

# Fading Cultural Identity among High School Students: An Analysis of Low "*Adiluhung*" Cultural Literacy in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how low levels of *adiluhung* cultural literacy and ineffective cultural mediation contribute to the fading of cultural identity among Indonesian high school students. Against the backdrop of increasing globalization, *adiluhung* culture representing noble national values continues to be formally present in educational settings, yet its role in shaping students' identity remains questionable. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical design, the study involved purposively selected senior high school students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and document analysis, and were analyzed using an interactive model supported by technique and source triangulation. The findings indicate that students' *adiluhung* cultural literacy is largely fragile, characterized by surface-level recognition of cultural symbols without interpretive understanding or value internalization. Cultural exposure in schools tends to be limited, episodic, and predominantly formalistic, offering minimal opportunities for sustained or experiential engagement. Consequently, students demonstrate identity ambivalence: while cognitively acknowledging the importance of national culture, they orient their self-expression toward global cultural forms perceived as more relevant to contemporary life. The discussion shows that this condition reflects a failure of cultural mediation, in which cultural knowledge exists but does not function as a meaningful resource for cultural identity formation. This study concludes that the weakening of students' cultural identity is driven less by cultural loss than by inadequate mediation between cultural exposure, cultural literacy, and lived experience. Strengthening cultural identity therefore requires interpretive and experiential cultural education that enables *adiluhung* culture to operate as a living source of meaning within globalized educational contexts.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesian *adiluhung* culture represents a corpus of noble values encompassing philosophical meanings, ethical principles, symbolic expressions, and refined cultural practices that have historically functioned as the foundation of national identity<sup>1</sup>. In Indonesian cultural

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Daffa Alfaiz, Asep Jamaludin, and Nandang Nandang, 'The Influence Of Job Satisfaction And Welfare On Employee Performance Pt . Sumber Adiluhung Kahuripan', *Management Studies and*

scholarship, *adiluhung* culture is not merely understood as traditional art forms, but as a value system that transmits moral orientation, social harmony, and collective identity across generations<sup>2</sup>. For adolescents particularly, high school students who are in a critical phase of identity formation engagement with such cultural values plays a decisive role in shaping their sense of belonging, cultural pride, and national consciousness<sup>3</sup>.

Cultural values, however, can only function as identity anchors when they are meaningfully understood and internalized. In this regard, cultural literacy becomes a central concept. Early discussions framed cultural literacy as shared cultural knowledge that enables social participation<sup>4</sup>, while contemporary perspectives emphasize its interpretative and internalizing dimensions. UNESCO<sup>5</sup> defines cultural literacy as the ability to understand, value, and integrate cultural meanings, symbols, and practices into one's identity. Cultural literacy therefore extends beyond surface-level recognition toward a process of value internalization that enables individuals to locate themselves within a cultural continuum<sup>6</sup>.

Within educational contexts, cultural literacy functions as a formative process through which values, norms, and symbolic meanings are transmitted<sup>7</sup>. Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development<sup>8</sup> highlights adolescence as a critical stage in which individuals actively seek stable identity orientations. Cultural frameworks provide continuity and meaning during this phase. When cultural literacy is weak, identity formation becomes fragmented, increasing adolescents' vulnerability to external cultural influences. Thus, low cultural literacy should be understood not merely as a deficit of knowledge, but as a disruption in the process of identity construction.

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*Entrepreneurship Journal*, 6.3 (2025); A Hernowo, 'Akulturasi Nilai Adiluhung "Urip Iku Urup" Dan Matius 5: 16 Bagi Masyarakat Agama Yang Kultural', *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 18.01 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> Alfaiz, Jamaludin, and Nandang; Rido Kurnianto, Nurul Iman, Sigit Dwi Laksana, 'History, Stigma, and Adiluhung Values Reyog Obyog (Cultural Studies in Indonesia)', *Psychology and Education Journal*, 58.2 (2021) <<https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i2.2128>>.

<sup>3</sup> E.D. Riyanto, 'Remixed Javaneness: Lyrics of Levelling Adiluhung Non-Adiluhung', in *Urban Studies: Border and Mobility*, 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429507410-9>>.

<sup>4</sup> Arif Muammar, 'Pemikiran Politik Amien Rais:Strategi Politik Adiluhung Bagi Negara Demokrasi', *Sosial Simbiosis : Jurnal Integrasi Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik*, 1.2 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.62383/sosial.v1i2.658>>.

<sup>5</sup> Retno Hendariningrum and others, 'Cultural Literacy for Preserving the Cosmological Axis of Yogyakarta: A UNESCO World Heritage Site in Indonesia', *RSF Conference Series: Business, Management and Social Sciences*, 5.2 (2025); Donald V.L. Macleod, 'Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change', in *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 2025 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.29308485.5>>; Hamid Yeganeh, 'Conceptualizing the Patterns of Change in Cultural Values: The Paradoxical Effects of Modernization, Demographics, and Globalization', *Social Sciences*, 13.9 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13090439>>.

<sup>6</sup> Ghufon Udin, Ahmad Zuber, and Argyo Demartoto, 'Karawitan Learning Ethnopedagogy as a Medium of Creating Adiluhung Character in Students', *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 5.3 (2018) <<https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v5i3.398>>; Ines Tasya Jadidah and others, 'Analisis Pengaruh Arus Globalisasi Terhadap Budaya Lokal (Indonesia)', *Academy of Social Science and Global Citizenship Journal*, 3.2 (2023) <<https://doi.org/10.47200/aossagcj.v3i2.2136>>.

<sup>7</sup> Mashuri, M. Syahrani Jailani, and Asad Isma, 'Perubahan Sosial Dan Pendidikan', *Dirasah : Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 7.2 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.58401/dirasah.v7i2.1299>>.

<sup>8</sup> Chia Mei Lian, Chih Wen Wu, and Ching Ling Cheng, 'Associations between Parental Psychological Control and Social Anxiety in Emerging Adulthood: The Mediating Role of Differentiation of Self', *Bulletin of Educational Psychology*, 53.2 (2021) <[https://doi.org/10.6251/BEP.202112\\_53\(2\).0005](https://doi.org/10.6251/BEP.202112_53(2).0005)>; Jeffrey Greenhaus and Gerard Callanan, 'Erikson'S Theory of Development', in *Encyclopedia of Career Development*, 2013 <<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412952675.n105>>; Zoi Nikiiforidou and Kyriakos Demetriou, 'The Origins of Self-Concept', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Culture and Identity from Early Childhood to Early Adulthood: Perceptions and Implications*, 2015.

Contemporary social conditions have further complicated this process. Globalization and digital media have intensified cross-cultural flows, enabling global popular culture to dominate students' everyday experiences<sup>9</sup>. As <sup>10</sup> argues, globalization accelerates cultural change while simultaneously marginalizing local value systems that lack strong institutional reinforcement. For many students, global culture manifested through popular music, fashion, and social media trends—offers symbols of modernity and social recognition that appear more relevant than local cultural traditions.

Empirical studies in Indonesia consistently indicate that students are more familiar with global popular culture than with their own cultural heritage, and that this imbalance correlates with weakening national identity. However, most of these studies conceptualize cultural literacy in broad terms and treat local culture as a homogeneous category. Consequently, the specific role of *adiluhung* culture as a value-laden system rather than merely a set of traditional practices<sup>11</sup> remains insufficiently theorized. Moreover, existing research tends to describe declining cultural attachment without adequately explaining the mechanisms through which low cultural engagement leads to identity erosion.

To address this gap, this study adopts an analytical framework that conceptualizes *adiluhung* cultural literacy as a mediating process between cultural exposure and students' cultural identity orientation<sup>12</sup>. Within this framework, cultural exposure refers to students' encounters with *adiluhung* culture through school curricula, learning practices, extracurricular activities<sup>13</sup>, family traditions, and community environments. Such exposure alone, however, does not automatically strengthen identity. Its impact depends on the extent to which cultural values are understood, interpreted, and internalized by students.

At the core of the framework is *adiluhung* cultural literacy as a process of value internalization, encompassing students' understanding of philosophical meanings, interpretation of symbolic expressions, and attitudes toward the relevance of *adiluhung* values in contemporary life. When this internalization process is weak, cultural values fail to function as identity anchors. Drawing on Erikson's (1968) theory<sup>14</sup>, this condition increases the likelihood of identity confusion during adolescence.

The outcome of this process is reflected in students' cultural identity orientation, manifested in their sense of belonging, cultural pride, and clarity of self-identification. In line with Wang <sup>15</sup> argument, the weakening of connections to cultural roots creates an identity vacuum that is often filled by global cultural frameworks. In this framework, global popular culture operates as a contextual force that competes with local cultural values, often reinforcing identity shifts toward global orientations when local value internalization is insufficient<sup>16</sup>.

This study contributes to existing literature by moving beyond descriptive accounts of cultural decline and offering a qualitative analysis of how low *adiluhung* cultural literacy operates as a mechanism of cultural identity erosion among high school students. Unlike previous studies

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<sup>9</sup> I Gusti Ngurah Mayun Susandhika, 'Globalisasi Dan Perubahan Budaya: Perspektif Teori Kebudayaan Modern', *Jurnal Ilmiah Cakrawarti*, 1.2 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.47532/jic.v1i2.10>>.

<sup>10</sup> Mikautadze (2022)

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad Al Fauzan and others, 'Budaya Jawa Dan Peranannya Dalam Nilai-Nilai Kepemimpinan', *Jurnal Pendidikan Multikultural Indonesia*, 4.1 (2021) <<https://doi.org/10.23887/jpmu.v4i1.30063>>.

<sup>12</sup> Bayuadhy Gesta, 'Tradisi-Tradisi Adiluhung Para Leluhur Jawa', *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11.1 (2019).

<sup>13</sup> Akbar Muflih Fauzi, 'Perancangan Katalog Wayang Koleksi Museum Wayang Indonesia" Di Kabupaten Wonogiri Sebagai Pelestarian Budaya Adiluhung', *Diploma Thesis, Universitas Negeri Malang*, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Lian, Wu, and Cheng; Greenhaus and Callanan; Nikiforidou and Demetriou.

<sup>15</sup> Wang (2007)

<sup>16</sup> Lesi Oktiani Putri, Anggraeni Dinie Dewi, and Rizky Saeful Hayat, 'Dampak Modernisasi Terhadap Minimnya Kesadaran Berbudaya', *Sindoro Cendikia Pendidikan*, 2023.

that focus primarily on cultural preferences or general attitudes, this research examines students' lived experiences to explain how limited exposure, weak value internalization, and dominant global cultural influences interact in shaping identity orientation.

Accordingly, this study aims to (1) describe the level of Indonesian *adilubung* cultural literacy among high school students and (2) analyze how low levels of such literacy contribute to the fading of students' cultural identity within the context of globalization.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design<sup>17</sup> to examine how low *adilubung* cultural literacy contributes to the fading of cultural identity among high school students<sup>18</sup>. An interpretive qualitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to uncover processes and mechanisms specifically how cultural exposure, value internalization, and identity orientation interact within students' lived experiences rather than to measure causal relationships quantitatively<sup>19</sup>.

The research design is explicitly guided by the analytical framework that positions *adilubung* cultural literacy as a mediating process between cultural exposure and cultural identity orientation. Consequently, data collection and analysis focus on capturing students' experiences across these three analytical domains.

### 2.2. Participants

The study was conducted in Senior High Schools (SMA) selected to represent varied educational contexts in terms of institutional emphasis on cultural education. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) students currently enrolled in grades 10–12, (2) regular participation in school learning activities, and (3) willingness to reflect on cultural experiences and identity.

High school students were chosen because adolescence constitutes a critical period of identity formation, during which cultural values function as key reference points. To maintain ethical standards, all participants were informed of the research objectives, and confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms or participant codes.

### 2.3. Analytical Construct and Operationalization

In line with the analytical framework, this study operationalizes its key constructs as follows:

#### 1. Cultural Exposure

Refers to students' encounters with *adilubung* culture through formal education (curriculum content, classroom instruction, extracurricular activities) and informal environments (family traditions, community practices).

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Elliott and Ladislav Timulak, 'Descriptive and Interpretive Approaches to Qualitative Research', *A Handbook of Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology*, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, Qualitative Inquiry*, 2002, 3RD <<https://doi.org/10.2307/330063>>; M. Q. Patton, 'Designing Qualitative Studies', in *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Cheryl N. Poth John W. Creswell, 'Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches', in *4, 4th edn* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2018), p. 8; Michael Quinn Patton, 'Variety of Qualitative Inquiry Frameworks', *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, 2015.

## 2. *Adilubung* Cultural Literacy (Value Internalization)

Defined as students' ability to understand, interpret, and internalize the philosophical values, symbolic meanings, and social functions embedded in *adilubung* culture.

## 3. Cultural Identity Orientation

Refers to students' sense of belonging, cultural pride, and self-identification, particularly in relation to national versus global cultural frameworks. These constructs guided the development of interview protocols, questionnaire prompts, and analytical codes

## 2.4. Data Sources and Data Collection

To capture the multidimensional nature of the analytical framework, this study employed multiple data sources:

### a. *In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to explore their cultural exposure, interpretations of *adilubung* values, and identity orientation. Interview questions were organized around the three analytical domains, allowing participants to narrate their experiences while enabling focused exploration of key concepts.

### b. *Open-Ended Questionnaires*

Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to gather broader qualitative data on students' cultural preferences, exposure to *adilubung* culture, and perceptions of cultural relevance. This instrument complemented interview data by identifying recurring patterns across participants.

## 2.5. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach informed by the interactive model of Miles and Huberman<sup>20</sup>. The analytical process consisted of the following stages:

1. Initial coding, in which data were coded deductively according to the analytical framework (cultural exposure, value internalization, identity orientation), while allowing inductive codes to emerge from participants' narratives.
2. Theme development, in which codes were clustered into higher-order themes that explain how low *adilubung* cultural literacy operates as a mechanism of identity erosion.
3. Interpretive analysis, linking empirical themes to theoretical perspectives on identity formation and cultural displacement under globalization.

This approach ensured that the analysis remained grounded in data while being theoretically informed.

## 2.6. Trustworthiness

To ensure methodological rigor, this study employed technique and source triangulation. Technique triangulation involved comparing data from interviews, questionnaires, and documents, while source triangulation compared accounts across different participants and institutional contexts. An audit trail documenting coding decisions and theme development was maintained to enhance transparency and credibility.

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel J. Palazzolo, 'Miles & Huberman', *Experiencing Citizenship: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Political Science*, 2023; M. B Miles and M. Huberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif* (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1992); Aulia siti Shalwa, 'Model Teknik Miles Dan Huberman Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif', *Ebizmark Blog*, 2025.

### 3. Results

The findings of this study reveal a patterned relationship between students' exposure to *adiluhung* culture, their level of cultural literacy, and the orientation of their cultural identity. Rather than indicating a total absence of cultural knowledge, the data point to a condition of fragmented exposure, fragile literacy, and unresolved identity orientation, which together contribute to the fading of students' cultural identity.

#### 3.1. Fragile *Adiluhung* Cultural Literacy: Recognition without Interpretation

Most students demonstrated a limited form of cultural literacy characterized by recognition without meaningful interpretation. Participants were generally familiar with surface-level markers of *adiluhung* culture, such as traditional dances, clothing, or regional customs—but lacked understanding of the philosophical values, ethical principles, or social functions embedded within them.

When asked to define *adiluhung* culture, students frequently used vague and generic descriptions:

*"Budaya adiluhung itu budaya tradisional yang diwariskan, seperti tari atau adat."* (S4)

Such responses suggest that cultural knowledge is confined to labels and formal categories, rather than functioning as a system of meaning. Cultural values are not internalized as interpretive frameworks but are instead perceived as static cultural artifacts.

More critically, several students expressed difficulty connecting *adiluhung* values to contemporary life:

*"Nilainya bagus, tapi rasanya tidak terlalu terpakai di kehidupan sekarang."* (S7)

This indicates a failure at the level of value mediation, where cultural knowledge does not translate into personal relevance. Rather than enriching students' identity formation, cultural literacy remains informational and detached from lived experience.

In some cases, misinterpretation emerged as a significant issue. Traditional culture was occasionally associated with rigidity, excessive rules, or outdated norms:

*"Budaya tradisional itu terkesan kaku dan terlalu mengikat."* (S11)

These perceptions reveal that the problem is not merely ignorance, but also the absence of guided interpretation that could situate *adiluhung* culture within modern contexts.

#### 3.2. Limited and Symbolic Cultural Exposure: Event-Based and Formalistic Engagement

Students' fragile cultural literacy is closely linked to the nature of their exposure to *adiluhung* culture. The findings show that exposure is limited in intensity, sporadic in frequency, and largely symbolic in form.

Within the school environment, cultural exposure typically occurred during specific events or ceremonial occasions:

*"Budaya tradisional biasanya muncul kalau ada acara tertentu saja."* (S6)

Cultural learning was described as predominantly theoretical, emphasizing memorization rather than experiential engagement:

*"Kami lebih sering menghafal nama tarian atau pakaian adat, tapi jarang praktik atau diskusi maknanya."* (S9)

This pattern reflects a form of symbolic formalism, where cultural elements are presented as curriculum content rather than lived practices. As a result, exposure does not support deep literacy development or encourage reflective engagement with cultural values.

Outside the school context, exposure was even more limited. Many students reported minimal cultural transmission within their families or communities:

*“Di rumah jarang ada pembahasan soal budaya tradisional.”* (S12)

Without reinforcement across multiple social contexts, school-based exposure remains isolated and easily overshadowed by global popular culture.

Only a small number of students reported sustained cultural exposure through extracurricular activities or family traditions:

*“Saya ikut sanggar tari, jadi lebih sering berinteraksi langsung dengan budaya tradisional.”* (S3)

These cases, however, were exceptions, indicating that meaningful exposure is uneven and largely dependent on individual circumstances rather than systematic educational design.

### 3.3. Cultural Identity Orientation: Ambivalence, Displacement, and Identity Tension

The combination of fragile literacy and limited exposure directly shapes students' cultural identity orientation. Rather than expressing a strong or coherent cultural identity, many students exhibited ambivalence and uncertainty in how they relate to national or regional culture.

Some students acknowledged their national identity in a nominal sense but expressed little emotional attachment:

*“Saya orang Indonesia, tapi soal identitas budaya rasanya biasa saja.”* (S8)

This suggests an identity that is cognitively recognized but affectively weak.

At the same time, global culture emerged as a dominant identity resource. Students often described stronger identification with global cultural forms, particularly in relation to lifestyle, fashion, and popular media:

*“Kalau soal gaya hidup dan musik, saya lebih cocok dengan budaya luar.”* (S10)

This reflects a process of identity displacement, where global culture offers more accessible and meaningful symbolic resources for self-expression than local tradition.

Importantly, the data reveal a persistent identity tension. Many students simultaneously acknowledged the importance of *adiluhung* culture while distancing themselves from it in practice:

*“Saya tahu budaya tradisional itu penting, tapi jarang merasa itu bagian dari diri saya.”* (S5)

This tension illustrates that cultural identity is not lost entirely but remains unresolved. Cultural values are respected at an abstract level but fail to become embedded in students' sense of self.

Only a small group of students demonstrated a coherent cultural identity grounded in *adiluhung* values. These students consistently linked identity clarity to sustained exposure and deeper cultural literacy:

*“Karena sering terlibat langsung, nilai-nilai budaya itu jadi bagian dari cara saya berpikir.”* (S2)

### 3.4. Integrative Pattern: Failure of Cultural Mediation

Across the findings, a consistent pattern emerges: limited cultural exposure leads to fragile cultural literacy, which in turn produces ambivalent and displaced identity orientations. The fading of cultural identity among high school students is therefore not the result of outright cultural rejection, but rather a failure of cultural mediation.

Cultural knowledge is present but not interpretively activated; exposure exists but lacks continuity and depth; identity recognition occurs but remains emotionally and practically disconnected. In the absence of sustained, contextualized, and experiential cultural learning, *adiluhung* culture becomes symbolically acknowledged yet experientially hollow.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the fading of cultural identity among Indonesian high school students is not the result of a rejection of *adiluhung* culture, but rather a consequence of how cultural knowledge is encountered, mediated, and internalized. Students' ability to recognize cultural symbols without understanding their underlying philosophical and ethical meanings reflects a condition of fragile cultural literacy. This confirms previous studies showing that students' engagement with local culture often remains superficial and formalistic, while also reinforcing UNESCO's assertion that cultural literacy entails interpretive understanding and value internalization<sup>21</sup>, not mere familiarity.

The limited and episodic nature of students' cultural exposure further explains this fragility. Cultural encounters were largely confined to ceremonial school events or theoretical classroom instruction, resulting in symbolic exposure that lacks experiential continuity. This pattern supports earlier arguments that event-based cultural education fails to produce sustained engagement. Without repeated, contextualized interaction across school, family, and community settings, cultural knowledge remains detached from everyday experience and is easily overshadowed by the continuous presence of global popular culture.

These conditions have direct implications for students' cultural identity orientation. Consistent with Erikson's (1968) theory of identity formation<sup>22</sup>, the absence of meaningful value internalization leads to identity ambivalence rather than firm cultural attachment. Students in this study acknowledged the importance of *adiluhung* culture at an abstract level, yet struggled to incorporate it into their lived identities. This finding aligns with Wang's<sup>23</sup> argument that cultural identity weakens when younger generations lose interpretive connections to their cultural roots, even when symbolic awareness persists.

At the same time, the findings complicate existing narratives that attribute identity erosion primarily to globalization. While global cultural forms clearly play a significant role in students' self-expression, their dominance appears less as a cause of cultural loss than as a response to the absence of effective mediation of local cultural values. Global culture offers accessible and continuous symbolic resources that local culture fails to provide when it is presented without interpretive depth or contextual relevance. This observation extends previous studies by shifting the analytical focus from cultural decline to the processes through which culture is—or is not—made meaningful.

The central contribution of this study, therefore, lies in identifying a failure of cultural mediation as the key mechanism linking limited exposure, fragile cultural literacy, and fading cultural identity. Unlike earlier research that emphasizes declining attachment or generational

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<sup>21</sup> Hendariningrum and others; Macleod; Yeganeh.

<sup>22</sup> Lian, Wu, and Cheng; Greenhaus and Callanan; Nikiforidou and Demetriou.

<sup>23</sup> Wang (2007)

disinterest, this study demonstrates that cultural elements remain present within educational spaces but function symbolically rather than experientially. When cultural symbols are not translated into lived values through sustained and reflective engagement, they are unable to serve as stable foundations for identity formation.

Insights from cultural literacy theory, identity development, and globalization studies, refine existing understandings of youth cultural identity in Indonesia. It suggests that strengthening cultural identity requires not only the preservation or promotion of cultural content, but also the development of pedagogical and social mechanisms that mediate cultural values in ways that resonate with students' contemporary experiences. In this sense, the fading of cultural identity is best understood not as cultural disappearance, but as a breakdown in the processes that connect cultural heritage to everyday life.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the fading of cultural identity among Indonesian high school students is not caused by the disappearance of *adiluhung* culture, but by the failure of cultural mediation that connects cultural exposure to meaningful literacy and identity internalization. Students' cultural knowledge remains largely symbolic, characterized by surface-level recognition without interpretive depth, due to limited, episodic, and formalistic cultural exposure. As a result, *adiluhung* culture is acknowledged cognitively but remains detached from students' lived experiences, leading to identity ambivalence and the displacement of local cultural values by more accessible global cultural forms.

The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study advances cultural literacy and identity scholarship by identifying mediation as the missing link between cultural exposure and identity formation, reframing cultural identity fading as a process failure rather than a generational deficit. Practically, it suggests that cultural education must move beyond ceremonial inclusion and content transmission toward sustained, experiential, and interpretive learning that enables students to negotiate cultural values within contemporary contexts. One limitation of this study lies in its qualitative and context-specific design, which prioritizes depth of interpretation over broad generalizability; however, this focus enables a nuanced understanding of the mediation processes shaping cultural literacy and identity formation among high school students. Future research may extend these insights by examining how different forms of cultural mediation—such as digital platforms, family-based transmission, or community engagement—operate across diverse educational and socio-cultural settings.

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