



Analyzing Early Childhood Fairy Tales: Looking for Studies on the Local Wisdom of Madurese Society

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Abstract

Purpose – Moral degradation continues to persist in Indonesia, with various cases of violence and conflicts occurring from early childhood to adolescence. The low foundation of character education is a major issue, especially in early childhood education. This research aims to analyze Bangkalan fairy tales in preserving Madura's local wisdom.

Design/methods/approach – The research method employed is qualitative research, utilizing data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects consist of cultural figures in Bangkalan and the folktales from Bangkalan. Data analysis in this research employs thematic analysis with validity testing through source triangulation and technique triangulation.

Findings – The findings of this research reveal that the local wisdom embedded in Bangkalan's folktales emphasizes the early cultivation of character traits. These character traits include respect for elders, adherence to religious practices, honesty, and empathy towards others. The research findings provide an alternative approach to instilling local wisdom in early childhood as a foundational framework for children in coping with technological advancements.

Research implications/limitations – This research is limited to the analysis of fairy tales intended for early childhood as a means to preserve local wisdom from an early age. Additionally, the research is confined to the cultural context of Bangkalan and may not be applicable to other regions. Future studies could explore similar analyses in different cultural contexts to provide a broader understanding of how fairy tales can preserve local wisdom across various societies.

Practical implications – This research provides implications in the form of practices of struggle and nurturing through fairy tales in Bangkalan. It demonstrates how these tales can be used as practical tools for teaching young children about resilience and care, instilling important cultural values from an early age.

Originality/value – This research provides positive value for young children by preserving the values of struggle found in Bangkalan fairy tales, contributing to the cultural education and heritage of Madura. By integrating these tales into early childhood education, it helps foster a sense of cultural identity and continuity among the younger generation.

Keywords Local wisdom, Children's fairy tales, Early childhood

Paper type Case study

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country characterized by "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," a phrase that signifies unity in diversity, encompassing various cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, social structures, and more. Historically, Indonesia is recognized as the largest archipelagic state in the world (Mahpud, 2010). Known as the "land of a thousand islands," Indonesia consists of 17,000 islands (Geospatial Information Agency), with five main islands: Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua. This vast number of islands corresponds with the diversity of ethnic groups and cultures, enriching each region of Indonesia.

The diversity of ethnic groups is influenced by different life backgrounds, due to the influx of foreign cultures and the spread of major religions throughout Indonesia. This has led to cultural acculturation and assimilation, further enhancing Indonesia's cultural diversity. This diversity is evident in the differences in religion, habits, traditions, customs, livelihoods, and arts, which are unique to each ethnic group (Widiastuti, 2013). This cultural diversity is crucial to preserve, as the values embedded within these cultures can strengthen social cohesion. This principle underpins the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" for the Indonesian people, fostering a society that lives in harmony, respects, and upholds the fundamental values of the Indonesian nation, namely Pancasila.

Madura, located in East Java Province, plays a significant role in Indonesia's historical development, particularly during the Dutch colonial period. On August 4, 1947, the Dutch implemented an economic blockade and a divide-and-rule policy in the regions of Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep. This led to the establishment of the State of Madura on February 20, 1948. However, this formation lacked public support, resulting in demonstrations for its dissolution in February 1950. Consequently, on March 19, 1950, Madura was officially designated as a residency of the Republic of Indonesia, demonstrating the strong unity and solidarity of the Indonesian people.

Geographically and ecologically, the people of Madura utilize their natural resources through a dryland farming system, heavily dependent on rainfall due to the arid nature of their soil. Therefore, the primary crops are rice and tobacco, which serve as their main sources of livelihood. However, this farming method is highly risky, as Madura experiences longer dry seasons compared to Western Indonesia (Java and Sumatra). This geographical challenge has shaped the Madurese people into diligent, tenacious, and resilient individuals in their quest for survival.

Bangkalan Regency is one of the four regencies on Madura Island. The community in Bangkalan is notably heterogeneous, with a diverse composition of ethnicities and cultures. This diversity has increased since the operation of the Suramadu Bridge, which has facilitated the influx of people from outside Madura, leading to cultural acculturation. The changes in ethnic structure, societal mobility, and social control within the Bangkalan community have impacted the cultural transmission to young children in the area. Preliminary observations during a study at a mosque during Eid al-Fitr prayers revealed many children engrossed in using gadgets. This behavior is often a result of parents giving gadgets to restless children to keep them calm. Such practices are considered less educational and contribute to the erosion of local wisdom in Bangkalan, which is traditionally observed during Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

One approach to embedding local wisdom is through storytelling. Local wisdom represents the worldview of a specific community regarding their natural and social environment (Hennilawati, 2022). It is a cultural wealth that must be firmly upheld, especially by the younger generation, to resist the tide of globalization, ensuring that the community's unique characteristics remain intact (Trisnasasti, 2021). Previous generations have employed various methods to preserve local wisdom, including storytelling. However, the current Alpha generation often views local wisdom and traditional worldviews handed down from ancestors as outdated and irrelevant in today's modern era (Hennilawati, 2022). In reality, storytelling has positive impacts on children's development (Darihastining et al., 2020), enhances children's literacy (Fajrie et al., 2024; Ramdhanian & Djoehaeni, 2022; Wahyudi, 2023), boosts children's potential (Pamungkas et al., 2019), helps children understand the values of local wisdom (Faeruz et al.,

2021; Nurinten et al., 2018), and preserves noble values or cultural wisdom (Mutmainnah et al., 2021; Nurfaizah & Rizal, 2024).

Instilling the values of local wisdom in children from an early age is crucial, as this is a sensitive period when children are highly receptive to stimuli that help them recognize the cultural wisdom of their community (Paggama, 2019) This community wisdom has been passed down through generations. Cultivating local wisdom is more effective when initiated in early childhood, with the expectation that children will grow to love and appreciate their culture. Additionally, this period is critical for determining subsequent growth and development, as it is when a child's brain reaches 80% of its potential capacity (Fadlillah, 2020; Rahman, 2002; Sujono, 2009; Suyadi & Ulfa, 2017; Suyanto, 2005; Wijayani, 2016). Therefore, this study focuses on the values of local wisdom in Bangkalan folktales as an effort to preserve and sustain Madura's local wisdom.

2. Methods

This research employs a qualitative methodology, incorporating both field research and library research, with a case study approach focusing on Bangkalan folktales. The data sources include field data on Bangkalan folktales, archives of these folktales, and insights from cultural experts and teachers at Early Childhood Education institutions in Bangkalan. The research object is determined by the focus on local wisdom in Bangkalan folktales.

Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Firstly, observations are conducted to assess the extent to which Bangkalan folktales are preserved today. Secondly, semi-structured interviews are conducted with several Early Childhood Education teachers in Bangkalan, Bangkalan cultural experts, and academics specializing in local wisdom. Thirdly, documentation involves recording observation activities and archiving Bangkalan folktales. Data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis as developed by Louis et al. (Louis et al., 2018). This thematic analysis involves understanding the data, creating codes, and identifying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. Result

3.1. Values of Bangkalan Folktales

Every folktale from the past contains values that can serve as lessons for life. Moreover, folktales offer insights into past lives and how these stories have been remembered by many people up to the present day. According to Mr. A, Bangkalan folktales are rich in values of struggle. For example, the tale of the hero Trunojoyo's struggle is still well-known among the community. Mr. A mentioned that this folktale is narrated to children in schools to illustrate the struggles of the past and how the Bangkalan region has become a comfortable place to live.

Folktales from the past play a crucial role in shaping the values of contemporary society. These stories serve not only as entertainment but also as educational tools that contain various valuable lessons. Folktales provide a glimpse into past lives, showing how the values and struggles from those times remain relevant and appreciated today.

Mr. A, a cultural expert from Bangkalan, emphasizes that the folktales from Bangkalan are rich in values of struggle. For example, the tale of the hero Trunojoyo's struggle is still widely known among the community. This story not only narrates heroism but also inspires with lessons of bravery, perseverance, and a high fighting spirit. According to Mr. A, these folktales are told to children in schools as part of the learning process.

By sharing these folktales, children are taught about the history and struggles of their predecessors, giving them an understanding of how the Bangkalan region has become a comfortable place to live today. These stories also help instill a love for the homeland and pride in their cultural heritage. The storytelling process in schools ensures that the noble values contained in these folktales remain alive and are passed on to the next generation.

Bangkalan folktales, rich in values of struggle and local wisdom, serve as an effective medium for preserving and perpetuating culture. Through these stories, children receive not only

entertainment but also important moral and historical lessons. Consequently, these ancient folktales play a strategic role in shaping the character and positive values of children, as well as maintaining the continuity of a rich cultural heritage.

One significant value conveyed in these folktales is helping others, as illustrated in the tale "Air Mata Ebu." According to Mr. A, there were two queens, known as Ratu Ebu, in Madura, one of whom resided in Bangkalan. This queen, with her extraordinary abilities, discovered a water source, alleviating the community's struggles in finding water in the dry and arid region of Madura.

Furthermore, Bangkalan folktales embody the value of exemplarity. This value is often depicted in historical tales, particularly those involving the royal palace. For instance, stories emphasize respectful speech towards others, reverence for righteous individuals, and more. Mr. A, a cultural expert from Bangkalan, highlighted that the palace consistently imparted values of decorum in speech and behavior, along with a simple way of life. He also stressed the importance of preserving the local wisdom that has been passed down through generations.

Bangkalan folktales, frequently portraying royal palace narratives, contain exemplary values crucial for the current generation to emulate. These values include politeness in speech and respect for individuals regarded as righteous or possessing high spiritual status. Mr. A emphasized that the palace has always been a center for disseminating these noble values, teaching society to be polite, behave well, and live simply. He further underscored the importance of preserving and maintaining local wisdom from the past to ensure these values remain an integral part of Bangkalan's community life. This demonstrates that ancient folktales function not only as entertainment but also as an effective educational medium for instilling high moral and cultural values.

3.2. Local Wisdom in the Folktales of Bangkalan Regency

Bangkalan Regency is an area on Java Island, adjacent to Surabaya. Historically, these two regions have differences, especially in their local wisdom. According to Mr. A, local wisdom in Bangkalan is still preserved today, and one way to achieve this is through the folktales of Bangkalan Regency.

A Bangkalan cultural expert stated, "To this day, I still tell folktales to my family and visit schools in Bangkalan to preserve these stories" (24). Similarly, Mrs. K mentioned, "Bangkalan folktales are told to children once a week during lessons." An academic also shared the view that "the tradition of storytelling in Bangkalan is a way to preserve local wisdom passed down through generations."

These quotes illustrate that folktales are an effective means of introducing local wisdom in Bangkalan. Early childhood is the most suitable stage for this introduction, as children at this age have a higher capacity for absorption compared to later stages. Experts note that early childhood is a period of significant brain development. Therefore, according to Bangkalan cultural experts, these folktales are ideal for being told to kindergarten and lower elementary school children.

The importance of preserving Bangkalan folktales is highlighted by various community figures and academics. A Bangkalan cultural expert, in his efforts to protect cultural heritage, continues to narrate folktales to his own family and actively visits schools in Bangkalan to ensure these stories remain alive and known to the younger generation. This demonstrates a strong personal commitment to preserving this oral tradition.

Echoing this sentiment, Mrs. K stated that Bangkalan folktales are told to children weekly as part of the learning process. This approach not only introduces children to local stories but also enriches their education with the moral and cultural values embedded in these folktales. Additionally, an academic noted that the tradition of storytelling in Bangkalan is a long-standing practice within the community. Therefore, storytelling is not only seen as entertainment but also as an effective way to preserve local wisdom passed down from generation to generation. Through this collective approach, Bangkalan folktales remain relevant and continue to be an integral part of the cultural identity of the Bangkalan community.

Mrs. K believes that Bangkalan has folktales with positive values for children that must be preserved. These folktales include Ke'lesap, Pangeran Cakraningrat, Pemuda Kafat, Pahlawan Trunojoyo, Joko Tole, Air Mata Ebu, Socah, Sakera Marlina, and Karapan Sapi (Interview with Mrs.

K). Similarly, Mr. A, a cultural expert from Bangkalan, emphasized that folktales such as Ke'lesap, Joko Tole, Socah, and Trunojoyo are particularly suitable for early childhood. However, he stressed that the language used should be simple and easily understood by young children. These stories have traditionally been passed down orally, from grandmothers to their grandchildren, either before bedtime or during shared activities.

Mrs. K highlights the importance of preserving Bangkalan folktales, which are rich in positive values. She mentioned several well-known stories, including Ke'lesap, Pangeran Cakraningrat, Pemuda Kafat, Pahlawan Trunojoyo, Joko Tole, Air Mata Ebu, Socah, Sakera Marlana, and Karapan Sapi. According to her, these tales should continue to be taught to children as they contain many beneficial moral lessons. Mr. A reinforced this view by naming some of the same folktales, which he also considers highly appropriate for young children. He pointed out that the language must be simple and comprehensible for early childhood audiences.

Furthermore, the method of conveying these folktales remains traditional, without the use of modern media, and they are transmitted orally from generation to generation. Typically, these stories are told by grandmothers to their grandchildren, either before bedtime or during other shared activities. This method not only preserves the authenticity and integrity of the stories but also strengthens family bonds and directly transmits cultural values. The storytelling process plays a crucial role in early childhood education in Bangkalan, ensuring that this rich oral tradition remains alive and continues to thrive over time. Through these folktales, children not only learn about local history and culture but also gain an understanding of values such as politeness, bravery, and respect for others.

Mrs. K also mentioned that telling Bangkalan folktales in schools is challenging without media, as archival records of these stories are rare. Thus, in schools, introducing Bangkalan folktales follows the traditional method, much like parents did in the past, by narrating these stories to children once a week. As noted above, whether at school or home, telling Bangkalan folktales remains a common practice for children. This tradition of storytelling, whether before bedtime or during special school activities, ensures that Bangkalan folktales continue to be loved by children today.

4. Discussion

As indicated by the research findings, Bangkalan folktales contain values that serve as life lessons for the future. This is consistent with previous studies that categorize local wisdom into two aspects: tangible and intangible local wisdom. First, tangible local wisdom. This category can be divided into several aspects, such as textual forms like value systems, procedures, and specific regulations documented in written records, including primbon (traditional Javanese books), calendars, and prasi (illustrated manuscripts). Second, intangible local wisdom. This form includes verbal teachings passed down through generations, such as stories, songs, and chants that convey traditional values. These are communicated orally and hold significant cultural and educational value. The dual aspects of local wisdom, both tangible and intangible, play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and moral lessons to future generations (Khosyi'ah & Rusyana, 2022; Mahardika, 2017; Mukhtar et al., 2016; Riyanti et al., 2022).

These values have persisted due to the habit of parents and teachers consistently telling folktales to children, both at school and at home. Bedtime stories, in particular, can be an effective tool in educating children, especially in instilling good character education. Moreover, these folktales can enhance children's knowledge, vocabulary, and language skills, especially when narrated daily before bedtime.

Bedtime storytelling is a traditional method for parents, grandparents, and elders to convey messages to children. This practice helps children develop sensitivity to their surrounding environment. According to the literature, folktales can be categorized into several types, including myths, futuristic tales, fables, historical tales, and therapeutic tales (Prastya et al., 2021; Rukiyah, 2018).

Implementing folktales in early childhood education can be done in various stages: a) during pregnancy. Numerous studies suggest that storytelling while the baby is in the womb can

influence the baby after birth. Since a baby in the womb already has developed senses, they can respond to the stories being told. b) from birth to six months. At this stage, the baby may not fully understand the stories, but they can perceive the parents' expressions while narrating. c) From one to six years. Children in this age range start responding to the stories told by their parents or guardians. They begin to fantasize and have a high level of curiosity, making it an ideal period for storytelling.

The research findings illustrate that the people of Bangkalan remain committed to preserving their ancestral local wisdom. Local wisdom is an inherited legacy that encompasses life values, including religious, cultural, and customary values. According to Suhartini, when a community adapts to its environment, it develops wisdom that manifests in knowledge, ideas, tools, and is combined with customary norms, cultural values, and activities to manage the environment to meet their needs (Eko & Putranto, 2019; Primayanti & Puspita, 2022; Qodariah & Armiyati, 2013; Suhartini, 2009).

According to Panjaitan et al., local wisdom serves several functions: conservation and preservation of natural resources, human resource development, cultural and scientific development, providing advice, beliefs, literature, and prohibitions. Social significance, such as family integration ceremonies, ethics and morals. Political significance, such as patron-client ceremonies (Diab et al., 2022; Panjaitan et al., 2014).

Therefore, the research findings imply the importance of preserving local wisdom in early childhood education. As technology advances, Bangkalan folktales should remain a reference for educators by utilizing existing technology. This research recommends developing Bangkalan folktales using technology that is friendly to early childhood education.

5. Conclusion

This research found that local wisdom, conveyed through the folktales of Bangkalan, is still preserved by community leaders, cultural experts, early childhood educators, and academics. Folktales containing local wisdom values are incorporated into early childhood education activities. The stories taught include Ke'lesap, Pangeran Cakraningrat, Pemuda Kafat, Pahlawan Trunojoyo, Joko Tole, Air Mata Ebu, Socah, Sakera Marlana, and Karapan Sapi. The values imparted through these folktales include exemplarity, perseverance, and mutual assistance. These findings provide an alternative for parents, community leaders, educators, and academics to maintain Bangkalan's local wisdom, which is increasingly threatened by modern developments.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Muhammad Abdul Latif conceived the idea, conducted data collection, and performed the analysis. Eriqa Pratiwi and Aldila Prameswari developed the theory of local wisdom, folktales, and early childhood education. All authors engaged in discussions regarding the findings and made contributions to the final manuscript.

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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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