



The Moral Teachings of Serat Papali and Their Implications for Strengthening Character Education in Indonesian Senior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the moral teachings of Serat Papali and their implications for strengthening character education in Indonesian senior high schools. The research is motivated by the need to integrate local wisdom into modern educational frameworks to address challenges in developing students' moral, social, and cognitive competencies. The study employs a qualitative content analysis method, examining the text of Serat Papali to identify ethical values and their relevance to the eight dimensions of the Senior High School Graduate Profile. The findings reveal that the text provides a coherent moral framework through three main pillars: self-ethics, including reflection, humility, and inner discipline; social ethics, emphasizing harmony and mutual respect; and ethics toward God, representing spiritual maturity. These values contribute to enhancing critical thinking, autonomy, collaboration, citizenship, creativity, productivity, well-being, and ethical communication among students. The study concludes that integrating Serat Papali into formal curricula can strengthen students' character development while preserving cultural identity, offering a sustainable and contextually relevant approach to character education. The research also suggests future studies to explore practical strategies for curriculum integration and to assess the impact of these ethical teachings on student behavior and learning outcomes in diverse educational settings.

1. Introduction

Indonesia's national education system is currently confronted with a profound moral crisis that manifests across multiple levels of schooling. At the primary and secondary levels, moral decline is reflected in increasing cases of substance abuse, violence, academic dishonesty, and risky behaviors among students (Agung, 2018; Carsiwan, 2024). At the higher education level, a similar pattern emerges in the

form of weakened academic integrity. The Research Integrity Risk Index places at least thirteen Indonesian universities in the red zone, indicating systemic vulnerabilities in the ethical foundations of research and scholarly publication (Agusta et al., 2025). This continuum of moral deterioration suggests that the issue is not merely individual misconduct but a deeper structural failure in character formation throughout the education pipeline.

The link between early moral reasoning and later unethical conduct has been well established. Zhao et al. (2024) demonstrate that weak moral reasoning among primary school learners predicts greater susceptibility to dishonest behavior in subsequent educational levels. Heriyati & Ekasari (2020) further argue that moral reasoning interacts with environmental pressures, opportunities for misconduct, and self-justification, shaping students' likelihood of violating ethical norms. Within higher education, pressures driven by competitive academic cultures, output-oriented performance measures, and incentive structures (Karatas & Zeybek, 2020; Lovakov & Teixeira da Silva, 2025) can exacerbate integrity problems, shifting the focus from intrinsic values to productivity metrics.

This moral and cultural shift reflects a broader transformation in Indonesian education—from a tradition rooted in local wisdom to an increasingly productivity-driven, utilitarian paradigm. In response, the Indonesian government introduced a renewed policy through the Ministry of Education Regulation No. 10 of 2025 on the Graduate Competency Standards (SKL), outlining eight dimensions of the Senior High School Graduate Profile: (1) faith and piety, (2) citizenship, (3) critical reasoning, (4) creativity, (5) collaboration, (6) independence, (7) health, and (8) communication. While the framework articulates an ideal character profile, it does not provide clear guidance on how these values should be internalized, especially within culturally vulnerable contexts (Ministry of Education Regulation, 2025). This gap is particularly critical for Senior High School (SMA) students, who occupy a transitional developmental stage before adulthood and active civic participation.

Growing scholarly attention emphasizes the need for character education to be anchored in cultural and philosophical foundations rather than merely policy structures. Indonesian philological traditions offer abundant ethical resources that have historically guided communal life, identity formation, and interpersonal conduct (Sulistiyorini, 2015). In the Javanese worldview, values such as *rukun* (harmonious relations) and *hormat* (respect) shape moral behavior and social interactions (Suseno, 2018; Yuniasih, 2023). Classical manuscripts convey ethical teachings through symbolic language, poetic form, and layered meaning—reflecting the Javanese preference for transmitting moral guidance in subtle, refined forms.

Serat Papali, a manuscript within the *Layang Sewoko* collection (NB 294, National Library of Indonesia), represents one such repository of ethical wisdom. As edited by (Widayati & Mr., 2019), the text contains moral teachings articulated through *tembang* and prose in Javanese script, integrating Javanese, Arabic, and Indonesian linguistic elements. Despite growing recognition of the role of local wisdom in

character education (Abdullah & Anggraeni, 2020; Dewi et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2023), previous studies have tended to describe Javanese moral values in general terms without conceptually aligning them with the specific structure and demands of national character education policies, particularly the SKL 2025 Graduate Profile.

This study addresses this gap by offering a hermeneutic analysis of *Serat Papali* using Paul Ricoeur's interpretive framework, which views texts as dynamic words of meaning open to renewed interpretation through the dialectic of distanciation and appropriation. Such an approach enables classical manuscripts to be re-read in ways that illuminate their contemporary relevance. The goal of this research is to identify the ethical values embedded in *Serat Papali* and analyze their relevance to the eight dimensions of the Senior High School Graduate Profile. By bridging Javanese ethical philosophy with national education policy, this study underscores the essential role of culture as a source of moral substance in shaping the character of Indonesia's young generation.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis to examine the ethical values embedded in *Serat Papali*. The primary data consisted of the transliteration and translation of the manuscript, comprising 30 stanzas from the *Layang Sewoko* collection. The data were in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that reflect Javanese ethical concepts.

Hermeneutic Framework

To interpret the ethical meanings within the text, the study adopted Paul Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, which views interpretation as a dialectical movement between distanciation and appropriation. Distanciation denotes the productive distance created by historical, cultural, and linguistic gaps between the text and the reader, granting the text autonomy to generate new meanings. Appropriation, in turn, represents the reader's engagement in re-actualizing these meanings within contemporary contexts. As Fithri, (2014) and Verdianto, (2020) explain, distanciation involves an active effort to bridge cultural otherness, while Widyasmoro, (2023) highlights its role in maintaining reflective awareness of textual structures and contexts. Ricoeur's framework enables classical Javanese manuscripts to be interpreted critically while acknowledging their cultural depth and symbolic layers.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using Hatch's interpretive analysis model (Hatch, 2023). The process began with an initial holistic reading of *Serat Papali* to understand its

general meaning structure and moral orientation. Following this, textual units in the form of words, expressions, and passages that reflected ethical teachings or moral worldviews were identified and extracted. These textual elements were then organized into inductive categories based on recurring value patterns emerging from the manuscript. Each category was subsequently interpreted in depth using Franz Magnis-Suseno's conceptual framework of Javanese ethics, which emphasizes the foundational principles of *rukun* (harmony) and *hormat* (respect) (Hardiman, 2020). Finally, the interpreted ethical categories were systematically connected to the eight dimensions of the Senior High School Graduate Profile outlined in Ministry of Education Regulation No. 10/2025, enabling an evaluation of their relevance to contemporary character education policy (Ministry of Education Regulation, 2025).

Analytical Rigor

Analytical rigor in this study was ensured through several strategies. The use of multiple theoretical lenses, specifically Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics and Suseno's framework of Javanese ethics, provided theoretical triangulation, allowing the interpretations to be examined from complementary philosophical perspectives. Auditability was maintained through transparent documentation of coding decisions, category formation, and interpretive steps to ensure that the analytical process could be traced and evaluated consistently. Contextual validity was reinforced by grounding the interpretations in established cultural scholarship on Javanese ethical traditions, thereby ensuring that the meanings derived from the text remained faithful to its cultural and philosophical context.

3. Results and Discussion

An analysis of the *papali* pupuh Dhandanggula reveals a structured Javanese ethical system that serves as a guide for behavior to achieve the highest spiritual goal, namely *slamet* (safety). This ethical system is fundamentally based on three interrelated pillars. The first pillar is ethics towards oneself, which serves as an internal foundation through inner discipline. The second pillar is social ethics, which embodies horizontal harmony through the principles of harmony and respect. The third pillar is ethics towards God, which regulates the vertical relationship between humans and God. To map these findings, details of each ethical pillar are presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Classification of Java Ethics

Javanese Ethics	Aspect	Description
Ethics Toward the Self	Mawas Diri (Self-Reflection)	This aspect constitutes a spiritual foundation centered on self-understanding as a prerequisite for entering the inner path of Javanese mysticism. It requires self-purification (<i>memasuh dhiri</i>) and continuous introspection (<i>mawas diri</i>) to comprehend <i>sangkan paraning dumadi</i> (the origin and

			purpose of human existence) as the initial step toward achieving life perfection.
	Andhap (Humility)	Asor	A moral disposition rooted in humility and modesty. <i>Serat Papali</i> emphasizes this value through strict prohibitions against all forms of arrogance, greed, pride, boasting, and even intellectual hubris. This aspect cultivates self-awareness by discouraging the three cardinal forms of arrogance: <i>adigang</i> (physical arrogance), <i>adigung</i> (social or power-based arrogance), and <i>adiguna</i> (intellectual arrogance).
	Laku (Ascetic Discipline)	Prihatin	A discipline of spiritual refinement aimed at cultivating inner sensitivity and moral clarity. It is manifested through cautiousness (<i>ngati-ati</i>) and ascetic practices (<i>tirakat</i>). This includes refraining from indulgence in desires and observing <i>cegah dhahar kelawan guling</i> (reducing food and sleep) as a form of bodily and emotional self-control.
Social Ethics	Rukun (Harmony)		A principle emphasizing social harmony founded on compassion, empathy, and noble conduct. It manifests through <i>tepa selira</i> (consideration for others), maintaining familial bonds, and cultivating forgiveness. The maxim <i>rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah</i> underscores its function in preventing social tension and preserving collective stability.
	Hormat (Respect)		A socially regulated attitude expressed through <i>ungguh-ungguh</i> (polite conduct) requiring propriety in speech and behavior according to social hierarchy, especially respect toward elders. Psychologically, this attitude is reinforced by three internalized social emotions: <i>wedi</i> (fear), <i>isin</i> (shame), and <i>sungkan</i> (deference).
Ethics Toward God	Nrimo ing Pandum (Acceptance of Divine Decree)		A spiritual disposition marked by sincere acceptance of God's will and provisions. This attitude frees individuals from excessive ambition and disappointment, enabling them to engage in acts of service (<i>ngabdi</i>) with genuine humility and without ulterior motives.
	Isin (Sacred Shame)		<i>Isin</i> functions as a moral regulatory mechanism with two dimensions. The primary theological dimension is feeling shame before God, fostering awareness that God oversees all actions. This is strengthened by its social dimension, whereby one feels shame before others when violating moral norms.
	Manunggaling Kawula Gusti (Union with the Divine)		The ultimate spiritual telos in Javanese mysticism, referring to the mystical union between human and Divine. At this stage, <i>ngelmu</i> (rational knowledge) transforms into intuitive awareness or <i>rasa sejati</i> . This represents <i>slamet</i> , the highest spiritual equilibrium, attained through <i>laku rasa</i> , wherein the human self becomes united with the ultimate source of truth and knowledge.

Table 2. Relevance of Javanese Ethics to Senior High School Graduate Profile Dimensions

Senior High School Graduate Profile Dimensions	Relevance of Javanese Ethical Values in <i>Serat Papali</i>
1. Faith, Noble Character, and Responsibility	<i>Manunggaling Kawula Gusti</i> (mystical union with God), <i>Isin</i> (moral shame before God), <i>Nrimo ing Pandum</i> (accepting divine decree), <i>Laku Prihatin</i> (spiritual discipline and self-restraint)

2. Citizenship and Diversity	<i>Rukun</i> (social harmony), <i>Hormat</i> (respectful conduct), <i>Andhap Asor</i> (humility), <i>Tepa Selira</i> (empathy and consideration)
3. Critical Reasoning	<i>Mawas Diri</i> (self-reflection), <i>Ngati-ati</i> (prudence/carefulness), prohibition of <i>Adiguna</i> (intellectual arrogance)
4. Creativity and Productivity	<i>Sepi ing pamrih</i> , <i>rame ing gawe</i> (selfless dedication and active contribution)
5. Collaboration	<i>Rukun</i> (harmonious cooperation), <i>Tepa Selira</i> (mutual consideration)
6. Independence and Initiative	<i>Mawas Diri</i> (self-awareness), <i>Laku Prihatin</i> (discipline fostering resilience and agency)
7. Physical and Mental Well-being	<i>Slamet</i> (inner balance and holistic well-being), <i>Cegah dhahar kelawan guling</i> (moderation in food and rest)
8. Ethical and Effective Communication	<i>Hormat</i> (politeness through <i>unggah-ungguh</i>), <i>Ngati-ati</i> (verbal self-control and prudence)

The first stanza of Serat Papali conveys a fundamental teaching, namely that words and deeds are the core of morality. The text opens with an explanation of the Papali language:

Stanza (3-5)

basa papali tegese,
tindak kang wus kapungkur,
kang pahedah ing bener becik,
yen niku kalakona,
selamet tinemu,
berkat i saterah ira,
manggih arja ucanapa pali singgih,

Translation

artinya bahasa papali,
perbuatan yang sudah terjadi,
yang bermanfaat di kebenaran dan kebaikan
jika itu dilakukan,
ditemukan keselamatan,
berkah seluruh keturunannya,
bertemu keselamatan, nyatanya hal-hal buruk

The opening stanzas of Serat Papali (verses 3–5) articulate the foundational principles of Javanese ethics, which center on the relationship between one’s actions (*tindak kang wus kapungkur*) and their ensuing moral–spiritual consequences. The term *basa papali* is understood as teachings concerning actions that have been carried out and that embody the values of *bener–becik* (truth and goodness); when these values are practiced, they lead to *slamet*, or holistic safety and well-being, for both the individual and their descendants. The concept of *slamet* extends beyond mere protection from harm and refers instead to a state of inner and cosmic equilibrium. Wibawa (2013) characterizes *slamet* as “a peaceful state of equanimity,” a condition of emotional stability and tranquility that constitutes a central moral orientation of Javanese society. Pasopati et al. (2025) further elucidates that *slamet* represents harmony between the *jagad alit* (the human microcosm) and the *jagad ageng* (the universal macrocosm), indicating that morality in Javanese thought encompasses social as well as cosmological

dimensions. Thus, this stanza teaches that actions aligned with goodness guide individuals toward holistic safety, reinforce cosmic order, and confer blessings across generations. It demonstrates that Serat Papali positions ethics as a path toward spiritual, moral, and social harmony, the essence of the Javanese philosophical worldview.

Stanza 12 (1-3)

sing sapa andhasaraken becik,
nora wurung tembe nemu arja,
muwah saturun-turune,

Translation

barang siapa yang mendasarkan hal baik,
menemukan keselamatan,
dan juga keturunannya,

The keyword *keselamatan* fundamentally refers to a pivotal and central concept deeply embedded in the Javanese worldview, specifically known as *slamet*. In essence, this concept signifies that *slamet* is not merely physical safety but a profound state of cosmic harmony, which is meticulously achieved by consciously aligning oneself with the rhythms of the universe and adhering to God's divine order (Sulistyorini, 2024). This philosophical foundation is clearly evident and comprehensively reflected in the following text is evident in the following text excerpt:

Stanzas 17 (1-7)

banyu bumi angin miwah langit,
surya condra kalawan kartika,
puniku sanake kabeh,
janma kang salah iku,
kabeh dadi satru nireki,
mulane ana lara,
walat kang tinemu,

Translation

air bumi angin dan langit,
sinar bulan dan juga bintang,
itu semua kerabatnya
manusia yang salah itu,
semua jadi musuhnya,
mulanya ada sakit,
bertemu kwalat,

The text above emphasizes that the universe is our kin, and when humans commit wrongdoing (ethical violations), they not only harm themselves but also damage their relationship with the universe. Consequently, nature will become an enemy, manifesting itself in the form of calamity. Salvation is the goal of the Papali Scroll, and the text contains teachings explaining the actions/path that must be taken to achieve salvation. The foundation of these actions is ethics towards oneself. This

text focuses on controlling desires and inner awareness. In addition to the foundation of self-ethics, one must practice social ethics, which are in line with Suseno (2018) two main principles, namely harmony and respect. The pinnacle of this teaching is the vertical relationship between humans and God. Self-ethics and social ethics are the foundations for achieving this theological goal. Furthermore, these values are described as follows.

Ethics towards oneself

Self-awareness

The first step toward salvation is self-awareness (introspection). This is described in the text below.

Stanza 4 (7-10)

singgahna ja ayun,
kang lastari ing pangangkah,
aja sira lumaku dipun keringi,
sawruh-wruhe priyongga,

Translation

jangan berniat menghindari,
teguhlah dalam niat,
jangan kamu berjalan menyimpang,
setahu-tahunya diri sendiri,

The text is an invitation to have determination in doing good, good intentions to do something and avoid deviation, and to recognize oneself. It is an invitation to recognize one's true self. This self-recognition is important to move on to a higher stage, such as *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*. The concept of “*setahu-tahunya diri sendiri*” serves as a fundamental requirement before one can move on to a higher spiritual stage. Therefore, self-recognition is an essential first step in walking the path of spirituality. In a broader perspective, O. Y. Pamungkas et al. (2021) explain that contemplating the true nature of life is an effort by humans to understand their position in the universe. Life is seen as a bridge connecting the real and invisible dimensions. Therefore, for the Javanese people, the universe is considered a sacred unity. This understanding makes us realize that the goal of humans is to return to God. This is in line with Marwati (2025) view, which identifies Javanese mysticism as a philosophy of life oriented towards the search for perfection in life. The process of understanding the origin and purpose of life is a process of self-discovery. To achieve this glory, O. Y. Pamungkas et al. (2021) emphasizes that through the character of Werkudara in the Dewa Ruci manuscript, one must dare to purify oneself to obtain the glory of life by removing impure traits and striving for self-awareness. In self-recognition, one must recognize the challenges that will hinder them. As in the quote below:

Stanza 9 (3-10)

ing ngaurip akeh lir e,

den weruh ing pakewuh,
ewuh iku tigang prakawis,
dhihin ewuh pangucap,
pindho ing pandulu,
pingtri ewuh sajroning tyas,
yen katara alane sajroning ngati,
wanda dadi panggrayangan,

Translation

di kehidupan banyak rintangannya,
jika tahu halangannya,
halangan itu ada tiga perkara,
pertama halangan perkataan,
kedua di dalam penglihatan,
ketiga halangan di dalam hati,
Jika terlihat kejelekannya di dalam hati
Badan jadi tuduhan jelek

The effort to control base desires (hawa nafsu) requires individuals to recognize and overcome the enemies that reside within themselves. The text identifies three obstacles that hinder moral conduct, distortions arising from the lisan, mata, and hati. These three impediments are manifestations of base desires that must be restrained. In Javanese spirituality (spiritualisme kejawen), the concrete manifestations of these impulses are formulated as *ma lima* (the five prohibitions). Bistara & Jali (2024) describe *ma lima* as prohibitions against *madat* (drug use), *madon* (sexual misconduct), *maling* (stealing), *main* (gambling), and *minum* (intoxication). These prohibitions essentially represent the consequences of an unrestrained lisan, mata, and hati. The text also offers psychological insight by emphasizing that the hati is the principal source of human behavior. To attain purity of heart, Wahab et al. (2024) explain that the core moral teachings are implemented through four forms of *laku* (spiritual disciplines), particularly *laku ati* (inner cultivation) and *laku rasa* (refinement of intuitive sensitivity). This underscores that overcoming the inner enemies must begin with the discipline of the inner self so that intention remains *lulus* (pure) and free from the contamination of base desires.

Laku Prihatin

Stanza 13 (1-8)

balik iku tirunen ta kaki,
jan matatrap sira kasihana,
ambilen iku sawabe,
amberkati satuhu,
nora wening yen dipun aji,
tiniru lagi kena,
pambekane alus,
pangucape ngarah-arrah,

Translation

kembali itu tirulah orang tua,

memang cocok kamu kasihanilah,
ambillah itu sebabnya,
memberkati sebenarnya,
tidak bersih jika dinilai,
juga bisa ditiru,
wataknya halus,
perkataannya berhati-hati,

Stanza 19 (1-6)

yen sirarsa kaharjaning dadi,
den nakarem sira dhangir badan,
kang rong prakara ywa supe,
kang dhihin cegah turu,
kapindhone ywa karem bukti,
pomeku lekasana,

Translation

jika kamu ingin memperoleh keselamatan,
tidak menuruti kesenangan jasmani,
dua perkara jangan lupa,
yang pertama mengurangi tidur,
yang kedua menyukai bukti,
lakukanlah dengan sungguh-sungguh

The teachings in verse 13 emphasize the importance of *tirakat* (ascetic discipline) and caution as the foundation for building good character. This verse encourages following the example of parents or elders who are described as having refined character and practicing *gunem ngati-ati* (careful speech). Such an example highlights cautious behavior, polite speech, and gentle manners as moral qualities. The emphasis on *ngati-ngati* reflects that Javanese ethics contain a psychological dimension of self-control, which is a prerequisite for forming a refined and guarded personality. Verse 19 reinforces this teaching by providing guidance toward attaining safety. The prohibition against following pleasures and the instruction to reduce sleep illustrate *tirakat* as a form of spiritual discipline. This teaching aligns with *Serat Wulangreh*, which advises *cegah dhahar kelawan guling* (reducing food and sleep) as a means of controlling desire. Self-control resonates with the spiritual dimension of *Sufi mysticism* in Islam, which aims at bringing oneself closer to God and cultivating awareness of nature as a living creation. In the Javanese worldview, a true Javanese person is one who practices such ethics and culture. Both perspectives place self-control as the main foundation in forming a whole and balanced personality (Uin et al., 2021). These two verses illustrate character formation aimed at refining conduct and sharpening inner awareness to achieve a state known as *rasa rumangsa*. Peristiano et al. (2025) define *rasa rumangsa* as the process of fully understanding oneself, beginning with sensory self-recognition and culminating in profound inner comprehension. Through the refinement of character achieved by *tirakat*, a person becomes capable of acting appropriately and maintaining social well-being and harmonious relationships with others.

Andhap asor

Stanza 2 (2-4)

aja sira tyas watek surakah,
aja colong calimude,
aja watak kumingsun,

Translation

jangan hatimu bersifat serakah,
jangan suka mencuri,
jangan bersifat angkuh,

Stanza 9 (1-2)

dene ulah becik lan utami,
aja sira ngegungaken raga,

Translation

jika sikap baik dan utama,
jangan kamu menganggunakan raga,

Stanza 11 (1-6)

aja sira watak suka sugih,
aja sira watak ngajak tukar,
aja ngandelken ngelmune,
aja watak anguthuh,
aja watak ngaruh-aruhi,
aja watak angiwa,

Translation

jangan kamu bersifat suka pamer,
jangan kamu bersifat mengajak bertengkar,
jangan mengandalkan pengetahuan,
jangan bersifat tidak punya malu,
jangan bersifat mempengaruhi,
jangan bersifat menyimpang,

Stanza 12 (4)

aja watak kumingsun,

terjemahan:

jangan bersifat angkuh,

The exhortation to embody *andhap asor* indicates that the text underscores a strict and consistent rejection of all forms of arrogance. These prohibitions encompass greed, theft, pride, ostentation, provocation, and even intellectual conceit. Collectively, these teachings affirm *andhap asor*, humility as a foundational principle of Javanese ethics (Munawaroh & Setyawan, 2024). The rejection of arrogance functions as a moral discipline intended to cultivate self-awareness, self-restraint, and the ability to position oneself appropriately within social relations (V. U. Pratiwi, 2021).

Javanese ethical teachings articulate three principal prohibitions: *adigang*, *adigung*, and *adiguna*. Verse 9 (1–2) prohibits glorifying one's physical form, reflecting *adigang*, or reliance on physical strength. Verses 2 and 11 forbid arrogance and display, aligning with *adigung*, the conceit of power. Verse 11 also discourages relying on intellectual superiority, corresponding to *adiguna*. The coherence of these prohibitions demonstrates the text's intention to prevent individuals from falling into illusions of superiority that can disrupt social harmony. The identification of physical, social, and intellectual forms of arrogance reflects the centrality of *andhap asor* as a moral prerequisite for attaining *laku utama* and developing awareness of one's limitations. As O. Pamungkas et al. (2018) notes, boastfulness and conceit are considered unethical traits that disturb cosmic balance. In *Sipatul Ngulaki*, humility is characterized by consistently kind speech, and a virtuous person responds to mistreatment with goodness and remains open-hearted even toward those who may seem unforgivable (Suharsono; Mustansyir, 2020). Self-ethics in this text serve as a spiritual foundation for cultivating ethics toward God. This orientation shapes one's character according to inner discipline. The control of pride is integrated with *laku prihatin*, involving restraint of bodily pleasures to enhance moral sensitivity. This illustrates that one cannot attain perfection while governed by ego.

Social Ethics

Rukun (Harmony)

Stanza 3 (1-7)

bagus iku dudu emas picis,
 dudu rupa dudu sasandhangan,
 wong bagus pakewuh lir e,
 kang ambek tyas rahayu,
 asih marang padhaning janmi,
 perak ati warnanya,
 resep kang andulu,

translation

bagus itu bukan uang emas,
 bukan rupa bukan pakaian,
 seperti orang yang menghadapi rintangan dengan baik,
 dengan hatinya yang baik,
 kasih sayang kepada sesama manusia,
 wujudnya menyenangkan,
 menyedapkan pandangannya,

This is evident in the teaching that emphasizes that goodness does not depend on wealth, appearance, or looks, but rather on the nobility of the heart that is able to face difficulties with kindness and provide comfort to others. The phrase “love for fellow human beings” illustrates that goodness will radiate through attitudes that are pleasant to others, reflecting the principle of *tepa selira*, which is to put oneself in the position of others and treat others well. The Javanese have an expression,

rukun agawe crah agawe bubrah, which means that a harmonious life, full of cooperation, will bring about social strength (Ni'am, 2024). In addition, the principle of harmony is also reflected in stanza 10.

Stanza 10 (4-10)

dene pingkalihipun,
isin marang padhaning ngurip,
yen kalakon nawirang,
sapa ing kang ayun,
dipun atut a kakadang,
pawong sanak aja pegat ngati-yati,
cineda dadi ala,

translation

lalu yang kedua,
malu kepada sesama hidup,
jika bertindak memalukan,
siapa yang menginginkannya,
rukun dengan saudara,
saudara perempuan jangan diputus,
dicela jadi buruk

The above verse emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relationships with others and family. The teaching “be harmonious with your siblings, do not sever ties with your sisters” reinforces that family relationships are the foundation of social balance. Harmony is an attitude of maintaining balance through respect, tolerance, and self-control. In line with this cultural wisdom, Hardiman (2020) states that the principle of harmony serves to prevent social tension and maintain collective peace in society. Furthermore, these essential social values are conveyed at their peak in the verse below:

Stanza 15 (3-10)

mring wong cilik dipun sareh,
den amrih tulusipun,
ja sadaya-daya ing pamrih,
aja sira anacah,
parentah ing batur,
den bisa agawe suka,
rengkuhen tanak putu wor kulit daging,
den agung apuranta,

translation

terhadap orang kecil pun sabar,
supaya ketulusannya,
jangan semuanya pamrih,
jangan kamu mencacah,
memerintah abdi,
jika bisa membuat suka,
rangkullah saudara cucu yang sedarah,

yang besar pengampunannya,

The verse above emphasizes compassion, patience, and sincerity in relating to others. The teaching “be patient even with the lowly, so that your sincerity is not self-serving” shows the importance of humility and selflessness. In Javanese philosophy, this value is rooted in the principle of “*sepi ing pamrih, rame ing gawe*” which means to be silent from personal interests, but to work hard for the common good. Then the advice “embrace your blood relatives, who are forgiving” emphasizes the importance of strengthening brotherhood through forgiveness. This value reflects Javanese social ethics that are oriented towards togetherness.

Hormat (Respect)

Stanza 8 (9-10)

lawan aja sira umpah-umpah kaki,
yeku pan tanpa guna,

translation

serta jangan kamu berkata jelek kepada orang tua,
itu tidak berguna,

The text above emphasizes respect for parents and elders. This teaching contains the moral meaning that disrespecting parents is useless and violates the order that governs relationships between people. This reflects manners or behavior that require a person to maintain politeness in speech and behavior in accordance with their social position. The principle of respect in the Javanese view is to maintain harmony between the younger and older generations. For Javanese children, education is achieved through the internalization of three feelings, namely *wedi*, *isin*, and *sungkan*. This is learned in social situations that require showing respect (Al & Arenggoasih, 2021). Javanese people feel *isin* if they do not show proper respect to those who deserve it (Tadjuddin et al., 2019; Umar et al., 2021).

Ethics towards God

Nrimo ing Pandum

The ultimate culmination of the moral teachings in Serat Papali essentially lies in the profound theological dimension, specifically regarding the vertical relationship between humans and God. All prior teachings focusing on self-control and social harmony serve as a necessary spiritual foundation to adequately prepare humans to achieve a higher of divine consciousness. In Javanese ethics, closeness to God is attainable and achieved through maintaining inner order while simultaneously and upholding social balance. This concept is clearly illustrated in the text excerpt below:

Stanza 3 (8-10)

saweneh kang amangeran,
ing mas picis ana marang busanadi,

ana marang kabisan,
translation
pemberiannya ditujukan kepada Tuhan,
berupa uang emas dan pakaian yang indah,
berupa kemampuan

The text emphasizes the values of sincerity and surrender in doing good. The phrase “*his gifts are intended for God, in the form of money and beautiful clothes, in the form of abilities*” contains the message that all forms of kindness must be intended for God. This text places God at the center of moral orientation. This orientation is deeply rooted in the Javanese worldview, which believes that God is not distant from humans. This is in line with the teachings of *sedulur papat limo pancet*, which, as explained by Rubaidi (2019), teaches about the existence of God in human life. Awareness of God's presence is the basis for why all ethical actions must be returned to Him. According to Ismail et al. (2019), the implementation of this awareness takes the form of *sumarah* (obedience) and *narima ing pandum* (accepting whatever is given to them), which, together with strong determination and real effort, become *gondelan* (guidelines) for Javanese people in their daily lives. Furthermore, spiritual depth is emphasized in verses 4 and 15, as follows:

Stanza 4 (1-3)
ana mangeran ngelmu nireki,
ana mangeran ing teguh tatag,
ana mangeran japane,
translation
pengetahuannya ditujukan kepada Tuhan,
keteguhannya ditujukan kepada Tuhan,
doanya ditujukan kepada Tuhan,

Spiritual orientation towards God through three main aspects of humanity, namely knowledge, steadfastness, and prayer. The text reflects the belief that all human potential, whether intellectual, moral, or spiritual, is directed towards drawing closer to God. This principle describes Javanese spirituality, namely *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*. In the framework of Javanese ethics, knowledge has no value without sincerity, steadfastness loses its meaning without devotion, and prayer is perfect when accompanied by humility. This text shows moral perfection, with God as the source and goal of all actions. In the framework of Javanese ethics, knowledge is worthless without sincerity, determination loses its meaning without devotion, and prayer is perfect when accompanied by humility. The harmony of these basic values is reflected in the expression “*ajine tekad, ilmune pasrah, rapalane adile Gusti*”. This expression conveys the message to align one's intentions with God's will, understand the essence of obedience, and place trust in God's justice in every aspect of life. For the Javanese people, the integration of intention and determination is obedience to God's justice, which is called the achievement of true life (Idham, 2021; Subrata, 2018). Furthermore, verse 15 deepens this teaching with the concept of *nrimo ing pandum*, which is to accept God's gifts wholeheartedly.

Stanza 15 (1-4)

yen sira wis antuksih ing Widhi,
nadyan wong Ngagung yen apa rentah,
mring wong cilik dipun sareh,
den amrih tulusipun,

translation

jika kamu sudah menerima dari Tuhan,
meskipun orang yang agung jika sudah runtuh,
terhadap orang kecil pun sabar,
supaya ketulusannya,

The concept of *nrimo* is an inner practice that frees individuals from ambition and disappointment. This attitude describes someone who sincerely devotes themselves to seeking blessings and inner peace. The attitude of *nrimo* is a process of purifying oneself from selfishness and physical pleasures so that humans can focus entirely on spiritual practices leading to salvation. According to Sinaga (2022), the virtues that are considered to be able to control the lust of anger are (1) *nrima*; (2) *ngajeni*, respecting others; (3) *sendika dhawuh*, not hurting others; (4) *trima*, choosing to remain silent to a certain extent.

Isin

Stanza 10 (2-5)

isin iku apan rong prakara,
dhihin isin Pangerane,
dene pingkalhipun,
isin marang padhaning ngurip,

translation

malu itu awalnya dua perkara,
pertama malu kepada Tuhannya,
lalu yang kedua,
malu kepada sesama hidup

The text above comprehensively presents the intertwined concepts of ethics and moral psychology through the foundational teachings of two distinct types of shame, namely shame towards God and fellow human beings. This concept specifically refers to the significant moral value of *isin* in Javanese culture, which functions as a mechanism of moral control. Hardiman (2020) elaborately explains *isin* as a social feeling that acts as a controller in maintaining behavior in accordance with social norms. Shame towards God reflects that a person does good because of their awareness of God's presence as a watcher.

Manunggaling Kawula Gusti

The ultimate goal of all practices and spirituality is described in verse 28, namely:

Stanza 28

iya iku kang wus prapteng gaib,
kang wus jumaneng ing dhewek ira,
kang wus weruh kahanane,
jatine manungseku,
tan prabeda ana nireki,
iku kang wus sampurna,
wekasaning kawruh,
nora kena den gagampang,
lamun wurung waspada marang kang jati,
sajatine kang murba,

translation

iya itu yang sudah datang dari gaib,
yang sudah selamat di dirinya,
yang sudah tahu tempatnya,
sejatinya manusia itu,
tidak berbeda,
itu yang sudah sempurna,
selesainya pengetahuan,
tidak kena kemudahan,
apabila tidak jadi waspada terhadap yang sejati,
sejatinya yang kuasa,

The text above illustrates the ultimate goal of Javanese spirituality, namely the attainment of *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*, the mystical union between the human being and the Divine. At this stage, *ngelmu* (knowledge) transforms beyond rationality and becomes an intuitive awareness that guides a person toward the experience of true *rasa*. This encounter is understood as the culmination of the spiritual journey, in which the human being no longer moves toward God but becomes unified with Him. In this phase of “the completion of knowledge,” one attains *slamet*, defined as the highest spiritual equilibrium, absolute and free from all worldly attachments.

To understand this attainment, Sugiarto & Suparno (2025) explain that in the Javanese worldview, *rasa* is the subtlest and most latent element of the human conscience, the place where God dwells and where the soul is united. *Rasa* is not merely emotion or *rasa njaba* driven by desire; rather, it is *rasa njero* (inner feeling), the profound stirring of spiritual consciousness. In Javanese teachings, the levels of thought and body must ultimately culminate in *rasa*, for it is within *rasa* that God resides. Based on this understanding, Wahab et al. (2024) affirm that through *laku rasa*, the spiritual seeker encounters the Divine. This encounter represents the apex of the spiritual journey, in which the human being becomes one with God.

The Relevance of Javanese Ethics in Serat Papali to Character Education in High School Graduate Profiles

Javanese ethics in Serat Papali show strong relevance in supporting the eight dimensions of the High School Graduate Profile (Ministry of Education Regulation, 2025). The integration of local wisdom into character education is a strategy that has been proven effective culturally and pedagogically, as (Hidayat et al., 2025) asserts that quality multicultural education must link global values with local traditions. Therefore, the Papali manuscript can be viewed not only as a literary text, but also as an ethical reference that is compatible with contemporary moral development theory and 21st-century learning needs (Idana & Insani, 2024; Ingias et al., 2022). The first dimension, ethical orientation toward God and moral maturity, is embodied in teachings such as *malu kepada Tuhan*, *nrimo ing pandum*, and *laku prihatin*, which cultivate moral awareness and self-regulation. Krisna et al. (2020) found that the practice of *laku prihatin* in Javanese cultural pesantrens in Yogyakarta enhanced students' moral discipline and spiritual awareness. Likewise, Sugiarto & Suparno (2025) demonstrated that integrating local religious narratives in high school curricula in West Sumatra promoted autonomous ethical decision-making, consistent with Kohlberg's post-conventional stage of moral development (Frey, 2018; Kohlberg, 1971). The second dimension, appreciation of diversity and intercultural interaction, is reinforced by the principles of *rukun*, *hormat*, and *andhap asor*, which foster social empathy and reduce stereotyping. (Widayati & Pratiwi, 2019) found that practicing *andhap asor* significantly develops intercultural competence, aligning with Munawaroh & Setyawan (2024) on the predictive role of intercultural humility.

The third dimension, the ability to critically evaluate information and make evidence-based decisions, is reflected in *ngati-ngati* (prudence) and *mawas diri* (self-reflection). Ajeng Rahadini & Nurhayati, (2022) demonstrated that caution and reflective practices in classical Javanese texts improve students' critical media literacy, while Kurniasari (2021) highlighted that local wisdom, based instruction cultivates intellectual humility, a core component of critical thinking (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017). The fourth dimension, productive behavior, is expressed through the principle *sepi ing pamrih*, *rame ing gawe*, which encourages students to work for collective benefit rather than individual gain. Rahayuningsih, (2022) reported that this collective-oriented work ethic enhances sustainable achievement motivation, consistent with Diana et al. (2025) on prosocial orientation. The fifth dimension, caring and collaborative capacity, is internalized through *tepa selira* and *rukun*, which strengthen collaborative skills in project-based learning. Santika & Wuryandani (2025) found that *tepa selira* positively influences students' cooperation, in line with Krishantari (2025) social-emotional learning framework.

The sixth dimension, reflective habits, responsibility, and initiative, corresponds with *mawas diri* and the disciplinary practice of *laku prihatin*, fostering autonomous learning and self-control. Lahmi et al. (2022) showed that reflective values embedded in classical Javanese texts improve self-regulated learning, consistent with (Zimmerman, 1989; Zimmermann, 2021) emphasis on self-evaluation as a cornerstone of autonomous learning. The seventh dimension, physical and mental well-being, is reinforced through *cegah dhahar kelawan guling* (moderation in eating and sleeping) and the concept of *slamet*, which emphasizes

inner balance and disciplined living. Idham (2021) found that Javanese ascetic practices enhance self-discipline and positively impact adolescents' mental health, consistent with Ryff's psychological well-being framework (Roslan et al., 2017). The eighth dimension, ethical communication, is fostered through *unggah-ungguh basa* and the principle of *hormat*, guiding students to interact politely and responsibly, including in digital contexts. (Rosana et al., 2019; Yafie et al., 2024) found that these values reduce online hate speech and foster constructive communication, aligning with Suhirman et al. (2021) concept of responsible digital interaction.

Overall, *Serat Papali* provides a coherent ethical and pedagogical framework across all eight dimensions of the Senior High School Graduate Profile (Siswanto et al., 2025). Its embedded local values cultivate mature moral, cognitive, and social competencies while fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical communication (Arastoopour Irgens et al., 2022; Astuti et al., 2019; Nurdiansah et al., 2021; V. H. Pratiwi, 2022). Integrating these teachings into formal curricula strengthens students' cultural identity, rendering character education more contextual, relevant, and sustainable, while simultaneously addressing global demands for 21st-century competencies (Siswanto, 2021). Consequently, *Serat Papali* offers both empirical and philosophical contributions that are highly significant for character education in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

The research concludes that the ethical values contained in *Serat Papali* offer substantial conceptual and practical contributions to character education in Indonesian senior high schools. The text provides a coherent moral framework through three main pillars: self-ethics, including reflection, humility, and disciplined conduct; social ethics emphasizing harmony and mutual respect; and ethics toward God as the foundation of spiritual maturity. These values align with the eight dimensions of the Senior High School Graduate Profile, supporting critical thinking, autonomy, collaboration, citizenship, creativity, productivity, well-being, and ethical communication. The study demonstrates that integrating local wisdom into modern curricula can strengthen students' moral, social, and cognitive competencies while reinforcing cultural identity. Furthermore, the findings suggest that *Serat Papali* can serve as a sustainable and contextually relevant resource for character education, bridging traditional philosophy with contemporary educational practices. Future research could explore practical strategies for curriculum integration and investigate the impact of these values on student behavior and decision-making in diverse educational settings. Overall, the research confirms that Javanese ethical teachings provide an effective and culturally grounded foundation for developing well-rounded, socially responsible, and morally mature graduates.

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