

Cultural Communication in Wayang Sada and Preservation of Local Values

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ABSTRACT

Wayang Sada, as a form of traditional Javanese performing arts, faces significant challenges in maintaining its relevance amid the growing tide of globalization. The main problem faced is how to maintain the interest of the younger generation in Wayang Sada in the midst of the onslaught of foreign cultural values supported by the development of modern technology and entertainment. This research aims to explore the role of Wayang Sada as a medium of cultural communication as well as efforts to preserve local values in the context of modernization. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach, which focuses on an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of Wayang Sada in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The results of the study show that although Wayang Sada has great potential in shaping the character of the younger generation through the local wisdom values contained in it, there is a significant gap in its integration strategy into the lives of the current young generation. The conclusion of this study is that Wayang Sada needs innovation and adaptation in cultural presentation and communication in order to attract the interest of the younger generation, while maintaining the preservation of local cultural values in the midst of the challenges of globalization.

KEYWORDS

cultural communication; traditional values; local wisdom; wayang sada; character development

INTRODUCTION

With the trend of globalization getting stronger, puppets (Wayang), especially Wayang Sada, face significant challenges in maintaining their relevance among the younger generation. Globalization also makes it easier for foreign cultural values to enter and influence society (Firman et al., 2024). The impact of globalization, which continues to proliferate in technology and communication, presents new challenges to the existence of puppets (Elizabeth & Dato, 2024). Globalization has led to the entry of outside cultures that make people more interested in modern arts or entertainment (Wardani & Saripudin, 2021). In addition, the efforts of puppet-based counselling carried out by the Social Service to overcome the many social problems and juvenile delinquency in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) have become a common concern (*Wayang Cakruk as a Preventive Effort for Social Problems and Adolescents – Social Service*, n.d.). Departing from a sense of concern for education and traditional arts that are beginning to be

abandoned by the younger generation, Marsono, as a Wayang Sada activist who comes from Gunungbang Hamlet, Bejiharjo Village, Karangmojo District, Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta, developed Wayang Sada so that Wayang as a national culture does not disappear with the times. As an icon of Indonesia's culture, Puppet culture requires efforts to be preserved and spread to the younger generation (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Culture is all spiritual and physical belonging to a group passed down from generation to generation (Asteria & Nofitasari, 2023).

Modern technology and media often replace the role of traditional cultural arts as a source of entertainment and learning. Cultural Arts are vital in communicating and implementing just and civilized human values in society (Wasngadiredja et al., 2023). Culture can be seen from the iceberg concept, where culture is visible and invisible (Natalia, 2023). Wayang Sada has excellent potential to continue to exist and develop if it is positioned as an entertaining and educational medium, especially in character formation based on local wisdom and values. Wayang is a local wisdom in performing arts, which is in great demand in the community (Ruastiti et al., 2020). The potential of local wisdom requires individuals with the passion and willingness to preserve the arts by ensuring the younger generation's involvement as future art players, the community as a support system for art conservation, and the government as a policymaker (Hartono et al., 2024). Local wisdom as a development resource can inspire and emphasize the importance of community involvement in creating sustainable, positive change (Kasman, 2024).

In addition to the challenges of globalization, there are changes in modern society's lifestyle and mindset that are increasingly moving away from tradition. Traditions change based on the subject's point of view being influenced by various external aspects (Rahayu, 2023). The tradition includes social values as a sign that living humans must always contribute to the social environment (Aprianti & Santi, 2021). Today's young generation is more familiar with technology and popular culture that tends to come from abroad, so interest in traditional arts such as puppetry has decreased. Interest in puppets tends to be more enjoyable to watch in entertainment content formats that are easy to reach, such as on YouTube and TV shows (Rohmah et al., 2021). This raises concerns about the loss of local cultural values contained in puppets. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to reintegrate the traditional art of Wayang into daily life, especially among the younger generation. Traditions must be maintained so that the preservation of culture can be well maintained and continued to the next successor (Alifuddin & Setyawan, 2021).

Wayang, as a spectacle and guide, is a type of traditional culture that has existed for a long time in Indonesia. As the next generation, we must introduce Wayang to future generations and the international community (Tiwari et al., 2023). Wayang functions as entertainment and a medium for conveying moral values, ethics, and life philosophies passed down from generation to generation. Wayang offers a wealth of information and allows them to gain in-depth knowledge (Jufry et al., 2024). Wayang, which still survives today, shows that Wayang is unique. One of the uniqueness of puppets can be seen from their various physical forms, including those made of skewers or Wayang Sada. Wayang

Sada reflects the creativity and local wisdom of the Javanese people in utilizing the resources that exist in the surrounding nature. Wayang has indeed been used as a medium to instil local cultural values (Kartika et al., 2020). More than just an entertainment tool, Wayang Sada also has an educational function, especially in shaping children's characters through stories full of cultural and moral values. In addition, puppets can be adopted as a new marketing strategy to meet the audience's demand and avoid social distancing (Meloni & Allasso, 2023).

As a cultural communication medium, Wayang Sada plays an essential role in shaping the younger generation's character. Cultural communication in Wayang Sada is closely related to the socio-cultural life of the community (Rolando & Walidah, 2021). Cultural communication is formed, embedded, and grows in every generation that will continue to face the times (Ridwan et al., 2022). The values contained in Wayang can be an effort to develop character (Jiwandono & Khairunisa, 2020). The formation of community character is inseparable from the prevailing environmental, customary, and cultural conditions (Permata Raharjo et al., 2023). Puppet stories convey various life values that children can use as guidelines in developing personality and morality. Children are taught about kindness, honesty, courage, and respect for others through puppet characters. Preserving puppets cannot be separated from the manifestation of noble culture and ancestral heritage that contains educational values (Pradana & Ruastiti, 2022). Thus, Wayang Sada is a tool to preserve culture and a unique instrument in character education. Character education is a learning process that prioritizes values and fostering ideologies to build strength (Adiprabowo & Widodo, 2023).

Although various studies have explored the role of puppets, including Wayang Sada, in preserving local cultural values and shaping the character of the younger generation, there is a significant research gap related to unique strategies for integrating Wayang Sada into the current context of globalization and modernization, especially in the face of challenges posed by technological developments and changes in the lifestyle of the younger generation who tend to be more interested in popular culture and digital technology than traditional art. Previous research has highlighted more educational and moralistic functions of puppets. However, it is still lacking in answering how to make Wayang Sada relevant and in demand by the younger generation in the digital era. Therefore, further research is needed that focuses not only on the preservation of cultural values but also on the innovation and adaptation of Wayang Sada in responding to ongoing social and technological changes.

METHOD

The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. The case study research strategy is related to how or why by focusing research related to contemporary phenomena, such as the sustainability and preservation of Wayang Sada amid the challenges of globalization (Yin, 2018). Case studies allow researchers to explore the real-life context in which Wayang Sada remains relevant and in demand by the younger

generation. Case study research begins by identifying specific cases to describe and analyze (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The stages of the research method are to determine the research focus, data collection, and data analysis. The focus of the research is on cultural issues that concern sustainable development goals. Data collection starts from field observation then conducts documentation in the field and literature study. Researchers are outsiders from the group being studied, witnessing and taking notes and recording data without being directly involved with the activity or community (Creswell, 2014). The observation is then used as a case study related to previous research through literature studies. All data was collected, reviewed, and sorted in advance according to the research topic. Observation data are classified based on the points to be discussed. The next stage is data analysis or interpretation of data obtained from observation and literature studies to see how Wayang Sada remains relevant and in demand by the younger generation to preserve cultural values. Data analysis is carried out through interpretive-related research related to previous research and relevant literature studies to obtain the object's meaning in depth. The final stage of this research is to draw conclusions based on the findings obtained and provide recommendations for further research. This approach is expected to provide new insights into the importance of preserving local culture amid globalization, as well as the role of Wayang Sada in character education based on local wisdom and values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The communication process carried out by Marsono through the Wayang Sada media as a formation of children's character can be seen from the primary and secondary communication processes. Marsono uses Javanese as the main medium for interacting with children in the primary communication process. Javanese is useful for preserving regional languages, considering there are now many absorbed languages (Damayanti et al., 2022). The use of Javanese language is related to politeness determined by "*unggah-ungguhing basa*" ("language manners"), a speech level that is a reference in Javanese (Mahmudah et al., 2023). The choice of Javanese is not only because it is an everyday language used by Marsono and children but also as a strategic effort to instil local cultural values from an early age. The Javanese language makes it easier to convey messages and strengthens children's understanding of the meaning of the forms of Wayang Sada that they learn. Wayang Sada is also very interesting for students, so it can motivate them to be more enthusiastic when learning (Syafri & Agel, 2022). Uniquely, Marsono does not use the Javanese word "ngoko," which tends to be rougher and is commonly used in children's daily conversations. Instead, he chose to use the Javanese "kromo," a more refined and polite form of Javanese. The Javanese word "kromo" is usually used when communicating with older or respected people. Hence, the choice of this language is a means of teaching the values of manners and respect to children. In addition to oral communication, Marsono also teaches Javanese through writing. Children are taught how to write the Javanese script, an integral part of their cultural heritage. This can be seen in

Figure 1, where Marsono patiently guides children to write Javanese script, developing their writing skills and strengthening their cultural identity.

Figure 1. The Process of Learning to Write Javanese Script



Source: Personal Document Vani (2017)

The primary communication process not only serves to convey information about Wayang Sada and Javanese culture but also as a tool to shape children's characters. Character building is the extraordinary goal of a proper education system (Handayani, 2020). By using the Javanese word "kromo" and teaching the Javanese script, Marsono instilled values such as respect, politeness, and pride in local cultural heritage. The importance of education on cultural values can maintain local cultural heritage in Indonesia (Farhaeni & Martini, 2023). This shows that applied communication is limited to knowledge transfer and includes character formation based on local wisdom. In addition to primary communication, Marsono also utilizes secondary communication in the learning process through Wayang Sada. Secondary communication refers to using media or tools as intermediaries in conveying messages. In this context, Wayang Sada plays a unique communication medium. Unique media can help the learning process to design creative media and can increase learning motivation (Kurniawati & Koeswanti, 2021).

Wayang Sada, made of 'sada' or skewers, has shapes and characters that represent the characters in the puppet story. Each puppet character has a specific symbolism that conveys moral and ethical values. For example, the Pandava symbolizes truth and justice, while the Kurawa represents terrible qualities such as greed and lies. By introducing children to various characters, Marsono uses puppet symbolism to teach the difference between good and bad behaviour. Symbolism in Wayang Sada is vital in reinforcing verbal messages conveyed through cultural communication. Symbolism is a unique tool for communicating important messages to the audience (Senopati & Wicaksandita, 2023). The children not only heard the stories or lessons delivered by Marsono but also saw the visualization of these values through the characters and forms of Wayang Sada, as shown in Figure 2. The use of visual symbols helps children to more easily understand and internalize these values, as they can relate abstract concepts to concrete visual representations.

Figure 2. Marsono tells stories through Wayang Sada media

Source: Personal Document Vani (2017)

Thus, combining primary communication through language and secondary communication through symbols in Wayang Sada creates a holistic learning experience for children. The learning experience process enriches their knowledge of Javanese culture and language and helps them form a strong character based on local wisdom and values. Character formation can overcome potential risks and challenges that may arise (Solissa et al., 2024). Wayang Sada, through these two communication processes, is a unique tool for preserving culture and instilling moral values amid the challenges of globalization. Proper integration of character education based on local culture can be a tool to face the challenges of globalization while strengthening national identity and preserving cultural heritage (Manarfa & Lasaiba, 2023). The process of conveying the Javanese language, written in Javanese script by Marsono, was carried out because of concern for seeing the children around him as Javanese who have been unable to write Javanese script. This is what caused Marsono to invite children to learn together through the Wayang Sada media.

Wayang Sada, as a medium of cultural communication used by Marsono to educate children, plays a significant role in character formation. The character that can be understood as fundamental values that guide behaviour in human interaction is essential in shaping a person's morals and ethics. The form of unity of character can provide strength to live life (Iqbal & Widodo, 2024). This character is a foundation supporting the value system in social life. If this character is lost or neglected, the values that have been the foundation of everyday life will collapse. The approach taken by Marsono through Wayang Sada is not just an art or entertainment activity but an effort to instil and affirm character values in children.

On the other hand, Indonesia's young generation is also being encouraged to have a character following the character education program of the Indonesian nation (Arifin & Rahman Hakim, 2021). The character can be universally formulated as a set of values that support an ordinary life, which includes peace, respect, cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, and unity. These values are

abstract principles and manifest in natural behaviour that can be internalized through various educational media, one of which is through traditional arts such as Wayang Sada.

The above character formulation is reflected in the activities carried out by Marsono in character formation for children in the surrounding environment. Children who come to study with Marsono are always free to decide when they want to come to study. Children are also taught to respect each other and live peacefully, side by side, without discriminating between each other. The children also seemed happy and happy when Marsono told the story through wayang sada. The stories Marsono tells with puppet show media do not always tell stories about puppet stories. However, the story can be about everyday life; for example, telling stories about how honesty is necessary is done by asking questions and giving answers to children. Marsono also gave an example to children of humility when feeling successful, compassion for others, responsibility for everything done, and a straightforward attitude in daily life. The impact of this cultural communication process can be seen in the formation of the character of children who participate in the puppet activity. They learn about traditional arts and the Javanese language and develop positive values that form the basis of their behaviour later in life. Local values or wisdom can be used to maintain social and natural harmony (Raharja et al., 2022). Wayang Sada, thus, becomes more than just a preserved cultural heritage; it transforms into a unique character education tool that shapes the younger generation, which has integrity, respect, and responsibility for themselves and others.

However, challenges remain in integrating these values into daily life, especially amid solid globalization currents. Education must accommodate local values, teach tolerance and respect for differences, and strengthen unity within the framework of globalization that connects Indonesia with the outside world (Mihit, 2023). Therefore, innovation in the presentation and preservation of Wayang Sada needs to continue so that this traditional art remains relevant and can compete with modern forms of entertainment. Local culture makes it easier for the audience to understand the content of the message conveyed (Adiprabowo & Wibowo, 2024). By maintaining and strengthening character values through cultural mediums such as Wayang Sada, society can ensure that future generations continue to appreciate and practice the values essential for harmonious and civilized coexistence.

Figure 3. The Process of Making Wayang Sada



Source: Personal Document Vani (2017)

In Figure 3, it appears that children are making puppets. The togetherness of the children reflects how they are taught to correct each other and help each other in the process of learning together to make wayang sada. The method of educating children carried out by Marsono is part of how character education is used to instil noble values, ethics, and morals based on religious teachings, customs, and regional values to develop children's personalities to become intelligent human beings. Cultivating a dignified personality can improve self-quality, balance mental resilience, and provide reliable spiritual will (Adisaputro & Rosidi, 2020).

The cultural communication process carried out by Marsono through Wayang Sada preserves Javanese culture and becomes a unique means of character education for children. The role of education is not only to exchange knowledge but also to maintain, maintain, and preserve culture and art (Hakiki & Adiprabowo, 2023). Combining primary communication through the Javanese language and secondary communication through puppet symbolism creates a holistic and meaningful learning experience. Children involved in this process acquire knowledge of traditional arts and culture and internalize the underlying moral and ethical values in daily life. The challenges of globalization that threaten the preservation of local culture are faced with innovation and adaptation carried out by Marsono, showing that cultural heritage can continue to be relevant and helpful in shaping a young generation with dignity and character. This effort also emphasizes the importance of education based on local values in facing the challenges of the times, as well as strengthening a solid and harmonious national identity.

CONCLUSION

As part of traditional Javanese performing arts, Wayang Sada plays a vital role in cultural communication and preserving local cultural values. Despite the challenges of globalization and the changing preferences of the younger generation towards modern entertainment, Wayang Sada remains relevant because of its ability to convey moral values, character building, and life philosophies contained in its stories. This research also confirms that preserving local culture, such as Wayang Sada, requires innovative and collaborative efforts between communities, governments, and educational institutions to maintain its sustainability in the future.

Recommendations for further research include a more in-depth exploration of the unique strategies for integrating Wayang Sada into the formal education curriculum and how digital technology can be leveraged to attract the younger generation's interest in this traditional performing art. In addition, further research can also examine how the cultural communication models used in Wayang Sada can be applied in a broader context, such as social campaigns or community-based development programs. This is important to ensure that Wayang Sada survives as a cultural heritage and continues to evolve and be relevant in modern life.

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