

## Character Education Values in the Javanese Gendhing “Pepeling” by Ki H. Anom Suroto: An Analysis of the Lyrics and Its Implications for Character Building among Elementary School Students

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the character education values embedded in the Javanese *gendhing* “Pepeling” composed by Ki H. Anom Suroto and examines its implications for character development among elementary school students. Although the *gendhing* is widely performed in Javanese religious and *wayang* gatherings, scholarly studies that examine its character education values for elementary education remain limited; this gap motivates the present study. The research employed a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach using content analysis of the *gendhing* lyrics, supported by a literature review on character education and Javanese *karawitan* and complemented by hermeneutic interpretation of the Javanese linguistic symbols. The findings reveal four core character values: (1) spiritual awareness and commitment to worship, (2) consistency (*istiqomah*) and discipline, (3) patience and *tawakal* (trust in God), and (4) *eling lan waspada* (being mindful and cautious). These values correspond closely to the moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action components of character formation and to the religious dimension of national character education. They are highly relevant for integration into elementary school character education through a local-wisdom-based approach. The study recommends that teachers use traditional Javanese *gendhing* as a contextual and meaningful medium for internalizing character values among elementary school students while contributing to cultural preservation.

**Keyword :** character education; Javanese gendhing; Pepeling; local wisdom; elementary school

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### Introduction

Character education has become one of the main priorities in Indonesia’s national education system, particularly amid the challenges of the digital era marked by moral crises and the degradation of noble values among the younger generation. Phenomena such as disrespect toward parents, low discipline, and weak self-control are frequently observed among elementary school students. In this context, a character education approach grounded in local wisdom becomes highly relevant because it presents values that are close to students’ daily lives and cultural backgrounds (Restian, 2022). Such an approach also answers the national mandate of strengthening character education (*penguatan pendidikan karakter*), in which the religious value is positioned as one of the principal pillars of student development (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017).

Traditional arts, particularly Javanese *karawitan*, possess significant potential as a medium for character education. Music and the performing arts are not merely sources of

entertainment; they carry social, aesthetic, and ethical functions that accompany human life from birth to death and help transmit communal values across generations (Wiflihani, 2016). Within this frame, Javanese *gendhing* functions not only as artistic expression but also conveys moral, spiritual, and philosophical messages capable of shaping human personality. One work particularly rich in character education values is the *gendhing* “Pepeling” by Ki H. Anom Suroto, a renowned shadow-puppet master (*dalang*) and *karawitan* artist. This *gendhing* contains profound life advice concerning religious observance, patience, and mindfulness in living (Waridi, 2000; Supanggih, 2002).

Although the *gendhing* “Pepeling” is widely known among Javanese communities and frequently played during religious gatherings and *wayang* performances, specific scholarly studies analyzing its character education values—particularly in relation to elementary school learning—remain limited. Existing studies on Javanese *gendhing* tend to emphasize its musical structure or its psychological and spiritual resonance for listeners (Hastanto, 2009; Wijaya et al., 2022), while the pedagogical potential of the lyrics for young learners has rarely been examined. Yet the lyrics of this *gendhing* hold strong potential as a contextual learning resource for internalizing character values among elementary school students, especially in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) and elementary schools (SD) with Javanese cultural foundations.

Theoretically, character is commonly understood as comprising three interrelated components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action; effective character education must therefore move beyond cognitive understanding toward habituation and consistent practice (Lickona, 1991). This perspective resonates with the holistic Indonesian educational philosophy that integrates *cipta* (thought), *rasa* (feeling), and *karsa* (will) in cultivating noble character (Dewantara, 1977). Reading the lyrics of “Pepeling” through this lens allows the study to connect indigenous artistic expression with established frameworks of character formation rather than treating the *gendhing* as a purely aesthetic artifact.

Based on the above background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the character education values contained in the lyrics of the *gendhing* “Pepeling” by Ki H. Anom Suroto, and (2) examine the implications of these values for character development among elementary school students. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of character education models based on local wisdom at the elementary school level.

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research design. The primary focus was a content analysis of the lyrics of the *gendhing* “Pepeling” by Ki H. Anom Suroto. The corpus of analysis consisted of the complete lyrics of the *gendhing* together with their Javanese linguistic units (words, lines, and stanzas) treated as units of meaning [mohon lengkapi: cantumkan sumber/edisi teks lirik yang digunakan beserta rujukannya].

Two categories of data were used. Primary data were the *gendhing* lyrics obtained from reliable written sources, including scholarly articles and *karawitan* performance documentation. Secondary data were gathered through a literature review on character education, Javanese *karawitan*, and the artistic thought associated with Ki H. Anom Suroto. Sources were selected on the basis of relevance and academic authority with respect to the themes of character education and Javanese performing arts.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) data reduction by selecting and focusing on lyric lines containing moral and spiritual messages; (2) data display through categorization of the identified character values; and (3) conclusion drawing and

verification. To enhance data validity, source triangulation was performed by comparing the meaning of the lyrics across various references and expert opinions on *karawitan*. The study also adopted hermeneutic analysis principles to understand the deeper meanings behind the Javanese linguistic symbols in the *gendhing* (Sugiyono, 2020). Each identified value was then mapped against the moral knowing–feeling–action framework to assess its pedagogical relevance for elementary school learners).

## Result and Discussion

### Result

#### 1. Brief Profile of Ki H. Anom Suroto and the Gendhing “Pepeling”

Ki H. Anom Suroto is one of the most respected maestros of *karawitan* and shadow-puppet masters (*dalang*) in Java. He is recognized not only as an artist but also as a preacher who uses traditional arts as a medium for conveying religious and ethical values. The *gendhing* “Pepeling” is one of his legendary works, functioning simultaneously as a medium for *dakwah* (Islamic preaching) and moral guidance. The word “Pepeling” in Javanese means “reminder” or “warning.” Consistent with this meaning, the *gendhing* contains messages urging human beings to always remember God, fulfill their religious obligations, and maintain good morals in daily life (Waridi, 2000). The popularity of “Pepeling” across both ritual and entertainment settings illustrates how *karawitan* can carry didactic functions while remaining aesthetically engaging (Supanggah, 2002).

#### 2. Analysis of Character Education Values in the Lyrics of Gendhing “Pepeling”

Based on the lyric analysis, the *gendhing* “Pepeling” contains four core character education values that are highly relevant for elementary school students. Each value is presented below together with the relevant Javanese lyric, its English meaning, and its pedagogical significance; a summary mapping is provided in Table 1.

*First, spiritual awareness and commitment to worship.* The lyrics “Wis wancine tansah dielingake, Wis wancine podo nindaake, Adzan wus kumandhang, wayahe sembahyang”—“it is time, we are always reminded; it is time, let us all carry it out; the call to prayer has resounded, it is time to pray”—teach the importance of remembering prayer times and promptly performing them. This value is fundamental in shaping the religious character of elementary school students. As the foundational pillar of national character education, religiosity nurtures responsible individuals with integrity (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017), while at the level of moral action it transforms belief into a consistent daily habit (Lickona, 1991).

*Second, consistency (istiqomah) and discipline.* The lines “Sholat dadi cagak ing agomo, Limang wektu kudu tansah dijogo, Kanthi istiqomah lan sing tumakninah”—“prayer is the pillar of religion; the five daily prayers must always be kept, with consistency (*istiqomah*) and tranquility (*tumakninah*)”—emphasize perseverance and orderliness in worship. For elementary school students, the value of *istiqomah* can be transformed into habits of discipline in studying, completing assignments, and maintaining daily routines. Discipline cultivated through repeated, meaningful practice exemplifies how moral knowing becomes moral action when it is habituated in everyday conduct (Lickona, 1991).

*Third, patience and tawakal (trust in God).* The lyrics “Sabar lan tawakal pasrah sing kuoso, Yen kepengin mbesok munggah suargo”—“be patient and trusting, surrender to the Almighty, if you wish one day to ascend to heaven”—teach patience in facing trials and surrender to God’s will. This value is crucial for building the mental and emotional resilience of elementary school students, who are in a formative stage of character development.

Patience and *tawakal* belong primarily to the dimension of moral feeling, shaping the emotional dispositions that sustain perseverance and self-control (Lickona, 1991).

Fourth, *eling lan waspada* (*being mindful and cautious*). The message “Ngelingono neng ndonya mung sedelo”—“remember that life in this world is only brief”—reminds human beings of the temporariness of worldly life. This value encourages students to avoid arrogance, to do good, and to use their time wisely. The disposition of *eling lan waspada* aligns well with the moral-development stage of elementary school children, who are beginning to understand the concepts of right and wrong, and it integrates moral knowing, feeling, and action into a reflective awareness that guides everyday choices.

**Table 1. Mapping of Character Values in the Gendhing “Pepeling”**

Character Value	Lyric Excerpt (Javanese)	English Meaning	Relevance for Elementary Students
Spiritual awareness & commitment to worship	Adzan wus kumandhang, wayahe sembahyang	The call to prayer has resounded; it is time to pray	Builds religious habits and responsibility
Consistency (istiqomah) & discipline	Kanthe istiqomah lan sing tumakninah	With consistency and tranquility	Forms discipline in study and daily routines
Patience & tawakal	Sabar lan tawakal pasrah sing kuoso	Be patient and trusting, surrender to the Almighty	Strengthens emotional resilience and self-control
Eling lan waspada	Ngelingono neng ndonya mung sedelo	Remember that life in this world is only brief	Encourages humility, mindfulness, and wise use of time

### 3. Implications for Character Education in Elementary Schools

The values contained in the *gendhing* “Pepeling” have strong practical implications for character education in elementary schools, particularly in MI and SD with Javanese cultural foundations. First, the *gendhing* can serve as a contextual and engaging learning medium. Teachers can play “Pepeling” and then guide students in discussing the meaning of its lyrics in simple terms. This activity not only introduces local culture but also internalizes character values naturally and enjoyably, consistent with the broader social and educative functions of music in human life (Wiflihani, 2016).

Second, the values in this *gendhing* can be integrated into several subjects, such as Islamic Religious Education, Pancasila Education, and Arts and Culture. For example, the values of worship observance and consistency can be linked to prayer materials in Islamic Education, while the values of patience and *eling lan waspada* can be connected to self-development and noble-character topics. Such cross-subject integration reflects the holistic cultivation of thought, feeling, and will that underlies indigenous educational philosophy (Dewantara, 1977) and supports the habituation emphasized in character theory (Lickona, 1991).

Third, utilizing traditional *gendhing* such as “Pepeling” supports cultural preservation while strengthening students’ identity as heirs of Javanese culture. Studies on Javanese *gendhing* indicate that engagement with this art can foster inner harmony

and emotional balance (Wijaya et al., 2022), qualities that reinforce the affective dimension of character education

. In a digital era saturated with foreign cultural influences, the presence of local wisdom through traditional arts becomes an effective means of shaping students' character rooted in the noble values of the Indonesian nation.

Practically, teachers may design simple classroom activities such as: guided listening followed by lyric discussion; collaborative translation of selected Javanese lines into Indonesian; reflective journaling on how a value (for example, *istiqomah*) can be applied at home and school; and short performances or *sing-along* sessions that connect the *gendhing* to a targeted character value. These activities position the *gendhing* not as supplementary entertainment but as a structured medium for value internalization.

## Discussion

The findings confirm that the *gendhing* "Pepeling" operates on two levels simultaneously: as an aesthetic *karawitan* work and as a didactic text. This dual character extends prior scholarship that has largely foregrounded the musical or psycho-spiritual dimensions of Javanese *gendhing* (Hastanto, 2009; Wijaya et al., 2022) by demonstrating its explicit pedagogical value for young learners. Read through the moral knowing–feeling–action framework, the four values are not isolated moral messages but a coherent sequence: awareness of religious obligation (knowing), the cultivation of patience and trust (feeling), and the habituation of disciplined, mindful conduct (action) (Lickona, 1991).

Positioned within the national policy on strengthening character education, the religious and disciplinary values of "Pepeling" align directly with the priority character values promoted at the basic-education level (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017), while its delivery through local art embodies the contextual, culturally grounded pedagogy advocated in local-wisdom approaches (Restian, 2022). This alignment suggests that indigenous artistic works can serve as authentic and locally meaningful carriers of nationally mandated values.

This study is nonetheless limited. It relies on textual and hermeneutic analysis of the lyrics rather than on classroom implementation, so the actual effectiveness of the *gendhing* in changing students' character has not been empirically tested. Future research could employ classroom action research or experimental designs to measure the impact of *gendhing*-based learning on character outcomes, and could expand the corpus to other works by Ki H. Anom Suroto for comparative analysis.

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the Javanese *gendhing* "Pepeling" by Ki H. Anom Suroto contains rich character education values that are highly relevant for elementary school students. The main values identified include spiritual awareness and commitment to worship, consistency (*istiqomah*) and discipline, patience and *tawakal*, and the attitude of *eling lan waspada*. These values are conveyed through simple yet profound lyrics, making them readily understandable and internalizable by elementary school-aged children, and they correspond closely to the moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action components of character formation.

Traditional *gendhing* such as "Pepeling" therefore hold great potential as a medium for character education based on local wisdom. It is recommended that elementary school teachers, particularly in MI and SD, utilize Javanese *gendhing* as one of the learning resources for character education. Integrating traditional arts into the curriculum not

only enriches students' learning experiences but also contributes to cultural preservation and to the formation of a generation of noble character rooted in the values of the Indonesian nation. Further empirical studies are encouraged to test the effectiveness of *gendhing*-based character learning in real classroom settings.

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