



## Integrating Indigenous Traditions into Character Education: Insights from Primary School Teachers

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**Abstract:** This research aims to explore how primary school teachers integrate character education based on indigenous cultures and traditions in elementary school settings. Using a qualitative approach, the study involved collecting and analyzing data through semi-structured interviews with eight educators. The procedure included gathering information, reducing and presenting data, and drawing conclusions to understand how teachers incorporate local traditions and cultures from the Malay and Dayak tribes—such as Pengari, Saprahan, Beduruk, Robok-robok, Beroyong and Jagau Sungei—into their teaching practices. The findings reveal that teachers adapt these traditions to promote character development, focusing on values like cooperation, mutual assistance, responsibility, social care, and environmental consciousness. This study contributes novel insights into the practical application of indigenous cultural elements in character education and demonstrates how these practices can enhance student development and cultural awareness.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana para guru sekolah dasar mengintegrasikan pendidikan karakter yang berbasis pada budaya dan tradisi adat di lingkungan sekolah dasar. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, studi ini melibatkan pengumpulan dan analisis data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan delapan pendidik. Prosedur penelitian mencakup pengumpulan informasi, reduksi dan penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan untuk memahami bagaimana para guru mengintegrasikan tradisi dan budaya lokal dari suku Melayu dan Dayak—seperti Pengari, Saprahan, Beduruk, Robok-robok, Beroyong dan Jagau Sungei—ke dalam praktik pengajaran mereka. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para guru menyesuaikan tradisi tersebut untuk mempromosikan pengembangan karakter, dengan fokus pada nilai-nilai seperti kerja sama, bantuan timbal balik, tanggung jawab, kepedulian sosial, dan kesadaran lingkungan. Studi ini memberikan wawasan baru tentang penerapan praktis elemen budaya adat dalam pendidikan karakter dan menunjukkan bagaimana bagaimana praktik-praktik ini dapat meningkatkan perkembangan dan kesadaran budaya siswa.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**T**he urgency of enhancing human resources through character education in Indonesia has become increasingly crucial. Recognizing its importance for the nation's future, the government has mandated that character education be a fundamental part of the curriculum at all educational levels, as outlined in Law No. 20 of 2003 and Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017. These regulations require educators to integrate core values such as integrity, religiosity, nationalism, independence, and mutual cooperation into their teaching. However, a crucial question remains: How effectively are these values being integrated into students' daily lives? It is essential to assess whether these values genuinely influence students' behaviors and attitudes. Additionally, the role of local cultures and traditions must be considered. Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage could provide valuable resources for enhancing character education. The challenge is to determine how local cultural elements can be effectively incorporated to make character education more relevant and impactful, thereby enriching the educational process and making it more resonant with students' cultural contexts.

Previous studies have explored various effective methodologies for character education in schools. Rahman et al. (2020) developed and validated a school culture-based model that significantly improved students' character. Zulela et al. (2022) demonstrated the benefits of integrating moral values into classroom-based lesson plans and instructional materials. Amelia & Ramadan (2021), Erlanda et al. (2021), and Fitriana et al. (2021) examined how aligning character-related activities with a school's ethos contributes to character development, emphasizing the role of a cohesive school culture. Abdussalam et al. (2024) highlighted

the importance of embedding character values within the curriculum and learning environment, while Cahyani et al. (2024) underscored the value of culture-based approaches in instilling positive habits at the elementary level. Anisah (2023) identified key strategies, including establishing a school brand and supporting extracurricular activities, to enhance character education.

Despite these advancements, there is a notable gap in research concerning the integration of local community cultures and traditions into character education. While previous studies have focused on classroom and school culture approaches, there has been limited exploration of how indigenous practices from the Malay and Dayak ethnic groups could enhance character education. Studies by Ramadhana et al. (2023), Septy (2016), Umah (2020), and Badeni & Saparahayuningsih (2023) indicates that local cultures offer valuable tools for enriching character development. Ibrahim & Sundawa (2023) and Rachmatsyah et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of incorporating local traditions into teaching practices, while Aura et al. (2023) showed that local wisdom-based character education improves students' social behavior and environmental awareness.

Additionally, Jamaluddin et al. (2021) found that integrating local cultural values with technology-based instructional models, such as flipped classrooms, fosters character development more effectively than traditional methods. Suhartini et al. (2019) described the dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization in the social construction of student behavior through local wisdom, emphasizing the need for collaboration among regional leaders, schools, families, and communities. These studies underscore the importance of integrating

character education within both structured academic settings and broader school culture. This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating how local traditions can be effectively integrated into elementary education in West Kalimantan, providing new insights into culturally responsive teaching methods.

The purpose of this study is to explore and document how local cultural practices and traditions of the Malay and Dayak ethnicities are adopted and adapted by primary school teachers in West Kalimantan. By focusing on the implementation of these indigenous practices in character education, this research seeks to understand their impact on fostering essential values such as cooperation, responsibility, and social care among students.

To address this issue, the study proposes that educational policymakers and practitioners should consider incorporating local cultural elements into character education frameworks. By actively integrating these practices into the curriculum and school activities, educators can enhance students' engagement and connection to the values being taught, thereby reinforcing character development in a culturally relevant context.

## METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to examine how teachers and

schools incorporate local traditions into character education for elementary school students. The approach was selected for its effectiveness in gathering detailed, direct insights from those involved in the practice, considering the study's time and resource constraints. Eight teachers from state elementary schools across various districts in West Kalimantan—Sambas, Sekadau, Kayong Utara, and Ketapang—participated in the study. The participants included a mix of certified and uncertified teachers, with varying educational backgrounds (see Table 1 for details)

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via video calls, guided by an interview protocol designed to explore participants' experiences and perspectives. The researcher developed and used this protocol to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant topics while allowing flexibility to address emerging issues. The data collected was transcribed manually, and the transcripts were thoroughly reviewed, coded, and categorized into themes to identify patterns and insights. To verify the accuracy of the data, participants were provided with transcripts for confirmation. The final analysis involved reducing and interpreting the data, and the findings were then compiled and presented based on these analyzed themes Fuchs (2023), and Khokar et al. (2020).

**Table 1 Profile of Participants**

No	Sex	Education	Status
1	Female	Bachelor of Primary Education	Uncertified Non-permanent Teacher
2	Female	Bachelor of Primary Education	Uncertified Non-permanent Teacher
3	Female/	Primary Education	Certified Non-permanent Teacher
4	Male	Bachelor of Primary Education	Uncertified Non-permanent Teacher
5	Male	Bachelor of Primary Education	Certified Permanent Teacher

6	Male	Master of Primary Education			Certified Permanent Teacher
7	Male	Bachelor Education	of	Primary	Uncertified Non-permanent teacher
8	Male	Bachelor Education	of	Primary	Uncertified Non-permanent teacher

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This study investigated how elementary school teachers in West Kalimantan province incorporate local traditions into character education programs. The findings show that teachers effectively use traditions such as Pengari, Saprahan, Beduruk, Robok-robok, beroyong and Jagau Sungei to foster character development among elementary school students. These traditions are adapted to fit school settings and schedules, enriching the character education process. The research examined the specific traditions used, their implementation methods, and the character values they aim to enhance.

### Pengari

Interviews with two teachers from an elementary school in Sekadau district, West Kalimantan, reveal Pengari as a local tradition integrated into school activities.

The tradition of Pengari from the Dayak Ketungau subtribe, particularly among those practicing the Islamic faith, has been thoughtfully incorporated into elementary school activities, illustrating a successful blend of cultural heritage and educational practice. Originally rooted in communal rice cultivation, Pengari is now adapted to enhance character education within the school environment.

The tradition is observed once or twice a month, typically scheduled on weekends or after the Monday flag-raising ceremony. During these activities, students engage in cleaning and tidying various school facilities such as courtyards, classrooms, toilets, libraries, and offices. They are organized into teams of approximately ten individuals, with

each team assigned specific areas to clean under the careful guidance of their teachers.

This organization helps instill the values of cooperation, mutual assistance, and responsibility as students collaborate to maintain a clean and orderly school environment. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding these activities, reinforcing the importance of teamwork and helping one another. Through their participation in Pengari, students learn the significance of collective effort and take on responsibility for a hygienic school space, reflecting broader values of personal and communal responsibility.

### Saprahan

In accordance with interviews conducted with six teacher-respondents from elementary schools situated in the Sambas district of West Kalimantan province, all participants highlighted the Saprahan tradition as a key avenue for fostering and fortifying character education rooted in local traditions.

In the Sambas district of West Kalimantan, the Saprahan tradition is effectively integrated into school activities to foster moral development among students. Originating from Melayu Sambas customs, Saprahan is a communal dining practice where participants sit on the floor in small groups, highlighting values such as togetherness, hospitality, social solidarity, and brotherhood.

Saprahan events occur monthly, typically on Fridays or Saturdays, and may also be held at the end of the semester or after final exams in the school hall or classroom. During these events, students bring food from home, form groups of 5-6, and share their food with peers. The occasion begins with a prayer and a

communal meal in the school courtyard or hall. Each group is responsible for bringing and sharing food, and for cleaning their area after the meal. Teachers oversee the event, ensuring that students understand their roles and responsibilities, and coordinate with the school principal to ensure smooth execution.

Through Saprahan, students learn to appreciate and respect the variety of foods brought by their peers, fostering mutual respect. The collaborative nature of the event, from preparation to clean-up, promotes teamwork and cooperation. Students also develop a sense of responsibility by bringing appropriate and hygienic food and by taking part in the clean-up process. The tradition emphasizes helping one another, as students support each other with tasks and share resources, thereby cultivating a spirit of generosity and mutual assistance.

### **Beduruk**

Based on interviews conducted with two teacher-respondents from an elementary school in the Sekadau district of West Kalimantan province, one of local traditions from Dayak tribe adapted to school activities is Beduruk.

In the Sekadau district of West Kalimantan, the Beduruk tradition from the Dayak Ketungau subtribe has been thoughtfully adapted to enhance character development in elementary schools. Originally tied to communal agricultural activities such as rice cultivation, Beduruk embodies the principles of mutual cooperation, social solidarity, and brotherhood, deeply rooted in the Christian faith of the Dayak Ketungau community.

Beduruk, a practice that traditionally involves communal collaboration during agricultural tasks, has been repurposed for educational settings to cultivate character. The tradition's core values—cooperation, mutual assistance, and a sense of togetherness—are retained and emphasized in the school environment. Originally performed during the rice planting and harvesting seasons, Beduruk

now focuses on maintaining cleanliness within the school.

Beduruk activities are organized once or twice a month, typically on Fridays or Saturdays. During these sessions, students from grades 1 through 6 are grouped into teams of approximately 7-10 individuals. Each team is tasked with cleaning specific areas of the school, including the courtyard, classrooms, toilets, library, and offices. The activities start with students gathering in the schoolyard or classrooms, followed by a collaborative cleaning effort. Teachers supervise and guide the students throughout the process, ensuring that the tasks are performed effectively and that the principles of Beduruk are upheld. The importance of handwashing after the cleaning activities is also emphasized, reflecting the tradition's focus on personal cleanliness.

The Beduruk tradition effectively reinforces several key character values. Cooperation is highlighted as students work together in teams to complete their cleaning duties. Mutual assistance is fostered as students help each other and the school cleaning staff. Responsibility is instilled through the students' involvement in maintaining a clean environment and ensuring proper disposal of waste. Additionally, personal cleanliness is emphasized as part of the tradition, teaching students about the importance of hygiene and responsibility.

### **Robok-robok**

Based on interviews with two teachers at an elementary school in the Ketapang district of West Kalimantan province, it is clear that the local tradition of Robok-robok from the Malay tribe has been incorporated into school activities as a means to develop and reinforce students' character.

Robok-robok is a tradition of the Malay tribe in Kalimantan, specifically the Malay Ketapang sub-tribe in the West Kalimantan Province. This tradition is held as a form of gratitude to the creator for all the blessings

bestowed every year on the last Wednesday of the month of Shafar in the Islamic calendar. The celebration takes place in a specific location, often by the sea, beach, or an open field, featuring a traditional main dish called Ketupat Colet. Each member of the community brings their own food to be enjoyed together with others. The event begins with prayers and chants before the communal meal.

In the school context, Robok-robok has been adapted to align with both traditional practices and modern educational activities. Originally celebrated annually, this tradition is now observed in schools not only during the traditional Robok-robok day but also during other significant occasions such as Indonesia's Independence Day, the distribution of semester report cards, and farewell ceremonies for sixth-grade students. The school-based Robok-robok involves a communal meal where each student contributes food from home, reflecting the core communal and sharing aspects of the tradition. The Robok-robok event in schools is organized with students bringing food from home, which is then arranged into groups by the class teacher. The meal can take place in classrooms, school halls, or on the school grounds. The activity starts with a period of mutual appreciation and food exchange among students, fostering a sense of togetherness and respect for each other's contributions. After the meal, students are involved in cleaning and tidying up the area, ensuring responsibility for maintaining a clean environment. Teachers oversee and coordinate the event, guiding students through both the communal aspects of the meal and the post-event cleanup.

Robok-robok activities in schools aim to instill several key character values. Responsibility is emphasized through students' involvement in both bringing food and cleaning up afterward. Mutual cooperation and assistance are fostered as students work together to share and exchange food. Respect for others is promoted by encouraging students to appreciate and enjoy the diverse

contributions of their peers. The sense of togetherness and family is reinforced through the communal nature of the meal, while the overall experience helps students connect with and appreciate their local culture and traditions.

### **Beroyong**

Interview with an elementary school teacher in a remote area of Sekadau district, West Kalimantan, unveil Beroyong as a local tradition incorporated into the school's activities.

In the Sekadau district of West Kalimantan, the Beroyong tradition from the Dayak Sawe sub-tribe has been effectively incorporated into elementary school activities to support character development. Beroyong, which translates to mutual cooperation or helping each other, is deeply rooted in the Dayak Sawe's cultural practices, traditionally involving collective efforts in activities like forest clearing for agriculture and during planting or harvesting seasons.

In the school setting, Beroyong is adapted to fit educational purposes and character development. The tradition is embodied in various school activities that reflect its core values of cooperation and mutual support. One key application of Beroyong in schools is organizing communal assistance for schoolmates, teachers, or staff facing illness or misfortune. This involves collecting voluntary donations from the school community to support those in need. Additionally, Beroyong principles are evident in collaborative efforts to maintain school cleanliness, such as cleaning school grounds, drainage systems, and other facilities. Beroyong activities in schools are typically organized by the class teacher in coordination with the school principal. The process includes mobilizing students and staff to participate in collective tasks, such as fundraising for affected individuals and engaging in regular cleaning activities. The organization of these activities emphasizes teamwork and collective responsibility,

mirroring the traditional practices of mutual cooperation in the Dayak Sawe culture.

The implementation of Beroyong in schools aims to cultivate and reinforce several important character values. Social care and mutual assistance are promoted through collective support for individuals in need. The tradition fosters a sense of togetherness and empathy among students as they work together to support their peers and maintain a clean environment. The willingness to share and cooperate is strengthened through active participation in these communal activities, reflecting the broader principles of the Beroyong tradition.

### **Jagau Sungei**

Based on interviews with two elementary school teachers teaching near a river in the Sekadau district, West Kalimantan, it was found that their school embraces the cultural tradition of Jagau Sungei as one of strategies to strengthen character values among students.

Jagau Sungei focuses on the preservation and protection of rivers, a vital natural resource for the Dayak community, which holds that the river is essential for sustaining life and must be protected from pollution and destructive practices.

Jagau Sungei is reflected in school practices aimed at fostering environmental awareness and respect for nature. The tradition is applied through activities and rules that highlight the importance of river conservation. For example, students are instructed not to litter into the river to prevent pollution and to avoid practices that could degrade the river's ecosystem, such as using harmful substances. The practice also includes monitoring the river's condition to prevent potential flooding, which could disrupt the school environment. Jagau Sungei principles are communicated to students by teachers, often towards the end of the school day, considering that many students pass by the river during their commutes. These values are also incorporated into various

subjects that address environmental issues, reinforcing the importance of river conservation throughout the curriculum. Additionally, the values are periodically reiterated during the Monday morning flag-raising ceremonies, ensuring regular reinforcement of these principles.

The integration of Jagau Sungei into the school environment aims to instill several key values. Environmental consciousness is a primary focus, as students learn the importance of maintaining a clean and healthy river. Responsibility is emphasized through the prohibition of littering and other harmful practices. By embedding these values into daily routines and educational content, Jagau Sungei helps students develop a strong sense of duty towards environmental protection, contributing to their overall character development.

### **Discussion**

The research paints a portrait of West Kalimantan province's education in some elementary schools where a vibrant tapestry of local traditions is interwoven. The incorporation of *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, *Beroyong*, and *Jagau Sungei* into character education programs signifies a thoughtful assimilation of cultural practices into the educational environment. This discovery resonates with the findings of (Badeni & Saparahayuningsih, 2023; Ramadhana et al., 2023; Septy, 2016; Sudartini, 2012; Sukarno, 2012; Umah, 2020) highlighting the potential for educators to leverage local culture in fostering positive character and behavior in students throughout their teaching and learning activities.

Derived from various tribes, *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, and *Jagau Sungei* contribute to the cultural mosaic of the region, enriching character education with diverse elements. Rooted in cultural and philosophical values, each tradition, whether emphasizing togetherness in *Pengari* or communal dining principles in *Saprahan*,

offers distinct perspectives on character development, including aspects like cooperation, mutual assistance, responsibility, social care, and environmental consciousness. This finding aligns with the research conducted by (Ibrahim & Sundawa, 2023; Rachmatsyah et al., 2023), emphasizing the role of local traditions as valuable tools for teachers in nurturing positive character traits in students, encompassing religious, cooperation, and social values.

The adaptability of *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, and *Jagau Sungei* within the educational setting is noteworthy, as these activities are specifically tailored to instill character values in students. Whether through communal shared meals or collaborative projects, these practices align seamlessly with the broader objectives of character education. This program is consistent with (Ruyadi & Si, 2010), which found that character development facilitated by local culture has a significantly positive impact on students' behavior. Moreover (Al Fath et al., 2023; Saputri et al., 2023) indicates that instructional activities based on local culture or tradition also have a significant effect on students' learning achievement. The careful integration of *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, and *Jagau Sungei* activities into school routines, considering their frequency and timing, reflects a thoughtful approach that enhances their effectiveness in character development. The active participation of students, combined with the involvement of teachers, principals, and school staff, fosters a sense of shared responsibility in reinforcing these character-building efforts.

Beyond individual character development, *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, and *Jagau Sungei* traditions also play a crucial role in cultural heritage preservation. These cultural practices act as conduits, facilitating the transmission of ancestral customs and values, thereby forging a profound connection to the diverse cultural of

West Kalimantan. Notably, *Jagau Sungei* emphasis on river conservation reflects a timely alignment with contemporary environmental concerns, highlighting the continued relevance of these traditions in addressing broader societal challenges. The assertion made by (Fitriasari & Yudistira, 2017; Marlina et al., 2023) supports the significance of these activities in character education, particularly with an environmental focus. They argue that character education aimed at environmental awareness seeks to instill values in students, fostering a sense of responsibility and care for the environment. The overarching goal is to cultivate sustainable thought patterns and behaviors, encouraging an eco-friendly lifestyle among students. By promoting environmental consciousness, these educational efforts not only contribute to the well-being of the planet but also play a crucial role in positively shaping the character of children.

The research underscores the transformative potential of integrating *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, and *Jagau Sungei* into the school context. It envisions schools as more than academic institutions, portraying them as cultural hubs where students learn not only from textbooks but also from the living traditions of their communities. This holistic approach to education enriches character development and cultivates a deep appreciation for the diverse cultural heritage of West Kalimantan. The integration of *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, and *Jagau Sungei* into the educational framework represents a community-centric approach to shaping the next generation, emphasizing the interconnectedness of education, culture, and character development.

## CONCLUSION

The integration of local traditions such as *Pengari*, *Saprahan*, *Beduruk*, *Robok-robok*, *Beroyong*, and *Jagau Sungei* into character education programs in West Kalimantan's elementary schools reflects a thoughtful and



culturally rich approach to nurturing positive character traits in students. These traditions, deeply rooted in diverse communities, serve as powerful tools for educators to instill values such as cooperation, mutual assistance, responsibility, social care, and environmental consciousness. The adaptability of these traditions within the school setting, tailored to instill character values, showcases a well-crafted approach to character development. The active participation of students, coupled with the involvement of teachers, principals, and school staff, fosters a sense of shared responsibility in reinforcing these character-building efforts. Moreover, beyond individual character development, these traditions contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, acting as conduits for the transmission of ancestral customs and values. Ultimately, the integration of local traditions into the educational framework represents a community-centric approach to shaping the next generation, highlighting the interconnectedness of education, culture, and character development.

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