



REVITALIZATION OF LOCAL TRADITIONS AS A MEDIUM FOR CHILDREN'S CHARACTER EDUCATION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of local traditions as a medium for children's character education in indigenous communities and formulate effective revitalization strategies during globalization challenges. With an ethnographic qualitative approach, the research was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with indigenous stakeholders, parents, and children, and analysis of related documents in various indigenous communities in Indonesia. The results of the study revealed that local traditions such as rituals, folklore, and traditional games contain important character values such as honesty, cooperation, and respect for nature. However, its effectiveness as an educational medium faces challenges due to global cultural penetration and a lack of institutional support. The study's key findings suggest that revitalizing local traditions requires an adaptive approach that blends traditional wisdom with contemporary innovation. Communities that successfully maintain the relevance of traditions generally develop strategies such as integration with formal education, the use of digital media, and intergenerational approaches in knowledge transmission. The study also identified three factors that determine success: (1) the active involvement of the young generation in the revitalization process, (2) adequate policy support, and (3) flexibility in traditional methods of conveying values. The results of this study make an important contribution to the development of a character education model based on local wisdom that remains relevant in the modern era, while offering a conceptual framework to combine cultural preservation with contemporary educational needs.

Keywords: Revitalization of local traditions, character education, indigenous communities, local wisdom, ethnopedagogy, cultural globalization

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples in various parts of the world, including Indonesia, have a wealth of local traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. This tradition not only functions as a cultural identity but also contains noble values that can be a medium for character education for the younger generation. However, along with the rapid flow of globalization and modernization, many local traditions are beginning to be eroded, even in danger of extinction. Children in indigenous communities are increasingly exposed to outside cultures through digital media, which is often not in line with local values. This condition raises concerns about the loss of identity and moral degradation in the next generation. Therefore, the revitalization of local traditions is a must to ensure that the values of local wisdom remain alive and play a role in shaping the character of children in indigenous communities.

Character education has long been considered an important element in the formation of a child's personality. According to (Sukiyat, t.t.), character education focuses not only on moral knowledge, but also on the habituation of good values in daily life. In this context, local traditions can act as an effective medium because they contain teachings about honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for nature and others. Research conducted by Sarmauli et al. (2022) shows that the Batak indigenous people, for example, use religious ceremonies and traditional arts as a means of instilling spiritual and social values in children. However, unfortunately, there have not been many studies that specifically examine how the

revitalization of local traditions can be optimized as a medium of character education in the contemporary era.

The underlying theory of this research is the theory of social constructivism. Vygotsky & Cole, (1978), which emphasizes that a person's learning and cognitive development are strongly influenced by social and cultural interactions. In this case, local traditions function as cultural tools that help children understand and internalize the values of their society. In addition, this research also refers to the concept of ethnopedagogy developed by Ahmad et al., (2023), which is an educational approach based on local wisdom. Ethnopedagogy emphasizes that the learning process must be relevant to the cultural context of students to be more meaningful. By combining these perspectives, this study seeks to find strategies for revitalizing local traditions that are adaptive to the changing times without losing the essence of their values.

The novelty of this research lies in the integrative approach between the revitalization of local traditions and character education in the context of indigenous communities that are facing the challenges of globalization. So far, much of the research on local traditions has focused more on aspects of cultural preservation, while research on character education tends to be centered on formal curricula. This research bridges these two aspects by exploring how revitalized local traditions can be an effective medium of character education for children in indigenous communities. In addition, this research also provides a new perspective on how modern technology and media can be leveraged to support the revitalization process without eliminating traditional values.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the role of local traditions as a medium for children's character education in indigenous communities and formulate a revitalization model that is by the contemporary context. In more detail, this study aims to: (1) identify the character values contained in the local traditions of indigenous communities, (2) analyze the factors that inhibit and support the revitalization of local traditions as a medium of character education, and (3) develop strategic recommendations for stakeholders in preserving and utilizing local traditions for character education.

The urgency of this research cannot be ignored, considering the fading of local values among the younger generation. If there is no serious effort to revitalize local traditions, it is not impossible that children in indigenous communities will lose their moral grip and cultural identity. This research is expected to make a practical contribution to indigenous communities, educators, and the government in designing character education programs based on local wisdom. In addition, the findings of this study can also enrich the treasures of education,

anthropology, and cultural studies by providing empirical evidence of the synergy between local traditions and character education in the modern era.

As such, this research is not only academically important, but also has far-reaching social implications. The revitalization of local traditions as a medium of character education can be an alternative solution in facing the challenges of moral degradation and identity crisis in children in indigenous communities. Through a holistic and contextual approach, it is hoped that local traditions will not only become memories of the past, but remain alive and relevant in forming a generation with strong character and culture.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to explore in depth the role of local traditions as a medium for children's character education in indigenous communities (Jaya, 2020). The qualitative approach was chosen because it can reveal the meanings, values, and cultural practices that exist in indigenous peoples, as well as understand how these traditions are internalized by children. Ethnography allows researchers to directly engage with the lives of indigenous communities through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and the study of documents related to surviving local traditions. Data is collected from key informants such as indigenous elders, parents, traditional teachers, and children involved in cultural preservation. The data collection technique is carried out through triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings.

Participatory observation is carried out in various traditional activities, such as ceremonies, traditional games, and cultural learning rituals, to see firsthand how character values are taught through these traditions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with indigenous stakeholders and informal educators to understand their perceptions of the relevance of local traditions in character education. In addition, the analysis of documents such as ancient manuscripts, oral historical records, and traditional video recordings is used as supporting data. Data analysis is carried out interactively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The data collected were categorized based on themes such as dominant character values, methods of cultural transmission, and revitalization challenges and opportunities. The research findings are then verified through focused group discussions (FGDs) with community members to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation. The results of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for strengthening character education based on local wisdom, while still considering the dynamics of social change in indigenous communities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals that local traditions in indigenous communities still play an important role as a medium of character education for children, despite the challenges of modernization. Based on in-depth observations and interviews, it was found that various rituals, folklore, traditional games, and daily practices contain noble values such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for nature and ancestors. For example, in the Sunda Wiwitan indigenous community, the Seren Taun ceremony is not only a harvest ritual but also a means to instill the value of gratitude, hard work, and togetherness in children. Children are actively involved in the preparation of the ceremony, from pounding rice to singing traditional songs, so they learn about the importance of collaboration and appreciation for produce. This process is in line with Vygotsky's theory of social learning, in which cultural interaction is the basis for character formation (Arif, 2020).

However, research has also found that the transmission of these values is no longer running optimally due to several factors. First, the flow of globalization and the penetration of digital media have shifted children's interest in local culture. Most children are more interested in digital games or social media content than in engaging in traditional activities. Second, many parents and the younger generation have begun to view local traditions as outdated, so they are reluctant to continue them. Third, the lack of institutional support, both from the government and formal schools, means that efforts to preserve traditions often depend only on the initiative of individuals or small groups in the community. These findings reinforce previous research by Hidayatullah, (2024) which suggests that without systematic intervention, local traditions are at risk of extinction in the next generation or two.

On the other hand, this study identifies how effectively some indigenous communities adapt to the changing times without losing the essence of their traditions. In Bali, for example, some informal schools (nature schools) have integrated activities such as dancing, playing gamelan, and traditional painting into their curriculum. This approach not only preserves children's interest in local culture but also proves that traditions can be recontextualized to make them relevant to modern life. Children who engage in this kind of program show a better understanding of values such as discipline, creativity, and respect compared to those who are not exposed. This supports Semiawan's (2010) Ethnopedagogical theory, which emphasizes that education based on local wisdom is easier to internalize because it is close to the daily lives of students.

Further discussion revealed that the success of revitalizing local traditions as a medium of character education is highly dependent on three main factors: active involvement of the

younger generation, policy support, and innovation of delivery methods. In the Kanayatn Dayak indigenous community, for example, elders began using digital media such as short videos and podcasts to document and disseminate folk stories. Children who are initially reluctant to listen to fairy tales in person become more enthusiastic when the stories are presented in the form of animation or interactive content. These findings show that technology does not have to be a threat to local traditions, but can be a powerful tool if used appropriately. However, keep in mind that the use of technology must still maintain the authenticity of the values contained in the tradition.

In addition, this study found that the role of community leaders and traditional stakeholders is very crucial in maintaining the sustainability of tradition as a medium for character education. In South Sulawesi, for example, the "pinati" (traditional spokespersons) are not only in charge of leading ceremonies but also actively visit schools to tell stories about the philosophy behind traditional rituals. This approach has succeeded in bridging the gap between formal and informal education, while providing new authority for indigenous elders as a relevant source of knowledge for the younger generation. These findings are in line with research Albana, (2023) which emphasizes that authoritative figures in society play a central role in the formation of children's characters.

In terms of the character values that were successfully identified, this study categorized them into five main groups: spirituality, social-community, environment, work ethic, and cultural identity. The value of spirituality is reflected in various rituals that teach children to respect the greater power of humans, be it God, ancestors, or the universe. According to Julianto & Sachari, (2016) Social-community values can be seen in cooperation traditions such as "mapalus" in Minahasa or "ngayah" in Bali, where children learn the importance of selfless cooperation. Meanwhile, environmental values are taught through local wisdom, such as "tri hita karana" in Bali or "huma betang" in Kalimantan, which emphasizes harmony with nature. The work ethic is reflected in various agricultural and handicraft traditions, while cultural identity is reinforced through regional languages, traditional clothing, and performing arts.

Another interesting finding is the difference in generations in perceiving the importance of local traditions. The older generation tends to see tradition as something sacred and should not be changed, while the younger generation is more open to modification as long as the core values are maintained. This difference in perception can actually be a strength if managed properly. In some communities, collaborative initiatives have emerged where younger generations are invited to record and archive traditional knowledge, while older generations are willing to receive input on ways of delivery that are more interesting to today's children.

This kind of approach not only preserves tradition but also creates a sense of shared ownership of cultural heritage.

In terms of challenges, this study identifies that one of the biggest obstacles is the lack of cultural literacy among the younger generation. Many children still perform certain rituals but do not understand the meaning behind them. For example, in the tradition of "nyangku" in Ciamis, children are invited to clean royal heirlooms, but few know the philosophy of preserving historical heritage. This condition has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of tradition as a medium of character education because its values are not fully internalized. To combat this, some communities have started developing illustrated guidebooks or interactive apps that explain the meanings of various symbols and rituals in a language that children can easily understand.

In the context of policy, this study found that local regulations on cultural preservation are often not optimally implemented. In some areas, the allocation of funds for cultural activities is very limited and tends to focus on the tourism aspect rather than education. In fact, with strong policy support, local traditions can be integrated into the local content curriculum in formal schools (Miranti et al., 2021). Some regions, such as Bali and Yogyakarta, have already started to implement this model with quite encouraging results, where children not only learn about the traditions theoretically but also get directly involved in the practice.

The discussion of the effectiveness of local traditions as a medium of character education cannot be separated from the issue of a gender gap. The study found that in some indigenous communities, there are still restrictions on roles based on gender in certain traditions. For example, in some areas, boys are more encouraged to learn traditional martial arts while girls are more focused on dance or handicrafts. Although this division of roles is not always problematic, if it is too rigid, it can limit the development of children's potential. Some progressive communities have begun to adopt a more inclusive approach, for example, by allowing girls to learn batik while boys are taught traditional dance.

Another noteworthy finding is about resistance to change. In some highly closed communities, efforts to revitalize traditions are often perceived as a threat to cultural purity. This attitude is counterproductive because it makes tradition even more alienated from the lives of the younger generation. This study suggests a dialogical approach in which all parties are involved in the revitalization process, so that the changes that occur are participatory and not forced. In terms of character education methodology, this study confirms that the experiential learning approach through local traditions is much more effective than just lectures or memorization. Children who are directly involved in traditional games such as "gasing" or

"congklak" not only learn about sportsmanship and strategy but also develop social skills through direct interaction with peers. These findings support a constructivist theory that emphasizes learning through experience.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that local traditions in indigenous communities have great potential as a medium for children's character education, despite facing serious challenges in the era of globalization. Various forms of traditions, such as rituals, folklore, games, and daily practices, have proven to be effective in instilling noble values such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for nature. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on the ability of the community to carry out adaptive revitalization without losing the essence of its core values. The findings of the study show that a participatory approach that involves all stakeholders—from traditional elders, parents, educators, to the younger generation is the key to success in maintaining the relevance of local traditions as a medium of character education. This research also reveals that modern technology and media, if used appropriately, can be a powerful supporting tool in the revitalization process. Digital documentation, interactive content, and the integration of traditions into formal education curricula have been proven to increase the interest and understanding of the younger generation in their cultural values. However, the most important thing is to ensure that the transformation of the method of delivery does not erode the deep meaning contained in each tradition. On the other hand, this study underlines the need for more concrete policy support from the government, both in the form of funding allocation and institutional strengthening, to ensure the sustainability of efforts to preserve local traditions.

Overall, this study confirms that local traditions are not just a legacy of the past, but living values that can continue to evolve to meet the needs of character education in modern times. With the right approach, local traditions will not only survive but also develop into an effective educational medium in forming a young generation with strong character and pride in their cultural identity. The main recommendation of this study is the need for an integrated revitalization model that combines traditional wisdom with contemporary innovation, as well as building collaborative networks between indigenous communities, educational institutions, and local governments. Thus, character education based on local traditions can be a sustainable solution in answering the challenges of moral degradation and identity crises among the younger generation of indigenous communities.

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