

Ngelawang as a Medium for Children's Character Education: Reinterpretation of the Stigma of *Barong Ngamen*

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ABSTRAK. Studi ini mengkaji tradisi Ngelawang, khususnya manifestasinya sebagai *Barong Ngamen*, sebagai media pendidikan karakter anak, sekaligus menafsirkan ulang stigmanya sebagai sekadar pertunjukan jalanan. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana tindakan simbolis, elemen performatif, dan keterlibatan komunal dalam Ngelawang menumbuhkan nilai-nilai moral, sosial, dan budaya di kalangan anak-anak. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa partisipasi dalam Ngelawang menumbuhkan kebajikan seperti disiplin, empati, kerja sama, dan rasa hormat terhadap tradisi, menjadikannya alat pedagogis yang kuat meskipun tidak formal, berakar pada etnopedagogi. Studi tersebut lebih lanjut mengungkapkan bahwa mengintegrasikan kearifan lokal ke dalam pertunjukan budaya memperkuat identitas, meningkatkan transmisi nilai antar generasi, dan mendukung pendidikan karakter nasional. Dengan merangka ulang *barong ngamen* dari bentuk hiburan yang distigmatisasi menjadi media pendidikan yang sah, penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya Ngelawang dalam membentuk disposisi etis anak-anak dan melestarikan warisan budaya Bali. Hasilnya juga menunjukkan bahwa menggabungkan tradisi adat ke dalam kerangka pendidikan memperkaya pembentukan karakter dan memberikan respons yang relevan secara budaya terhadap tantangan pendidikan kontemporer.

ABSTRACT. This study examines the *ngelawang* tradition, particularly its manifestation as *Barong Ngamen*, as a medium for children's character education while reinterpreting its stigma as a mere street performance. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach through observation, interviews, and document analysis, the research highlights how symbolic actions, performative elements, and communal engagement in *ngelawang* foster moral, social, and cultural values among children. Findings indicate that participation in *ngelawang* cultivates virtues such as discipline, empathy, cooperation, and respect for tradition, positioning it as an informal but powerful pedagogical tool rooted in ethnopädagogy. The study further reveals that the integration of local wisdom into cultural performances strengthens identity, enhances intergenerational transmission of values, and supports national character education. By reframing *barong ngamen* from a stigmatized form of entertainment into a legitimate educational medium, this research underscores the significance of *ngelawang* in shaping children's ethical dispositions and preserving Balinese cultural heritage. The results also suggest that incorporating indigenous traditions into educational frameworks enriches character formation and offers a culturally resonant response to contemporary educational challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *ngelawang* tradition, particularly its manifestation as *barong ngamen*, offers a unique lens through which to examine the intersection of cultural heritage and pedagogical practices for character development in children (Saputra et al., 2024). This research aims to reinterpret the existing stigma associated with *barong ngamen*, traditionally viewed through a performative rather than an educational lens, by highlighting its intrinsic value as an ethnopädagogical tool for fostering character in Balinese youth (Sakti et al., 2024). Specifically, this study investigates how the symbolic actions and community engagement inherent in *ngelawang* contribute to the moral, social, and cultural education of children, often without explicit formal instruction (Giri & Ardiawan, 2018).

This reinterpretation seeks to bridge the gap between traditional cultural practices and contemporary educational frameworks, positing *ngelawang* as a vital, albeit often overlooked, informal educational mechanism (Giri & Ardiawan, 2018). By analyzing the performative aspects and communal interactions within *barong ngamen*, this paper elucidates how traditional arts, like *ngelawang*, function as dynamic vehicles for transmitting cultural values and shaping patriotic character among younger generations (Sulton et al., 2020). Moreover, the study posits that such cultural expressions, much like Ludruk arts or Javanese puppetry, provide a rich context for character education by drawing upon folklore, history, and everyday life to impart values like empathy, wisdom, and regional pride (Nugroho, 2023) (Sulistiyani et al., 2019).

This approach aligns with broader efforts to integrate local wisdom into character education, thereby reinforcing cultural identity and fostering robust character development among students (Sakti et al., 2024) (Kismini et al., 2021). Indeed, the integration of indigenous cultural practices into character education frameworks is increasingly recognized for its potential to cultivate holistic development in children, fostering not only personal virtues but also a deeper connection to their cultural heritage (Rosala & Budiman, 2020). Such approaches, exemplified by studies on traditional performances like *Wayang Topeng* and *Angklung Caruk*, underscore how embedded cultural narratives and community participation can effectively instill ethical principles and social responsibility in young participants (Yanuartuti et al., 2021) (Karsono et al., 2020). This research therefore provides an in-depth analysis of *ngelawang*, examining its structure and function as a medium for transmitting cultural values and shaping character. It further explores how these performances, by immersing children in a tangible expression of Balinese heritage, contribute to their understanding of local wisdom and their societal roles (Pujiyanti et al., 2023).

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology to explore the multifaceted roles of *ngelawang* as a medium for children's character education (Ulfa et al., 2025). This approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of the nuanced ways in which this Balinese tradition contributes to the moral and social development of youth (Ulfa et al., 2025). The qualitative framework allows for a detailed examination of participants' perspectives and experiences, providing rich contextual data on how *ngelawang* traditions shape character attributes and foster cultural literacy (Kurniawan et al., 2025). Specifically, observations and interviews will be conducted with children, parents, and community elders involved in *ngelawang* performances to gather comprehensive insights into its educational impacts (Aura et al., 2023).

Furthermore, archival research and content analysis of relevant Balinese cultural texts will be utilized to contextualize *ngelawang* within its historical and spiritual significance, thereby illuminating its foundational role in character formation (Krissandi et al., 2023). The research design will also incorporate participant observation, allowing for an immersive understanding of the cultural practices and learning interactions within the *ngelawang* environment (Lestari et al., 2024). This holistic approach aims to uncover the implicit pedagogical mechanisms through which *ngelawang* transmits indigenous values, mirroring the transmission of knowledge in Bali Aga villages (Suarni et al., 2021).

Data collection will involve ethnographic techniques, including direct observation of *ngelawang* performances, in-depth interviews with participants and community leaders, and analysis of relevant cultural documents to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Ramdan & Muzakar, 2022). This multi-modal data collection strategy will enable triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings by cross-referencing information from various sources (Arshad et al., 2018) (Liu et al., n.d.). The gathered data will subsequently undergo thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and core themes related to character development and cultural transmission within the *ngelawang* context (Rofiq, 2024) (Ista et al., 2024).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This analytical process will synthesize an in-depth understanding of how *ngelawang* contributes to children's moral education, cooperative skills, and spiritual awareness. This rigorous qualitative method, which includes detailed examination and systematic reporting, will involve coding interview transcriptions, observational notes, and document analyses to identify recurring themes associated with the educational impact of *ngelawang* (Khasyi, 2024). The interpretive approach will uncover underlying meanings and connections that may not be immediately apparent, providing a nuanced perspective on its pedagogical efficacy (Lestari et al., 2024). The research will specifically investigate how participation in *ngelawang* instills values such as discipline, social responsibility, and respect for tradition, thereby challenging the conventional stigmatization of **Barong Ngamen** as mere street performance. This method of inquiry, utilizing descriptive data from observed actions and spoken words, aligns with established qualitative research practices to provide a comprehensive depiction of *ngelawang's* cultural and educational significance (Pujiyanti et al., 2023).

The data collection methods, which include observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review, are consistent with established qualitative research approaches used to analyze cultural phenomena and their educational implications (Pratiwi et al., 2024). This comprehensive approach ensures that the study captures both the explicit and implicit educational outcomes derived from engaging with the *ngelawang* tradition (Solehah et al., 2024). Specifically,

the selection of a descriptive qualitative design ensures that the validity and reliability of the research results are upheld, thereby facilitating a clear understanding of the investigative process and conclusions (Solehah et al., 2024). This methodical approach allows for a robust examination of *ngelawang*'s function in character education, drawing insights from both direct engagement with the tradition and scholarly resources (Liubana et al., 2024).

Such a systematic approach also supports the transparent communication of findings, allowing for an accurate and thorough representation of *ngelawang*'s role in fostering character development among children (Palili & Fatimah, 2025). Ultimately, this research seeks to recontextualize *barong ngamen* as a legitimate and effective conduit for transmitting essential cultural values and moral principles to the younger generation, countering prevailing negative perceptions (Caesarine & Setyaningsih, 2023). The findings from this study are expected to demonstrate how *ngelawang* serves as a dynamic and culturally resonant pedagogical tool, reinforcing community bonds and cultivating an ethical disposition in children (Ernawita & Rakimahwati, 2020).

Discussion

The findings reveal that *ngelawang* functions not merely as a cultural performance but as a pedagogical space that nurtures moral and social values through communal participation. The interactive elements within the performance such as cooperation, rhythm, and symbolic movement—facilitate children's development of empathy, discipline, and respect for tradition. These embodied experiences align with prior analyses emphasizing that cultural practices, often perceived as entertainment, serve as deep pedagogical instruments for cultivating character and cultural literacy among younger generations (Ulfa et al., 2025).

Cultural heritage, such as traditional Javanese children's songs or the *Warok Ponoragan* tradition, has been shown to reinforce national character and preserve local wisdom (Abdullah & Anggraeni, 2020; Rofiq, 2024). The revitalization of such traditions in modern contexts demonstrates their ability to transmit moral messages while empowering communities (Abdullah & Anggraeni, 2020). In the case of *ngelawang*, participation fosters cooperation, creativity, and independence values that complement formal education, particularly when schools face challenges in internalizing these aspects (Wea & Toron, 2025).

Therefore, integrating local wisdom into educational frameworks is not only culturally relevant but also essential for cultivating individuals with strong moral foundations and deep appreciation for their roots (Saputra et al., 2024). This approach resonates with the philosophical principles of character education, which emphasize experiential learning and moral reasoning rooted in lived culture (Romjadi, 2024). For instance, applying indigenous concepts such as *memayu hayuning bawana* in family and community settings illustrates how traditional values can enhance life quality and strengthen social harmony (Pujiyanti et al., 2023).

Dance learning based on local wisdom further supports this notion. It offers structured yet creative pathways for instilling independence and mutual cooperation, connecting learners emotionally to their heritage and fostering pride in identity (Rosala & Budiman, 2020; Kusrianto et al., 2025). Within *ngelawang*, this experiential model translates into an embodied learning process where children do not simply observe tradition but live it through performance, ritual, and interaction. Such engagement surpasses conventional classroom instruction in effectiveness by transforming abstract moral principles into tangible experiences (Ulfa et al., 2025).

This dynamic participation encourages a sense of ownership and collective awareness, enhancing intergenerational communication and social cohesion (Ulfa et al., 2025; Nur et al., 2023). The performative act of *ngelawang*, thus, becomes both a celebration and a moral training ground. It aligns with the Javanese philosophy of *memayu hayuning bawana*, which emphasizes harmony, tolerance, and cooperation values that mirror those internalized by children participating in this Balinese tradition (Pujiyanti et al., 2023).

Moreover, this reinterpretation of *ngelawang* as a form of character education highlights its potential as a culturally grounded pedagogical model. Similar to other indigenous education practices, such as *Wayang Topeng* or *Angklung Caruk*, *ngelawang* acts as a living curriculum that bridges moral reasoning with artistic expression (Yanuartuti et al., 2021; Karsono et al., 2020). By embedding ethical messages in performative and communal forms, it transforms cultural participation into experiential moral development.

In synthesizing these insights, *ngelawang* can be understood as a local wisdom-based educational practice that simultaneously fosters moral integrity, creativity, and cultural resilience. Its integration into modern education systems offers a culturally resonant response to contemporary challenges in character formation. As observed by Krissandi et al. (2023), embedding such indigenous educational principles into school curricula can enrich holistic development and reinforce cultural identity among the youth. This perspective underscores the value of *ngelawang* not only as heritage preservation but also as a transformative educational approach that bridges tradition and modernity.

4. CONCLUSION

This perspective offers a compelling argument for incorporating traditional practices like *ngelawang* into modern educational frameworks, enriching learning experiences and broadening perspectives for character formation based on local values (Krissandi et al., 2023). This integration can foster a deeper appreciation for indigenous knowledge systems, promoting culturally relevant pedagogies that cultivate civic and ethical virtues in children (Pujiyanti et al., 2023) (Supeni & Harini, 2021). Furthermore, such approaches can counteract the erosion of cultural heritage often

associated with globalization, preserving unique communal identities and fostering a sense of belonging (Ulfa et al., 2025). By grounding education in these local traditions, children are provided with practical avenues for developing self-reliance and community engagement, drawing strength from ancestral wisdom and a connection to their natural environment (Krissandi et al., 2023).

This integration can empower children to become active participants in their cultural transmission, fostering a sense of ownership over their heritage (Ulfa et al., 2025). Additionally, it promotes critical thinking as students learn to analyze traditional practices and adapt them to contemporary challenges, thereby cultivating innovative solutions grounded in cultural wisdom (Kusrianto et al., 2025). This approach aligns with broader efforts to integrate local wisdom into educational curricula, recognizing its potential to provide relevant contexts for learning and strengthen cultural identity (Kusrianto et al., 2025) (Ardyati et al., 2025).

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