



A Literature Review: Analyzing the Rawa Pening Folktale to Foster Character Education in Elementary School

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character values,
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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the character values contained in the Rawa Pening folklore and their relevance to character education in elementary schools. This research is a type of literature study, which is used to explore the topic related to the character values embedded in the Rawa Pening folklore and their implementation for elementary school students. Literature was collected from Google Scholar using the keywords “character values” and “Rawa Pening folklore.” The inclusion criteria for source selection included publications from 2021 to 2025. A total of 7 relevant and representative articles were selected for further analysis. The data were analyzed through a process of classification and categorization, thematic analysis, and synthesis and interpretation. Based on the results of the literature review, it was found that the Rawa Pening folklore holds strong potential for instilling character values in elementary school students, such as responsibility, empathy, and humility, which can be internalized through classroom learning activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in instilling character values in children, particularly those in elementary school. It is crucial to ensure that this education is effectively implemented, especially in teaching Indonesian to students (Niswariyana et al., 2020). In this context, teachers must recognize that teaching in elementary schools also involves nurturing character in students (Rahman and Liswijaya, 2023). It is essential for students to understand that learning should reflect the noble social and cultural values of the Indonesian nation (Rahmanida Nst et al., 2022).

During the learning process, educators should prioritize students as the focus of attention, fostering a student-centered approach to learning (Utaminingsih and Nizaar, 2020). This can be achieved through an efficient and effective learning environment, keeping in mind that learning is a structured and systematic activity where students are central to the process (Bilal et al., 2022).

The term "character" originates from Greek, meaning "to mark," and emphasizes the importance of applying values of goodness in one's behavior. Individuals who act dishonestly, greedily, or cruelly exhibit negative characteristics, while those who adhere to moral norms are regarded as having noble character. According to Samrin, character encompasses all universal values of human nature, including the relationships between individuals, God, nature, and others. This character is reflected in thoughts, feelings, speech, attitudes, and actions (Ammar, 2020).

Character values can be implemented in elementary schools as a forum to introduce the cultural values of a society and emulate them (Nugroho et al., 2024). In addition to being interesting for elementary school children, folklore also contains values and culture. Therefore, integrating character education into every aspect of learning is very crucial. Character education aims to encourage individuals to understand, care about, and behave according to all ethical values. The process of character formation is not easy; it requires time and consistent effort. Folklore is part of an oral tradition that is passed down verbally from generation to generation and is often referred to as oral literature (Galih, 2022).

Usually, these stories are anonymous, meaning that there is no known author. The structure of folklore generally consists of three elements: introduction, incident, complication, and interpretation or resolution (Rizkillah, 2021). One of the legendary folklore is Rawa Pening. This story contains values such as honesty, humility, responsibility, social concern, local wisdom, respect for nature, justice, fortitude, and understanding of the consequences of actions (Mulyani, 2024). The values contained in the Rawa Pening folklore are closely related to character building in elementary school students.

One of the works that raises the legend of Rawa Pening is a book entitled "Cerita Rakyat Dari Jawa Tengah" by Tri Wahyuni (2016), which has been published by the Language Development and Fostering Agency. This book is intended for junior high school (SMP) students and tells the history of Rawa Pening in 52 pages. Although the narrative is quite good, the use of visual language in the book is still lacking, with illustrations that function more as a compliment and are not very communicative. Until now, there has been no digitally illustrated book about the Rawa Pening folklore that is specifically intended for elementary school students.

In this study, the researcher will examine the character values contained in the Rawa Pening folktale, a legend originating from Ambarawa, Bawen, Tuntang, and Banyu Biru Districts, Semarang City Regency, Central Java Province.

METHOD

Type of Research

The research conducted in this study is classified as library research. This method is employed to explore the folklore of Rawa Pening and to examine the character values it embodies. According to Creswell and Hasby, literature studies involve collecting library sources and systematically organizing relevant information (Farhin & Ikhsan Saleh, 2022).

Time and Place of Research

This research was carried out from March to April 2025. All research activities were conducted online by searching and gathering literature from scientific databases, particularly Google Scholar. The entire process was undertaken independently by the researcher as part of an academic assignment.

Research Subjects

The subjects of this study are the folklore of Rawa Pening, with a particular focus on the character values it represents. The unit of analysis for this study comprises seven relevant scientific articles that discuss character values in folklore, specifically pertaining to Rawa Pening, which were published between 2021 and 2025.

Research Procedure

This research was carried out through several stages, beginning with a search for articles using the keywords "character values" and "Rawa Pening folklore" on Google Scholar. Articles were selected based on inclusion criteria, specifically the publication years 2021–2025 and relevance to the research topic. The selected articles were then classified and analyzed thematically to identify character values. The final stage involved synthesizing and interpreting the findings to draw research conclusions.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique used in this study is document analysis. The data sources consist of scientific journal articles obtained from Google Scholar. Only articles that have undergone a peer-review process and were published between 2021 and 2025 were included to ensure the validity and relevance of the data.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data in this study were analyzed qualitatively through article classification, thematic analysis, and synthesis and interpretation. Classification was carried out to group the articles based on the types of character values studied. Furthermore, thematic analysis was used to identify dominant patterns of character values, and the final stage involved synthesizing findings from various sources to draw conclusions relevant to the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review show that there are seven journals that specifically examine the character values contained in the Rawa Pening folktale. These seven journals not only identify various moral, social, and cultural values, but also examine their use in the context of education, especially in the formation of elementary school students' character. The local values reflected in the Rawa Pening legend are interpreted in various approaches, ranging from creative learning methods to the use of folklore as teaching materials in teaching Indonesian to foreign speakers. These findings are then summarized in the form of a chart to facilitate understanding of the focus and contribution of each journal.

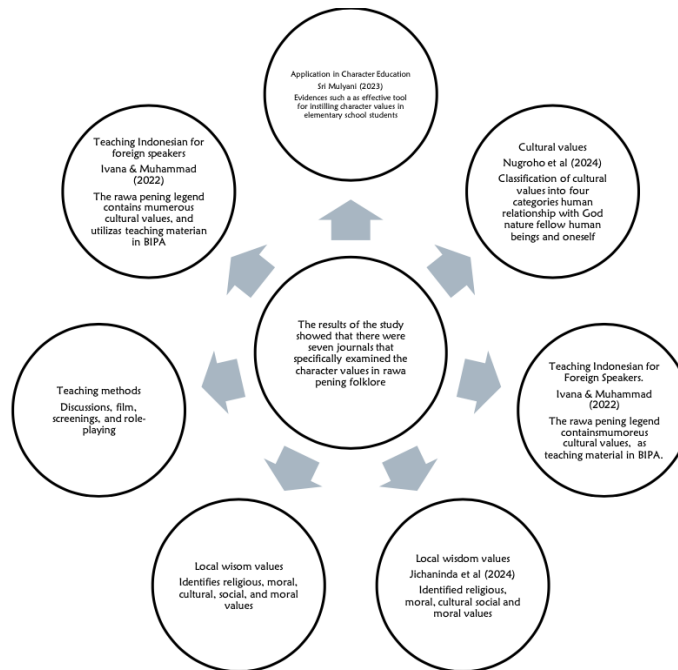


Figure 1. Concept map resulting from a study of the folklore journal Rawa Pening.

The image above shows the research results from seven journals that specifically examine the character values contained in the Rawa Pening folk tale. Research by Sri Mulyani (2023) revealed that this folklore functions as an effective tool in instilling character values in elementary school students. The values identified in this study include honesty, humility, responsibility, social concern, local wisdom, respect for nature, justice, fortitude, and understanding of responsibility. The application of this story in character education yields positive results, where students are not only able to understand these values but also apply them in their daily lives.

In practice, the teaching methods used by teachers include discussions, film screenings, and role-playing, all of which are designed to link character values to the situations faced by students. This approach demonstrates that interactive and contextual teaching can significantly enhance students' understanding of the values being taught. By engaging students in various activities, educators can create a more dynamic learning environment that fosters the internalization of these essential character values.

Furthermore, Ivana & Muhammad (2022) highlighted the use of the Rawa Pening legend as a teaching material in teaching Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA). This study shows that this legend contains many cultural values, such as rituals, traditions, and norms that are upheld by the people of Central Java. By utilizing this legend, BIPA students not only learn the language, but also understand Indonesian culture in depth. This is important because cultural introduction can help foreign speakers to better understand the social and cultural context in which the language is used. In addition, the use of folklore in teaching BIPA can also increase students' interest in learning, because folklore often contains interesting and entertaining elements.

Bunga, Nur Arini, & Hana Amalia (2023) found that the Rawa Pening legend contains many examples of morals that can be used as examples. These values include remembering Allah, sincerity, respect for others, manners, mutual cooperation, togetherness, shame, and wisdom. This study emphasizes the importance of moral values in everyday life, which can shape positive character in students. By internalizing these values, students are expected to become better individuals and contribute positively to society. In addition, this study also shows that folklore can function as a medium to convey moral messages that are relevant to students' daily lives, so that they can learn from the experiences of the characters in the story.

On the other hand, Jichaninda et al. (2024) identified five local wisdom values in the Rawa Pening folklore, namely religious, moral, cultural, social, and moral values. These values reflect an attitude of obedience to God, respect for parents, and social values such as mutual cooperation and caring. This study shows that

these values can be instilled in elementary school children to form positive characters. The local wisdom contained in this folklore also reflects the cultural identity of the local community, which is important to maintain and preserve. By understanding and internalizing local wisdom values, students not only learn about their own culture, but also learn to appreciate and respect other cultures.

Nugroho et al. (2024) classified cultural values in Central Javanese folklore into four categories: human relationships with God, nature, fellow human beings, and oneself. These values can be used as alternative teaching materials in character education, providing good life guidelines for students. This study emphasizes that folklore containing cultural values can be used as a tool to instill good character in students. By teaching these values, it is hoped that students can develop positive attitudes towards the environment, fellow human beings, and themselves. In addition, this study also shows that teaching based on cultural values can increase students' awareness of the importance of protecting the environment and preserving local culture.

Rina & Dian (2024) emphasize the importance of local wisdom-based learning as a medium for developing students' character through fairy tales. This study shows that traditional fairy tales contain many moral values that are beneficial for children's lives, such as discipline, perseverance, tolerance, and religious enthusiasm. By using fairy tales as a learning medium, students can learn about moral values in a fun and interesting context. In addition, this approach can also stimulate students' imagination and creativity, which are important for their cognitive development. This study also shows that local wisdom-based learning can help students to better understand and appreciate their own culture, as well as increase their love for their homeland.

Lilis (2021) showed that the process of internalizing local wisdom is carried out through daily activities in the family, such as listening to traditional stories. This activity serves to strengthen the child's character, even though there are obstacles such as lack of time for parents to interact. This study emphasizes that the family has an important role in the process of forming a child's character, where positive interactions between parents and children can help children internalize good values. Therefore, it is important for parents to take the time to interact with their children and introduce them to traditional stories that contain moral values.

Overall, the Rawa Pening folklore plays an important role in the formation of students' character, where essential character values are not only taught theoretically but also applied in students' daily lives through various teaching methods. By utilizing the Rawa Pening legend in BIPA teaching, foreign students not only learn the language but also understand Indonesian culture in depth, which is important for building a more holistic understanding of cultural identity. In addition, the moral values contained in this legend can serve as relevant life guidelines for students, where respecting others and being sincere can help them develop good character.

The family also plays an important role in the process of internalizing character values, where daily activities, such as listening to traditional stories, can strengthen children's character. Thus, a contextual and applicable pedagogical approach is crucial in building a generation with character, where the Rawa Pening folklore not only contains noble values but also provides an effective way to teach character to children. The implementation of these values in education is expected to form a better generation, characterized by strong moral principles and high cultural awareness.

In summary, the collective findings from the seven journals underscore the significant role of Rawa Pening folklore in shaping the character of elementary school students. The research highlights that the integration of this folklore into educational practices not only facilitates the understanding of essential character values such as honesty, humility, and social responsibility but also encourages their practical application in daily life. Through diverse teaching methods, including discussions, film screenings, and role-playing, educators can create an engaging and interactive learning environment that resonates with students' experiences.

Furthermore, the emphasis on local wisdom and cultural identity enriches the educational experience, fostering a deeper appreciation for Indonesian culture among both local and foreign students. Ultimately, the effective implementation of these character values in education is expected to cultivate a generation that is not only morally grounded but also culturally aware and capable of contributing positively to society. This synthesis of folklore and education serves as a powerful tool in developing well-rounded individuals who embody the values necessary for a harmonious and progressive community.

CONCLUSION

Rawa Pening folklore plays an important role in the character building of elementary school students by integrating values such as honesty, humility, and social responsibility that are not only understood theoretically, but also applied in everyday life. The use of various teaching methods such as discussions, film screenings, and role-playing create an interactive and contextual learning environment, thereby enhancing student understanding. The emphasis on local wisdom and cultural identity enriches the learning experience and increases appreciation of Indonesian culture, for both local and foreign students. Thus, the integration of character values from folklore in education is expected to form a generation with strong morals, cultural awareness, and able to make positive contributions to society, making folklore an effective tool in developing individuals with character and a harmonious and progressive community.

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