

The Internalization of the Value of Mutual Cooperation in Strengthening National Identity

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ABSTRACT

Gotong royong is an activity that is characteristic of Indonesian society that has been carried out since the past until now. However, at the time in Indonesian society has begun to experience changes towards the fading of gotong royong activities due to the influence of the globalization era. The purpose of this study is to strengthen the values of gotong royong as a strengthening of national identity in the era of globalization. This study uses a case study by relying on sources that have good credibility. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on gotong royong not merely as a traditional cultural value, but as a strategic cultural mechanism for resisting the erosion of national identity in the face of global cultural homogenization. Unlike earlier works that treat gotong royong as a static heritage, this research repositions it as a dynamic sociocultural resource that can be adapted and reintegrated into modern institutions such as schools, urban communities, and digital civic spaces. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that real efforts are needed from all parties, both families, schools, communities and governments in an effort to internalize the values of gotong royong in order to strengthen the identity of the Indonesian nation.

ABSTRAK

Internalisasi Nilai Gotong Royong dalam memperkuat Identitas Bangsa. Gotong royong merupakan kegiatan yang menjadi ciri khas dari masyarakat Indonesia yang dilaksanakan sejak dulu hingga sekarang. Namun, pada saat di masyarakat Indonesia sudah mulai mengalami perubahan kearah lunturanya kegiatan gotong royong yang disebabkan pengaruh era globalisasi. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menguatkan kembali nilai-nilai gotong royong sebagai penguatan identitas bangsa di era globalisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus dengan mengandalkan sumber-sumber yang memiliki kredibilitas yang baik. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada fokusnya pada gotong royong bukan hanya sebagai nilai budaya tradisional, tetapi sebagai mekanisme budaya strategis untuk melawan erosi identitas nasional dalam menghadapi homogenisasi budaya global. Berbeda dengan karya-karya sebelumnya yang memperlakukan gotong royong sebagai warisan statis, penelitian ini memosisikannya kembali sebagai sumber daya sosial budaya yang dinamis yang dapat diadaptasi dan diintegrasikan kembali ke dalam lembaga-lembaga modern seperti sekolah, masyarakat perkotaan, dan ruang-ruang sipil digital. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian maka dapat di simpulkan bahwa perlu upaya nyata dari semua pihak baik keluarga, sekolah, masyarakat dan pemerintah dalam upaya untuk melakukan internalisasi nilai gotong royong guna memperkuat identitas bangsa Indonesia.

Kata kata kunci:

Internalisasi;

Gotong Royong;

Identitas Bangsa.

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Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a high level of diversity, which can be seen in its variety of religions, races, ethnic groups, customs, languages, and more. If managed properly, this diversity can lead to a harmonious and captivating social life. However, chaos, marginalization, disorientation, and loss of identity may occur if Indonesians begin to forget the values that have long been regarded as their national identity and cultural hallmark. This aligns with the view of Lisdiana & Sudrajat (2023), who state that national identity is a manifestation of cultural values that grow and develop within the life of a nation, reflecting its distinctive characteristics. Mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) is also one of the core elements of Indonesia's national identity. Historical records indicate that the Indonesian nation was established through the spirit of mutual assistance, and this value has served as a way of life for all Indonesians. This can be observed in long-standing practices within Indonesian communities, both past and present (Prayogi, et.al., 2024).

Gotong royong represents a fundamental value that has become an inseparable part of Indonesian culture. It embodies the spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance among community members, passed down through generations. According to Pambudi & Utami (2020), the value of *gotong royong* is not merely a form of collective action but also a reflection of the nation's identity—representing the character and uniqueness of Indonesia's plural and diverse society. Through *gotong royong*, communities can foster solidarity and mutual trust, both of which are essential for maintaining social cohesion. The internalization of these values in everyday life should serve to strengthen social bonds and a sense of togetherness amid the challenges posed by globalization and rapid social change. By positioning *gotong royong* as a national identity, we not only preserve cultural heritage but also build a more inclusive and harmonious future.

However, in reality, the practice of *gotong royong* is gradually fading from both rural and urban communities. This decline can be observed in the decreasing frequency and participation in communal work activities across different social groups. Data from the West Java Central Bureau of Statistics (2021) shows a striking difference based on area type: 87.07% of rural residents participate in *gotong royong*, compared to only 74.62% in urban areas. This suggests that participation in mutual cooperation is significantly lower in urban settings. The erosion of the *gotong royong* value poses a serious concern, as it has long been a defining feature of Indonesian national identity (Gultom, 2024).

Several studies have been conducted regarding the value of *gotong royong* as a marker of national identity. One such study by Marhayati (2021) emphasizes that the internalization of *gotong royong* represents a concrete step that must be taken by Indonesian society, as this value has long been a characteristic of Indonesian communal life. The internalization of the *gotong royong* culture as a national identity needs to be adapted to the cultural background of each region to effectively achieve its intended purpose. Furthermore, the role of the government in positioning *gotong royong* as a national identity should be reflected in policy measures that are consistent with the 1945 Constitution and other relevant regulations.

Another previous study by Aulia et al. (2021) discusses the topic "*Understanding Indonesia's National Identity as the Nation's Character in Facing the Challenges of Globalization*." This study asserts that to address the challenges globalization poses to national identity, citizens should engage in concrete efforts such as implementing the values of Pancasila in daily life, practicing *gotong royong*, fostering patriotism and nationalism, prioritizing unity and cohesion, and utilizing social media wisely.

This study differs from Marhayati's (2021) in that it focuses more on re-strengthening the values embodied in *gotong royong* across various aspects of life, as well as reaffirming the historical values that demonstrate *gotong royong* as an integral characteristic of Indonesian society. Compared to the study by Aulia et al. (2021), this research places greater emphasis on efforts—both by the community and the government—to preserve *gotong royong* as a symbol of national identity, a unique cultural trait, and the essence of the Indonesian people in the face of rapid changes brought about by globalization.

Therefore, this study aims to reinforce the values of *gotong royong* in everyday life as an effort to uphold national identity in the era of globalization. The objective of this research is to analyze historical perspectives as well as the internalization efforts of *gotong royong* as a national identity in contemporary times. The novelty of this research lies in its qualitative approach, which explores the internalization of *gotong royong* values as a means of strengthening national identity an area that has received limited attention in prior studies. The results of this study are expected to contribute meaningfully to both the author and readers, enhancing understanding and awareness of the importance of collectively preserving *gotong royong* as a core element of Indonesia's national identity and cultural uniqueness.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method. The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate because the research aims to explore as much information as possible from relevant sources, which will then be analyzed through literature and other supporting materials. According to Sugiyono (2013), qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning behind events or phenomena through interactions among individuals as well as with the objects involved in those events. This approach allows the researcher to gather a variety of information and data, particularly from individuals who are competent and directly involved in the phenomena being studied. The data collection technique used in this research is a case study, which involves gathering data relevant to the research topic. In this study, the data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and observation. The data analysis technique applied is qualitative analysis using a deductive approach, meaning that general theories are used as the basis to draw specific conclusions. The case study focuses on collecting data related to *gotong royong*, national identity, and the impact of globalization on various aspects of community life. Furthermore, the study also includes the collection of additional data and sources from credible journals, books related to culture, *gotong royong*, national identity, and other relevant topics. This step is taken to enrich the references and strengthen the analysis.

Results and discussion

Based on the findings of this study, efforts to internalize the values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) can be carried out through various forms of community activities, such as *kerja bakti* (communal work), *nyambungan* (collective support), *liliuran* (rotational mutual assistance) in house construction and renovation, participation in social activities, and agricultural cooperation. These forms of activity contribute significantly to embedding the spirit of *gotong royong* within each citizen. The internalization of these values must be applied across various aspects of daily life. Fundamentally, *gotong royong* is a practice that facilitates and lightens communal tasks. More than that, it has become a cultural hallmark of Indonesian society, and therefore, efforts are necessary to preserve and uphold this value in everyday life.

This aligns with Subagyo (2012), who asserted that *gotong royong* is a distinctive character trait of the Indonesian people, evidenced by its presence across diverse local traditions. Apriyani et al. (2017) also noted that *gotong royong* embodies positive values such as collaboration, prioritizing togetherness, and fostering unity in community, national, and state life. These values will be discussed in detail as part of the effort to internalize *gotong royong* as part of the national identity.

The study found that many community activities are fundamentally grounded in *gotong royong*, including *liliuran* in housing construction, *nyambungan*, communal work, social initiatives, and agricultural tasks. Although *gotong royong* practices have undergone notable changes, it remains important for all members of society, not only in rural areas but throughout Indonesia to re-embed these values in all aspects of life. Each *gotong royong* activity contributes to the internalization of cooperative values among citizens. Through practices such as *liliuran*, *nyambungan*, and shared agricultural work, individuals cultivate values such as prioritizing communal interests, mutual assistance, empathy,

sacrifice, and emotional bonding among fellow citizens. These are the values that reinforce the internalization of *gotong royong*, helping to preserve it as a national identity.

The value of self-sacrifice in *gotong royong* refers to the willingness to contribute time, energy, ideas, and even money for the common good. This is consistent with Fuadah and Syafril (2022), who stated that the spirit of sacrifice in *gotong royong* is seen throughout the entire process from preparation to implementation usually in the form of labor, financial contributions, or useful materials. In *gotong royong*, individuals often volunteer their time without any formal invitation or expectation of material reward. Physical labor is often considered the most essential element, as *gotong royong* is traditionally performed without financial compensation. Additionally, intellectual contributions are also common, particularly from those with greater knowledge or insight within the community. Finally, financial sacrifice is evident in the form of community donations, fees, or collective contributions.

As widely understood, *gotong royong* involves mutual help and working together to ease burdens. This cooperative spirit is inherently collective, making it nearly impossible to practice in isolation. The helping nature of *gotong royong* often triggers personal motivation and civic participation. The value of togetherness is characterized by shared empathy and solidarity, fostering a desire to engage in communal action. According to Lestari and ESY (2021), togetherness in *gotong royong* enhances and sustains the cooperative spirit, social harmony, and sense of kinship. This is often reflected in simultaneous work starts, shared meal and rest times, and a collective spirit that binds participants during communal tasks.

The values embedded in *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) include the value of unity. *Gotong royong* can foster a sense of unity and cohesion within the community, which aligns with the third principle of Pancasila. According to Wijaya et al. (2024), the value of unity emerges from human creativity in engaging in social activities, such as love, sympathy, and other social emotions. This statement highlights that unity is one of the most crucial values inherent in *gotong royong*, as a sense of solidarity and togetherness is essential for accomplishing collective tasks or addressing current societal challenges in Indonesia. Although rural communities that engage in *gotong royong* activities may not always be consciously aware of the unity they foster, these activities help cultivate harmony within their environment.

Table 1. The core values of *gotong royong*

Value	Description	Relation to National Identity
Unity	Fosters communal cohesion and harmony	Reflects Pancasila's third principle; essential for social integrity
Compassion	Encourages empathy and emotional solidarity	Builds mutual care within communities
Mutual Assistance	Promotes helping one another without expecting reward	Strengthens collective responsibility
Social Bonding	Deepens interpersonal relationships and community ties	Enhances national resilience through grassroots interaction
Empowerment	Functions as a tool for mobilizing community resources and decision-making	Contributes to democratic participation and equity

Gotong royong also nurtures compassion and mutual care among community members. These values are closely related to expressions of sympathy and empathy toward others. The sense of compassion and care prevents individuals from allowing their fellow citizens to struggle alone, whether in completing tasks or facing other difficulties. Additionally, *gotong royong* strengthens social bonds and relationships. According to Pranadji (in Rochmadi, 2020), *gotong royong* can also be interpreted as a form of community empowerment, as it serves as a form of social capital that builds institutional

strength at the community, national, and even transnational levels, ultimately contributing to collective well-being. This view suggests that social interaction and community cohesion are critical components that generate significant positive impacts for society.

All the aforementioned values of *gotong royong* are advantages that must be continuously practiced and preserved so that they can positively impact Indonesian society and become part of the national identity. However, in practice, the values embodied in *gotong royong* have been increasingly eroded by the influences of globalization. This erosion is driven by both internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to individual attitudes such as egoism, individualism, and laziness. External factors include the impacts of globalization, technological advancement, and other societal changes.

These contributing factors hinder the internalization of *gotong royong* values as a national identity. Given this reality, concerted efforts are required from families, schools, communities, and the government. The process of internalizing these values is not an easy task, as it involves deep appreciation, understanding, and mastery that lead to personal awareness. The family plays a foundational role in this process by instilling the importance of *gotong royong* as a valuable life principle. Families must cultivate these values from an early age by engaging children in cooperative activities, such as tidying the house together. At this stage, parental involvement is vital in conveying the message that working together is easier and more effective than working alone.

Schools also play a crucial role in the internalization of *gotong royong*. According to Mulyani et al. (2020), schools can teach and internalize this value both through theoretical instruction and practical implementation. Educational content that promotes *gotong royong* can be found in subjects such as Pancasila Education, which covers the concept in detail. This helps to strengthen students' cognitive understanding of mutual cooperation. In addition to theory-based learning, schools can also instill *gotong royong* through classroom practices such as cleaning duties, group work, P5 learning projects (Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students), and cultural arts education.

The roles of both family and school significantly influence the internalization of *gotong royong*, as these institutions provide the foundation for individuals to apply these values in broader community life. When individuals have a strong understanding of *gotong royong* from their family and educational experiences, they are more likely to embody and practice these values in their social environment, particularly by participating in community activities. In other words, once the foundational values are in place, the community setting becomes the arena for practical application. Given the rapid progression of globalization, the internalization of *gotong royong* in society must be pursued with renewed vigor. Community environments, therefore, play a vital role in strengthening and maintaining *gotong royong* as a core element of Indonesia's national identity.

Another significant contributor to the efforts to strengthen the value of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) as a national identity is the role of the government. The government must continue to demonstrate its commitment in preserving *gotong royong* as a distinctive feature, core character, and identity of the Indonesian nation. This can be done through various policy initiatives aimed at reinforcing the value of mutual cooperation, such as incorporating *gotong royong* principles into village regulations, local government policies, and other relevant legal frameworks. Another approach involves the implementation of programs that directly promote mutual cooperation, such as community clean-up initiatives (*Jumat Bersih*), regular neighborhood maintenance activities, and similar efforts. According to Yusri (2020), village heads, as representatives of the government, play a crucial role in strengthening the value of *gotong royong* through the policies they enact. This statement emphasizes the importance of initiative and courage on the part of village leaders in formulating policies that reinforce mutual cooperation, thereby enabling the internalization of *gotong royong* as a national identity.

The internalization of *gotong royong* as a national identity is not an easy task; it requires the active and effective participation of various stakeholders, including families, schools, communities, and

the government. Each of these actors has its own roles and responsibilities, making it essential to build synergy among all parties involved to ensure that *gotong royong* remains a hallmark, core identity, and unifying value of the Indonesian nation.

Conclusion

The internalization of *gotong royong* values must be carried out through various forms of activities embedded in different aspects of life, so that the values inherent in *gotong royong* can be deeply instilled in the character and personality of every citizen. Historically, *gotong royong* has indeed been a hallmark of the Indonesian nation. However, in the face of globalization, concrete efforts from all sectors are required to ensure that these values are preserved and sustained within the fabric of society. The implementation of *gotong royong* values such as mutual assistance, solidarity, social interaction, and willingness to make sacrifices needs to be reflected in everyday life as a means of internalizing this national ethos. Therefore, tangible contributions from families, schools, communities, and the government are essential in the process of internalizing *gotong royong* values in order to strengthen Indonesia's national identity.

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