

## Saprahan and Character Education: Internalizing Malay Traditional Values in Mempawah

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the internalization model of the values of the Malay Saprahan tradition in the context of character education in the modern era. Saprahan, rich in communal and moral values, faces cultural erosion due to modernization and curriculum constraints. Using a qualitative case study approach involving six key informants (traditional leaders, community members, and teachers) in Mempawah Regency, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation, and strengthened by triangulation techniques to ensure credibility. The findings were analyzed inductively based on an Ethnopedagogy framework. The results show that Saprahan values can be categorized into Communal and Moral Values, Civic and Identity Values, and Cognitive and Creative Values. A key pattern found is the existence of functional contrast: moral and civic values are optimally internalized in the community through direct practice, but the transmission of cognitive and creative values in schools is hampered structurally. The main obstacles are the lack of local wisdom-based teaching modules and teachers' low understanding of Ethnopedagogy. The novelty of this research is the identification and categorization of Saprahan values into these three dimensions, as well as the proof that the internalization problem lies in the structural gap that separates the community-based (local) curriculum from the formal curriculum. These results emphasize the urgency of developing a Saprahan-Based Ethnopedagogical Curriculum Model to bridge this gap in the future.

**Keyword:** Saprahan; Character Education; Internalization of Mempawah Malay Traditional Values;

## Introduction

Saprahan, a core social practice in Malay culture, is rich in the values of mutual cooperation and togetherness, which serve as an important foundation for character education. However, this noble tradition now faces serious threats from the tide of modernization in urban society. This behavioral shift is marked by the replacement of the Saprahan ritual by more practical modern practices, such as buffets (Sanjaya & Safitri, 2024), which directly results in the younger generation's diminished appreciation for local heritage (Nur Afifah, 2022). Consequently, fundamental values such as social solidarity and shared responsibility are increasingly being eroded, accelerated by the influence of digital media, which diminishes a deep understanding of the meaning of Saprahan (Muzakkir, 2021).

A major gap is evident in the formal education system. Character education in schools is often ineffective due to the dominance of approaches detached from everyday cultural contexts (Hemafitria et al., 2018), exacerbated by the lack of integration of Saprahan into the local curriculum (Naden, 2023). Theoretically, the process of internalizing Saprahan values such as patience, justice, and cooperation should be based on ethnopedagogy. However, urbanization and conflicts with individualistic lifestyles have weakened the transmission of values between generations (Karyana, 2021; Kautsar & Kurniawan, 2023), thus creating an urgent need to revitalize local values to prevent them from being pushed aside by external influences (Irawan et al., 2022).

Although the urgency of internalizing Saprahan values has been recognized, a fundamental, unresolved problem is the lack of innovative models that empirically integrate this tradition with contemporary educational needs (Palupi & Suprayitno, 2020). The uniform national curriculum and the suboptimal role of teachers in connecting Saprahan with everyday character learning (Utami et al., 2022) are real obstacles. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by developing an innovative approach (Widana & Jayanthi, 2021) to address the misalignment between cultural heritage and modern demands.

Based on this background and gap, this study aims to identify and formulate an effective model for internalizing the values of the Saprahan Melayu tradition in character education among the younger generation amidst the currents of modernization.

## Methods

This research used a qualitative approach with a single case study design to in-depth explore the internalization of Saprahan values as a means of character education in Mempawah (Sugiyono, 2020).

### Research Participants (Key Informants)

Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling. A total of six participants were divided into three categories, with strict inclusion criteria:

Traditional Leaders/Culturalists (2): Individuals with authority on the philosophy and history of Saprahan.

Community Members/Practitioners (2): Active participants in Saprahan and with school-age children.

Teachers/Educators (2): Junior high/senior high school teachers in Mempawah who integrate cultural values (Fitrah & Luthiyah, 2018).

#### Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through three main techniques:

In-depth Interviews: Conducted semi-structured, each session lasting 60–90 minutes, until the data reached theoretical saturation. The focus of the interviews was the model of character value internalization.

Participatory Observation: Researchers were directly involved in Saprahan activities, documented through field notes, recordings, and photographs.

Documentation Study: Collecting documents related to the curriculum and local policies (Sayidah, 2018).

#### Data Analysis and Credibility

Data analysis was conducted inductively following the steps of Reduction, Presentation, and Conclusion Drawing (Lizawati, 2017).

To ensure the quality of the findings, this study employed four Data Credibility (Trustworthiness) techniques:

Source Triangulation: Comparing data from three categories of informants.

Method Triangulation: Combining the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

Member Checking: Verifying the summary of findings with key informants.

Audit Trail: Systematic storage of all raw data and analysis processes.

### Results And Discussion

This research presents data obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. These data are grouped into three main conceptual categories synthesized from the Saprahan character values to provide a sharper and more in-depth analysis.

#### Saprahan Character Values

The character values embodied in the Saprahan tradition are synthesized into three major themes that represent its cultural and educational functions. These are explained in the following table.

**Table 3.1** Interview Results

Conceptual	Core Values	Interview	Evidence
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Categories	Discovered	(Verbatim)
<b>Communal and Moral Values</b>	Solidarity, Mutual Cooperation, Religiosity, Togetherness, and Gratitude	"For us, Saprahan is not just about eating. It's a ritual of respect for God and others. The principle of sitting cross-legged and sharing from a single tray instills the deepest sense of solidarity and gratitude." (Traditional Leaders: Datuk Bintang and Pak Rahmad).
<b>Civic Values and Identity</b>	Nationalism, Love of the Homeland, Cultural Awareness	"If Saprahan is lost, our Malay identity will be lost. The younger generation must be aware of this. It's our duty to continue practicing saprahan so that their values of patriotism and nationalism don't fade, replaced by foreign culture." (Community: Mr. Daeng and Mrs. Wanti)
<b>Cognitive and Creative Values</b>	Curiosity, Creativity, and Honesty (as learning potential)	"Saprahan is an asset; it can be an excellent learning resource. But at school, we struggle. There are no teaching modules that guide us on how to teach students' curiosity and creativity through this local wisdom." (Teachers: Ms. Ratih and Mr. Riski)

#### Description Based on Interview Results

The interviews confirmed that Saprahan has fundamental significance as a moral arena and collective identity.

Communal and Moral Data: Traditional leaders (Datuk Bintang and Pak Rahmad) and community practitioners agreed that the physical practice of Saprahan (sitting equally, sharing meals) intrinsically instills values (Solidarity, Gotong Royong). This is optimally internalized in the community environment through real social interactions.

**Citizenship and Identity Data:** The community explicitly views the preservation of Saprahan as an effort to raise awareness and maintain identity. This perspective links Saprahan with nationalism and patriotism as a bulwark against outside cultures, underscoring the function of tradition as a mandatory heritage.

**Cognitive and Creative Data:** Educators emphasized that Saprahan is a rich resource for stimulating curiosity and creativity when used as a learning medium. However, this potential is hampered by structural factors in schools.

#### Contrast of Internalization of Values in the Community vs. School (Analysis Pattern)

The analysis reveals significant contrasts in the transmission of Saprahan values, which serve as key research patterns:

**Community Success:** The transmission of values in tables 1 and 2 within the community functions optimally. Traditional leaders emphasize that Saprahan is the primary medium for moral transmission that fosters unity and shared responsibility. Practitioners added that this is a conscious community effort to instill nationalism in the younger generation to ensure cultural sustainability.

**Formal Institutional Constraints:** Despite the significant potential for Cognitive and Creative Values, teachers (Ratih and Riski) identified curriculum and material constraints as the main obstacles. The lack of learning resources based on local wisdom and teachers' understanding of ethnopedagogy are key obstacles to the systematic implementation of Saprahan values in the classroom.

### **Discussion**

This discussion focuses on the synthesis of the above data and its interpretation, linked to the theoretical framework of ethnopedagogy and character education.

#### The Nature of Saprahan as a Source of Communal and Moral Values

Data confirms that the essence of Saprahan goes beyond the ritual of eating, serving as a moral platform for Malay society (Amatullah, 2020). Communal values (solidarity, mutual cooperation, religiosity) are internalized through physical practices (sitting cross-legged, six people together, sharing a meal) and social practices (Larasati & Hum, 2022).

This interpretation aligns with the concept of ethnopedagogy, which states that local culture inherently possesses strong educational potential. Interviews with traditional traders, which emphasize religious aspects, gratitude, and solidarity, provide empirical evidence that Saprahan is an effective curriculum for shaping collective character. Communal and moral values are the foundation of character that must be preserved against modern individualistic lifestyles (Mahdi & Shadiqin, 2023).

### The Urgency of Civic and Identity Values in Preservation

This study found that the community's motivation to preserve Saprahan fosters Civic and Identity Values, namely nationalism and patriotism. This is an important data pattern: Saprahan not only shapes social behavior but also strengthens cultural identity as a bulwark against the onslaught of global culture. This internalization through cultural practices constitutes a form of resistance against identity extinction, making it a strategic agenda for cultural inheritance in the younger generation (Saputra et al., 2019).

### Structural and Functional Gaps: Neglected Cognitive Values

The contrasting data serves as a key analysis pattern. Although Saprahan is rich in resources for cultivating Cognitive Values (Curiosity, Creativity) in schools, its functionality is hampered by structural gaps.

Data from teacher informants (Ratih and Riski) explicitly highlight that the Curriculum and Materials are the main obstacles. This demonstrates the failure of the formal education system to optimally adopt the Ethnopedagogical framework (Made Subrata & Rai, 2023). However, integrating local culture can make learning more contextual and meaningful (Kasandra et al., 2023). This failure, reinforced by another study (Fatmi et al., 2023), implies the need for interventions to bridge the gap between the potential of local wisdom and the implementation of formal character education.

### Conclusion

This study aims to internalize the values of the Malay Saprahan tradition in character education, focusing on the challenges of modernization and curriculum constraints. Based on an in-depth case study analysis using an ethnopedagogical framework, it was found that the Saprahan tradition is a source of character values functionally divided into three categories: Communal and Moral Values, Civic and Identity Values, and Cognitive and Creative Values. Primary data demonstrate a significant contrast in the internalization process: Moral and Civic Values operate effectively and optimally in the community through direct social practices, but the transmission of Cognitive Values in formal institutions (schools) is structurally hampered. This primary obstacle arises from the lack of contextualized teaching modules and teachers' poor understanding of the concept of ethnopedagogy, preventing the systematic utilization of Saprahan's potential as a character learning asset.

This study makes a novel contribution to the literature by explicitly categorizing Saprahan values into three dimensions and demonstrating that the problem of internalization lies not solely in cultural erosion but in the functional and structural gaps that separate the curriculum of community life from the formal curriculum in schools.

These findings underscore the urgency of developing a model that bridges community ethnopedagogy practices with school curriculum needs.

While this research offers in-depth insights, it has methodological and contextual limitations. As a single-case study focused on Mempawah Regency with a limited number of key informants (six), the generalizability of the findings may be limited to areas with similar Malay cultural characteristics. Therefore, future research is strongly recommended to conduct research and development (R&D) to formulate a Saprahan-Based Ethnopedagogical Curriculum Development Model that is applicable to formal education. Furthermore, an experimental study regarding the effectiveness of the Teacher Training Program in improving competency in managing local wisdom-based learning is also needed.

### **Suggestion**

Systematic efforts are needed to integrate Saprahan values through curriculum adjustments and the development of learning resources based on local wisdom. This step must be complemented by intensive training for teachers to improve their competence in utilizing culture as a contextual learning medium. Furthermore, close collaboration between schools, traditional leaders, and local communities is needed to ensure the internalization of Saprahan values is strengthened and continuously internalized in both the educational and community spheres.

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