Journal of Educational Sciences Vol. 9 No. 3 (May, 2025) 1692-1703

Journal of Educational Sciences
Journal homepage: https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES

P-ISSN 2581-1657
E-ISSN 2581-2203

Character Educational Values of Sikambang Dance in Traditional Wedding Ceremonies of Sibolga Community

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 21 April 2025
Revised: 10 May 2025
Accepted: 17 May 2025
Published online: 24 May 2025

Keywords:

Value,
Character,
Sikambang,
Sibolga

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Article Doi:

https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.9.3.p.1692-1703

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A B S T R A C T

Sikambang dance is a cultural heritage in the traditional wedding ceremony of the Sibolga community, which contains noble values such as cooperation, responsibility, politeness, respect for customs, and love for local culture. However, the existence of this dance is increasingly being eroded by technological advances and cultural shifts, making it less known to the younger generation. This study aims to identify and analyze the character education values embedded in the Sikambang Dance. The study employs an ethnographic method with a field-based approach through direct observation, interviews, and active participation within the Sibolga community. The findings reveal that the Sikambang Dance is not merely a form of entertainment but also a tool for character development among the younger generation based on local wisdom. This research is expected to serve as a reference in efforts to preserve culture and strengthen character education rooted in local values.

1. Introduction

Dance as a form of cultural expression plays an important role in shaping the character and social values of society. Each traditional dance is not only for entertainment, but also as an educational medium that contains philosophies and moral values that are passed down from generation to generation (Bahiz et al., 2023; Usmaedi et al., 2024). One of the dances with high cultural value is the Sikambang dance, which is part of the traditional Sibolga wedding procession. This dance has a symbolic meaning that is closely linked to character formation, both for the performers and for the audience watching.

Marriage is a basic human nature that is the will of Allah. Therefore, the Sharia of marriage was established by Allah as the earliest among the other Sharia, that is,

when the situation was still covered by an atmosphere of ignorance. The goal is for man to open his heart and mind to a life that corresponds to human nature, so that he can achieve happiness. Friendship is the worship and sunnah of His Messenger, who is the Qudrat and Iradat of Allah in the creation of the universe. Allah Sharia: Every Muslim who has a marriage can be found in Surah al-Rum, verse 21: ('Ulwan, 2006).

"One of His signs is that He has created for you pairs of your own (kind) so that you can feel at peace with Him. He has awakened a feeling of love and affection among you. Verily, in such things there are signs (of Allah's greatness) for the people who think." (Online, 2024).

The Sibolga people are known for having strong traditions and customs in various areas of life, including in the organization of weddings. Sikambang dance is present as a cultural expression that not only shows the beauty of movement, but also contains moral messages that can shape individual characters. In various literatures, character building is one of the important aspects of a person's personality development, with values such as politeness, honesty, cooperation, and responsibility often being taught through cultural practices, including the art of dance.

The performance of this traditional wedding ceremony is inseparable from the accompaniment of music and dance (Takari, 2018), which is called Sikambang Music Arts. Sikambang is made up of two words, namely "Si" and "Kambang". In general, people on the coast of Sibolga Central interpret Tapanuli Sikambang as a type of art in the coastal community, where the art is designed with advice, rhythmic songs and in the form of dance. The type of musical instrument used to accompany singing and dancing in the Sikambang arts is the Sikambang Gandang. Gandang Batapik. Singkadu, a carano that is often used to set the tempo of music and accordion.

Character education has a noble goal, which is to improve the quality of learning management and educational outcomes that are oriented towards the achievement of character formation or the noble morals of the students (Ministry, 2020). Through character education, which is applied to each unit of education, students should be able to maximize and use their knowledge individually, learn and realize the value of character values and noble morals, so that students become students who fear God, have academic ability, have personality maturity, and have learning, work, and righteous deeds. Jamal explained that the goal of character education is to to improve the quality of educational outcomes and the implementation of education in schools, so as to lead to the success of the education of students' character and noble morals in a holistic, integrated and balanced manner (Asman, 2013).

In the meantime, Zubaedi said, character education is an education that has the same direction and purpose as moral education, namely as a means to bring about fundamental and fundamental changes, because character education will lead individuals to their roots. In addition, the purpose of education is defined in Article

3 of Law No. 20 of 2003, which specifies: National education is to develop skills and shape the character and civilization of a worthy nation, to educate the life of the nation, with the aim of developing the potential of students to become people who believe in and fear Almighty God, have a noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative and independent (Yaumi, 2016).

The art, beauty and art is a positive goal to make the connoisseur happy. Dance is a beautiful rhythmic movement as an expression of the human soul, which pays attention to the elements of space and time. Art is one of the elements of culture that is realized in daily life and as a place for the expression of desires, desires and goals. A culture that is created clearly has a purpose, be it goals in the form of morals, rules, laws and customs. The Sikambang culture was created to be used in traditional events, wedding ceremonies, circumcision ceremonies, descending karai (to the ground/outside the house), greetings, coronations, entering a new house, initiations, and art performances. This Sikambang art is generally never used in religious ceremonies and idolatry. So it is clear that the art of Sikambang is only for ceremonial events, not for religious events, and even more so for idolatry (Lubis et al., 2020).

Because of this phenomenon, the community took the initiative to create a dance by using ratok (crying) in the dance section called Sikambang dance. Ratok is written as Dendang in the music of Sikambang dance, or more commonly known as the Sikambang song. The relationship between the Sikambang dance and the song Sikambang is Sikambang in the dance is a name of the Sikambang dance accompanying song used as the opening song of the Sikambang dance. The Sikambang dance with the song Sikambang is both a traditional performance by Nagari children born on the south coast, and both have a story theme that represents sadness. The description of each act in Sikambang dance is as follows Hermansyah et al., (2024). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the character education values contained in sikambang dance and its role in preserving local culture in the sibolga community (Khumairoh, 2022).

2. Methodology

In this study, the type of research is used as ethnography. Ethnography is an empirical and theoretical approach that aims to obtain an in-depth description and analysis of culture on the basis of intensive fieldwork (Sugiyono, 2016). The purpose of ethnographic research is to provide a holistic picture of the research subject, with an emphasis on photographing the daily experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and other people in contact. Ethnography literally means "to write about a group of people". According to Smith (2017), ethnographic design is a qualitative research procedure used to describe and analyze different cultural groups that interpret behavioral patterns, beliefs, and languages that evolve over time and are used by a group of people. Following the origin of the term ethnography, based on the terms "ethno" (nation) and "graphy" (explain), ethnographic examination of inclusive culture, i.e. all aspects of culture: cultural artefacts (tools, buildings). If we deviate from this term and its description,

ethnography can be interpreted as a way to identify different characteristics of people (countries), which usually lead to something special.The research site is located in Sibolga, the object of research of traditional guides (traditional wedding ceremonies). Sibolga community leaders and local dancers or cultural workers. Techniques for collecting interview and observation data. Data analysis techniques for data reduction, data presentation and verification.

3. Result and Discussion

Broadly speaking, the purpose of the Sikambang cultural arts can be divided into three groups, namely Sikambang as art that can be seen from the art of Sikambang itself. Whereas the art of Sikambang is in the form of advice, in the form of dance and accompanied by music. Dances in the Sikambang art include: Handkerchief Dance, Umbrella Dance, Salendang Dance, Children's Dance, Adak Dance, Silver Dance, and Sampayan Dance. Music itself is also part of art, namely the art of music (Manalu, 2024). In his book, Sikambang is an art set on the west coast, starting from Meulaboh in Banda Aceh to Tapanuli, especially in Barus City and Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra. These two regions are still actively using the Sikambang art for some of their activities. Basically, the art of Sikambang consists of dance and song movements and is full of advice. The art of Sikambang is not an acculturation adopted by the Batak and Minangkabau cultures, but the artistic heritage of the coastal kingdom's civilization.

As can be seen in the Figure 1 below, this image depicts a performance of the Sikambang dance at a traditional wedding ceremony in Sibolga. Each movement of the dancers reflects a deep meaning of respect for tradition, cooperation, and unity. The vibrant colors of the costumes and stage decorations enhance the festive atmosphere and pride in the local cultural heritage. Through this image, we are reminded of the beauty of traditions passed down through generations and the importance of the younger generation's role in preserving these noble values in daily life.

Figure 1. Sikambang Dance

Sikambang dancing as a traditional dance is a symbolic technique inspired by a true story. The true story is summarized in three acts. These three acts are connected and cannot be separated in the correct order because the first to last acts have a narrative flow. The Sikambang chapter tells of the happiness of the king's family, the Maratok chapter tells of the grief that befell the royal family, then the Katera chapter tells of the sincerity of the king and his wife for the misfortune that befell them (Vani et al., 2017)

The Value of Character Building in Sikambang Dance in the Traditional Sibolga Community Wedding Ceremony

a. The Value of Politeness in Sikambang Dance

The presence of this dance in the wedding procession highlights the role of art in strengthening the cultural identity and forming the character of the younger generation so that they can continue to appreciate and preserve local wisdom. Therefore, understanding the meaning and moral message of Sikambang dance is an important part of efforts to preserve the culture and cultivate the values of character amidst an ever-accelerating modernization trend. As the whistleblower YT revealed that;

> *"Give an explanation and analysis from the following interview excerpts; Of course, Sikambang Dance has many values of character building. This dance is not only a beautiful movement, but also full of meaning. One of the most felt values is politeness, because in every movement there is tenderness and respect for culture. In addition, Sikambang dance also teaches discipline, especially in maintaining the cohesion of movements and musical rhythms. There is also the value of collaboration, because in a performance, the dancer must be able to tune in to his group. Don't forget the value of cultural love and responsibility, because dancing the Sikambang dance means preserving the heritage of our ancestors."*

The above interview excerpt provides an overview of how the Sikambang dance functions not only as entertainment in the traditional wedding ceremony of the Sibolga people, but also as a medium for learning the values of character building. Some of the key values mentioned in the quote are courtesy, discipline, cooperation, love of culture, and responsibility.

The informant emphasized that politeness is the most important value in Sikambang dance. This courtesy is reflected in the tenderness of each dance, which represents the customs and respect for local customs and culture. In the context of a traditional wedding (Sukihana, 2012), the courtesy in this dance also reflects the attitude of respect towards the bride and groom, the family and the community present. The graceful and gentle gesture is also a symbol of appreciation for the traditional values inherited from the ancestors. Sikambang dancing also requires discipline, especially in terms of maintaining the harmony of the movements with the musical rhythms. Dancers must adhere to the rules that have been passed down from generation to

generation in order to remain in tune with the cultural essence inherent in this dance. This discipline applies not only in practice and performance, but is also an expression of a broader attitude to life, namely the importance of consistency and regularity in the fulfilment of social and cultural responsibility.

In the Sikambang dance, there are several dancers who have to move harmoniously. This shows that this dance conveys the value of collaboration, where each individual in the group must be able to tune in to the other members. Not only in terms of movement, but also in understanding the role of each individual in creating beautiful harmony. This collaboration also reflects the social life of the Sibolga community, where individuals are expected to contribute to maintaining harmony and solidarity in the community. This shows that the Sikambang dance is not only an artistic heritage, but also a form of trust that must be maintained in order to remain alive and relevant in the midst of the changing times. Not much different from what the informant conveyed to YT, the BD informant said that too;

> *"Oh, there is! This Sikambang dance teaches many life values. The first is the value of courtesy. Every movement in this dance is performed gently and respectfully, which teaches us to always be polite, especially to the elderly. The second is the value of cooperation, because the Sikambang dance is usually danced in groups, so there must be harmony between the dancers, they cannot walk alone. The third is the value of perseverance and patience, because it takes practice and appreciation to be able to implement it correctly. Fourthly, the value of respect for tradition, because this dance is part of the custom that is passed down from generation to generation. So if we want to preserve this culture, we must also preserve good character values for future generations."*

From the excerpt of the above interview, it is clear that Sikambang dance in the Sibolga community is not only an art performance, but also a medium full of values of character building. In this interview excerpt, the informant emphasizes that this dance teaches various important aspects of life that can shape an individual's attitude and personality. One of the most important values that is emphasized is politeness. The movements in the Sikambang dance are performed gently and respectfully, reflecting the polite attitude that each individual must have, especially when interacting with others, especially the elderly. This shows that dance is not only a cultural expression, but also a form of teaching social ethics that is rooted in people's lives.

b. The Value of Togetherness in Sikambang Dance

The Sikambang dance also conveys the value of togetherness. Since it is a dance that is usually performed in a group, each dancer must be able to adjust the movements with the other members to create harmony in the performance. This value teaches that in social life, man cannot walk alone, but must work together and adapt to the environment. This shows that togetherness and solidarity are an important part of the culture of the Sibolga community, where balance and harmony must always be maintained.

The Sikambang dance also teaches perseverance and patience. In order to be able to perform this dance well, a dancer must go through repeated and appreciative practice. This process requires discipline and perseverance in understanding each movement in order to convey the meaning it contains. This is in line with daily life, where each individual must have steadfastness and patience to achieve goals. Thus, this dance becomes a lesson that success cannot be achieved immediately, but through effort and hard work. To achieve this, one way is to integrate local wisdom, such as the Sikambang dance, into learning materials and the formal curriculum. This is as the ZA informant testifies;

> *"So far it is still very minimal. Some schools have taught Sikambang dance as part of extracurricular education, but there is no curriculum that officially includes this dance as part of arts and culture learning. If there is a more serious programme, such as regular training in schools or the creation of an annual cultural festival in which young people participate, there will be more people interested in learning. Personally, I hope that there will be cooperation between the government, the art scene and the schools to be more active in the preservation of the Sikambang dance. Because if we don't start now, it will be too late."*

This interview excerpt shows that the preservation of Sikambang dance in the world of education is still very low and has not received enough attention in the formal curriculum. Although there are some schools that teach it in extracurricular activities, there is no policy that explicitly includes this dance as part of the systematic learning of arts and culture. This reflects that while Sikambang dance has a high artistic and character educational value, its efforts to preserve it have not been well integrated into the formal education system.

The informant's statement also contains an element of fear that Sikambang dance may lose its relevance among the younger generation and face extinction if concrete steps are not taken immediately. The accelerating evolution of time, coupled with the advent of global culture through social media and modern entertainment, makes the challenges of preserving traditional culture even greater. Therefore, it is urgent to integrate the Sikambang dance into various forms of educational and cultural activities from now on, so that it is not too late when interest in this cultural heritage begins to wane. The lack of optimal internationalization of local art values such as Sikambang dance in formal education can also be seen through the following statements by BD informants:

> *"So far, it hasn't been optimal. In schools, perhaps few introduce the Sikambang dance as part of the cultural arts curriculum. If extracurricular programs or special classes can be offered, it will indeed be more effective in obtaining this dance. Schools can work with the arts community to teach Sikambang dance on a regular basis, not just at cultural events."*

This interview excerpt highlights the lack of teaching of Sikambang dance in a formal educational setting, especially in schools. The source said that efforts to preserve this dance have not been maximized, as few schools include it in the

cultural arts curriculum. This reflects that although Sikambang dance is an important part of the cultural heritage of the Sibolga people, its existence in the world of education is still limited and has not become the main concern in the cultural arts education system.

c. The Value of Gotong Royong in Sikambang Dance

The Sikambang dance also includes the value of mutual cooperation in family life. In Islam, marriage is a sacred bond that must be well cultivated. As it says in the Qur'an: "*And among His signs (greatness) is that He creates for you pairs of your own kind, so that you may be inclined and at peace with Him, and He makes love and affection among you*" (QS. Ar-Rum: 21).

Another value that can be taken away from the Sikambang dance is the attitude of patience and tawakal in married life. Marriage is not only the union of two individuals, but it also requires commitment and patience in the face of life's trials. This is in accordance with the word of Allah: *"Verily, Allah is with those who are patient*" (QS. Al-Baqarah/2:153).

Sikambang dance not only has aesthetic values, but also contains character-building values that are consistent with Islamic teachings. This dance teaches people to respect customs, maintain harmony and build good social relationships in community life. The Sikambang dance also reflects the value of togetherness and mutual cooperation, which is part of the concept of Ukhuwah Islamiyah (brotherhood in Islam). In the wedding ceremony, this dance teaches the importance of harmony and cooperation between the members of the community, which is in line with Islamic principles in establishing harmonious and mutually respectful social relationships (Nasution, 2020).

The value of character building in Sikambang dance can also be related to the concept of tarbiyah in Islam, which is the formation of a personality based on the values of faith and morality (Sari & Rahmah, 2023). Islam emphasizes the importance of maintaining traditions that do not contradict religious teachings, so that the preservation of the Sikambang dance in the context of wedding customs can also be part of the cultural da'wa that strengthens the identity of the Sibolga Muslim community.

The Sikambang dance at the Sibolga wedding ceremony is not only an artistic expression but also a medium of character formation relevant to Islamic values. Through this dance, the younger generation is taught to respect traditions, uphold moral values and internalize Islamic principles in social and family life.

This declaration also hopes that more educational institutions will work to preserve the Sikambang dance so that the younger generation can better understand its cultural roots. If this step is implemented correctly, then the preservation of the Sikambang dance will not only depend on the initiatives of a particular art community or school, but will become part of the collective consciousness of the community to preserve and nurture the local culture. In practice, in addition to

formal and non-formal educational institutions, the *knowledge transfer process* regarding the Sikambang dance culture is also optimized by the role of the community itself. Due to this awareness, the Sikamban dance can still be inherited, as the informant of YT expressed;

> *"They play a very important role! The elders are the guardians of the tradition, ensuring that the original meaning of the Sikambang dance does not change. Dance educators not only teach dance techniques, but also the philosophy behind their movements. Parents usually also support their children in learning dance by motivating them and reminding them of ethics and manners in dancing. They are all a bridge that connects the old and the new generation to preserve this culture."*

Excerpts from this interview shed light on the role of different parties in maintaining and preserving the Sikambang dance, especially elders, dance teachers, and parents. The resource person emphasized that the sustainability of a cultural tradition such as Sikambang dance depends not only on dancers or art communities, but also on personalities who play a role in passing on the values, meanings and techniques of dance to the younger generation.

d. The Value of Responsibility in Sikambang Dance

Another value of character building, which is reflected in Sikambang dance, is mutual cooperation. In Islam, togetherness or mutual cooperation is strongly emphasized as part of the Islamic Uchuwah. This is in line with the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (saw):

> *"The parable of believers in terms of love, affection and affection is like a body. If one limb is sick, then the whole body will feel pain and cannot sleep." (HR. Muslims)*

From the perspective of Islamic upbringing, Sikambang dance reflects noble moral values, such as respect for parents and ancestors, respect for local culture, and a sense of responsibility for family and community (Rahmah, 2022). The movements and symbolism in this dance represent customs and ethics that are in line with Islamic teachings, such as politeness, gentleness, and simplicity, which reflect the attitude of tawadhu' (humility) and gratitude for the blessing of marriage as a form of worship.

The preservation of Sikambang dance is not only the responsibility of individuals or specific artistic communities, but is a collective responsibility that involves various elements of society. Older people maintain the authenticity of cultural significance and value, dance teachers become facilitators in teaching dance techniques and philosophies, while parents play a role in supporting their children to continue to love and respect the local culture. They all act as a bridge that connects the old and new generations and ensures that the Sikambang dance remains alive and passed on in a state that remains authentic and meaningful. Through the active participation of various parties, the Sikambang dance will not

only remain sustainable, but can also develop as part of the cultural identity of the Sibolga people, which will also be appreciated and applied by future generations.

In addition to the elders and dance teachers, parents also play an important role in preserving the Sikambang dance, especially in helping their children learn and love the local culture. Motivation and encouragement from parents can encourage children to delve deeper into this dance, especially amid the development of times when traditional culture often competes with modern popular culture. In addition, parents also play a role in teaching ethics and manners in dance, reflecting how cultural values remain relevant in daily life. With the support of the family, the children are motivated to respect and preserve their own cultural heritage.

> *"In the past, the role of elders and dance teachers was very large. If there are young people who want to learn Sikambang dance, they need to go to a dance instructor who is already considered an expert. Usually, these dance instructors are people who have years of experience and understand the philosophy behind each move. They teach not only the movements, but also the history and meaning of the dance itself. Parents also often encouraged their children to learn dance because it was considered part of cultural education. But now this role is beginning to dwindle. Many parents focus more on their children's formal education and pay less attention to the local culture. If you think about it, learning the Sikambang dance is also a form of character building that is no less important. Therefore, the role of the art community is very important now. There must be people who are interested in it and still want to teach this dance to the younger generation. If not, it can be lost over time."*

The above interview excerpt illustrates the shift in the role of Sikambang dance in preserving the Sikambang dance from the past to the present. In the past, elders and dance teachers played a very large role in maintaining the continuity of Sikambang dance. Young people who want to learn this dance must contact a dance teacher who is recognized as profound, both in terms of dance techniques and the philosophy behind the dance moves. Dance educators act not only as skill trainers, but also as guardians of cultural and historical values that are passed down from generation to generation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis from the perspective of dance anthropology, cultural semiotics and cultural functionalism, it can be concluded that Sikambang dance is not only a performing art, but also a symbolic system that conveys common, social and spiritual values to the community. From the perspective of dance anthropology, Sikambang dance functions as a cultural communication tool that represents the identity of the Sibolga people. From a cultural semiotic perspective, the movements, costumes and characteristics of this dance have a symbolic meaning that reflects the values of politeness, respect and social harmony. In the theory of cultural functionalism, this dance serves to preserve traditional values, strengthen

the identity of the community and inform the younger generation about the importance of preserving customs and culture. Therefore, the preservation of the Sikambang dance is very important, not only to preserve traditional arts, but also to preserve the noble values inherited from the ancestors. Over time, the Sikambang dance is also relevant in the life of modern society as a reminder of the importance of customs, traditions and harmony in family and community life.

Acknowledgement

We are very grateful to our supervisor at UIN Sumatera Utara for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the research process. In addition, we offer. Recognition for the scholars and researchers whose work forms the basis of our. Literature Research and Theoretical Framework. Special thanks to the library. Employees and academic staff for their support in accessing relevant materials..

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How to cite this article:

Lubis, A. S., Hanum OK, A., & Arsyad, J. (2025). Character Educational Values of Sikambang Dance in Traditional Wedding Ceremonies of Sibolga Community. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, *9(3)*, 1692-1703.