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Caring for National Unity: Lessons from the Youth Pledge to Today

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Abstract

This article discusses the importance of maintaining the unity of the Indonesian nation through lessons learned from the youth pledge declared in 1928. Using a literature study method, this article finds that the spirit of unity contained in the Youth Pledge is very relevant in facing socio-cultural challenges in the modern era. The results of the analysis show that the application of the values of the Youth Pledge can strengthen the sense of nationality and unity in society. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the need for a joint commitment to maintaining unity for a better future for the nation.

Keywords: *Nationality, National Identity, National Unity, Social Challenges, Youth Pledge.*

PRELIMINARY

The Youth Pledge, proclaimed on October 28, 1928, was a monumental event in the history of the Indonesian nation's struggle. The pledge marked the collective consciousness of youth to unite under one homeland, one nation, and one language. This momentum marked the starting point for the formation of an Indonesian national identity that transcended ethnic, religious, and regional boundaries (Saripurnawan, 2020; Kusumaningrum & Sulistyaningsih, 2021). In the context of the struggle for independence, the Youth Pledge became a symbol of unity that underpinned the birth of a spirit of nationalism.

Throughout the nation's history, the spirit of the Youth Pledge played a role not only in the physical struggle for independence but also served as a moral foundation for building national life after independence (Raihani, 2018). This spirit of unity is reflected in various aspects of social, political, and cultural life. However, over time, the meaning of the Youth Pledge has often shifted, especially among the younger generation living in the digital and globalized era.

Globalization presents new challenges in the form of a rapid flow of information, cultural exchange, and ideologies that can erode national identity (Patras et al., 2022). This phenomenon has led some young people to become more familiar with foreign cultures than with their own national heritage. Consequently, the spirit of unity that once burned within young people tends to weaken, giving rise to the potential for social disintegration (Cahyaningtyas et al., 2022).

In addition to globalization, advances in communication technology have also created increasingly sharp social polarization. Social media often becomes a platform for the emergence of hate speech, intolerance, and identity conflicts. This situation threatens the fundamental values embodied in the Youth Pledge, namely national unity (Fossati, 2022; Anderson, 2006). Therefore, critical reflection on the meaning of the Youth Pledge is necessary to ensure its relevance and applicability in modern life.

In the context of education, the values of the Youth Pledge need to be internalized in students from an early age. Schools, as character-building institutions, must play an active role in instilling a spirit of nationalism, tolerance, and love of country. Through multicultural education, students can understand diversity as a national treasure, not a source of division.

The challenges of maintaining national unity come not only from outside but also from within, such as increasing intolerance between groups, social conflict, and a lack of empathy among citizens (Anggraheni, 2022). This situation demands a joint effort from all elements of the nation to revive the values of the Youth Pledge through concrete actions in daily life.

Various studies have shown that strengthening national identity can be achieved by reinstilling national values, such as patriotism, the spirit of mutual cooperation, and respect for differences. The Youth Pledge serves as a source of moral inspiration to strengthen collective awareness of the importance of coexisting in diversity.

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze the important lessons to be learned from the Youth Pledge and its relevance to maintaining Indonesian national unity in the modern era. Using a literature review method, this research seeks to reaffirm the historical, social, and moral significance of the Youth Pledge as a guide for strengthening national identity amidst global challenges.

METHOD

The method used in this research is a literature review. The author collected and analyzed various sources, including books, scientific articles, and historical documents (Assingkily, 2021), related to the theme of unity and the Youth Pledge. This analysis aims to understand the context and meaning of the Youth Pledge and the challenges facing the Indonesian nation today.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A literature review shows that the values embodied in the Youth Pledge remain highly relevant to the current state of the Indonesian nation. The pledge of "one nation, one people, one language" serves as the foundation for a sense of shared ownership of the Indonesian homeland, regardless of ethnic, cultural, or religious background.

The primary value emerging from the Youth Pledge is the spirit of unity. This spirit has proven effective in uniting diverse youth groups from diverse backgrounds to fight for a common goal: national independence (Budianta, 2016). In the current context, this value is crucial for fostering national solidarity amidst diversity.

Furthermore, the Youth Pledge plays a role in strengthening national identity. This identity serves as a psychological foundation that affirms that all Indonesians have an emotional attachment to their homeland (Salim & Limanta, 2020). Through this understanding, society can build a collective awareness of the importance of maintaining national brotherhood.

The analysis also found that modern challenges to national unity emerge in the form of intolerance, radicalism, and social polarization. These phenomena often arise due to low national literacy and a lack of character education that emphasizes the importance of nationalistic values (Nasution, 1995).

In the educational realm, the implementation of the Youth Pledge values can be achieved through multicultural education. This education teaches the importance of respecting differences and working together amidst diversity (Suryadinata, 2008; Welsh, et al., 2021). Thus, schools become a strategic arena for reinstilling the spirit of the Youth Pledge in the younger generation.

Other findings indicate that intercultural dialogue and social initiatives are effective strategies for strengthening national unity. Activities involving people from across ethnicities and religions can build social empathy, broaden national perspectives, and foster a sense of togetherness as Indonesian citizens.

Mass media also plays a crucial role in maintaining the spirit of the Youth Pledge. Media content that emphasizes brotherhood, cooperation, and mutual assistance can be an educational tool for addressing social polarization. Conversely, media that spreads hatred needs to be balanced with strong digital literacy.

The national values embodied in the Youth Pledge can also be implemented through social and cultural movements (Azhar, 2020; Suroyo et al., 2023). For example, arts, sports, and social activities involving various elements of society can strengthen positive interactions between citizens and strengthen national solidarity.



Figure 1. Lessons from the Youth Pledge

Overall, the research findings confirm that the spirit of the Youth Pledge is not merely a historical symbol, but also an ethical and moral guide for building the nation's future. The practice of these values must be realized sustainably through education, media, public policy, and community participation.

Thus, the lessons of the Youth Pledge provide a strong foundation for developing a resilient and inclusive national character. Through a collective commitment to maintaining unity and respecting diversity, Indonesia can continue to stand strong as a sovereign and dignified nation amidst global challenges.

CONCLUSION

Maintaining national unity is a shared responsibility that must be shared by all levels of society. The lessons of the Youth Pledge demonstrate that despite ever-changing challenges, the spirit of unity remains a strong foundation for building a better future. By implementing these values in our daily lives, we can create a more harmonious and integrated society.

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