

The Role of Malay Cultural Values in Shaping Character: A Study of Politeness and Courtesy in Family Education

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Abstrak: Nilai kesantunan dan kesopanan budaya Melayu di era globalisasi, mulai tergerus, khususnya di kalangan generasi muda. Ungkapan Santun dalam bertutur, sopan dalam bertindak merupakan salah satu ajaran moral yang diwariskan secara turun-temurun dalam keluarga Melayu sebagai bagian dari pendidikan karakter. Berkenaan dengan itu penelitian ini membahas nilai-nilai kesantunan dan kesopanan ditanamkan dalam keluarga Melayu serta perannya dalam membentuk kepribadian individu. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi lisan, adat istiadat, dan praktik keseharian dalam keluarga Melayu yang menekankan pentingnya komunikasi yang beretika serta perilaku yang hormat terhadap sesama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ungkapan santun dalam bertutur, sopan dalam bertindak mencerminkan pendidikan karakter keluarga Melayu yang menanamkan tata krama, rasa hormat, empati, dan kebijaksanaan melalui keteladanan dan kebiasaan harian. Nilai ini menjadi fondasi identitas budaya yang perlu dilestarikan di era modern oleh generasi muda. Implikasi penelitian ini menguatkan pandangan Ki Hadjar Dewantara bahwa keluarga merupakan lingkungan pendidikan pertama dan utama dalam pembentukan karakter. Oleh karena itu, revitalisasi nilai-nilai budaya lokal dalam pendidikan keluarga sangat penting untuk memperkuat identitas kultural sekaligus membentengi generasi muda dari krisis nilai di tengah arus modernisasi.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Melayu, Pendidikan Karakter, Pendidikan Keluarga

Abstract: The values of politeness and courtesy in Malay culture are increasingly being eroded in the era of globalization, particularly among younger generations. The expressions polite in speech, courteous in action represent moral teachings that have been passed down through generations in Malay families as part of character education. This study explores how these values are instilled within Malay families and their role in shaping individual personality. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review, this research examines oral traditions, customs, and daily practices in Malay households that emphasize ethical communication and respectful behavior toward others. The findings reveal that expressions of politeness in speech and courteous conduct reflect the character education embedded in Malay family life, which cultivates manners, respect, empathy, and wisdom through daily habits and exemplary behavior. These values serve as a cultural identity foundation that must be preserved by the younger generation in modern times. The implications of this study reinforce Ki Hadjar Dewantara's perspective that the family is the first and foremost educational environment in shaping character. Therefore, the revitalization of local cultural values within family education is essential to strengthen cultural identity and safeguard the younger generation from a moral crisis amid the forces of modernization.

Keywords: Malay Culture, Character Education, Family Education

INTRUDUCTION

Character education in the family has an important role in shaping children's personality from an early age. Childhood is a critical period that determines a child's attitude and behavior in the future. Parents contribute to the internalization of moral values that become the foundation of religious and social norms in family life. The parenting provided directly shapes the child's personality and behavior; the quality of the child's behavior, both in positive and negative aspects, is largely determined by the parenting approach applied (Ade Kartini & Asep Maulana, 2020). The family environment is seen as the first educational institution where children learn to distinguish right from wrong, which significantly influences their character formation before formal school education begins (Indramawan, 2020). The family is the first and main environment for children in instilling moral and ethical values that will form the basis of their behavior in the future (Sutriyanti, 2016).

The family is the main environment where children can grow and develop, playing a crucial role in shaping children's social skills, self-actualization, and behavior, including both positive and deviant traits. The role of parents in character education includes several key aspects. First, setting a good example for children, as children tend to imitate their parents' behavior. Second, providing opportunities for children to practice the values taught, so that they can understand and internalize the values. Third, giving responsibility according to the age and ability of the child, which helps them learn about consequences and the importance of fulfilling

obligations. Fourth, supervise and direct children in socializing, ensuring they choose a positive social environment that supports the development of good character (Puspytasari, 2022).

Character education in the family can also be strengthened through understanding and practicing religious teachings. In the Islamic perspective, for example, character education is based on the values contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. Cultivating values such as honesty, responsibility and caring can be done by referring to these teachings. Thus, children not only understand these values theoretically, but also apply them in everyday life (Septi Lastris Siregar & Zulkipli Lessy, 2021). Religious character education in children is highly dependent on the role of the family, especially parents, in shaping their moral and spiritual foundations. Parents have the main responsibility in instilling religious values that will shape children's daily behavior. Children who have a religious character tend to show behavior based on belief in God, diligently worship, have adequate religious knowledge, and are able to actualize religious teachings in everyday life (Rosikum, 2018)

A good character education model must be designed systematically and purposefully. Determining goals is a crucial initial stage, because these goals will guide the character education program towards the expected targets. To achieve these goals, a model for developing character education in the family is made using various approaches, methods, and appropriate strategies (Ade Kartini & Asep Maulana, 2020), the family can be the first and main environment in shaping children's religious character, which

will be the basis for their moral and spiritual development in the future (Rosikum, 2018). Effective character education involves not only knowledge of values but also emotional involvement, recognizing the interaction between information and feelings in guiding children's actions

Parenting in a Muslim family can greatly affect the character and morals of a child. Therefore, the role of parents is the main key in shaping a child's personality who is pious and has good morals. Although each child has a different character, parents must make every effort to educate their children so that they have good morals and become useful examples for society (Tuti Nuriyati, Desi Arpa, & Siti Munawarah, 2023). The family environment also contributes to providing early education, including biological, social, and religious education, which has an impact on the development of children's character from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, the family has a crucial role in shaping children's character which will later be reflected in their behavior and social interactions (Nadila Oktavia, Yulia Filanda, Muhammad Azri, Alhafiz Alfi Syahputra, & Robi'ah, 2024).

Families provide the basis for shaping children's behavior, character, morals, and education. Through daily interactions, parents instill values such as honesty, responsibility and empathy. This process of cultural internalization helps children develop a civilized and noble personality. In Malay culture, politeness and courtesy are closely related to language use and daily behavior. Language not only serves as a means of communication, but also reflects a person's identity and character. In the Malay dialect of

Kampar, there is a language of small talk, involving speech partners in the speaker's activities, reflecting appreciation and respect for the interlocutor, so that communication becomes smoother and social relations are closer. Thus, language politeness through small talk not only maintains social norms, but also strengthens solidarity in Malay society (Annisa Rahmi, Hasnah Faizah, & Syafrial, 2023).

In the Islamic perspective, language politeness not only reflects individual manners, but also reflects the Islamic values adopted by the community. Strategies and guidelines for language politeness from an Islamic perspective emphasize the importance of choosing good words, speaking softly, and avoiding speech that can hurt other people's feelings. This is in line with Islamic teachings that encourage its followers to always keep their tongues and communicate in a good and correct way. In the context of Malay culture, politeness and courtesy are important elements in Malay culture, which emphasizes the importance of respectful and ethical communication. politeness is also reflected in the use of subtle and respectful language, especially when interacting with people who are older or have a higher position. The use of honorific titles, figurative language, and certain expressions are part of efforts to maintain social harmony and show respect for others (Wan Siti Fatimatul & Akmal W. Hassan, 2019).

Politeness and courtesy are core values in Malay culture that are reflected in various aspects of life, including in language use and daily communication. The Principle of Politeness introduced by Leech (1983)

emphasizes the importance of minimizing impoliteness and maximizing politeness in social interaction. This principle consists of six maxims, namely: the maxim of politeness, the maxim of humility, the maxim of agreement, the maxim of sympathy, the maxim of courtesy, and the maxim of support (Norazilah Buhari, Nor Azlili Hassan, Nik Norazira Abd Aziz, 2020). This emphasis on politeness is also seen in the use of language that is gentle, polite, and does not offend the interlocutor (Mohd Khaidir Bin Abdul Wahab, Mohd NorTaufiq Bin NorHashim, & Wan Azni Binti Wan Mohamad, 2021)

The use of subtle words and respect for the interlocutor reflects the good sense and noble values of the Malay community. In Islam, which is embraced by the majority of the Malay community, politeness in language is also highly emphasized as a reflection of good morals and as a way to maintain harmonious relationships between individuals (Hamid). Politeness and courtesy in Malay culture is not just a social norm, but also a manifestation of the cultural and religious values that underlie social interaction in the community.

In communication, language politeness is a reflection of the culture and intellect of the Malay community, which emphasizes the use of words that are appropriate, do not offend, and keep the listener's face. In addition, language politeness is also influenced by factors such as role, power, social level differences, topics of conversation, and rules prevailing in society. These factors shape the context of conversation and determine how individuals communicate politely according to

Malay cultural norms (Ayuni Mohamad Bakari & Rohaidah Kamaruddin, 2019).

This research has a distinction from other studies, previous studies that emphasize more on the general role of the family in the formation of children's character as described by Nurdiana, L. et.al, this article specifically raises the dimension of Malay local culture as the basis of character education in the family. This research not only examines the role of parents as the first educator, but also explores the values of *language politeness* and *politeness* in Malay culture as an instrument of religious and civilized child character formation.

Moreover, while Athirah, F. et.al.'s research focused more on religious character education from the perspective of Islamic teachings in general, this article broadens the scope by integrating Islamic teachings with local cultural expressions, such as the use of conversational language, polite word choice, and respect for social hierarchy as described by Roza, E. This confirms that character education in Malay families is holistic: combining religious, ethical, and cultural dimensions.

Furthermore, in contrast to Mustaffa, C.S. et.al.'s research approach that emphasizes the principles of politeness in communication theoretically and generally, this article grounded the principles into the practice of everyday Malay family life. Thus, this research not only contributes theoretical understanding, but also offers an applicative model of Islamic Malay culture-based character building that can be applied in parenting amidst globalization and changing values.

Finally, this article enriches the character education approach by linking the principles of language politeness (Leech, 1983) with Islamic teachings on oral manners and communication, making this paper a bridge between pragmatic linguistic theory, socio-cultural ethics, and spiritual values in Islam. This interdisciplinary approach provides added value that has not been raised much in depth in previous research.

The importance of politeness and courtesy in Malay culture is not only limited to oral communication, but is also reflected in various aspects of social life, such as in criticism, greetings, and daily interactions, all of which emphasize respect for others and maintaining harmony in society. In other words, character education that starts from the family plays an important role in shaping moral individuals while encouraging the creation of a civilized and cultured society. The role of the family in instilling noble values is the foundation for the birth of a smart generation both intellectually and emotionally.

This article reviews character values in Malay families with the aim of exploring, understanding, and continuing the spread of noble values that have been passed down from generation to generation by the Malay people. These values reflect a distinctive cultural identity and serve as guidelines in daily life, especially in building harmonious relationships within the family and social environment. By understanding these values, the younger generation is expected to maintain and preserve the Malay cultural heritage, so that it is not eroded by the rapid globalization.

This article aims to inspire Malay families to continue cultivating character

values in their daily lives. By bringing up real examples in family life, this article offers an understanding of the application of these values in the fields of child education, social relations, and conflict resolution. It also plays a role in building public awareness of the importance of character values in creating family harmony and community life. By understanding and applying these values, Malay families can be an example in maintaining the customs, culture, and norms that have been passed down from generation to generation.

METHOD

This research methodology uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method through library research. This method involves collecting data by searching and reconstructing information from various sources such as books, journals, and previous research relevant to the topic under study. In the context of this research, the qualitative approach aims to reveal phenomena holistically and contextually. The descriptive method is used to provide a detailed description of certain conditions or phenomena based on the data obtained. Literature study is conducted to understand and analyze various theories and previous findings related to qualitative research design. Thus, researchers can develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study (Fadli, 2021).

In analyzing the data, the author adapted the Miles and Huberman model which includes the stages of data collection, data reduction, and conclusion drawing. In this research, the data used is in the form of

text or information that is already available, not the result of direct observation of events. Researchers only need to access sources that already exist in libraries or ready-made data (Muftahatus Sa'adah, Gismina Tri Rahmayati, & Yoga Catur Prasetyo, 2022).

To ensure the validity of the data, researchers used source triangulation techniques, comparing and reviewing data from different literatures to obtain consistency of information. In addition, content validity was rechecked through credible scientific references and reinforcement with expert opinions so that the analysis results remained objective and academically accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Courtesy in Speech and Politeness in Action

In Malay culture, being polite in speech and polite in action are important values that reflect respect in communication and behavior. Politeness in speech refers to the use of subtle and non-offensive language, while politeness in action refers to behavior that reflects manners and adherence to social norms. Politeness is a habit that lives in society and builds harmony in communication. An expression is called polite if it is not pushy, not arrogant, gives choices, and makes the interlocutor feel valued (Fitria, 2017).

The application of politeness is important in various contexts, both formal and informal. Language reflects the character of the nation, and the Malay community has long maintained this value of politeness, as seen in the Legend of Tepian Musi ("sorry,

gallant gentlemen") (Ernalida, 2018). This value comes from customs and Islamic teachings that have shaped the social behavior of the community, reflected in daily communication (Ramadani, 2020). In oral tradition, good manners reflect a personality that respects everyone and obeys the rules (Syaputra, 2024).

Malay is a high-context culture that emphasizes nonverbal messages and respect in communication (Ardian, 2022). Communication is a mirror of traditional values that teach ethics, mutual respect, and wisdom. Politeness in speech is seen in the use of indirect expressions to avoid the impression of rudeness, while courtesy in action is seen in traditional processions that comply with community norms (Nova Yohana & Kurnia Husmiwati, 2015).

Islam brought significant changes into the fabric of Malay society, replacing the Hindu caste system. Islam teaches human equality, and its values reinforce polite behavior in social interactions (Roza, 2014). In Malay culture, the pantang larang tradition also contains politeness values, such as the prohibition of interrupting parents talking or directly reprimanding babies (Firmansyah, 2023; Triwirandi et al., 2021).

Malay poems such as Siti Zubaidah reflect the value of politeness and can be used in language learning (Ari Susandi et al., 2021). Malays also use poetry as a medium to convey messages (Fitria, 2017). Malay proverbs teach the importance of respecting teachers as a form of appreciation for knowledge (Triwirandi et al., 2021).

The value of politeness and manners is passed down through literature and aims to

maintain social harmony and strengthen relationships between individuals. In communication, the Malay community prioritizes subtle language and polite actions, reflecting a culture that is passed down across generations. Politeness and manners constitute a strong Malay cultural identity (Mustaffa, 2024).

Character Education in the Malay Family

In Malay culture, character education is not solely oriented towards the moral formation of children, but also places the role of parents as a key factor in the education process. Tenas Effendy in his work *The Malay View of Children* asserts that the success of children's moral education is highly dependent on the behavior and example shown by parents. Parents are expected to have noble character, which is reflected in the attitude of loving children, paying attention to their growth and development, instilling the value of discipline, guiding children in using freedom responsibly, and supporting the development of children's interests and talents. The moral values taught include religious values, the spirit of collectivity (*gotong royong*), self-awareness, work ethic, effective time management, and leadership. Character education in Riau Malay society is closely related to customs and culture rooted in Islamic principles. This is reflected in the expression "*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendikan kitabullah*," which indicates that customary norms in Malay society are sourced from Islamic religious teachings. Thus, character education developed in this society is not only based on social norms, but also on

strong and integral religious values (Sabakti, 2018).

It is important for parents to realize that character education is not an instant process, but requires consistency and exemplification. Parents are expected to be role models for their children in applying positive values. With the right approach and continuity, character education in the family can be a strong foundation for the development of a noble and responsible child. *Gurindam 12*, a famous Malay literary work, has an important role in character education in Malay families, this work contains moral and ethical values that can be used as guidelines in educating children. The implementation of character education through *Gurindam 12* in the family environment can be done through parental exemplary. Children tend to imitate the behavior of their parents, so it is important for parents to show attitudes and actions that are in accordance with the values contained in *Gurindam 12*. Thus, children can understand and internalize these values in their daily lives (Yuniva, F., Agung, L., & Sulistyaningrum, C. D, 2023).

Character education in Malay families emphasizes the value of responsibility that is instilled early in children. This value is reflected in the customs and local wisdom that govern community life, with the principle of "*Adat bersendi Syara', Syara' bersendi Kitabullah*". This means that customs and traditions are based on the teachings of Islamic law, which is derived from the Qur'an. Parents' responsibilities include raising, educating, guiding and fulfilling the needs of their children, including food, drink and religious education. Failure to fulfill these

responsibilities is considered a sin in Islamic teachings. As part of the community, individuals are also expected to maintain the good name of the family through attitudes and actions that are in accordance with customary and religious norms (Ulfah, 2019).

Responsibility for oneself requires individual awareness to fulfill personal obligations and develop a good personality. This is in line with the command in the Qur'an Surah At-Tahrim verse 6 which reminds Muslims to protect themselves and their families from hellfire. Character education in the Malay family aims to form a responsible person, both to himself, his family, society, nation, and to God (Ulfah, 2019).

Malay parents feel embarrassed if their children behave immodestly or deviantly, so they tend to educate children firmly, even harshly, to ensure good behavior. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of instilling faith in the family. For example, QS. Luqman verse 13 teaches children not to associate partners with Allah, which is a form of tawhid education from an early age. The Prophet's Hadith also emphasizes the responsibility of parents in nurturing children to develop into complete and noble individuals. Family education in Malay culture can be a strong basis for building harmonious families and preventing various social problems in society (Farhana Athirah, Nur'azimah, & Marhamah Ulfa, 2024)

Through several traditional methods inherited character education in Malay families is carried out for generations. One of the main methods is through folklore. Parents tell local stories laden with moral and ethical values to their children. These stories serve as a medium to introduce cultural and moral values to

children from an early age, a means to instill values such as honesty, courage and respect in children from an early age (Suratman, 2019). Through these stories, children learn about the social norms, ethics, and local wisdom embraced by the Malay community, thus helping to shape their character in accordance with the local culture. Parents and community members are actively involved in telling folk stories (Suratman, Early Childhood Character Education Through Folklore and Playing Singinca'an in the Sambas Malay Tribe of Sepadu Village, 2018).

Folktales like Batang Tuaka and Batu Bertangkup are not just for entertainment; they teach the importance of trust, honesty, hard work, respect and responsibility. Likewise, Gurindam 12, a literary work rich in religious messages, responsibility and ethics, is still used to shape the character of the younger generation. Traditional arts, such as weaving and carving, teach the value of hard work, creativity and responsibility. Meanwhile, traditional dances such as Zapin carry the values of politeness, cohesiveness, and the spirit of cooperation in every move. Traditional games such as jumping rope, marbles, long pole, also play an important role. Through these simple games, children learn about cooperation, patience, honesty, accuracy, confidence, and a sense of responsibility. All of these efforts can run well thanks to supporting factors, such as the competence of teachers who understand local values, a conducive environment, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure that support the Riau Malay culture-based character learning process (Ein Maria Ulfa & Nurhasanah, 2023).

In addition, character education is also implemented through pantang larang. Pantang larang are unwritten rules that govern the behavior of individuals in society. By introducing pantang larang to children, parents teach them about social boundaries and the consequences of breaking these norms. This helps children understand the importance of discipline and responsibility in everyday life (Suratman, 2019).

Another method is through interaction with the natural environment. The Sambas Malay community utilizes the surrounding nature as a medium of learning for children. Through activities such as gardening, fishing, or exploring the forest, children are taught about the balance of the ecosystem, the importance of protecting the environment, as well as the values of hard work and perseverance. This approach not only introduces children to practical knowledge, but also instills a sense of love and responsibility for nature. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultural values and traditions in educating the younger generation, so that they grow into individuals with strong character and integrity (Suratman, 2019). Some of the main characters that need to be implemented in character education are religious, independent, responsible, social care, and love of reading. The implementation of these characters is expected to shape the personalities of students who are in line with the values adopted by the local community (Tri Syamsijulianto, Rahman Rahman, Mia Zultrianti Sari, Stelie D Ratumanan, & Solehun Solehun, 2022).

Character education in Malay families is also influenced by cultural values passed down through various traditional media, one of

which is Malay songs. These songs not only serve as entertainment, but also as an effective means in instilling moral and character values to the younger generation. Traditional songs are often used as a tool to teach ethics, manners, and prevailing social norms. Through lyrics that are full of moral messages, children are taught about the importance of respecting parents, maintaining good relationships with others, and upholding the values of honesty and responsibility. In addition, Malay songs also reflect local wisdom that teaches about the importance of maintaining harmony in social life. Values such as mutual cooperation, help, and a sense of togetherness are conveyed subtly through verses that are easy to remember and sing together (Lela Nurdiana, Rian Hidayat, Hilda Agustin, & Febbinur Anggi, 2024).

The folk songs reflect values such as religiosity, honesty, hard work, and responsibility. The implementation of these values in literature learning aims to shape students' characters in accordance with the culture and local wisdom of the Riau Malay community. Thus, students not only understand literary works textually, but also internalize the character values contained in them, so that they can be applied in everyday life (Arianti, 2024).

Islamic educational values are also contained in Malay pantun, such as honesty, patience, tolerance, and compassion. Malay pantun contains fundamental Islamic educational values and remains relevant in individual and community character building. Pantun acts as an effective medium of da'wah, where its poetic and rhythmic nature enhances acceptance of religious and ethical teachings.

The potential of Malay pantun as a tool of cultural preservation and Islamic education in a modern context, provides new insights into how traditional oral literature can be adapted into contemporary educational frameworks to ensure Islamic teachings remain accessible and appealing to the younger generation (Suhernawati, Jarir, Rini Nopita, & Betti Fariati, 2025).

Another Malay local wisdom tradition is the Bara'an Tradition, which is a form of custom that is rich in character education values. This tradition involves gathering in groups to the homes of neighbors or relatives, which is usually done after the celebration of Islamic holidays. Through this tradition, the community is taught the importance of strengthening social relationships, respecting each other, and maintaining togetherness. Children involved in this tradition learn about manners, tolerance, and the importance of maintaining good relationships with others. In addition, they are also taught Islamic values such as forgiveness, sharing, and caring for others, all of which are integral parts of character education in Islam. Bara'an tradition not only serves as a cultural heritage, but also as an effective medium of character education in Malay families (Harmaini, Jarir, Fatimah Uri, & Elya Susanti, 2025).

Local wisdom passed down from generation to generation can also be an effective means of instilling moral and ethical values to the younger generation, which includes the values, norms and traditional knowledge of the local community, considered an important source in character education. Integrating local wisdom in education aims to form individuals who are not only

academically intelligent, but also have strong character and high integrity, becoming increasingly relevant in facing the challenges of globalization and modernization. By instilling strong cultural values from an early age, it is hoped that the younger generation of Malays will be able to maintain their cultural identity while remaining open to the times (Wulandari, 2022). Malay customs also emphasize the importance of manners and respect for parents and other family members. Children are taught to always behave well, be virtuous, obey their parents' directions, and respect their siblings. This aims to form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have noble morals and are able to interact harmoniously in society (Alma Ida, Zulkifli, & Ria Novianti, 2023).

The application of these values in daily life in Malay families helps to form individuals of strong character and integrity. Parents use folklore as a medium to convey moral and ethical messages to their children, so that these values are embedded from an early age. Thus, customs and folktales play an important role in preserving and transmitting the noble values of Malay culture to the next generation.

CONCLUSIONS

Character education in the family, especially in Malay culture and Islamic perspective, plays an important role in shaping children's personality from an early age. The family is the first environment to instill moral, ethical and religious values through parenting, parental example, and teaching cultural and religious values. Values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy and good manners are taught to form noble morals and strengthen

cultural identity. Politeness in speech and politeness in action is a core part of Malay culture, reflecting high manners, respect and social ethics. Subtle and meaningful language is used in communication to maintain harmony and avoid conflict. These values are passed down through literature, proverbs, legends, and the role of traditional and religious leaders. Character education in Malay families also teaches religiosity, social care and hard work through traditional media such as Gurindam 12, pantun, folklore and traditions such as Bara'an. The principle of "Adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah" is the main foundation. With a local wisdom-based approach, this education aims to produce a generation that is smart, moral, and able to maintain cultural identity in the midst of global challenges.

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