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Analysis of the Legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta as a Source of Character Values Based on Thomas Lickona's Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the character values embedded in the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta based on Thomas Lickona's character theory. Folklore, especially legends, plays an essential role as a medium of character education because it conveys moral messages, ethics, and local wisdom relevant to young generations. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with content analysis of twelve legends compiled in Dhanu Priyo Prabowo's Anthology of Folklore of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The findings reveal that each legend contains character values categorized into Lickona's three dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These values include loyalty, religiosity, hard work, sacrifice, solidarity, environmental awareness, and integrity. Furthermore, the results are in line with the five core values of Indonesia's Strengthening Character Education program (PPK), namely religious, nationalist, independent, cooperative, and integrity. Therefore, Yogyakarta's legends can serve as contextual learning resources in language, literature, and character education, while simultaneously contributing to the preservation of local wisdom.

1. Introduction

Character education is one of the important agendas in Indonesia's national education system in the 21st century. The increasingly complex challenges of globalization not only bring technological developments but also raise various moral and social issues among the younger generation (Zubaidah, 2020). The phenomenon of moral decline, low responsibility, reduced social awareness, and rampant deviant behavior shows that education should not only emphasize cognitive aspects but also strengthen affective and psychomotor dimensions (Nafi'a & Gumiandari, 2024). Thus, character education becomes a fundamental foundation in shaping a generation with integrity and the ability to face modern life.

In this context, folklore plays a significant role because it contains moral messages, ethics, and local wisdom passed down across generations (Hidayat et al., 2024). As cultural heritage, folk tales serve as informal educational media that internalize noble values (Anggreni & Fachrurrazi, 2025) which align with national education goals.

One form of folklore rich in moral teachings is legends. Legends, believed to have actually happened and related to certain figures or places, are full of values relevant to daily life (Trisnasasti, 2021). In the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), various legends offer literary interest as well as potential sources of character values (Arwansyah et al., 2024). This potential appears in the Anthology of Folktales of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which presents twelve legends (Prabowo, 2004) : Kiai Jegot, Ki Pemanahan, Gunung yang Berbau Harum, Putri Pembayun, Dua Orang Sakti, Sebuah Desa Bernama Kasuran, Syekh Surbakti, Tumenggung Mertalaya, Desa Kembang, Karangwaru, Blunyah, and Desa itu Bernama Butuh. These stories remain alive in collective memory and contain messages relevant to the younger generation. The selection of these legends is based on several considerations. First, they provide historical and mythological insights while conveying moral messages relevant to character formation. Second, they represent regional cultural heritage that strengthens national identity through local wisdom. Third, analyzing their character values can enrich educational resources, especially language, literature, and character education.

One theory that is relevant in analyzing character values in literary works is Thomas Lickona's theory of character. Lickona, an important figure in character education, emphasizes that character is not limited to moral knowledge, but also includes moral feelings and moral actions. These three aspects must work together for a person to truly be considered to have character (Hikmasari et al., 2021). Lickona's theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding, instilling, and developing character values in the context of education (Lickona, 1996). Therefore, examining the legends of Yogyakarta using Lickona's theory allows the author to identify the character values contained therein while assessing their relevance to character education in schools.

Furthermore, Yogyakarta folklore as a subject of study also has its own uniqueness. Yogyakarta is known as a region rich in tradition, culture, and local wisdom. Javanese cultural values that uphold manners, mutual cooperation, religiosity, loyalty, and respect for ancestors are reflected in various folk tales (Ramadhani et al., 2024). These values are essentially universal character values that are in line with the goals of modern education. Thus, analysis of Yogyakarta legends is not only beneficial for cultural preservation, but also relevant to supporting the character education agenda in schools.

The current state of education shows a tendency for the younger generation to be more interested in global popular culture dominated by digital media (Rahim, 2024). As a result, local cultural heritage such as folklore is increasingly marginalized. In fact, folklore is an effective medium for character building, as it conveys moral messages through stories that are close to people's lives (Achsani,

2018). If the potential of folklore, especially legends, can be optimized in education, then the noble values of the nation can be preserved and instilled in future generations. In addition, research on character values in folklore also supports the Indonesian government's policy on strengthening character education (PPK) (Amin, 2022). PPK emphasizes five main values, namely religious, nationalistic, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity (Nurazijah et al., 2025). These values are essentially in line with Lickona's concept of character. Thus, an analysis of Yogyakarta legends based on Lickona's theory will show how local wisdom can synergize with national education policy.

The anthology of folk tales from the Special Region of Yogyakarta, written by Dhanu Priyo Prabowo, which is the subject of this study, contains a variety of folk tales, including twelve legends, each of which contains different life values (Prabowo, 2004). Each legend presents a distinctive moral theme; for example, Ki Pemanahan teaches loyalty and devotion to the king, Putri Pembayun emphasizes the values of courage and strategy, while Syekh Surbakti demonstrates religiosity and fighting spirit. The variety of themes in the twelve legends opens up opportunities to examine character values in greater depth while also demonstrating their potential for integration into school learning, particularly in the context of strengthening character education.

In the context of Indonesian language and literature learning, these legends can be used as contextual and meaningful teaching materials. Students are not only encouraged to understand the structure and content of the stories, but also to emulate the character values contained within them. For example, the value of mutual cooperation can be taught through group work activities inspired by legends, or the value of integrity can be instilled through reflective discussions about the characters in the story. In this way, learning is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects, but also towards shaping the attitudes and behavior of students.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze legends in the Folklore of the Special Region of Yogyakarta based on Thomas Lickona's theory. The results of this analysis are expected to enrich literary studies rooted in local wisdom while also benefiting the world of education, especially in the development of learning materials that emphasize character education. Thus, this study is not only relevant to the field of language and literature education, but also contributes to efforts to build national character through the utilization of local cultural values in the learning process.

2. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a content analysis approach. Qualitative research is descriptive in nature, which means that researchers explain phenomena, objects, and social contexts narratively, and the chosen approach focuses on collecting data in the form of words, with the assumption that all sign systems, whether in the form of language, symbols, or other forms of representation, have meanings that can be interpreted (Fadli, 2021). Each element

is considered significant because they are interrelated, influence each other, and together form a complete unity of meaning. The qualitative method was chosen because the object of study was literary texts that were analyzed to find the character values contained within them (Ndruru, 2025). The source of research data is the book *Antologi Cerita Rakyat Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* by Dhanu Priyo Prabowo (2004), which contains various folktales. From this book, the research focused on twelve legends, namely Kiai Jegot, Ki Pemanahan, Gunung yang Berbau Harum, Putri Pembayun, Dua Orang Sakti, Desa Kasuran, Syekh Surbakti, Tumenggung Mertalaya, Desa Kembang, Karangwaru, Blunyah, and Desa Butuh.

The data analyzed consisted of text excerpts, descriptions of events, and characters' actions that reflected moral teachings or life values. The data collection process was carried out through intensive reading of the twelve legends, followed by recording the parts of the text that contained character values. Next, the data was analyzed using Thomas Lickona's theoretical framework, which includes three dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The analysis was carried out by classifying the findings according to these categories, then interpreting their meaning in the context of character education. To maintain the validity of the results, the interpretation of character values was adjusted to relevant literature on character education and local wisdom, and compared with the main values of Character Education Strengthening (PPK) promoted by the government. In this way, the research results are not only academically valid, but also have practical relevance for the world of education, especially in language, literature, and character education in schools.

3. Results and Discussion

The book that is the subject of this study is entitled *Anthology of Folktales from the Special Region of Yogyakarta*, written by Dhanu Priyo Prabowo and first published in 2004 by the Language Center through the Indonesian and Regional Literature Book Development Project, Jakarta. This anthology contains 30 folktales from five regions in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), which are categorized into legends, myths, and fairy tales. This grouping aims to make it easier for readers to recognize the characteristics and cultural nuances contained in each type of story.

Figure 1 below shows the book cover used as the main data source in this study. The book cover features an illustration of a Javanese woman in traditional dress with a gamelan instrument in the background, reinforcing the classic cultural atmosphere that is characteristic of Yogyakarta folk tales. The book consists of 249 pages with a physical dimension of 19 cm and carries the ISBN 979-685-412-0. It begins with a six-page introduction explaining the objectives of the anthology, followed by a two-page table of contents. Each story is arranged in a separate chapter with an average length of 9–10 pages, depending on narrative complexity and cultural exposition. The final section contains a three-page author biography, highlighting the writer's contribution to regional literature documentation. With its systematic structure and comprehensive categorization, this anthology serves as a rich data source for analyzing character values within the twelve legends examined

in this research. These legends embody moral teachings and local wisdom that remain relevant for character education in contemporary society.

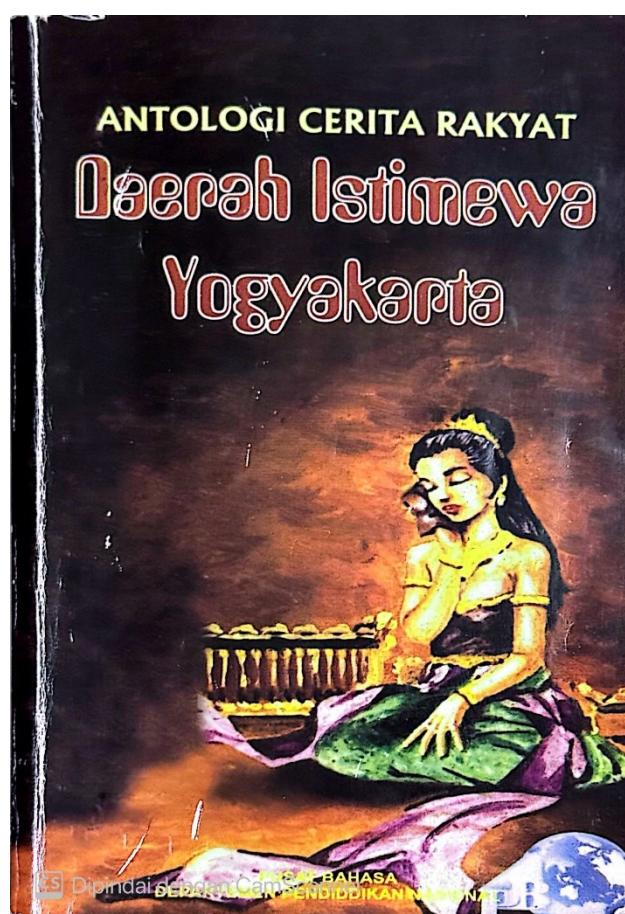


Figure 1. Cover of Antologi Cerita Rakyat Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta

Moral Knowing

In Thomas Lickona's framework (Lickona, 1996), moral knowing refers to the capacity to understand moral principles that form the basis of ethical judgment. When this concept is applied to the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, a relatively consistent moral pattern emerges. However, critical analysis shows that the moral meanings within the legends are not always linear and instead reveal the complexity of the relationship between humans, nature, and power. Therefore, a cross-legendary reading is crucial to uncover not only the values intended to be taught, but also the moral structures, normative tensions, and cultural biases hidden within these oral traditions.

In general, the most dominant pattern of moral knowing is an emphasis on responsibility as the foundation of morality. This value appears in the legends of Kiai Jegot, Butuh Village, and Blunyah, but the emphasis on responsibility here is collective and cosmological rather than individual, as in Lickona's theory, which is more oriented toward personal moral agency. This difference indicates that moral knowing in the Javanese context does not always rest on individual autonomy, but

rather on harmony with the socio-natural order. Critically, it can be argued that these legends use ecological morality as a mechanism of cultural control: humans who violate the cosmic order will suffer dire consequences, thus moral knowing serves as both a warning and a legitimation of traditional order.

Another consistent value is leadership integrity, as evident in the legends of Ki Pemanahan, Gunung yang Berbau Harum (The Mountain That Smells Good), and Putri Pembayun. However, critical analysis shows that the moral teachings in these legends often operate within the framework of elite-centered morality. This is evident in the way morality is constructed: ethical qualities such as consistency of word and action, self-control, and public responsibility are denied to ordinary people, but are instead attributed almost exclusively to kings or leaders. Thus, moral knowing serves to reinforce the moral legitimacy of rulers in Javanese monarchical culture. This pattern contains a hierarchical bias that does not fully align with the principle of moral universality emphasized by Lickona.

This means there is a tension between moral teachings based on royal tales and the framework of modern character education theory that emphasizes the equality of moral actors. Furthermore, legends such as the Two Magical People, Kasuran, and the story of Sultan Agung and Sheikh Surbakti demonstrate moral knowing based on spirituality and humility. However, a critical reading reveals that this form of spirituality tends to emphasize submission to divine power and the guidance of holy figures. This pattern is ambivalent: on the one hand, it teaches humility, but on the other, it can potentially diminish individual agency in rational problem-solving. Compared to Lickona's framework, which emphasizes moral reasoning as an active process, these legends demonstrate a model of moral knowing that prioritizes religious intuition and obedience to spiritual authority over ethical argumentation.

Furthermore, cross-legendary analysis reveals internal contradictions in the instillation of moral values. For example, the legend of Princess Pembayun teaches that conflict can be resolved through non-violent strategy and ingenuity, while the legend of Tumenggung Mertalaya emphasizes the value of honor, rooted in courage in the face of violence and sacrifice. This tension between values demonstrates that moral knowing in Yogyakarta tradition is neither singular nor consistent, but rather a moral mosaic influenced by political, social, and narrative contexts. This incongruity is important to note because it suggests that legends cannot be read as a stable set of moral values, but rather as a space for negotiation between ideal ethics and historical reality.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings enrich our understanding of Lickona's framework. Yogyakarta legends demonstrate that moral knowing is not merely an intellectual process focused on defining good and bad, but also a cultural process involving cosmological symbolism, power structures, and "value tensions" that cannot always be simplified into universal moral categories. Thus, the contribution of this research lies in affirming that moral knowing in the context of local culture is relational, hierarchical, and contextual, differing from the individualistic assumptions often inherent in modern approaches to character education.

Moral Feeling

Within the framework of character education theory, moral feeling is an affective dimension that determines a person's emotional drive to do good deeds. This component includes empathy, conscience, shame, respect, love, compassion, and moral courage. Various studies confirm that this emotional aspect plays an important role in linking moral knowing with moral action, because moral values that are only understood cognitively will not become real behavior without emotional resonance (Mestvirishvili et al., 2020). When analyzed across the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, there appears to be a configuration of moral feeling that not only reinforces certain moral values but also displays ethical tensions, cultural biases, and emotional constructs that function as tools of social legitimation. Thus, moral feeling in these legends cannot be read as merely individual emotions but as cultural expressions that shape the collective moral orientation of Javanese society.

The results of cross-legend analysis show that the most consistent and dominant moral value is respect towards nature, power, ancestors, and spiritual authority. This value appears in the legends of Kiai Jegot, Kasuran, Blunyah, and several other stories that feature emotional expressions of fear of violating the cosmic order, awe of supernatural powers, and respect for inherited traditions. However, from a critical perspective, this form of moral feeling is not entirely in line with Lickona's concept of respect, which is based on the recognition of human dignity as individuals. In the context of Yogyakarta legends, respect is directed more towards cosmological structures and social hierarchies, rather than individual equality. In other words, there is a shift in affective orientation: from "respecting humans as individuals" to "respecting orders that are considered sacred." This shift is important to note because it shows how emotions are used as a mechanism to maintain socio-cultural stability.

In addition to respect, other moral feelings that often arise are gratitude and devotional emotion, or a deep religious feeling toward divine power. These values are evident in the legends of Ki Pemanahan and Dua Orang Sakti, where miracles or divine blessings evoke feelings of gratitude that are then translated into social responsibility. These religious feelings are not merely a form of individual emotion, but serve to strengthen awareness of human dependence on God. Narvaez (2014) refers to this form of moral feeling as spiritual framing, which is how culture shapes moral sensitivity through religious emotional experiences. However, it should be critically noted that the religiously-based moral orientation in these legends sometimes weakens the element of moral autonomy. When ethical decisions are driven by fear of spiritual punishment or gratitude for divine intervention, the space for rational moral reasoning becomes relatively limited. Here we see a paradigm shift between the modern character education approach, which emphasizes self-governed morality, and the Javanese tradition, which prioritizes "the correctness of actions in the cosmic order."

Another prominent moral sentiment is compassion, especially in legends related to leadership, such as Gunung yang Berbau Harum (The Fragrant Mountain). Here,

Sultan Agung is depicted as feeling empathy and pity for his suffering people, prompting him to take action to ease their burden. This pattern positions Javanese leadership as feeling-centered leadership, a leadership model that relies on emotional sensitivity rather than just political calculations. However, it can be critically argued that the emotional state of leaders in legends is often presented as the key that determines the fate of the people, thus creating a moral pattern that depends on great-man morality. This can obscure the role of the people as moral subjects, because moral feelings are attached more to the leader than to the general public. Thus, this kind of narrative can serve to reinforce hierarchical structures and position the ruler as the sole primary moral agent.

The emotional tension in the legend of Princess Pembayun provides an interesting example of moral ambivalence. On the one hand, there is Pembayun's love and loyalty to her husband, while on the other hand, there is political conflict that forces the character to face a conflict between personal emotions and the interests of the state. This ambivalence shows that moral feelings do not always lead to harmonious conflict resolution, but often become a source of inner struggle. Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 2025) refers to this condition as “tragic emotion,” which is a moral emotion that arises when equally good values clash. Thus, the legend of Pembayun contributes to the theory that moral feelings in the Javanese cultural context are not always harmonious; there is room for contradictions that enrich our understanding of the emotional dynamics of moral decision-making.

On the other hand, legends such as Tumenggung Mertalaya display collective emotions oriented towards honor shame when the dignity of the kingdom is tarnished and pride when able to maintain the self-respect of Mataram. This emotion is in line with the concept of a “culture of honor” (Cohen et al., 1996), in which shame and pride play a central role in maintaining group identity. However, critically, this kind of moral feeling also has the potential to encourage risky behavior or excessive heroism in a political context. In the legend, collective shame triggers extreme courage, which from a modern character education perspective may be considered an ambivalent form of moral feeling it can be noble, but it can also normalize violence for the sake of honor.

The legends of Blunyah and Karangwaru show more everyday moral feelings, such as patience, humility, and gentleness. These emotions reinforce Javanese social ethics, namely *andhap asor* (humility) and *tepa slira* (tolerance). However, once again, there is a cultural bias that needs to be considered. These emotions are often used as moral standards to judge good behavior, but in a modern context, they can cause problems when they become the basis for social resignation or restraint of self-expression. In short, moral feelings in these legends serve as a tool for reproducing social norms that not only shape moral sensitivity but also control behavior according to certain cultural ideals (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

From the overall analysis, it can be concluded that moral feelings in Yogyakarta legends form three major patterns: sacred respect that maintains the cosmic-hierarchical order; religious affection that motivates moral actions but reduces moral autonomy; and empathy and compassion that strengthen social relationships,

but are sometimes tied to leadership structures. These patterns indicate that moral sentiment in the Javanese cultural context functions not only as a personal incentive to do good, but also as a cultural mechanism for maintaining social balance and political legitimacy.

Moral Action

In character education theory, moral action is the culmination of the character process the stage when moral knowledge (knowing) and emotional impulses (feeling) are manifested in concrete actions. It is at this point that moral values are truly tested, because moral actions depend not only on understanding and feelings, but also on the courage to choose, moral firmness, and the capacity to overcome situational obstacles. When analyzed across the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, moral action appears as an arena of negotiation between moral ideals, power structures, and Javanese cultural norms that are rich in values of harmony, duty, and sacrifice. Therefore, moral actions in legends are not singular in nature, but rather exhibit patterns of consistency, tension, and potential ambivalence that enrich Lickona's theoretical analysis.

In general, the most consistent moral action pattern in these legends is moral action based on collective responsibility. In a number of stories such as Kasuran, Karangwaru, and Blunyah, moral actions are not driven by individual autonomy, but by the community's awareness to maintain social order, the environment, or traditions. This approach reflects the type of moral action in communal cultures which, according to Narvaez (2014), is rooted in communal imagination, namely the orientation of moral actions for the sake of group stability. However, from a critical perspective, this collective orientation can obscure individual moral agency, so that actions are often judged to be moral not because of personal ethical reflection, but because of their conformity to social norms. Thus, the pattern of moral action in legends contrasts with Lickona's framework, which emphasizes individual decisions based on universal principles.

The second major pattern that emerges is moral actions rooted in spirituality and religious devotion as seen in the legends of Syekh Surbakti, Ki Pemanahan, and Dua Orang Sakti. In these cases, the characters act not primarily because of rational moral reasoning, but because of the belief that their actions are part of God's will or cosmic harmony. This model of action is similar to what Ricoeur (2025) refers to as ethical authority-based action, namely moral actions that depend on figures or principles that are considered to have the highest moral authority. Positively, this pattern emphasizes humility and awareness of human limitations. However, critically, this type of moral action can weaken moral autonomy because ethical decisions are often placed outside the subject, thus limiting the space for moral evaluation based on reasoning.

Furthermore, there is a pattern of moral action based on sacrifice a very strong value in the legend of Princess Pembayun and Tumenggung Mertalaya. In Javanese tradition, the act of courageous sacrifice is considered the pinnacle of moral honor. However, as Arendt warns, moral action driven by sacrifice can be ambivalent, as

it can be used to legitimize extreme actions or normalize suffering for the sake of a collective ideal (Hauser, 2012). In the legend of Mertalaya, for example, moral action appears as courage in facing great risks for the sake of Mataram's dignity, but this action also demonstrates the tension between honor and human safety. This tension shows that moral action in Javanese legends is not always harmonious; sometimes it is born of a tragic dilemma when equally noble values conflict.

An interesting contrast is also evident between legends that emphasize nonviolent moral action, such as Kiai Jegot and Dua Orang Sakti, and legends that emphasize heroic moral action based on physical courage, such as Mertalaya or Butuh. In the first group, moral action is manifested in the form of protecting nature, patience, and peaceful choices patterns that align with Javanese ecological ethics and spirituality. Meanwhile, the second group emphasizes confrontational courage as a noble act. This contradiction shows that the concept of moral action in Yogyakarta legends is not monolithic. In fact, it often lies at two extremes: moral action as harmony or moral action as struggle. This difference shows that the value of moral action is shaped by the socio-political context of the narrative, not by a single universal moral standard. Theoretically, this expands the understanding that moral action is situational and bound by cultural structures.

The pattern of moral action in legends also demonstrates the dominance of leadership as the center of moral action. In stories like Gunung yang Berbau Harum or Ki Pemanahan, moral action is always initiated by the leader as if community figures lack their own moral agency. Thus, these narratives construct what Post calls leader-centered morality, a model of morality that places the burden of moral action solely on elite figures. Critically, this can serve as a cultural legitimation of traditional Javanese political power. In the context of modern character education, this is problematic because it tends to position society as moral objects, rather than active decision-making subjects.

However, there are also legends that depict moral actions based on personal integrity, such as Jaka Prayoga in Kembang Village, who chooses to work hard for his parents, or Butuh Village, which depicts the moral action of keeping a promise despite the risks. These stories demonstrate that individual moral actions are also recognized in Javanese tradition, although their role is smaller than collective or hierarchical moral actions. This indicates that Yogyakarta legends contain diverse layers of moral actions, from the highly communal, to the highly spiritual, to the highly personal. Thus, through cross-story analysis, moral actions in the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta yield three main theoretical findings. First, moral actions in Javanese tradition are more collective, cosmological, and relational, differing from the individualistic orientation within Lickona's framework. Second, moral actions are often bound by hierarchical structures and spirituality, so that ethical choices are situated within the context of obligations to the community, the king, or God. Third, there is an internal contradiction between moral actions based on harmony and those based on heroic courage demonstrating that Javanese morality is not static, but a dynamic arena of values influenced by history and power structures.

Integration of Character Values with Character Education Strengthening

The integration of character values found in the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta with the government's Program Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (PPK) requires not only an alignment of thematic values but also a critical connection that demonstrates how local wisdom can reinforce the holistic formation of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. PPK promotes five core values religious, nationalist, independent, cooperative, and integrity yet these values cannot operate effectively without being rooted in contextual cultural experiences that enable students to understand, feel, and enact them. In this sense, the Yogyakarta legends function not merely as cultural artifacts but as pedagogical instruments capable of bridging abstract moral principles with lived social realities (Fitriadi et al., 2024).

When the legends are analyzed comparatively across the three dimensions of Lickona's framework, it becomes clear that the integration with PPK can be strengthened through thematic convergence. For instance, the religious value in PPK is not limited to worship practices but includes spiritual awareness, gratitude, surrender, and moral courage. This value strongly resonates with the combined findings across legends, where moral knowing about divine order (as in Kiai Jegot and Ki Pemanahan) is complemented by emotional states of reverence and spiritual fear, and ultimately materializes in moral actions of obedience, restraint, and ethical leadership. Such coherence demonstrates that religious character does not emerge from doctrinal instruction alone but through the interplay of cognition, emotion, and action within cultural narratives. This supports the argument that indigenous stories provide experiential frameworks for internalizing religious values.

The nationalistic value in PPK often reduced in practice to symbolic or ceremonial acts finds deeper justification in legends such as Putri Pembayun and Tumenggung Mertalaya, where devotion to the kingdom emerges from a complex negotiation of personal sacrifice, collective duty, emotional loyalty, and courageous moral decisions. These legends reveal that nationalism in the Javanese cultural context is tied to moral feeling (loyalty, shame, pride) and moral action (risk-taking for the common good). This challenges the tendency of school-based nationalism to emphasize cognitive memorization of national symbols rather than cultivating emotional and behavioral embodiment (Szőnyi, 2017). By integrating such legends, PPK can shift toward a nationalism grounded in ethical responsibility, emotional attachment, and civic action. Similarly, the independence value promoted by PPK is enriched when viewed through cross-legend patterns. Independence in legends such as in Karangwaru or the perseverance of Ki Pemanahan is not framed as individual autonomy alone but as disciplined self-reliance supported by self-control and long-term commitment. These narratives align with research indicating that character education often fails when independence is taught only as personal freedom rather than sustained effort and moral perseverance (Hidayah et al., 2026). Through these legends, students can see independence not as isolation, but as moral action rooted in moral knowing (awareness of responsibility) and moral feeling (resilience, optimism).

The cooperative value (gotong royong) is also reinforced when analyzed across legends such as Kasuran and Butuh, where community solidarity is driven by shared emotional experiences (fear, gratitude, empathy) and leads to collective moral action. These narratives demonstrate that cooperation arises from a moral ecology shared beliefs, shared emotions, and shared practices rather than mere instructions to “work together.” This aligns with cultural character education theories emphasizing that cooperative values require authentic communal contexts to be meaningfully internalized (Ayuningtyas & Ritonga, 2025). Hence, legends provide an ideal cultural medium for revitalizing gotong royong in contemporary character education.

The value of integrity, which often poses the greatest challenge in school-based programs, finds strong representation in the consistency between moral knowing feeling action across legends such as Ki Pemanahan, Tumenggung Mertalaya, and Desa Butuh. Integrity in these stories is not simplistic honesty, but a coherence of cognition, emotional commitment, loyalty, and principled action even when the consequences are costly. This resonates with scholarly critique that integrity should be taught not as a rule but as moral identity shaped through narrative reflection and lived ethical dilemmas. Legends thus offer a narrative arena through which students can discuss conflict, negotiate moral choices, and reflect on the emotional and practical weight of integrity.

From a pedagogical perspective, integrating these legends into PPK requires a shift from content-based to process-based character education. Legends should not function merely as reading materials or cultural ornaments, but as analytical and dialogical tools through which students examine moral dilemmas, trace emotional dynamics, and evaluate actions taken by characters (Romli et al., 2026). This is consistent with approaches to narrative-based moral education that highlight the importance of reflection, discussion, and value reconstruction. Teachers can implement them through project-based learning, role play, ethical debate, or socio-cultural inquiry, ensuring that students experience all three dimensions of Lickona’s character formation.

Critically, integrating legends with PPK also contributes theoretically to the discourse on character education by demonstrating that local wisdom is not merely supplementary but central to culturally grounded moral development. It reveals that the three components of character knowing, feeling, action manifest more coherently when embedded in local narratives where moral concepts are contextualized, emotionally charged, and behaviorally demonstrated. This synthesis provides a culturally responsive character education framework aligned with global theories yet rooted in Indonesian cultural identity (Khoirunissa & Jinan, 2025). Thus, the integration of Yogyakarta legends with the PPK program not only enriches pedagogical practices but also offers a theoretical contribution by showing how narrative-based local wisdom can operationalize comprehensive character formation within the Lickona framework. This expands the discourse from value inventory to analytical synthesis, bridging national policy with cultural epistemology.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the legends of the Special Region of Yogyakarta offer more than moral messages preserved through oral tradition. When read closely, these stories reveal a pattern of moral learning that moves naturally from understanding, to feeling, to action. The characters do not simply “know” what is right they struggle with their emotions, face dilemmas, and eventually make choices that reflect their sense of responsibility. This pattern, which appears repeatedly across different legends, suggests that the moral world of these stories is both coherent and deeply rooted in the way Javanese communities think about character. What also becomes clear is that the values emerging from these legends speak directly to the aims of today’s character education. The emphasis on responsibility, humility, cooperation, courage, and integrity resonates strongly with the values promoted in national education policy. Because these values appear in culturally familiar contexts, the legends offer students a way to experience moral ideas that feels close to their own world, rather than abstract or forced. This connection gives the stories a special relevance for classrooms today. The strength of this study lies in its attempt to look beyond simple description. By examining patterns across the legends, it becomes possible to see how local wisdom can contribute meaningfully to national discussions on character formation. The analysis shows that traditional stories are not outdated cultural artifacts; they remain living resources that can help young people think, feel, and act with greater moral awareness. This opens the door for further work on how local narratives might support character education in other regions as well.

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