



How to cite this article:

Rusli, F. H., & Mohd Said, B. S. (2025). Malay Folk Songs in Preschool Education: A Medium for the Information of Malay Identity. *Journal of Creative Industry and Sustainable Culture*, 4(14), 210-233. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jcisc2024.4.14>

**MALAY FOLK SONGS IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION:  
A MEDIUM FOR THE FORMATION OF MALAY IDENTITY**

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Received: 3/5/2025

Revised: 13/7/2025

Accepted: 1/9/2025

Published: 31/10/2025

**ABSTRACT**

Learning through music has been proven to greatly aid in the development of moral values among preschool children. This study aims to examine the extent to which Malay identity is instilled through Malay folk songs. The research was conducted in three preschools located in the Bachok district of Kelantan. Ten songs were selected as samples for this study. The focus is on the development of children's attitudes and social cognition, based on the Behaviourism Theory by Skinner (1953) and Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura, A. (1962), and their relationship with the Characteristics of Malay Identity as introduced by Teuku Luckman (1990). The research design employed is qualitative in nature. The methods used include interviews, observations, and data analysis. The informants for the in-depth interviews in this study were three preschool teachers in Bachok, Kelantan. The findings highlight that Malay folk songs not only possess a unique personal aura behind the aesthetics of their melodies and lyrics, but also have the ability to engage children in developing the foundational aspects of Malay identity in their attitudes and actions. This study recommends that research on Malay folk songs needs to be further enhanced, not only to nurture a sense of identity among children, but also to strengthen their psychological resilience in facing the challenges of globalization and new media, which contribute to identity crises among today's youth

**Keywords:** *Malay Identity, Malay Folk Song, Preschool, Children Social Cognition, Characteristics*

## INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has indeed brought numerous positive impacts to human civilization. However, it has also had negative effects, causing people to gradually forget traditional knowledge that exists within society, deeming it irrelevant in the context of a rapidly developing world. Traditional elements are often seen as obstacles to progress. This issue was also addressed by Fitria (2018), who opined that technological advancement could diminish cultural heritage, even though the preservation of national heritage values is crucial and meaningful in shaping the identity and character of a nation.

Activities such as singing and dancing to music are examples of teaching methods rooted in creativity and aesthetics, as recommended in the *National Preschool Standard Curriculum* (KSPK, 2017). Music is an inseparable part of a child's world. Without music, a child's life would feel empty (Mohamad Azam Samsudin, Kamariah Abu Bakar, & Noorhayati Mohd Noor, 2019). Music and drama are forms of art that significantly impact a child's mental development. At the same time, children are given opportunities to showcase their artistic talents (KSPK, 2017).

Levinowitz, L. M. (1998) and Papageorgi, I. (2022) mentioned that music and singing are closely associated with early childhood. Naturally, children are drawn to sound and music, which entertain them. Therefore, music and singing have a positive effect and capture children's attention in the classroom (Harriet et al., 2014). Furthermore, children learn rhythm, melody, and pronunciation through music. Thus, music can be used creatively and effectively by teachers during teaching and learning sessions.

Sakti, S., Endraswara, S., & Rohman, A. (2024) emphasizes that integrating local cultural values into early childhood education significantly enhances character development, fostering virtues such as cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility, as a means for them to understand themselves, their surroundings, and their community. Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2019) emphasized that this can be achieved through music education, as music provides children with knowledge about themselves, their families, and the world around them. They also cited educational pioneers such as G. Stanley Hall and Sigmund Freud, who agreed that music could be used as a medium and strategy in art education pedagogy.

According to Patricia (2019), when singing and dancing the children become engage with music and teacher can communicate with them through facial expression, indicative gesture which activate the desired social behaviors. This method effectively engages children's interest in their own culture while also shaping their perception and understanding of cultural objects. For instance, when singing, children become familiar with a song and begin to relate closely to the traditional musical elements it contains.

Ultimately, music education serves to instill national identity values in children and foster a love for their nation and country. As Aripin (2014) stated, love for one's nation and country reflects a strong and firm national identity. In relation to this, Malay art in general, and Malay folk songs in particular, can

contribute significantly to instilling Malay identity in children. According to MacDonald (2002), music generally serves two key functions in expressing and reflecting national identity: it unites people through a shared sense of belonging.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, music is believed to unite members of a particular ethnic group. In the context of music education, music conveys ideas of national identity and emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage for future generations. This is clearly reflected in folk songs, which are seen as a system for fostering nationalism, with music being viewed not just as culture but as a national phenomenon (MacDonald, 2002, p. 158).

Aripin (2014) suggested that folk songs should be introduced from early childhood, as they can instill valuable ideas in young minds. He expressed disappointment over the gradual marginalization of folk songs, noting that many young people today are unaware of their existence. He also emphasized that folk songs are easy to sing, remember, and internalize due to their long-standing presence in the lives of earlier generations. He firmly believes that kindergartens or preschools are the most effective starting point for fostering appreciation for Malay folk songs.

Therefore, in the context of this study, based on the views presented above, the issue to be examined is the extent to which the instillation of Malay identity through traditional Malay folk songs can be effectively implemented in preschool education.

Despite existing studies on music in early childhood education and on the transmission of cultural values, few have specifically examined the role of Malay folk songs in shaping Malay identity among preschool children. This study addresses this gap by investigating how traditional folk songs can simultaneously promote language development, moral values, and a sense of cultural belonging. By combining in-depth interviews with preschool educators and classroom observations, the research provides empirical insights into the practical application of folk songs as culturally responsive pedagogical tools. This approach highlights a previously underexplored link between early musical engagement and the formation of ethnic and national identity, offering valuable implications for curriculum design and early childhood education in Malaysia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Folk Songs**

According to Nazilah Rezkifutri (2018), folk songs are short musical components consisting of lyrics and melody, sung or chanted by the general public and passed down orally. These songs are a form of oral literature that develop within communities and are performed with tone and rhythm. They are commonly associated with traditional games of specific regions. Siti Noor and Normaliza (2017) explain that the development of folk songs falls under the category of folklore, with origins that are often unknown due to their oral transmission. As a result, they are considered collective cultural property, reflecting life experiences, stories, and legends

embedded within their lyrics. The melody and tempo of these songs also mirror the spirit and character of the society in which they emerge.

Danandjaja (1984) adds that the tones of folk songs represent the emotional context of life events and the cultural values upheld by the community. According to Nur Asmira Mat Din (2011), folk songs were sung by earlier communities not only for entertainment purposes but also as a medium for educating society through the lyrics and stories they conveyed. In this way, folk song performances served as tools for transmitting knowledge and values, functioning as a medium of traditional education. These songs thus contain normative educational values that can serve as examples and guidance for daily life.

Aripin Said (1999) emphasizes that folk songs were traditionally sung by communities in the past as a means of education, often performed by skilled storytellers known as *penglipur lara*. Jamal Abdul Hamid (1999) describes folk songs as a form of oral tradition, developed and refined orally and spontaneously, without a formal system to regulate their lyrical structure. Despite this lack of rigid structure, the lyrics effectively convey meaningful messages across generations.

Rogayah A. Hamid (2006) highlights that folk songs are typically delivered in the dialects or local languages of specific ethnic groups, with their origins often unknown. These songs play a powerful role as tools of social control, effectively communicating messages in ways that resonate with local communities. Their content is inspired by events closely tied to the environment and is expressed in a subtle, aesthetically rich, and ethically grounded manner. This makes them culturally resonant and easily accepted by the community. Fita Fitria (2018) supports this view, adding that folk songs are often presented simply, using beautiful and accessible regional language.

### **Malay Folk Songs**

Rahmah Bujang (1999) concluded that Malay folk songs originate from the Malay ethnic group and embody the worldview and collective thoughts of the Malays from regions such as the Malay Peninsula, the Riau Archipelago, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore. These songs were commonly sung in domestic settings, ranging from lullabies for children to performances during Malay festive occasions. They were presented either individually or in groups and were typically accompanied by traditional Malay musical instruments. The content of these songs reflects the close relationship between the Malay people and their natural environment, as well as the socio-economic conditions of the time

Rahmah further notes that Malay folk songs are also categorized as children's songs due to their cheerful tone. The singing style and timing of these songs are adapted to suit the lives and routines of children. Aripin Said (1999) supports this perspective by stating that folk songs are a source of pride for the Malay community. Beyond their uniqueness, they contain philosophical values that encapsulate the Malay worldview, which has been developed and refined over generations. These values play a significant role in shaping the personality and identity of the Malay people.

### **The Use of Folk Songs in Preschool Education**

Shahizan Hasan and Ahmad Shahabudin (2006) define preschool children as those between the ages of four and six. At this stage, children are considered highly impressionable, as their personalities are influenced by their immediate environment. Their cognitive development is still in progress, resulting in a vivid imagination and an inclination toward fantasy.

Preschool education generally refers to an informal learning system that emphasizes play-based learning, aligned with the physical and mental development of children. It is designed to introduce children to social life and prepare them for formal education in primary school. Key developmental aspects emphasized include language and communication, cognitive and mental development, emotional and spiritual growth, moral values, psychomotor skills, and physical development.

Numerous studies in Malaysia and Indonesia have investigated the use of folk songs in early childhood education. Each region possesses unique ethnic groups and languages rich in folk traditions. For instance, Siti Noor Riha Sulong and Normaliza Abd Rahim (2017) found that among Indigenous communities, folk songs have been passed down across generations to foster children's interest in schooling. These songs serve as foundational literacy tools, enabling children to connect with their cultural heritage and instilling values of self-identity and moral integrity. Animal-themed folk songs such as *Si Pintar*, *Si Manis*, and *Kura-Kura* have been shown to develop children's empathy toward animals and convey moral messages through personified characters. These songs provide not only entertainment but also serve as instruments of social critique and satire that are accessible to children.

Loy Chee Luen (2016) concluded that the Kodály Method, which incorporates folk songs into music instruction, is an effective and adaptable approach for preschool education. The method encourages musical skill development through solfa singing, hand signals, body movement, and playing musical glasses. These interactive strategies engage children in the musical learning process, helping them discover and express themselves while nurturing a love for music.

Danandjaja (1984) observed that songs embedded within folk stories are part of oral literature and are designed to simplify the communication of messages and lessons to children. Sri Ayu Laali (2018), in her study *Character Formation in Children through the Kokonua Song*, found that folk songs are effective in character education, offering insights from psychology, cognition, language, and behavioral sciences.

Rahmat Kartolo (2019) emphasized that folk songs often explore everyday themes that are easy for children to grasp. Their implementation in preschool settings can be enhanced through multimedia tools like videos, which increase children's engagement. Fita Fatria (2018), in her work *Socialization of the Archipelago's Songs as an Effort to Cultivate Love for the Homeland*, supported Rahmat's view, noting that the relatable nature of folk song themes promotes acceptance across various communities.

Nazilah Rezkifutri (2018), in her study *Cultural Values in Folk Songs for Children in the Tambelan Community, Bintan, Riau Archipelago Province*, identified key Malay cultural values in children's folk songs, particularly the concept of unity. These songs teach harmony across differences in ethnicity, religion, and class, fostering mutual care, empathy, and respect within families and communities.

Hanifah Sabin, V. P., and Bullare@Bahari, M. I. (2019) argued that folk songs can promote behavioral and psychological changes in children. Their rhythmic qualities can be popularized among modern youth, even in the face of global cultural trends such as K-pop. When integrated into reading instruction, these culturally relevant songs accelerate literacy acquisition by connecting with children's social environments and daily experiences.

Finally, the animated program *Didi & Friends* has proven effective in incorporating Malay folk songs into early childhood education. Zaharah Osman (2016) demonstrated that the program not only entertains but also positively impacts children's emotional and cognitive development. It is widely used by preschool teachers to create joyful learning environments, especially since many children are already familiar with the content outside of the classroom.

### **Malay Identity**

For the definition of the concept of Malay identity (*Jati Diri Melayu*), this study adopts the framework proposed by cultural scholar Tengku Luckman Sinar Badarshah (1990), as follows:

1. An individual is considered Malay when they are Muslim, speak the Malay language daily, and observe Malay customs and traditions. These traditions follow the principle: "*Customs are based on Islamic Law, Islamic Law is based on the Book of God (the Quran).*"
2. "*Where there is a ruler, customs thrive; without a ruler, customs perish*"—an old proverb. In the past, rulers were regarded as God's representatives on earth, to be respected and obeyed. God is also considered the head of Islamic governance.
3. The Malays regard the ruler as possessing *daulat* (divine right or sacred authority), serving as the head of government, the Islamic leader of the kingdom, and the guardian of Malay customs.
4. Faith in the One and Only God (Allah).
5. Emphasis on the enforcement of laws to ensure societal peace, order, and prosperity.
6. High regard for courtesy and civility as a reflection of the refinement of Malay civilization.

7. Emphasis on education and the pursuit of knowledge.
8. Valuing a sense of shame (*malu*), speaking gently, dressing modestly, and avoiding taboos and sin. It is considered better to die than to bring shame upon oneself or one's family. At the same time, one should avoid shaming others harshly.
9. Consensus and consultation (*mesyuarat* and *muafakat*) form the foundation of Malay social life.
10. Warmth and hospitality toward guests.
11. Willingness to defend oneself or one's values when pushed into a corner (as a last resort).

This study also discusses Malay identity through the lens of four identity pillars as outlined in *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, authored by Zakaria Stapa, Noranizah Yusuf, and Abdul Fatah Shaharudin (2012). The book is a compilation of expressions, proverbs, poems, advice, and wisdom from Malay elders. The four pillars are:

1. Pillar of Piety to Allah; The foremost pillar in shaping Malay identity, reflecting the Islamic character of the Malays in alignment with Islamic values, norms, and culture.
2. Pillar of Morality (*Akhlak*); A reflection of an individual's actions and behavior in their relationship with God, fellow human beings, and other creatures.
3. Pillar of Knowledge; Emphasizes the importance of acquiring knowledge for personal development as well as for the betterment of the community, nation, and country.
4. Pillar of Social Relations (*Muamalah*); Highlights the value of living harmoniously through cooperation, mutual support, and unity, reflecting the essence of the Malay personality and identity. In essence, individuals are expected to prioritize discussion and consensus in decision-making.

Abdul Halim Ramli (2008) defines the values of Malay identity as those rooted in Islamic teachings. Personality is seen as the image and identity of the Malay people, which must be preserved perpetually; reflected in the saying, "not worn by the heat, not soaked by the rain." The linguistic aesthetics of the Malays; expressed through metaphors, *gurindam* (rhymed advice), *syair* (narrative poetry), proverbs, idioms, *pantun* (quatrains), *seloka* (poetic expressions), and customary sayings; are manifestations of the Malay intellect and personality.

### **The Behaviorism Theory**

According to Skinner (1953), in the development process of students, they often respond to their environment when repetition occurs. The process of shaping behavior will take a long time and result in complex actions due to the frequent environmental factors. Rachlin (1991) explained that reinforcement is given firstly to satisfy an individual's needs, and secondly, to reduce stress and stimulate the brain. Skinner divided reinforcement into two types: positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.

There are five types of processes in Skinner's operant conditioning theory, namely: Positive Reinforcement, Negative Reinforcement, Punishment, Premack Principle and Extinction.

## **Social Cognitive Theory**

According to Bandura (1962), humans naturally learn through imitation or observation—that is, by seeing others perform behaviors and then receiving rewards for their actions, or by observing others being punished for their actions. Initially, this theory was known as social learning theory. This theory has similarities with operant conditioning theory, which considers the effect of reinforcement on behavior. It later developed into Social Cognitive Theory since cognitive processes are also involved. Naturally, humans learn through the process of observation and imitation (Bandura, 1962) Social Learning through Imitation. In M. R. Jones (Ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (pp. 211-269).

The statement above are the fundamental processes of learning in Social Cognitive Theory. However, there are other concepts proposed by this theory that will influence the role of social learning. Specifically, Social Cognitive Theory states that if an individual feels a strong psychological connection with the model, the process of social learning will occur more frequently. According to White (1972: 252), identification begins with the desire to emulate, followed by the effort to act like the person who serves as a behavioral model

Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes not only the observer's ability to perform specific behaviors but also their belief in their capacity to do so. This belief, known as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a), is considered a critical prerequisite for behavior change.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative research design, using two main approaches: interviews and content analysis. The interview method will be conducted with preschool teachers, parents, and individuals involved in early childhood education to gather their perspectives on the use of traditional Malay songs in the development of children's identity. This interview will emphasize their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of folk songs in shaping the Malay identity in preschool children.

In addition, content analysis will be performed on the lyrics and melodies of Malay folk songs used in preschool education. The purpose is to understand the cultural values contained within these songs and how these elements can be adapted to meet the educational needs of children. Through this, the study aims to evaluate the role of Malay folk songs in fostering Malay identity and its impact on the development of preschool children's identity. Overall, the qualitative approach used in this study aims to build the researcher's understanding, which is to explore how Malay folk songs play a role in nurturing Malay identity among preschool children.

In the initial stage of the study, the researcher uses a phenomenological approach, which is a method oriented towards obtaining explanations. This research design is chosen because it is suitable for the researcher, who aims to explore the depth of the implementation of Malay identity through Malay folk songs.

The study location is in three preschools around Bachok, Kelantan. The informants for this study are three preschool teachers from three different preschools around Bandar Bachok, Kelantan. All three informants will be referred to as TA, TB, and TC. The method used by the researcher is in-depth interviews with a total of 14 questions, which are divided into Question 1, Question 2, and the closing question. Each question is further broken down into several sub-questions.

The interview protocol, containing these 14 questions, was developed by the researcher based on improvements made from the pilot study questions. Examples of the questions posed are:

- Focused Question for Research Question 1: What is your view on the use of Malay folk songs in preschools?
- Focused Question for Research Question 2: How do you ensure that children understand the noble values that you try to instill/communicate?
- Closing Question: Do you have any suggestions to further enhance the implementation of Malay folk songs in instilling Malay identity in your preschool? If so, please state them.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Preschool Teachers' Practices in Instilling Malay Identity Through Folk Songs**

From this research question, the researcher identified several themes; introducing noble values, methods for understanding noble values, activities to assess understanding of noble value, teachers' views on noble values, folk songs that reflect Malay identity and characteristics of Malay identity.

#### **Introducing Noble Values**

a) Question-and-answer method about noble values.

The informants used question-and-answer techniques to introduce the noble values in the folk songs to preschool children. Here are their statements:

"Yes, every time we introduce something new, we delve into the content of the song's lyrics. I will ask the children to mention the noble values or good values found in the lyrics. Then, I explain what happens when we practice these values in our lives." (TA)

"Yes, I introduce and sing the song at the end of the lesson, then talk about the noble values in the song." (TB)

"Yes, I always explain the folk songs. After the children sing, I ask them if they understand the meaning of the song. If they do, I ask them to explain it verbally. If not, I will clarify the noble values in the song." (TC)

### **Methods for Understanding Noble Values**

a) Question-and-answer, reminders.

To ensure children understand the noble values conveyed through the folk songs, the informants regularly used questioning, reminders, and reinforcement.

"I always ask questions about their daily lives at home, reminding them to practice good things both at home and in school." (TA)

"After the children retell the song's contents and noble values, I reward them with reinforcement." (TB)

"I ask the children to repeat what the teacher says and then ask a few of them to repeat it." (TC)

### **Activities to Assess Understanding of Noble Values**

a) Observation while at preschool.

Several activities were conducted to assess children's understanding of the noble values while they were at preschool.

"I observe them during school activities, especially when they are playing with their peers, eating, or coming and going from school, to see if they practice these values." (TA)

"One activity we can use to assess children's understanding is quizzes, which also encourage active participation." (TB)

"I ask questions to test the children's understanding of the noble values and provide reinforcement." (TC)

### **Teachers' Views on Noble Values**

a) Students quickly understand and remember.

The informants believe that it is easier to instill noble values in young children, especially those aged 5-6 years.

"Instilling noble values is very important because children at this age are very receptive to teaching compared to older children." (TA)

"This activity encourages students to actively participate and helps them remember and understand the values more easily." (TB)

"Noble values are easy to instill in children as young as 5-6 years old." (TC)

### **Folk Songs that Reflect Malay Identity**

a) Folk songs reflect Malay Identity

The informants shared their views on folk songs that are effective in instilling Malay identity in preschool children.

"For me, a Malay folk song suitable for children aged 5-6 years that reflects Malay identity is *Lompat Si Katak Lompat*." (TA)

"*Tepuk Amai-Amari, Wau Bulan*, I believe these songs carry high values of Malay identity." (TB)

"The folk songs that reflect Malay identity include *Lompat Si Katak Lompat, Bangun Pagi*, and *Bangau Oh Bangau*." (TC)

### **Characteristics of Malay Identity**

a) Hard-working and striving for success.

According to the informants, the folk song *Lompat Si Katak Lompat* promotes the value of being diligent in working towards success.

"If we work hard and diligently pursue knowledge, we will succeed, as reflected in the lyrics 'lompatlah si katak lompat, lompatlah tinggi-tinggi,' which has a hidden meaning encouraging children to work hard to achieve their dreams." (TA)

"The song *Wau Bulan* educates children about traditional Malay games, especially those in the Kelantan region. Through the lyrics of *Wau Bulan*, children learn about traditional Malay Games. *Wau Bulan* is also familiar to the children because they see it often in their environment." (TB)

Moreover, other values of Malay identity, such as good manners, respect for elders, and waking up early, are easy to instill in children, as they naturally love their parents and appreciate kindness.

"The values of Malay identity in folk songs include good manners, respect for elders, and waking up early. This is easy to instill because children at this age naturally love their parents and enjoy when people are kind to them." (TC)

## **The Role of Malay Folk Songs in Enhancing the Instillation of Malay Identity in Preschool Education**

### **Teacher Efforts to Instill Malay Identity**

a) Always setting a good example.

The informants highlighted their efforts to instill Malay identity through folk songs by setting a good example and emphasizing the importance of good behavior, etiquette, and relationships with others.

"I strive to instill noble values and Malay identity in children because it is crucial for shaping a person's identity. Children at this age cannot distinguish between good and bad, so it is essential to show them examples through folk songs, activities, and behavior." (TA)

"I always encourage them to follow good values, and I set an example in my actions." (TB)

"I try to set a good example for them and encourage them to display good manners and behavior." (TC)

This section presents an overview of the themes related to the research questions about the use of folk songs in preschool education and their role in promoting Malay identity. The informant proposed several measures to enhance the inculcation of identity values through the activity of singing Malay folk songs in preschool education. Among the suggestions put forward include:

#### **1. Malay Folk Song Competitions**

The informant suggested organizing Malay folk songs competitions starting from lower levels up to higher levels. This would provide children with the opportunity to explore Malay folk songs more deeply and appreciate the values embedded within them. Such activities can also foster healthy competition among children while strengthening their pride in Malay cultural heritage.

## 2. Utilization of Multimedia Technology

With the advancement of technology, the informant also suggested that relevant parties provide multimedia software containing Malay folk songs accompanied by visual illustrations that reflect the values embedded in the songs. Through this software, children would find it easier to understand and apply these values in their daily lives, thereby enhancing their comprehension of Malay identity.

## 3. National-Level Competitions

In addition, the informant proposed that Malay folk song singing competitions be expanded to the national level. This would offer a broader platform for children to engage with Malay culture in a more extensive and meaningful manner.

## 4. Promotion of Folk Songs through Broadcasting Media

Lastly, the informant expressed hope that Malay folk songs would continue to be aired through broadcasting media. This would help instill confidence and enthusiasm in children to sing Malay folk songs and foster a sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

Overall, these suggestions aim to strengthen the inculcation of Malay identity values in preschool education, emphasizing the use of technology, competitions, and media broadcasting as key platforms to educate and introduce Malay culture to the younger generation.

### **Document Analysis**

In this document analysis section, the lyrics of Malay folk songs are examined for the values of Malay identity that can be instilled in preschool children based on the 11 characteristics of the Malay Identity Concept formulated by cultural expert Tengku Luckman Sinar Badarshah (1990).

### ***Song 1: Air Pasang Pagi (Morning High Tide)***

#### **Lyrics of "Air Pasang Pagi":**

*Air pasang pagi surut pukul lima  
Nyonya bangun pagi siram pokok bunga  
Pokok bunga Melur tanam tepi batas  
Itik bertelur ayam menetas*

In terms of meaning, this lyric directly provides children with geographical knowledge about the timing of high and low tides, and a message about the morning routine of a woman watering flowers. It also depicts the habitat of animals (ducks and chickens) laying and hatching eggs.

In terms of Malay identity values, the lyrics indirectly nurture a love for plants and an understanding of animal habitats. More specifically, this song instills knowledge in children.

## **Song 2: Bangau Oh Bangau (Heron Oh Heron)**

### **Lyrics of “Bangau Oh Bangau”**

*Banggu oh bangau kenapa engkau kurus  
Macam mana aku tak kurus  
Ikan tidak nak timbul  
Ikan tidak nak timbul*

*Ikan oh ikan kenapa kau tak timbul  
Macem mana aku tak timbul  
Rumput panjang santai  
Rumput panjang sangat*

*Rumput oh rumput kenapa engkau panjang  
Macam mana aku tak panjang  
Kerbau tak makan aku  
Kerbau tak makan aku*

*Kerbau oh kerbau kenapa tak makan rumput  
Macam mana aku tak makan  
Perut aku sakit  
Perut aku sakit*

*Perut oh perut kenapa engkau sakit  
Macam mana aku tak sakit  
Makan nasi mentah  
Makan nasi mentah*

*Nasi oh nasi kenapa engkau mentah  
Macam mana aku tak mentah  
Kayu habis basah  
Kayu habis basah*

*Kayu oh kayu kenapa engkau basah  
Macam mana aku tak basah  
Hujan timpa aku  
Hujan timpa aku*

*Hujan oh hujan kenapa timpa kayu  
Macam mana aku tak timpa  
Katak panggil aku  
Katak panggil aku*

*Katak oh katak kenapa panggil hujan  
Macam mana aku tak panggil  
Ular nak makan aku  
Ular nak makan aku*

*Ular oh ular kenapa nak makan katak  
Macam mana aku tak makan  
Memang makanan aku  
Memang makanan aku*

Overall, the lyrics of this song instill the value of consultation and consensus, which are central to Malay social life. In other words, social living should involve cooperation rather than blaming others. This is closely linked to the core values of ethics and social conduct in the construction of Malay identity.

### ***Song 3: Bangun Pagi (Wake Up Early)***

#### **Lyrics of "Bangun Pagi":**

*Bangun pagi  
Gosok gigi  
Cuci muka  
Terus mandi  
Pakai baju  
Sikat rambut  
Pakai kasut  
Minum susu  
Badan sihat  
Otak cerTAs  
Pergi sekolah  
Senang hati*

From start to finish, the lyrics educate children about personal hygiene habits, from waking up in the morning to brushing teeth, washing the face, and bathing. Then dressing up neatly, wearing shoes, drinking milk, and going to school. These good habits lead to physical health, mental alertness, and happiness in learning.

The song promotes health and religious values aligned with Malay culture, emphasizing the virtue of waking early and striving for success. It also indirectly teaches Islamic principles such as the importance of performing the *Subuh* (dawn) prayer, conveying the idea that “Islam is beautiful.”

***Song 4: Bapaku Pulang dari Kota (My Father Returns from Town)***

**Lyrics of "Bapaku Pulang dari Kota":**

*Bapaku pulang dari kota  
Bapaku belikan kereta  
Kereta kecil warna merah  
Boleh kubawa ke sekolah  
Pon pon pon pon...  
Marilah adik mari naik  
Boleh kubawa jumpa nenek*

This cheerful melody not only entertains children but also subtly teaches love and appreciation for family. The child's happiness is evident when the father buys a small red toy car for school play. The lyrics also reflect the child's eagerness to share this joy with their grandmother.

From a Malay identity perspective, the song emphasizes gratitude for gifts and the importance of positive family relationships, values supported by Tengku Luckman's concepts of ethical conduct and mutual respect.

***Song 5: Burung Kakak Tua (The Parrot)***

**Lyrics of "Burung Kakak Tua":**

*Burung Kakak Tua  
HingTAp di jendela  
Nenek sudah tua  
Giginya tingTAl dua  
Tredung tredung tredung tralala...*

Although cheerful, this song indirectly teaches children to love the wise parrot; a metaphor for an elderly grandmother. The value intended here is respect for the elderly, recognizing their life experience and the love they have passed on to younger generations.

***Song 6: Ikan Kekek***

**Lyrics of "Ikan Kekek":**

*Ikan Kekek mak iloi iloi  
Ikan Gelama mak ilai ilai  
Sungguh cantik adikku amboi  
Tapi ketawa mengilai-ngilai  
Kalau adik nak jadi pandai  
Mari belajar, janTAnlah lalai*

*Ikan Kekek hoi, Ikan Kekek...*

The line “but laughs loudly” teaches that polite behavior is highly valued in Malay culture, and loud laughter is considered impolite. The verse “if you want to be smart, come study and don’t be lazy” emphasizes the importance of education and learning.

***Song 7: Lompat Si Katak Lompat (Jump, Little Frog, Jump)***

**Lyrics of "Lompat Si Katak Lompat":**

*Lompat si katak lompat  
Lompatlah tinggi-tinggi  
Cepatlah adik cepat  
Marilah bangun pagi-pagi  
Kalau adik rajin belajar  
Tentu cepat pandai  
Nanti kita berjaya*

The values here include diligence in waking up early and seeking knowledge. It connects to three core values of Malay identity: piety (waking early as practice for morning prayers), ethics, and the pursuit of knowledge.

***Song 8: Rasa Sayang***

**Lyrics of "Rasa Sayang":**

*Rasa sayang eh  
Rasa sayang sayang eh  
Eh lihat nona jauh  
Rasa sayang sayang eh*

*Followed by traditional Malay quatrains (pantun)*

This joyful song encourages children to think positively about others and instills love for the Malay language and literature through the pantun verses. The line “Eh, see the lady from afar” subtly promotes kindness and reduces prejudice.

***Song 9: Tepuk Amai-Amai (Clap Clap Clap)***

**Lyrics of "Tepuk Amai-Amai":**

*Tepuk amai-amai  
Belalang kupu-kupu  
Tepuk sampai pandai  
Emak upah susu  
Susu lemak manis  
Santan kelapa muda  
Adik jangan nangis  
Emak ada kerja*

This song, often sung by parents and family members to babies and toddlers, teaches babies not to cry and shows a mother's love through feeding. The line "Don't cry, mother has work" instills appreciation for a mother's efforts. When sung by preschoolers, the song teaches them to sympathize with and help care for younger siblings and support their mothers, whether at home or work.

***Song 10: Wau Bulan (The Moon Kite)***

**Lyrics of "Wau Bulan":**

*Wau bulan, eh wau bulan  
Wau bulan teraju tiTA  
Ini malam sama-sama  
Sama-sama bersuka ria*

A famous Kelantanese folk song often performed at cultural events and in *dikir barat* shows, this song promotes love for traditional Malay games and a joyful social life, both reflecting core values of Malay identity.

## FINDING

### Summary of Findings Based on In-Depth Interviews

Based on the in-depth interviews conducted with all three informants, it can be concluded that the use of Malay folk songs in preschool education is effective not only as a form of entertainment that brings enjoyment to children through singing and play activities, but also as an educational tool for the development of children's morals and character. The noble values embedded in Malay folk songs are closely tied to the core values of Malay identity.

Overall, based on the views of all three informants, the inculcation of Malay identity values through Malay folk songs is highly relevant and supports three out of the eleven characteristics of the *Malay Identity Concept* as outlined by cultural expert Tengku Luckman Sinar Badarshah (1990), namely:

1. Prioritizing courtesy (*budi bahasa*), which reflects politeness and the refined civilization of the Malays.
2. Emphasizing the importance of education and knowledge.
3. Valuing the sense of shame (*budaya malu*), speaking politely, and avoiding rude or humiliating speech towards others.

All three informants also demonstrated critical and creative awareness in their methods of using Malay folk songs in preschool education. They organized quizzes, singing, and dance competitions at their respective preschools. Furthermore, they exhibited a positive and forward-thinking attitude by proposing efforts to enhance the prestige of Malay folk songs, including the suggestion to hold national-level Malay folk song competitions involving preschool children, and encouraging broadcasting media to regularly play these songs to instill a sense of pride and love among Malaysian children.

Based on the ten Malay folk songs above, it is evident that Malay songs are not merely cheerful melodies that entertain children in preschool education. More importantly, they contain noble values in general and specifically promote the inculcation of Malay identity values that can indirectly contribute to the formation of children's personal and cultural identity. The singing of these folk songs by children also involves several indirect learning processes: recognizing musical tones, memorizing lyrics, and developing thinking skills through the interpretation of the songs' content.

The efforts of preschool teachers to continue elevating the image of Malay folk songs are proof that these songs have a positive impact on preschool education. Their suggestion that all stakeholders involved in preschool education increase the use of Malay folk songs further demonstrates their positive stance toward their use. For instance, implementing more creative methods in singing, dancing, and artistic activities in preschools, and organizing competitions up to the national level. These efforts can significantly contribute to enhancing children's interest in Malay folk songs.

Overall, the findings of this study reveal that singing and dancing activities using Malay folk songs in preschool education in the Bachok district initially served as a form of activity aimed at bringing joy to children. However, gradually, whether directly or indirectly, children acquire essential skills and knowledge through engagement in these activities, teachers have actually implemented a learning process related to early childhood education, in line with the principles of the Behaviourism Theory.

The informants in this study have shown that the singing of Malay folk songs in their respective preschools has created a learning impact that stimulates both the minds and emotions of children towards the learning process. At the same time, children are introduced to Malay musical arts through the melodies and rhythms of these folk songs, which eventually foster appreciation and love for the Malay language. When children enjoy singing these songs, teachers are able to stimulate body movement, leading to individual or group dance forms.

The study findings also reveal that activities involving movement are a natural need for children, serving as a means for them to express their feelings and desires. In this regard, the use of music is a method that effectively achieves this goal. When singing activities are frequently repeated throughout a child's time in preschool, they will gradually begin to understand the meaning behind the Malay folk songs they sing. This process of understanding song meanings will slowly cultivate an appreciation for the moral values embedded in these songs. The internalization of these values will eventually foster a love for the elements of Malay identity, ultimately shaping a personality and character in children that aligns with the image of the Malay identity.

## CONCLUSION

The method of using Malay folk songs in preschool education in the Bachok district of Kelantan has shown that the lyrics of these songs are highly effective in stimulating cognitive development, psychomotor skills, and ultimately in shaping the personality and character of children in Malaysia. This aligns with the formation of a future generation that is knowledgeable, courteous, and visionary.

This study reveals that the melodies, rhythms, tempo, and lyrics of Malay folk songs are easily sung by preschool children because they are deeply ingrained in their souls and closely connected to their daily lives. Indirectly, this also brings children's hearts and minds closer to the identity of the Malay language and culture, which is refined, beautiful, and rich in elements of nature as reflected in the lyrics of these songs. By singing these songs, children are also able to recognize themselves as members of the Malay race with a cultural heritage, and in turn, develop a love for the Malay language as their national language.

This study also highlights the role of Malay folk songs in fostering values of togetherness among children during singing and dancing activities, and further contributes to preserving traditional folk games, such as the *wau* (traditional kite), as shown in the research findings.

From the behavioural approach, a student's behaviour requires preparation (stimulus) in the environment and a habitual response to the surroundings in the learning process so that the student

can react and be reinforced by the teacher. Typically, reinforcement increases the likelihood of a behavioural response reoccurring.

To achieve the goal of instilling Malay identity through Malay folk songs in preschool education, the teachers, who are also informants in this study, demonstrated their significant and vital roles as motivators. They must also be critical and creative actors in stimulating children's interest in participating in these singing activities. The preschool teachers' knowledge, abilities, and sensitivity towards Malay folk songs, as shown in this study, also highlight their success in shaping the personality and character of children that reflect the Malay identity.

The role of every preschool teacher is significant and challenging because preschool education represents a crucial early experience in a child's educational journey. Teachers must be truly knowledgeable, skilled, critical, and creative in providing enjoyable and effective learning experiences that stimulate children and equip them with essential skills, self-confidence, and positive attitudes for future learning.

It is often emphasized in preschool education that singing should have specific objectives and use simple language, short lyrics, and content that aligns with children's language development. Malay music and songs typically contain simple Malay lyrics that can help build children's language foundation and expand their vocabulary through the use of new words in the songs.

Whether consciously or not, teachers help nurture children's unique ways of thinking through simple metaphors in traditional Malay folk songs, such as "Bangau Oh Bangau," "Burung Kakak Tua," "Lompat Si Katak Lompat," and "Rasa Sayang." These songs contain Malay rhymes rich in both literal and figurative meanings. Overall, singing traditional Malay folk songs serves as a unique form of normative education for preschool children. Due to their cultural richness, the use of these songs in preschool education should be further enhanced. This study recommends that research on Malay folk songs needs to be further enhanced, not only to nurture a sense of identity among children, but also to strengthen their psychological resilience in facing the challenges of globalization and new media, which contribute to identity crises among today's youth

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

*"The authors declare no conflict of interest."*

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for profit sectors.

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