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Choir learning innovation through the vocalizing sadako strategy

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Abstract: Non-academic education in senior high schools plays an important role in developing students' talents and skills beyond academic aspects, one of which is through choir extracurricular activities. SMAMDA Voice, the choir group at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo, is a platform for developing students' interests and has achieved various national and international accomplishments. This success cannot be separated from the learning strategies applied, one of which is the Vocalizing Sadako strategy—an innovation by SMAMDA Voice's coaches that combines physical and vocal warm-ups systematically. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Vocalizing Sadako strategy and its impact on improving students' learning outcomes in choir practice. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The results show that the Vocalizing Sadako strategy can improve students' vocal quality, discipline, and self-confidence in singing harmoniously. Through structured and consistent training, students show improvement in vocal technique, musicality, and teamwork in choir performances. In conclusion, the Vocalizing Sadako strategy is an effective learning innovation for improving students' learning outcomes in choir extracurricular activities at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo.

Keywords: *Vocalizing Sadako, learning strategy, choir, outcomes, extracurricular*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education in schools is a structured and systematic process aimed at developing students' potential holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Within the context of national education, this potential is cultivated not only through academic instruction in the classroom but also through non-academic activities that serve as complementary learning experiences. One form of non-academic activity that contributes significantly to student development is extracurricular engagement. These activities offer students opportunities to express their talents, interests, and creativity beyond formal academic subjects.

Among various extracurricular fields, music—particularly choral singing—has become one of the most popular and engaging forms of non-academic education at the senior high school level. Choir activities not only sharpen students' vocal skills and musicality but also foster character development, discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence (Sanjaya, 2012). Therefore, a systematic and adaptive learning approach that aligns with students' developmental needs is essential.

Art education is an integral part of character development and self-expression, especially for high school students who are in a critical stage of identity formation. In this context, choir activities serve not only as a medium for vocal training but also as a platform for fostering social attitudes, teamwork, and appreciation for the arts. The



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implementation of innovative teaching strategies in these activities is essential to spark students' interest and maintain their motivation throughout the learning process. The Vocalizing Sadako strategy emerges as a local innovation developed by the coach through practical field experience, focusing not only on vocal techniques but also on pedagogical approaches tailored to the learners' characteristics.

SMAMDA Voice, the choir group at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo, is a prime example of a well-managed extracurricular program that successfully nurtures student potential through innovative vocal training. Since its establishment in 2010, SMAMDA Voice has achieved numerous accolades at regional, national, and international levels. These include first place in the East Java Provincial Choir Festival (2018), a gold medal in the National High School Choir Competition (2019), a gold medal in the National Virtual Choir Competition (2021), and both gold and silver medals at the Singapore International Choir Festival (SICF), which featured participation from 75 choir teams across various countries. These accomplishments reflect the implementation of a systematic instructional strategy focused on the continuous development of vocal quality.

One of the key instructional strategies applied by SMAMDA Voice is the Vocalizing Sadako method, a modified and advanced approach to traditional vocal warm-ups. This strategy was initiated by SMAMDA Voice coach, Mr. Juliarto Joedi Wahjono, by combining elements of physical and vocal warm-up into a structured, step-by-step training process. The training includes breathing reinforcement, articulation techniques, vocal resonance development, and emotional expression in singing. The Vocalizing Sadako strategy is implemented through two types of training schemes: the general extracurricular group and the event team that prepares specifically for competitions. The event team follows a more intensive training plan divided into four phases over eight months, ranging from basic vocal formation to final-stage performance enhancement (finishing and choir clinic).

Preliminary observations suggest that the Vocalizing Sadako strategy has made a significant contribution to improving students' learning outcomes in choir activities, particularly in terms of vocal technique, music notation skills, attitude, and collaborative competence (Hamalik, 2008). Nevertheless, certain challenges remain, such as limited understanding of musical notation, which requires more intensive and collaborative learning strategies. In light of these conditions, this study aims to describe the learning outcomes of students after participating in choir learning using the Vocalizing Sadako strategy at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of effective vocal learning strategies within the context of senior high school extracurricular programs.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at illustrating the learning outcomes of students after participating in choir instruction using the Vocalizing Sadako strategy at SMA

Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. The focus of the research was directed toward changes in students' knowledge, attitudes, and vocal skills as indicators of learning outcomes. This approach was chosen based on the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the teaching process and its impact through the direct experiences of the students, coaches, and choir supervisors of SMAMDA Voice.

The research subjects consisted of the choir coaches, supervisors, and active members who had participated in training for at least three consecutive months. Data collection was conducted through observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly examine the vocal skills of participants during training sessions, including breathing techniques, head voice usage, articulation, and harmony. These observations were carried out across multiple rehearsal sessions, with notes taken to record changes in learning behavior and improvements in students' vocal abilities.

The following is a summary of the observations conducted during the choir learning process involving the Vocalizing Sadako strategy:

Table 1. Observation Results of SMAMDA Voice Choir Learning

No	Observation Activity	Date/Location	Result
1	Observation of Choir Facilities and Infrastructure of SMAMDA Voice at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	August 31, 2024, at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	The available facilities and infrastructure adequately support the choir learning process of SMAMDA Voice at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. A keyboard, sound system, and an art room are provided to facilitate the learning activities.
2	Observation of the Choir Practice Process of SMAMDA Voice at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	September 7, 2024, at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	Describing the implementation of the choir learning process of SMAMDA Voice at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo by applying the Vocalizing Sadako learning strategy approach.
3	Observation of the Choir Rehearsal Process of SMAMDA Voice at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	January 11, 2025, at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	Describing the improvement in motivation and learning outcomes of the SMAMDA Voice choir at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo following the implementation of the Vocalizing Sadako learning strategy.

Interviews were conducted with the choir coaches and several student members to explore their perceptions regarding improvements in learning outcomes, covering cognitive aspects (technical understanding), affective aspects (attitudes and motivation), and psychomotor aspects (vocal ability and performance). The interviews were structured using a uniform set of questions for all respondents and were analyzed thematically.

The following interview results reflect the perceptions of both coaches and students regarding the impact of the Vocalizing Sadako strategy on their learning outcomes:

Table 2. Structured Interview Results with the Coach and Students

No	Date/Location	Respondent	Topic	Result
1	August 7, 2024, at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	Juliarto Joedi Wahjono as Coach	History, Vocalizing Sadako technique, achievements, and coach's strategy	The Sadako technique was developed by the coach and is used as a warm-up exercise. It functions to enhance students' vocal and mental readiness. Achievements have improved since its implementation.
2	September 7, 2024, at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	Juliarto Joedi Wahjono as Coach	Student discipline, interest, teaching methods, challenges	Student interest is high, leading to the implementation of an entrance test. The primary teaching method is demonstration. The main challenges include some students' slower comprehension, which requires additional motivation and extra practice.
3	January 11, 2025, at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo	Chairperson and Head of Research and Development of SMAMDA Voice	Rehearsal process, role of research and development, improvement in learning outcomes	Training begins at home, followed by physical exercises, the Sadako technique, learning material, and evaluation. The research and development team assists students facing difficulties, while the coach provides evaluations. Learning outcomes have improved significantly.

In addition to observation and interviews, documentation was also used as a supporting technique. Documentation included photos and videos of rehearsals, achievement records, and coach evaluations, all of which demonstrated that the implementation of the Vocalizing Sadako strategy had a significant impact on students' vocal skills.

The research instruments used in this study consisted of observation sheets to record changes in students' vocal abilities, interview guidelines to direct questions relevant to learning outcome indicators, and achievement documents prepared by the school or the coaches. The learning media utilized during training included a keyboard as vocal accompaniment, a whiteboard for explaining vocal techniques, and a rehearsal hall with supportive acoustics. The Vocalizing Sadako strategy was routinely applied during vocal warm-up sessions to train the transition from chest voice to head voice and to enhance students' vocal resonance.

Data analysis was conducted using the model proposed by (Miles, 1992), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting information relevant to the focus of learning outcomes, data display was organized into thematic narratives, and conclusions were drawn inductively from patterns observed in the field. To ensure data validity,

the researcher applied triangulation techniques (Moleong, 2014), both in terms of data collection methods (observation, interviews, and documentation) and sources (coaches, students, and supervisors), and also conducted member checking to confirm the accuracy of the data with the respective informants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Based on observations conducted during several rehearsal sessions, it was evident that this strategy was consistently applied as part of the choir learning routine. Students followed a sequence of activities that began with physical warm-ups and breathing exercises, followed by the Vocalizing Sadako technique as the core component of vocal warm-up. This technique requires participants to produce sounds starting from low to high pitches with resonance focused in the head or the roof of the mouth, resembling a "raspy" or growling tone. It serves to open the vocal tract and enhance flexibility in reaching higher notes. Field observations showed that this strategy effectively prepared students vocally, improved breath control, and facilitated access to higher vocal registers, particularly in the soprano and tenor sections.

In the cognitive domain, students demonstrated improvement in their understanding of song structure, the use of musical notation, and the mastery of vocal technique terminology. This was evident from interviews with the coaches and documentation from training evaluations, which showed that students were able to articulate the techniques they had practiced and apply them during regular rehearsals. Additionally, students actively engaged in discussions with coaches and fellow choir members to deepen their understanding of breathing techniques, articulation, and vocal harmony. These activities indicate that the learning strategy employed was not merely mechanical, but also encouraged critical thinking and reflection among the participants.

In the affective domain, it was found that the strategy had a positive impact on students' learning motivation and discipline (Uno, 2008). With a consistent training structure, students became accustomed to attending rehearsals on time, maintaining their physical condition and vocal health, and demonstrating a positive attitude toward the challenges of the training process. Several students reported that this technique helped reduce their anxiety when singing solo or performing in front of an audience, as they had become used to stabilizing their voice and building self-confidence through routine warm-ups. A strong sense of camaraderie also developed through peer interactions, especially with the support of the SMAMDA Voice Research and Development Team, which implemented a peer-tutoring approach for new members. This finding is consistent with the study by (Nugroho, 2022), which found that peer-teaching-based vocal instruction effectively accelerated the adaptation of new students in mastering vocal techniques, particularly within the context of extracurricular music activities.

In the psychomotor domain, students showed a marked improvement in their vocal abilities. Regular training sessions led to

enhanced pitch stability, improved breath control, and increased ability to reach high notes using the head voice technique. This method also helped students maintain vocal quality during extended rehearsals and strengthened their ability to harmonize within the SATB voice formation. Several students reported that they were able to sing higher notes with greater ease and no longer felt the need to force their voice from the throat, which had previously been a common challenge. These findings are further supported by (Park, 2018), who noted that consistent head voice training significantly improves vocal range and pitch stability among high school choir students.

Based on Table 3, the assessment of vocal techniques was conducted individually for four student subjects using seven indicators: breathing, solfeggio, intonation, vibrato, timbre, articulation, and resonance. The results show that Subjects 1 and 2 each scored a total of 27 points, Subject 3 achieved the highest score of 29, while Subject 4 received 25 points. On average, students demonstrated relatively strong mastery in intonation and resonance. However, several subjects still required improvement in breathing and articulation, particularly when performing long phrases and fast tempos. According to the coach's evaluation notes, Subject 1 was advised to strengthen vibrato and resonance; Subject 2 was guided to focus on consonant articulation and advanced solfeggio; Subject 3 was encouraged to explore emotional expression; and Subject 4 was recommended to practice the 4-4-4 breathing technique as well as major and minor solfeggio proficiency. These findings reinforce that the Vocalizing Sadako strategy not only enhances fundamental vocal skills but also provides tailored individual development paths for each learner.

Table 3. Vocal Technique Assessment

Subject	Breathing	Solfeggio	Intonation	Vibrato	Timbre	Articulation	Resonance	Total
1	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	27
2	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	27
3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	29
4	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	25

Interviews with the coaches, team leader, and other members supported the observational data. Juliarto Joedi Wahjono stated that Vocalizing Sadako is a signature technique of SMAMDA Voice, which has consistently proven effective in improving students' learning outcomes over the years, and has been a key factor in the team's success at various national and international choir competitions, further emphasized that this method goes beyond vocal training—it also serves as a strategy for character development. Each practice session begins with prayer, stretching, physical warm-up, and then vocal warm-up, creating a training environment that is both disciplined and enjoyable. The team leader remarked that while the technique may sound unusual at first, it actually helps create a relaxed atmosphere and encourages students to engage more emotionally during rehearsals.

From the documentation analysis, rehearsal footage and the coaches' evaluation records indicated notable improvement among individual choir members, particularly in pitch accuracy, articulation clarity, and control of vocal dynamics. These findings were further validated by the achievements of SMAMDA Voice, which earned recognition at the Singapore International Choir Festival—demonstrating that the applied strategy influenced not only the internal learning process but also produced measurable success in external performance contexts.

3.2 Discussion

The implementation of the Vocalizing Sadako strategy in choir extracurricular activities at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo has been proven to significantly impact students' learning outcomes. In this study, learning outcomes are defined as the interconnected development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Anderson, 2002). Overall, the strategy has contributed to enhancing participants' vocal quality, strengthening their understanding of vocal techniques, fostering discipline, and building students' confidence both during rehearsals and live performances. These findings are in line with the study by (Suryaningsih, 2020), which showed that a structured, strategy-based vocal approach can improve vocal quality and student confidence in high school choir activities.

From a learning theory perspective, the Vocalizing Sadako strategy aligns with the principles of active learning, in which students are fully engaged in practice, reflection, and continuous improvement. This approach is also consistent with the learning outcomes taxonomy model by (Anderson, 2002), which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The strategy successfully incorporates these three domains into a structured, reflective, and comprehensive vocal training process aimed at holistic vocal development.

In addition, the success of this strategy is also supported by external factors such as the availability of training facilities (an acoustic hall, keyboard, and sound system), strong support from the school administration, and the active role of coaches and supervisors. According to (Djamarah, 2011), student learning outcomes are influenced by internal factors such as interest and motivation, as well as external factors such as the learning environment, available facilities, and the role of educators. With the combination of these factors, the Vocalizing Sadako strategy can be implemented consistently and produce optimal results.

In conclusion, the Vocalizing Sadako strategy has proven effective in enhancing students' learning outcomes in choir activities. This strategy not only improves students' technical vocal abilities but also fosters discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence—elements that are integral to character education through the arts. Therefore, the strategy deserves to be further developed, adapted, and integrated as part of an innovative and contextual vocal learning approach within the school environment.

The findings of this study suggest that the Vocalizing Sadako strategy holds strong potential to be adopted and adapted in other

educational settings beyond SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. Its structured approach, emphasis on technical vocal development, and integration of character-building values make it a holistic strategy that aligns with the objectives of modern music education. Schools seeking to improve the quality of their choir programs may consider adopting a similar phased training method tailored to their students' context. Furthermore, the flexibility of the Vocalizing Sadako method allows it to be adjusted for beginners as well as advanced choir teams, making it applicable across different levels of musical experience. Future research may explore how this strategy can be implemented in different cultural or institutional environments, or how digital technology can support its broader dissemination and practice.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Vocalizing Sadako strategy has a significant positive impact on students' learning outcomes in choir activities at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. This strategy not only enhances students' vocal abilities in a technical sense but also contributes to the development of affective and psychomotor domains, including discipline, self-confidence, and teamwork. The structured and consistent training program carried out over eight months effectively prepares students to participate in various choir competitions. The training process, which includes breathing exercises, vocal warm-ups, articulation, and stage expression, allows students to build both technical and performance-based skills.

While challenges were found in students' initial understanding of musical notation, these were gradually overcome through intensive practice, demonstration-based teaching methods, and peer support provided by more experienced group members. This collaborative learning environment plays an essential role in fostering motivation and accelerating the learning process. The success of the Vocalizing Sadako strategy is further demonstrated by the national and international achievements of the SMAMDA Voice choir team, which reflect not only individual vocal improvement but also the effectiveness of the instructional approach as a whole.

This study contributes to the development of contextual and innovative vocal training methods within high school extracurricular programs. Future research may explore the adaptation of this strategy in different school settings or investigate its impact on students with varying musical backgrounds. Overall, the Vocalizing Sadako strategy serves as a promising model for enhancing choral education and student engagement in the arts.

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