



Whispers of Wisdom: A Qualitative Case Study on Character Education through *Dodaidi* Lullabies in Aceh's Early Childhood

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores the values of local wisdom embedded in *Dodaidi* lullabies as perceived by caregivers in Acehnese communities, with the aim of identifying and analyzing character values expressed through this traditional oral form. Rather than evaluating outcomes in children, the study focuses on how parents and community figures view *Dodaidi* as a cultural medium for transmitting values in early childhood. *Dodaidi* represents a unique combination of musical art, oral tradition, and cultural symbolism that reflects the moral and spiritual aspirations of Acehnese society.

Design/methods/approach – A qualitative case study approach was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis to investigate how *Dodaidi* is practiced and interpreted within informal family education settings.

Findings – The study identified key values that are embedded in *Dodaidi* lyrics according to parental and community perspectives: (1) unity and faith; (2) worship and religious practice; (3) reverence for parents and teachers (*takzim*); (4) social empathy and manners; and (5) responsibility and a strong work ethic.

Research implications/limitations – This study presents *Dodaidi* as a cultural expression perceived by caregivers to support informal character education. However, it does not assess its actual impact on children's development. The study relies on adult perspectives and does not examine how abstract values like faith or responsibility are internalized by young children, especially those who may not yet comprehend the lyrics. Thus, conclusions are limited to perceived functions rather than proven effectiveness.

Practical implications – *Dodaidi* is typically sung by parents or grandparents during bedtime, blending affectionate interaction with the transmission of values and cultural identity. Its preservation can support cultural continuity in early childhood education.

Originality/value – The research contributes to discourse on culturally rooted educational practices by documenting how traditional lullabies such as *Dodaidi* are understood as moral resources within family life. It encourages greater appreciation for oral traditions as part of local strategies for value-based education.

Keywords Character building, Early childhood education, Local wisdom, *Dodaidi* tradition

Paper type Case study

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Received: 20 April 2025; Revised: 23 June 2025; Accepted: 29 June 2025

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2025.111-07>

1. Introduction

In recent years, character has become increasingly recognized as a central pillar in the development of a nation's human resources, particularly in the context of rapid globalization. Early childhood, often referred to as the "golden age," is a critical period during which foundational character traits begin to take shape and become embedded in a child's personality and behavior (Birhan et al., 2021). The formation of character is not an instant process but requires consistent exposure to value-laden interactions over time. This urgency is reflected in Indonesia's Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which affirms that education should develop learners into individuals who are faithful to God, morally upright, knowledgeable, creative, and socially responsible (Mei-Ju et al., 2014). Consequently, character education is not a supplementary goal, but a fundamental purpose of national education efforts.

In the contemporary globalized landscape, children are exposed to an array of external influences—both positive and negative—which may challenge their cultural identity and moral development. The influx of foreign cultural values can potentially erode national character unless effectively filtered through a robust system of value transmission (Mungmachon, 2012). One promising solution is to strengthen character education by embedding it within the framework of local cultural values and wisdom. This approach ensures that character formation is both contextually relevant and culturally grounded, offering resilience against homogenizing global trends. The active involvement of parents, educators, and community stakeholders is crucial to ensure that such values are consistently modeled and reinforced across settings (Filion et al., 2023; Galán-Vera et al., 2025; Hou et al., 2023; Kim & Jin, 2024; Leijten et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024).

Local wisdom embodies the philosophical and ethical foundations of a community and represents a rich source of moral values that can be integrated into educational practices. Indonesia, as a culturally diverse nation, possesses a wealth of traditional values that can be instrumental in shaping character, with Acehese culture standing out due to its strong Islamic orientation (Muvid et al., 2020). Suastra identifies local assets—such as traditional arts, customs, and human resources—as markers of regional identity and social capital (Suastra, 2006). Far from being an impediment to progress, local culture functions as a moral compass and a cultural filter in navigating global transformations (Layli et al., 2023). Thus, revisiting and revitalizing local wisdom is a strategic effort to cultivate character in a culturally congruent manner (Sakti et al., 2024).

One unique manifestation of local wisdom in Aceh is the *Dodaidi* tradition (also known as *peu ayon aneuk*), a form of lullaby sung to infants that conveys a spectrum of values ranging from religious devotion to social responsibility. Typically performed by mothers or fathers while rocking the child, these poetic lullabies introduce the child to concepts such as the oneness of God, love for the Prophet, respect for parents, and harmony with the environment (Hasanah et al., 2022). What distinguishes *Dodaidi* is its ability to function as an educational tool without relying on formal structures such as curricula or syllabi. Through melodic and affective expression, children are gently immersed in moral teachings from a very young age. This informal yet meaningful transmission of values underscores the importance of recognizing traditional cultural practices as viable educational resources.

Although several studies have explored the role of *Dodaidi* in transmitting values such as emotional bonding and religious identity (Andriani et al., 2018; Syahril & Idris, 2019), these studies tend to focus on its functional aspects, often neglecting its symbolic, performative, and aesthetic dimensions. In contrast, this study seeks to enrich the understanding of *Dodaidi* by exploring not only the values embedded in its lyrics but also the cultural meanings, emotional expressions, and spiritual metaphors conveyed through its performance. Furthermore, it considers how *Dodaidi* is maintained or adapted across generations, reflecting both continuity and transformation within a changing cultural landscape. Through this lens, the research aims to illuminate *Dodaidi* as a living cultural artifact—situated between heritage preservation and pedagogical function—contributing to both academic discourse and practical insights on culturally grounded character education.

The concept of character has been defined as a combination of traits and behaviors that reflect an individual's moral orientation and identity (Dictionaries, 2009). Zubaidi interprets character as the internalization of goodness into concrete behavior (Zubaedi, 2011), while Aristotle, as cited by Lickona, describes character as the balance between self-oriented virtues (such as moderation) and interpersonal conduct (Lickona, 2009). Lickona elaborates further by categorizing character into three domains: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action—all of which must interact to produce a well-rounded moral agent (Lickona, 2009). Character includes critical thinking (Manassero-Mas et al., 2022), honesty (Ding et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2021), empathy (Wahlers et al., 2024), and the ability to make ethical decisions in complex situations. It is, therefore, not merely a personal trait but a collective outcome shaped by relationships and cultural norms.

In this regard, local wisdom serves as a form of social capital rich in ethical norms, customary practices, and intergenerational knowledge (Pratama et al., 2024). These values may be embedded in proverbs, songs, rituals, or traditional sayings that regulate behavior within the community. Vipiyanthi emphasizes that local wisdom, when institutionalized, forms the basis for socially accepted moral conduct (Vipiyanthi, 2011). Wagiran identifies six characteristics of local wisdom, such as its contextual adaptability and potential for dynamic application (Wagiran, 2012). However, in the case of *Dodaidi*, the tradition appears to be preserved with minimal change across generations, as emphasized by informants who describe it as a faithfully transmitted oral legacy. Given these features, local wisdom holds immense potential as a culturally embedded pedagogical tool that not only supports character education but also fosters a deep sense of identity and belonging.

This study aims to explore how *Dodaidi*, as a manifestation of Acehnese local wisdom, is perceived and practiced by caregivers as a means of conveying character values to young children. In addition to identifying moral messages within the lyrics, the research also examines the symbolic meanings, emotional expressions, and cultural metaphors embedded in *Dodaidi* as an oral performance. Rather than measuring developmental outcomes, the study focuses on how this tradition is interpreted as a tool of informal education and cultural continuity within families. Situated in the broader discourse of culturally grounded education, this research responds to growing concerns about moral identity in the face of globalization by investigating how indigenous oral traditions transmit values across generations. By focusing on the narratives and practices of parents, grandparents, and cultural figures, this study contributes to the literature on character education from a community-informed and culturally embedded perspective. Ultimately, it affirms the significance of preserving and revitalizing traditions like *Dodaidi* as part of a dynamic and affective process of intergenerational value transmission in early childhood.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine how the *Dodaidi* tradition is practiced and interpreted as a means of conveying character values within Acehnese society. Qualitative research is suitable for capturing the meanings, beliefs, and lived experiences of participants in rich cultural contexts (Creswell, 2024). The study focuses on understanding *Dodaidi* through the perspectives of adults—parents, traditional performers, and religious figures—who play key roles in sustaining and transmitting this tradition. Data collection employed purposive sampling and methodological triangulation, including semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. According to Fossey et al., qualitative approaches are useful for generating thematic insights from language, behavior, and cultural artifacts (Fossey et al., 2002). This study did not include children as research subjects; rather, it aimed to explore adult perspectives on the pedagogical functions of *Dodaidi* as a form of family-based oral tradition.

2.3. Data Collection

To ensure rich and valid data, the researcher utilizes three main data collection techniques: observation, interview, and documentation. These techniques are combined through methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Table 1. Description of Data Collection Techniques

Technique	Purpose	Description
Observation	To capture real-life practices and social interactions related to <i>Dodaidi</i> .	Conducted in the field without standardized instruments; relies on observational cues (Sugiyono, 2009).
Interview	To gather insights and deeper understanding that cannot be observed directly.	Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who possess cultural and religious knowledge of <i>Dodaidi</i> . The informants included a traditional leader from the City of Lhokseumawe, a religious teacher well-versed in the meaning and context of <i>Dodaidi</i> , as well as six parents from various regions in Aceh. These participants were selected for their lived experiences and insights related to the practice and transmission of <i>Dodaidi</i> in their communities.
Documentation	To complement observation and interviews with existing written or visual data.	Includes literature, photographs, traditional scripts, and community records related to <i>Dodaidi</i> .

The selection of participants in this study uses purposive sampling, targeting individuals who are considered to have a deep understanding of the *Dodaidi* tradition. These include traditional *Dodaidi* performers, cultural figures, and religious leaders within the Acehnese community. The criteria for selection are based on the participants' experience, knowledge, and direct involvement in preserving and practicing the tradition. Their perspectives are crucial for uncovering the philosophical and practical meanings of *Dodaidi* within the context of character education and local wisdom. Data analysis in this research follows an inductive approach, where patterns and themes are derived from the data rather than being imposed beforehand.

2.5. Data Analysis

The analysis involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction phase, the researcher organizes and simplifies raw data into meaningful units. Next, the data are displayed in narrative or thematic formats to identify emerging concepts. Finally, conclusions are drawn and verified by comparing the findings from different sources and methods (Miles et al., 2014). This approach allows for a nuanced and in-depth interpretation of the meanings embedded in the *Dodaidi* tradition as both a cultural and educational practice. To support this interpretation, the study applies Bandura's Social Learning Theory as a conceptual lens to understand how value transmission may occur through modeling within the family. While this study does not directly observe children, it interprets caregivers' narratives about repeated and affective lullaby practices as forms of observational learning, where children may internalize values by witnessing consistent verbal and emotional behaviors from trusted adults.

3. Result

3.1. Transmission of Character Values through the Oral Tradition of *Dodaidi*

Peuyon aneuk is a form of oral literature in Acehnese society, especially within child-rearing practices. It refers to the act of lulling a child to sleep in a hanging cradle (*ayon ija*) while singing verses rich in religious and national values. Typically performed by mothers or elder women, this tradition functions not only as entertainment but also as a means of moral education. Delivered spontaneously and passed down orally, the verses often include praise, prayers, and

remembrance. They aim to instill character values—moral, religious, social, and cultural—so that children grow into responsible individuals. The practice remains a vital part of Acehese daily life.

The meaning in it gives a clue about the idealized life style and expected by the author to the listener. Besides it also contains messages and values related to character education in the form of moral messages, religious messages, social criticism, customs, cultural values and others. Based on interviewed with the Chairman of the Aceh Adat Council Kota Lhokseumawe (MAA), Tgk Adnan Yahya, he pointed out that:

“there has never been a reference since when the occurrence of the *dodaidi*, but if we analyze I can understand that since the Acehese started to plant the soul of the *sabi* war against the Dutch, “*Dodaidi dodaidang, geulayang blang ka putoh taloo. Beurijang rayeuk gata ban ka seudang ta peutheun prang ta bela nanggroe*”. It is not known exactly when the occurrence of *dodaidi* in the Acehese society, the rare writing culture and the difficulty of tracking into the past made the birth of *dodaidi* difficult to ascertain.” (Tgk Adnan Yahya; 20/1/25)

However, *dodaidi* was allegedly born during the war that occurred in the 1970s Aceh with the Netherlands. In those days the Dutch before which had been preceded by other nations meant to take over the trade of Aceh spices. Another informant who is a mother of the lecturer in the early childhood education at Banda Aceh State Islamic University, which the writer has interviewed on the 7th of February that she said:

“the children had been put to sleep with lyrics of rituals or Islamic songs, it so amazing I thought because the lyrics are loaded with messages, good moral value that have a huge impact on the child’s brain”(NF; 12/3/25)

Then, the writer also interviewed one of the housewife informants who was the original community of Aceh *Pidie* or Sigli on Monday the 26th of February. She is a mother who has 6 children who are grown up and have completed their education well, she is one of the mothers who applies *dodaidi* when putting her children to sleep, even now when she is with her grandchildren, that she said:

“which must first of all contain its religious value, because it contains *zikir*, prayer, which means that the good words affect the soul of the child, for example the content of *dodaidi* is “*oh rayeuk aneuk beu meutuah*”, means hope you grow up to be a great person someday. Also, the words “*tamong syuruga*” which mean later in the hereafter you go to heaven. Additionally, “*ayah ngon bunda, guree yang keu lhee, ureung nyan ban lhee beu bek ta dhot-dhot*” which mean parents and teacher are both should be respect (AS; 2/2/25)

So that the essence of it all contains many good values, prayer and also a hope. Here are the values of character education in the lyrics of *dodaidi* including:

"Lailaahaillallaah

Kalimah thaibah beukai tamate,
Muhammadarrasulullah
Sabe takeubah lam hate "

Prayer should be kept If it's time to do it soon.
Remember children and youth The five-day
prayers should not be wasted.

Laailahaillallah Thaibah sentence to die
Muhammad the Messenger of Allah
Always kept in the heart.

Jinoe lon peugah rukon nyang keu lhee
Buleuen Ramadhan peurintah geuyue puasa. Beule
seudeukah tapubuet nyang get.
Nibak buleun nyan Allah bri fahla meuganda-
ganda

Pubuet seumbahyang beugot tajaga
'oh trok bak watee pubuet beurijang
Remember hi ubiet ngon raya Seumbahyang
limong beuta keurija

Now I convey the third pillar of Islam

Ramadan, month of Fasting that Increase alms multiply virtue Ramadan is a double reward.

Jinoe lon peuthee hi putiek jambee keu peut rukon Geuyue boh zakeut 'oh katrok nisab dumna hareuta. Trok sithon sigoe peugot keunira nibak hareukat Meugoe ngon meukat beuna tahitab tahitong manfaat

Now I tell you the fourth Islamic cashew pie. The reward pays zakat when it comes to Nisab treasure. Once a year for the calculation of property. Agriculture and trade should be calculated profits.

*Laailahailallah
Tajak u makah tanoh mulia Tapubeut haji aneuk meutuah Meubaro sah Islam keu lima
Lailahailallah*

Go to the noble ground Do Hajj son of the loyalty. Only then is the fifth pillar of Islam.

*Kulah kama neuk lam peungeuh sabe
Malam bek pre-pre taireng doa Beu-ek seujahtera baten ngon lahe
Awai ngon akhe beusamporeuna*

Crown son, in the light always the night ends with prayer May the prosperity be inward. Beginning and ending is perfect.

*Jak kutimang hai putiek sukon Beutatunjong poma di gata Bek tadhoh-dhot poma ngon ayah, In yuep gaki ma syuruga gata Peu nyang ma peugah neuk bek tabantah
Bek mita ilah peulom darohaka Tapubuet suroh neuk, peujioh teugah.*

*Nyang larang Allah bek tekeurija
Lon jak lon ayon aneuk lon, lon woe lon ayon
Poma meu-ek tron beungong sukon meujaga gata 'oh rayeuk gata aneuk cut, bungong si tahon. Ingat keu untong ayah ngon poma singoh ka tuha ban mandum tinggai watei tariwang cukup that sayang ngon amai hana
lhee peukara nyang taba sajan nyang keu hai neuk nyang taba sajan*

Everything stayed on our return time it is a pity no charity, three things we bring home that is the child we bring home.

*jut kutimang hai bungong meulu gantoe ash 'oh rayeuk gata
jut kutimang hai putiek langsung hareukat tapuwoe keu ma*

let me swing beloved father's successor as you grow up. Work hard then it will bring goodness to mother.

3.2. Constructing Early Childhood Character Education Based on Acehese Local Wisdom

From the lyrics above, it can be seen that parents begin to instill character values in their children from a very early age, even while they are still in the cradle. These values are conveyed through the traditional lullaby known as *Dodaidi* in Acehese society. Within a single lyric, various character values are embedded, including:

3.2.1. The Value of unity and faith

Interviews with elderly mothers and caregivers in Aceh revealed that the *Dodaidi* lullaby has long been used as a means to introduce the concept of *tauhid* (the oneness of Allah) to children from the earliest stage of life. One mother in Banda Aceh explained:

"We sing 'La ilaha illallah' softly when rocking the baby, not just to make them sleep, but so that these words become part of their soul." (A; 20/2/25)

Observations reveal that *Dodaidi* lullabies are sung even before birth, as expectant mothers recite them during daily routines. Religious leaders affirm the spiritual intent of this practice—embedding the *shahada* early to cultivate a natural bond with the Creator. The repetition of phrases like "*Lailahailallah*" (There is no god but Allah) is deliberate, aiming to instill monotheistic faith as a core identity from the womb to the cradle. These verses, rich in theological meaning, are intended to guide children toward a life of devotion, obedience, and spiritual awareness.

More than a soothing technique, *Dodaidi* serves as a medium of early spiritual education. From a developmental psychology perspective, repeated exposure to meaningful words during early childhood enhances cognitive and emotional growth. In this context, the consistent chanting

of divine attributes helps internalize *tauhid* (oneness of God), shaping a moral and spiritual foundation. Thus, *Dodaidi* functions both as cultural heritage and a pedagogical strategy to instill faith, discipline, and purpose in a child's life.

3.2.2. *The Value of education practice and worship*

The fieldwork also revealed that *Dodaidi* often contains references to the core practices of Islam. Several mothers shared that the lullabies they learned from their own mothers include phrases about prayer (*sholat*), fasting (*puasa*), almsgiving (*zakat*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*). A mother from Lhokseumawe recalled:

"When I was little, my mother would sing about going to the Baitullah. Now I sing it to my daughter. She doesn't understand the words yet, but I believe they will stay with her." (Z; 2/2/25)

Through observation, it became apparent that these religious messages are embedded in daily nurturing, with no formal instruction but a deep sense of intentionality. This practice allows children to become familiar with religious duties through affectionate and gentle exposure. The lullabies are not merely entertainment; they function as a form of religious socialization grounded in rhythm, melody, and repetition.

The verses in *Dodaidi* subtly introduce children to the core pillars of Islamic practice—prayer, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage—even before they fully comprehend language. Through gentle lullabies sung during bedtime routines, parents embed religious teachings that emphasize the significance of worship and faith. These poetic recitations function as early moral guidance, using repetition to familiarize children with the fundamentals of *Islam* and *Iman*.

This integration of faith into everyday affection reflects a deep-rooted educational approach in Acehese culture, where religious values are internalized not only through formal learning but also through emotional bonding. By embedding spiritual messages within melodic and nurturing moments, *Dodaidi* fosters a child's religious identity naturally and intimately. It exemplifies how character education in Aceh begins at home, grounded in love, culture, and rhythm—ensuring that Islamic values become deeply woven into a child's personal and communal life.

3.2.3. *The value of reverent education (takzim)*

Respect for parents and teachers was a recurring theme in interviews. The verses of *Dodaidi*, according to local informants, often contain gentle reminders about the importance of obedience to one's parents and deference to teachers. One elderly grandmother in Aceh Besar said:

"We always remind our children to listen to us, to speak softly, and not to raise their voice. That's how we were raised, and we pass it on through the lullabies." (A; 20/2/25)

The study also highlights the high regard for teachers in Acehese culture, as parents acknowledge their pivotal role in shaping children's moral and intellectual growth. The value of *takzim*, or deep respect and obedience toward parents and teachers, is woven into the verses of *Dodaidi* and passed down through generations. These lullabies act as emotional bridges, reinforcing authority, guidance, and gratitude within both familial and educational settings.

Takzim is instilled from an early age, emphasizing reverence and proper conduct, especially toward parents and teachers. The verses often include parental advice urging children to worship God and honor their parents. This aligns with the Islamic teaching that divine blessings are linked to parental pleasure (*ridha*). In daily life, children are taught to speak politely, with a soft tone, and to avoid disobedience. Through *Dodaidi*, such norms become part of the child's early moral fabric, nurturing them to grow into virtuous, respectful, and educated individuals who contribute positively to society and the nation.

Furthermore, the Acehese people also hold teachers in high esteem, recognizing their essential role in introducing children to the knowledge of God and His Messenger. It is through

the guidance of teachers that children gain understanding, become civilized, and are equipped with moral and intellectual foundations. The position of a teacher is therefore considered highly honourable within the community. This reverence toward teachers and parents is not only taught through formal education but is also embedded in the *Dodaidi* tradition, where children are exposed to these values from infancy. By incorporating messages of *takzim* into lullabies, the Acehnese culture ensures that respect for authority, gratitude for guidance, and the pursuit of knowledge are nurtured from the very beginning of a child's life.

3.2.4. *The value of social education*

Many of the lullabies observed during the study emphasize social harmony and good conduct. The lyrics often promote values such as kindness, helping others, and avoiding harmful behavior. One local religious teacher explained:

“Even in the lullabies, we teach our children not to be selfish, to respect neighbors, and to do good deeds. That’s how we maintain harmony in our society.” (KU; 2/2/25)

Though simple in form, the messages embedded in *Dodaidi* carry profound social lessons. Observations show that children exposed to these lullabies tend to adopt courteous behaviors early on, such as greeting elders respectfully and assisting with household tasks. Beyond their soothing function, the lullabies serve as social scripts that shape interpersonal conduct and community awareness. They reflect the Acehnese commitment to *hablumminannas*—maintaining harmonious relationships and demonstrating politeness and virtue in everyday interactions.

Core social values cultivated through *Dodaidi* include politeness, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding wrong), engaging in righteous acts (*amal sholeh*), and charity. The Acehnese believe that individuals who embody good manners are honored and blessed by Allah. Thus, from an early age, children are taught kindness, humility, and respect to grow into esteemed and protected members of society.

From an educational perspective, the formative years are critical for instilling such values. Piaget's cognitive development theory suggests that during the preoperational stage (ages 2–7), children begin to grasp social roles through interaction. Vygotsky further highlights the role of guided participation and cultural tools in learning.

3.2.5. *The value of responsibility and hardworking*

An interview with a father who still used *Dodaidi* Lullabies while soothing his child to sleep revealed that the lullaby carries messages of diligence, perseverance, and the importance of contributing to one's community and faith. According to him, *Dodaidi* teaches children to grow up as hardworking individuals. As a father of two young sons, he believes that by frequently introducing *Dodaidi*, he is helping to internalize social values and a strong work ethic from an early age.

“Our lullabies speak of our warriors, their struggles, and the importance of working hard. These are not just stories—they are reminders of who we are.” (WA; 20/3/25)

Several versions of *Dodaidi* contain messages of historical resistance against colonial forces, instilling courage and national pride. Parents sing these lullabies to remind their children of ancestral heritage and sacrifice. Observations reveal that such songs often emphasize hard work, responsibility, and spiritual struggle. Hard work is portrayed as a fundamental human nature, and neglecting it is seen as denying one's potential. *Dodaidi* also includes themes of jihad in defense of religion and country, reflecting the Acehnese legacy of valor against colonial invaders. From an early age, children are exposed to verses celebrating bravery and resistance, shaping a spirited and resilient generation.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the *Dodaidi* tradition in Acehnese culture functions as more than an artistic expression; it is perceived by caregivers as a medium for transmitting key moral values to young children. Through lullaby poetry, values such as religious devotion, moral discipline, reverence for parents and teachers, and diligence are conveyed in ways that are emotionally resonant and culturally embedded. While the study does not measure behavioral outcomes in children, it highlights how parents and elders believe that the affective and repetitive nature of *Dodaidi* nurtures character from an early age. This perception aligns with educational approaches that emphasize culturally grounded and emotionally meaningful strategies in early childhood learning (Lickona, 2009).

This research offers a distinct contribution by reframing *Dodaidi* not as a static cultural artifact, but as a living pedagogical expression embedded in daily caregiving practices. Unlike previous works that only describe the functional use of local wisdom, this study explores the symbolic, performative, and intergenerational aspects of lullabies. Interpreting the data through Bandura's Social Learning Theory, it becomes clear that parents and caregivers serve as primary moral models (Bandura, 1977). Although young children may not comprehend the full semantic content of the lyrics, the consistent delivery of *Dodaidi* in nurturing contexts enables implicit learning through emotional cues and repetition—key mechanisms of modeling and observational learning. This process allows values such as affection, patience, obedience, and religiosity to be internalized over time, even before the child acquires full linguistic competence. Thus, *Dodaidi* serves not only as a cultural expression but also as a formative medium through which early moral and emotional foundations are laid in Acehnese society.

Insights from developmental psychology further strengthen this interpretation. Lullabies inherently possess acoustic features—such as slow tempo, soothing rhythm, and gentle tone—that support emotional bonding and self-regulation in infants (Nikolsky & Benítez-Burraco, 2024). These non-verbal aspects create a secure attachment environment, allowing values to be transmitted affectively rather than explicitly. From a cultural transmission perspective, *Dodaidi* exemplifies vertical learning, where children internalize norms through repeated exposure to parental behaviors and language (Boyd Williams et al., 2022; Kwa et al., 2024; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2023). Unlike formal instruction, this type of learning is embedded in routine interactions and relies heavily on relational trust and emotional resonance. This dynamic reinforces Bandura's proposition that effective character learning often occurs through modeled behaviors within trusted relationships, rather than through direct instruction alone (Bandura, 1977). Consequently, *Dodaidi* serves as a meaningful conduit for the transmission of cultural identity and moral values in early childhood, grounded in the intimate and affective bonds between caregiver and child.

Children's tendency to trust emotionally consistent caregivers further enhances *Dodaidi*'s pedagogical value. Infants as young as 6–14 months show a preference for familiar emotional signals, making caregivers ideal moral models (Alonso et al., 2025; Boekamp et al., 2025; Poulin-Dubois et al., 2020). This dual mechanism—emotional institutionalization and cognitive modeling—makes *Dodaidi* an effective medium for informal character education. Islamic educational philosophy also emphasizes *uswah hasanah* (good example), where children learn through modeled behavior rather than commands (Ghazali, 2004). A mother's affectionate singing becomes a rhythmic expression of ethics, instilling both emotional security and moral grounding in early childhood (Cavero et al., 2024; Göttel et al., 2009; Persico et al., 2017).

These insights carry important implications for both educators and policymakers. Embedding local traditions like *Dodaidi* into early education can strengthen cultural identity and emotional resonance in moral instruction. Such practices are particularly effective during early childhood, a period marked by high emotional sensitivity and cognitive plasticity. Nonetheless, the study's focus on a single cultural context limits its generalizability. Future research should incorporate broader, comparative, and possibly quantitative methods to assess how cultural traditions shape character development across various communities.

4.1. Research Contribution

This study offers a significant contribution by introducing the *Dodaidi* tradition as a culturally relevant approach to character education in early childhood. It bridges the gap between indigenous oral practices and modern educational theory, highlighting how local wisdom can support moral and emotional development from an early age. The research also provides practical insights for integrating cultural elements into informal and formal learning environments. Include that the study produces an integrative theoretical model that visualizes character education based on *Dodaidi* tradition. The study also emphasize the framing of *Dodaidi* as an active pedagogical medium, not merely a cultural artifact. Also, highlight the contribution to character education rooted in affective, Islamic spiritual, and local cultural transmission.

4.2. Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its narrow cultural scope and qualitative design. The focus on a single tradition within Acehnese society restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. Additionally, the research was conducted only in selected regions of Aceh, namely Lhokseumawe, Pidie, and Banda Aceh, limiting geographical representation. The diversity of informant types was also limited, as the majority were elderly women (mothers or grandmothers), potentially excluding the perspectives of younger generations who may interpret or engage with the tradition differently. Furthermore, the study lacks empirical data on the actual impact of *Dodaidi* on children's character development, making it difficult to assess its direct effectiveness. Lastly, the absence of comparative analysis with similar lullaby traditions in other cultural regions restricts the potential for intercultural validation and broader applicability of the findings.

4.3. Suggestions

Future research should explore similar traditions in other regions of Indonesia to uncover Future research should explore lullaby traditions from other Indonesian culture such as Javanese, Bugis, or Minangkabau, to compare shared values, pedagogical functions, and cultural nuances in early childhood character education. Longitudinal or experimental studies involving direct observation of children regularly exposed to *Dodaidi* could provide deeper insight into its impact on character development. Collaboration with early childhood educators and local curriculum developers is also recommended to meaningfully integrate the values conveyed through *Dodaidi* into formal educational settings. Moreover, future initiatives could focus on developing educational media based on *Dodaidi* lyrics, such as illustrated storybooks, digital music, or animated content for moral education, to enhance accessibility and engagement for young learners.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights that *Dodaidi*, as a traditional Acehnese lullaby, is perceived by caregivers as a meaningful medium for transmitting moral and spiritual values such as faith (*iman*), worship (*ibadah*), reverence (*takzim*), social empathy, responsibility, and diligence to young children through affective and culturally embedded interactions. While the findings suggest that *Dodaidi* plays a role in informal character education within the studied communities, these insights are based on limited data from three regions in Aceh and a small number of participants. Therefore, conclusions about its broader applicability must be approached with caution. The study does not evaluate its actual impact on children, nor does it address contemporary challenges such as digital media influence or shifting generational engagement with oral traditions. As such, *Dodaidi* should be understood as a culturally specific practice with localized relevance, rather than a universal strategy for addressing moral decline. Further research is recommended to explore its adaptability, intergenerational continuity, and pedagogical value in diverse contexts.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Munawwarah conceived the idea and conducted data collection. Sri Astuti and Nadia Futhira developed the theory wisdom, character education, and early childhood education. Isramatur Rahmi performed the analysis. All authors in discussions regarding the findings and made contributions to the final manuscript.

Funding statement

This research did not receive funding or grants from any public, commercial, or nonprofit funding agencies.

Data availability statement

The dataset generated and analyzed during the research is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

All authors declare that they have no financial or personal interests that could influence the work presented in this manuscript.

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