

Strategies for Introducing the Cultural Values of Gresik Embodied in Damar Kurung: A Study on Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to introduce the cultural values of Gresik through *Damar Kurung*, a cultural icon, to early childhood students as part of preserving local wisdom and shaping the character of future generations. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method using observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects are 20 children aged 3-4 years at Taman Pengasuhan Anak (TPA) Harmoni in Gresik Regency, selected using purposive sampling. The results reveal that cultural introduction strategies involving direct and audiovisual exposure to *Damar Kurung*, coloring activities, and practicing traditional and religious values effectively enhance children's cultural understanding and fine motor skills. Approximately 70% of participants showed expected developmental progress in recognizing cultural values, including religiosity, tradition, social interaction, and education. This research concludes that utilizing local art forms like *Damar Kurung* as educational media provides enjoyable

and meaningful learning experiences supporting young children's character development. Such strategies expand cultural awareness, foster an appreciation for local arts, and inspire a commitment to preserving traditions among younger generations.

Introduction

Students play a crucial role as the next generation responsible for building a better future for their families, nations, and countries. Their development, particularly in early childhood, begins within the family as the first foundation, followed by formal education in school environments (Khadijah & Jf, 2021). Early childhood encompasses ages 0 to 8 years in modern educational perspectives, aligning with the Indonesian education system, including lower elementary grades, kindergarten, playgroups, and daycare centers. This research focuses on children aged 4 to 7 years (Widyastuti, 2020).

One engaging approach in early childhood education is the integration of artistic activities such as painting, drawing, playing music, dancing, and crafting. These activities allow children to express emotions creatively and enjoyably. Through art, children can broaden their understanding of various emotions, observe and interpret others' emotional expressions, and develop positive emotional regulation skills (Telaumbanua & Bu'ulolo, 2024). Art-based activities help children freely express feelings without limitations, enriching their emotional comprehension.

Educational stimulation at home and in formal settings

significantly shapes children's character and knowledge (Miranti & Zulfahmi, 2024). Teachers' primary duty is to provide the best support for children's holistic development. Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but a guided process that leads individuals toward maturity and personal growth. Human involvement is essential, considering the evolving intellectual potential that can be nurtured and guided (Dacholfany & Hasanah, 2021). Additionally, fostering students' character is a central objective of effective character education (Fitria & Rayhani, 2021; Judrah et al., 2024).

Instructional media is critical in enhancing children's sensory development (Ulum et al., 2023). Traditionally, learning media were limited to simple forms such as pictures, graphics, or illustrated books. Advances in science and technology have introduced more sophisticated tools, including slides (PowerPoint), photographs, computers, videos, and films (Zahwa & Syafi'i, 2022). An innovative approach involves utilizing culturally-based media, such as *Damar Kurung*, to teach cultural values to young children. *Damar Kurung* is visually captivating and rich in cultural values, including religiosity (obedience, social harmony, discipline), economic virtues (honesty, perseverance, resilience), and social norms (courtesy, respect). These values are conveyed through stories depicted in its artwork, making it an effective medium for teaching the cultural heritage of Gresik (Syafana & Umam, 2024).

This research aims to introduce *Damar Kurung* as a distinctive

Gresik art form. Using illustrations and narratives by artist Masmundari, it explores *Damar Kurung*'s potential to instill local cultural values and familiarize children with Gresik's community traditions. Previous research by Ubaidillah et al. (2024), highlights the positive impact of coloring *Damar Kurung* on fine motor skill development, aligning with Fauziah et al. (2024), who emphasize its role in cultural preservation. This cultural introduction strengthens identity and promotes tradition among younger generations (Khofsah et al., 2023). Therefore, educators play a vital role in fostering an appreciation of local arts and heritage by incorporating *Damar Kurung* into early childhood education.

Methods

This research employs a descriptive qualitative research design, focusing on an in-depth description of specific social or cultural phenomena based on data directly collected from the field. This design aligns with a research approach aimed at understanding and documenting individual experiences and perspectives related to the research subject (Waruwu, 2024). Descriptive qualitative research is commonly used in educational studies to explore the role of culturally-based teaching strategies (Sugiyono, 2020).

The research uses observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection methods. The researchers conducted direct field observations and interviews with the principal and teachers at *Taman Pengasuhan Anak (TPA) Harmoni* to explore the significance of introducing *Damar Kurung* to students residing in Gresik.

This research occurred at *TPA Harmoni*, in Perum Permata Harmony, Jl. Harmoni 2 No.19, Tebalo, Manyar District, Gresik Regency, East Java. The research population includes all children enrolled at *TPA Harmoni*, comprising more than 20 children aged 3 months to 7 years. The study sample focuses on children aged 3-4 years, selected for their early developmental stage, making them suitable for introducing cultural values. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which involves selecting subjects that align with the research objectives (Asrulla et al., 2023).

Results and Discussions

This research highlights the importance of introducing local art and culture through *Damar Kurung*, a cultural icon of Gresik, in early childhood education. *Damar Kurung*, the legendary work of Masmundari, depicts the daily life of the Gresik community, including religious activities such as congregational prayers, festive celebrations, *Takbir Keliling*, and unique traditions like the *Pasar Bandeng* and *Padusan* before Ramadan (Meitasari, 2017). As a cultural medium, this painting embodies religious values, courtesy, togetherness, and economic aspects relevant to children's character development (Utama, 2016).

According to an interview with Sri Wahyuni, a cultural expert from Gresik, each side of *Damar Kurung* not only narrates the history of Islam's introduction to Indonesia but also contains elements of tradition, social aspects, and education, which are crucial for cultural introduction from an early age. Activities like festivals or *Damar Kurung* painting

competitions are often used as a means of cultural preservation by showcasing artwork in public spaces.

The introduction of *Damar Kurung* is tailored to the comprehension level of children aged 3-4 years. The themes of the paintings include activities like congregational prayers, traditional games such as hide-and-seek, and bus rides, using bright colors like red, green, and blue to capture the children's attention. Before engaging in painting activities, children are introduced to the tools, materials, and simple techniques for making *Damar Kurung*. Coloring activities become an effective strategy for integrating art with cultural learning (Ubaidillah et al., 2024).

The research results indicate that introducing local culture through visual art, such as *Damar Kurung*, effectively instills cultural values and enhances artistic appreciation in early childhood. These activities also develop fine motor skills and foster a love for cultural heritage (Khaerani et al., 2024). Teachers at TPA Harmoni emphasized the need for repetition to reinforce children's understanding of the activities. For instance, using *Damar Kurung* as a learning medium in the *Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) can be implemented over 1-2 weeks, involving activities such as introducing the paintings, simple lantern-making techniques, and decorating the environment with *Damar Kurung* motifs.

This research was conducted over three days and included activities such as direct observation of *Damar Kurung*, audiovisual

introductions to *Damar Kurung*, practicing habits aligned with religious values (reciting), traditional values (rabbit dance), coloring *Damar Kurung*, and learning about its uses. The teacher of the Bulan class also noted that repetition is necessary for student learning to help children better understand the activities.

The strategies used in this research included several activities: 1) Introducing children to and observing *Damar Kurung* through discussions and showing videos about it. 2) Coloring *Damar Kurung* images, narrating one of its paintings, and practicing religious and traditional values. 3) Playing with *Damar Kurung* through traditional games like *cublak-cublak suweng*, hide-and-seek, and searching for colorful balls.



Figure 1. Introducing and observing *Damar Kurung* through Q&A and video

Based on observations of Activity 1, it was found that among children aged 3-4 years, 11 students were categorized as Starting to Develop (MB), 3 students as Developing Very Well (BSB), and 6 students as Developing as Expected (BSH) in their ability to recognize *Damar Kurung* both directly and through audiovisual media. On average, the

children's ability to narrate one of the *Damar Kurung* paintings was categorized as Starting to Develop (MB), as indicated by their interest in learning about *Damar Kurung*.



Figure 2. Coloring *Damar Kurung*, Introducing Religious and Traditional Values

Based on observations of Activity 2, it was found that in practicing religious and traditional values in *Damar Kurung*, 6 students were categorized as Starting to Develop (MB), and 14 students as Developing as Expected (BSH). Thus, the average developmental level of students in applying these values through *Damar Kurung* was categorized as Developing as Expected (BSH).



Figure 3. Playing with The Light from *Damar Kurung*

Based on observations of Activity 3, the development of the children in the Bulan class in understanding the uses of *Damar Kurung* showed that 6 students were categorized as Developing Very Well (BSB), 8 as Developing as Expected (BSH), and 6 as Starting to Develop (MB). On average, the Bulan class students' developmental level in recognizing *Damar Kurung's* applications was categorized as Developing as Expected (BSH).

The researchers introduced *Damar Kurung* as an icon of Gresik to teach local wisdom beyond traditional games, food, and beverages. The children enthusiastically participated in the activities that introduced Gresik's local culture. They even shared their excitement about these activities at home with their families. For example, Griffit's mother, a parent at TPA Harmoni, mentioned that her child wanted to own a *Damar Kurung* like the one used during the learning activities.

The research found that the most effective strategy for introducing the cultural values of Gresik embedded in *Damar Kurung* involved direct and audiovisual exposure, coloring *Damar Kurung*, and practicing the cultural values within *Damar Kurung* (religious and traditional values). The benefits of this approach include providing children with experiences in learning about Gresik's culture, expanding their knowledge of local traditions, fostering cultural appreciation through *Damar Kurung*, and contributing to the preservation of Gresik's local wisdom.

This research aligns with the views of educators emphasizing the

integration of artistic activities into early childhood education curricula to optimize children's development from an early age (Khaerani dkk, 2024) Using appropriate teaching media, such as *Damar Kurung*, can significantly enhance children's fine motor skills (Ubaidillah dkk, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the cultural values of Gresik embedded in *Damar Kurung* for children aged 3-4 years at TPA Harmoni include traditional values, religious values, social values, and educational values. Religious values encompass tolerance, love for peace, unity, devotion to worship, and understanding of good and bad traits. Traditional values include caring and kindness. The social values include respect, courtesy, affection, cooperation, humility, self-confidence, and love for peace. The educational values involve self-confidence, creativity, hard work, and perseverance.

The strategies for introducing the cultural values of Gresik found in *Damar Kurung* include direct and audiovisual exposure to *Damar Kurung*, coloring activities, and practicing cultural values through traditional activities (such as the rabbit dance) and religious activities (such as reciting prayers). The benefits of introducing *Damar Kurung* to children aged 3-4 years are that students gain experience in learning about Gresik's culture, expand their knowledge of local traditions, develop an appreciation for Gresik's culture through *Damar Kurung*, and contribute to the preservation of Gresik's local wisdom.

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