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Proverbs as a Reflection of Moral and Cultural Values: A Comparative Study of Javanese and Lamaholot Proverbs

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Abstract

Proverbs are one of the forms of oral cultural expression that contain moral values, ethics, and the worldview of a society. Proverbs serve as a means of social education that reflect local understandings of well-being and harmonious living. However, in practice, instances of people being less wise in their speech are still often found in today's social reality. This study aims to compare two proverbs from different cultures, namely the Javanese proverb "Sopo nandur bakal ngunduh" which means "Whoever plants will reap," and the Lamaholot proverb "Kata Ikan Ikan Matakena, Kata Ganto Ganto Ujong Bale" which means "Words are like fish that gaze, and speech is like waves returning at the edge of the reef." Despite their geographical and cultural differences, both proverbs share similar principles regarding the importance of acting and speaking wisely. The Javanese proverb emphasizes the principle of cause and effect and work ethics as the foundation of prosperity, while the Lamaholot proverb highlights the importance of maintaining thoughtful speech for the sake of peace. Both promote universal values such as responsibility, integrity, politeness, and wisdom. These attitudes contain many values that remain highly relevant in building a just, harmonious, and civilized society amidst today's cultural diversity. The focus of this research is on the values contained within these proverbs and their relevance to modern social life. The study was conducted using a literature review method.

Keywords

Javanese Proverbs, Lamaholot Proverbs, Moral Values, Social Ethics, Wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly pluralistic era, the values flourishing within society are becoming more diverse. Many values held by specific communities may not necessarily be well-received or accepted by others. This diversity raises a fundamental question: how should an individual conduct themselves within a society? Many

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individuals still act solely according to their own will, disregarding the community around them. Therefore, it is essential to understand how one should properly act, speak, and present oneself. In many cultures, speech serves as an excellent medium for building brotherhood. Consequently, the words uttered by an individual are of paramount importance, as they determine the dynamics of a society.

As Dell Hymes stated, "language is the symbolic guide to culture."[1] In social relations, words can be bridges that connect or chasms that divide. Thus, every human being should realize that the words they speak are a reflection of their values and self-awareness as part of a community. Good words, however simple, are capable of fostering mutual trust, strengthening solidarity, and building togetherness. Conversely, words spoken without consideration can trigger conflict and worsen the atmosphere. Amidst social diversity, choosing words wisely is not merely a matter of ethics but also a form of social responsibility. Therefore, the choice of words which becomes part of one's character, serves as the primary foundation so that the use of language in social life reflects the upheld moral and cultural values.

According to Fransisca Jone Mare (Megawangi, 2001: 53 in National Seminar Proceedings), character strengthening encompasses values such as faith in God the Creator, responsibility, independence, honesty, tolerance, compassion, mutual assistance, life principles, innovation, an unyielding spirit, justice, courage, magnanimity, as well as peace and unity. These values can be developed through cognitive understanding, applied in concrete actions, and eventually become habits in daily life.[2] In practice, these character values function as a moral compass that guides an individual in thinking, behaving, and acting amidst complex social situations. Such character strengthening is highly relevant in facing the challenges of the modern era, which is fraught with social dynamics, rapid flows of information, and shifts in cultural values. These values can be developed gradually through continuous learning processes, such as through role-modeling within the family and community.

By nature, values possess certain characteristics that allow for change, as they are produced by cultural, social, and personal experiences embedded within an

[1] Dell Hymes, *Foundation in Sociolinguistics, an Ethnographic Approach*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), 55.

[2] Fransiska Jone Mare, "Representasi Ungkapan-Ungkapan Bahasa Lamaholot Lingkungan Kelautan Masyarakat Desa Bahinga terhadap Peningkatan Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra* Vol. 8, no. 1, (2021): 35.

individual's psychological structure.[3] Thus, a value always lives within a specific context that must be understood to grasp its intended meaning. In practice, these values are often expressed through speech, which serves not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for transmitting meaning and life wisdom from generation to generation. Speech manifests in many forms, including pantun (traditional poetry), poems, proverbs, aphorisms, advice, and other traditional expressions containing deep moral, ethical, and philosophical values.

Proverbs are a form of cultural expression with a dual function: as a communication tool and a means of transmitting social values. In the context of cultural anthropology, proverbs represent the collective values of a society internalized through historical experience and daily practice. Therefore, proverbs should not only be read as linguistic expressions but also as reflections of the value structures living within a community. One example reflecting this is the Javanese proverb *"Sopo nandur bakal ngunduh",* which literally means "he who plants shall reap." This proverb demonstrates a cultural awareness of the cause and effect principle inherent in human actions. In Javanese society, this is not merely an expression of advice but also functions as an ethical guideline encouraging individuals to act with responsibility, hard work, and moral awareness of the consequences of their deeds.

Meanwhile, in the Lamaholot culture of eastern Indonesia, there is a proverb, *"Kata Ikan Ikan Matakena, Kata Ganto Ganto Ujong Bale",* which implicitly contains a warning against the destructive impact of words. Through the metaphor of thorny fish and spears piercing into a house, the Lamaholot people emphasize that language possesses real social power and can determine the quality of human relations. In this context, proverbs function not only as instruments of communication ethics but also as social control mechanisms that maintain harmony and stability in community life.

Salgia Fitri and Sartono (2025) in Guruku: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sosial Humaniora researched the role of character education in building tolerance and social awareness among elementary school students toward their peers. This study indicates that character education plays a vital role in fostering values of mutual

[3] Dr. Waryunah Irmawati, *Dimensi Aksiologis Makna Peribahasa Jawa: Reinterpretasi Filosofis terhadap Pemaknaan Peribahasa Jawa dalam Masyarakat di Surakarta dan Kartasura* (Laporan Penelitian Individual, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Salatiga, Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian pada Masyarakat, 2020), 8

respect, empathy, and social responsibility within the school environment. The consistent application of character education is capable of creating harmonious relationships among students and increasing awareness of living tolerantly amidst diversity.

Similar research is found in other scientific journals, such as the study conducted by Okarisma Mailani et al. (2022) in Kampret Jurnal, which discusses the role of language as man's primary communication tool. It demonstrates that language functions to express feelings, convey information, explore the environment, influence others, and provide entertainment. This research confirms that language plays a crucial role in building social relationships and enabling effective communication in daily life.

A study by Saputri (2023) titled "Analysis of Noble Values and the Meaning of Javanese Proverbs (Field Study in Wonosari Village)" asserts that Javanese proverbs still play an important role in shaping the social character of the community. She found that Javanese proverbs contain values of honesty, simplicity, hard work, and respect for others. These values are passed down through expressions dense with meaning, making language an effective tool for moral education at the local level.

Research by Wissang (2024) in her writing on Lamaholot local wisdom in the short story anthology "Kuntum Keroko di Kaki Bukit" shows that the Lamaholot people also possess a moral value system manifested through language and oral traditions. Values such as gotong-royong (mutual cooperation), social concern, religiosity, and respect for nature are prominent in Lamaholot proverbs and folklore. Their traditional utterances function as behavioral guidelines and a bond of community solidarity in everyday life.

Nugroho (2022) in his article "Exploring Cultural Values in Ethnic Proverbs for Local Content Subject Matter in Regional Language and Literature" asserts that proverbs serve as effective means of character education. Through simple figurative language, proverbs instill values such as honesty, responsibility, and politeness, which are relevant for shaping the cultural identity of the younger generation.

DISCUSSION

Proverbs are a series of sentences that generally exist within a society through oral tradition. A proverb or expression is born from the collective life experiences of a community, which are then distilled into advice, warnings, or life guidelines. Although conveyed in short and simple sentences, proverbs possess profound

meaning. The content of a proverb reflects the worldview, moral values, and wisdom passed down through generations. Proverbs function as a tool for social education that guides human behavior to align with mutually upheld norms and ethics. Language serves as a Symbolic Representation of the Legitimacy of Societal Rules, manifesting in advice, specifically through expressions, taboos, and customary regulations.[4] Through symbolic expressions, proverbs teach how an individual should ideally behave, speak, and act within community life.

Ethics, as a builder of character or noble morals within a culture, contains moral teachings in the form of instructional texts, maxims, parables (*paribasan*), metaphors (*bebasan*), illustrations (*saloka*), and so forth.[5] Proverbs are viewed as a moral mirror that guides humans to live wisely and with civility. Wisdom is obtained not only through formal education but also through life experiences expressed through meaningful words. The existence of proverbs also demonstrates the linguistic richness and cultural depth of a nation. Each proverb carries a unique local nuance while containing universal messages that remain relevant across different places and times.

Every proverb possesses distinct values. Therefore, within a single culture, there are numerous proverbs that speak within their respective contexts. This diversity emerges and develops within a specific society through processes of social interaction, collective experience, and inherited traditions. In the context of a diverse society, the values contained in proverbs are equally varied, reflecting differences in background, social conditions, and the challenges faced. Every region has unique situations and conditions that must be viewed through the lens of its living cultural context.

In social and cultural spheres, language serves as the primary medium for conveying values. Language has various representations; it has something to display and something to convey. Oral language is the form most frequently encountered in daily life. Through language, an individual can understand their surroundings. More than just a communication tool, language also functions as a mirror of culture and the identity of a society.

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[4] Dina Amalia Susamto, "Konstruksi Sosial Pepatah Tradisional dan Aturan Adat untuk Keseimbangan Ekologi," *Totobuang: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya* Vol. 6, No. 1 (Juni 2018): 57.

[5] Sawitri, Sawitri, Bengat Bengat, R. Adi Deswijaya, and Nurpeni Priyatiningsih, "Nilai Karakter Pada Peribahasa, Pepatah dan Saloka Jawa Sebagai Pembelajaran Karakter Untuk Generasi Penerus Bangsa," *Kawruh: Journal of Language Education, Literature and Local Culture* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Oktober 2019): 105, https://doi.org/10.32585/kawruh.v1i2.407.

Through these aphorisms (pepatah-petitih) and traditional verses (pantun-peribahasa), one can find fundamental life principles that serve as the basis for both private and communal life.[6] Through language, moral values, worldviews, and the mindsets of a group are transmitted from generation to generation. Language does not only convey messages verbally but also carries symbolic meanings that illustrate how humans perceive the world. In a cultural context, language becomes the medium for instilling teachings, social norms, and local wisdom that shape the collective character of a society. Language becomes both a tool and a means to understand, interpret, and preserve culture itself.

Beyond referring to external objects, language is also a common medium for education. An individual's personal quality is evident in their speech. This is why education in speech is crucial. A person's moral virtue is also reflected in a single word. Consequently, words play a vital role in a culture. A culture that upholds high morality will strive to educate future generations with language imbued with moral content. Usually, utterances containing these moral values are referred to as proverbs, parables, or maxims. A proverb is a sentence aimed at emphasizing a particular value. Thus, it is not surprising that a vast number of proverbs exist. Each proverb is shaped by an individual's social environment. Accordingly, different environments will produce different proverbs, as each environment has a specific context that needs to be addressed.

Proverbs always contain deep instructional values. Behind short and concise expressions lie moral pointers that lead humans to behave and act wisely. The content of a proverb generally consists of advice, recommendations, or prohibitions that direct someone to distinguish between what is appropriate and what is unfit to do. Each proverb does not only teach individual goodness but also instills social awareness so that humans may live in order and mutual respect. Proverbs function to form a civilized societal order, a society that upholds human values, respects others, and maintains the harmony of living together.

Proverbs are a form of oral tradition that acts as a tool for delivering cultural values from one generation to the next. Oral tradition, as a form of local wisdom that must be preserved, has a significant influence on people within any cultural

[6] Mustansyir, Rizal , Misnal Munir, "Konsep Urang Sabana Urang dalam Pepatah Adat Minangkabau," *Jurnal Filsafat* Vol.19, No. 2 (Agustus 2009): 165-177.

community.[7] As a concise form of narrative, proverbs contain ethical values, social rules, and a worldview formed through the experiences and reflections of the community. Their existence shows that culture can be inherited not only through formal institutions but also in more informal ways through daily interactions. To that end, proverbs are a part of culture that integrates elements of language, ethics, and sociality in a holistic manner. Through delivery that is brief yet rich in meaning, proverbs affirm social values, strengthen cultural identity, and convey collective wisdom that remains relevant across various generations and social contexts. Ethics is about practices and understanding right and wrong in principles, while morality is about the values of right and wrong in human behavior.[8]

The Context of Javanese Culture

The Javanese people are recognized as one of the ethnic groups with a complex and profound cultural system, deeply rooted in moral values and life ethics. Javanese culture is often referred to as *budaya adiluhung* (a culture of high and noble value).[9] It encompasses a worldview that reflects a balance between human relationships with God, fellow human beings, and the natural environment. This culture emerged from a long historical process that shaped the character of the Javanese people as individuals who are refined in speech, cautious in action, and constantly striving to maintain social harmony. Two primary principles determine the patterns of social interaction in Javanese society: the principle of harmony (kerukunan) and the principle of respect (hormat).[10]

In Javanese society, language serves as a reflection of culture and a medium for shaping social character. Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a vessel for expressing the moral values living within the community. The Javanese language possesses speech levels such as *ngoko, madya,* and *krama*, each reflecting

[7] Luluk Ulfa Hasanah, Novi Andari, "Tradisi Lisan sebagai Media Pembelajaran Nilai Sosial dan Budaya Masyarakat," *Jurnal Ilmiah Fomena* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Mei 2021): 63.

[8] Abdullah A Afifi, "Islamic Moral Ethics: The Foundations for Good Governance, Management, and Civilizational Advancement," *Perwakilan Journal of Good Governance, Diplomacy, Customary Institutionalization and Social Networks* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2024): 67 https://doi.org/10.58764/j.prwkl.2024.2.84.

[9] Dr. Waryunah Irmawati, 63

[10] Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Jawa Sebuah Analisa Falsafati tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001 and Nuryantiningsih, Farida, "Relevansi Adjektiva Human Propensity dalam Bahasa Jawa sebagai Cerminan Pandangan Hidup Manusia Jawa," *Deskripsi Bahasa*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (2022): 55

politeness, social hierarchy, and respect for the interlocutor. The appropriate use of language is considered a manifestation of awareness regarding one's social position and a sign of respect toward others. Through language, individuals can adapt to customs, behaviors, and societal etiquette, while simultaneously integrating themselves easily into all forms of society.

The values underlying the Javanese worldview are expected to serve as a life balance amidst the heterogeneous society of Indonesia. Proverbs become a medium for moral and social education passed down through generations. Through maxims such as *"Sopo nandur bakal ngunduh,"* society is taught the principle of cause and effect in moral life: that every action, whether good or bad, will bear fruit according to one's deeds. This indicates a profound ethical view for instance, that life must be lived with caution, responsibility, and the realization that every action carries moral consequences. In a social context, such proverbs function as cultural control tools to form a civilized society aware of both personal and social responsibilities.

In addition to the principle of cause and effect, Javanese society also upholds values such as harmony, respect, and politeness. The principle of harmony (rukun) involves maintaining alignment and tranquility in social relations. Living in harmony is considered the ideal condition where there is no conflict or opposition between individuals or groups. Everyone is expected to exercise self-control, restrain anger, and avoid division for the sake of collective peace. The principle of respect (hormat) demands that every individual behave politely and respect the social standing of others. In daily interactions, this respect is evident through linguistic choices, gestures, and courteous behavior. Meanwhile, *tepa selira* refers to the ability to place oneself in another's position and feel their emotions. [11] This value guides the community to live with mutual respect, avoid egoism, and guard the feelings of others.

The social ethics of the Javanese people are also inseparable from a worldview that emphasizes harmony between the inner and outer self (lahir dan batin). The Javanese are taught to be *eling lan waspada* (always mindful of God and vigilant in every action).[12] This spiritual awareness forms a humble (*andhap asor*) and patient personality.[13] The attitude of *sabar lan nrimo* (accepting with an open heart what God

[11] Erna Istikomah dan Hardiyanto, "Tepa Salira (Tenggang Rasa) dalam Konteks Perdamaian Dunia," *Kejawen: Jurnal Kebudayaan Jawa* Vol. 1, No. 2 (2021): 145.

[12] Dr. Waryunah Irmawati, 65

[13] Dr. Waryunah Irmawati, 69

has ordained) becomes a symbol of inner balance in facing life. These values produce a society that tends to avoid direct confrontation, preferring peaceful paths and maintaining harmonious social relations.

Javanese social ethics stem from a worldview emphasizing the balance between the external and internal worlds. This idea originates from the philosophy of Sangkan Paraning Dumadi, which involves tracing the path of life by seeking, recognizing, internalizing, and realizing the origins, journey, and purpose of life in this world until one can rediscover and meet the Creator.[14] Therefore, the Javanese prioritize the values of harmony and etiquette as the foundation for building social interaction. In daily life, the Javanese are taught to remain mindful and cautious, constantly remembering God and acting with deliberation in every step. This means everyone must realize that everything originates from God's will; thus, individuals must act with full responsibility and humility. Meanwhile, being cautious means taking wise steps and considering matters thoroughly before acting to avoid harm to oneself or others.

This spiritual awareness forms a character that is humble, patient, and accepting of God's decrees without losing the spirit of effort (ikhtiar). These values grant Javanese society a calm nature, not easily provoked by emotion, and a constant effort to maintain internal balance when facing various life challenges. In social interaction, this ethics encourages individuals to avoid conflict and prefer peaceful approaches through deliberation (musyawarah). The principle of *tepa selira*, the ability to empathize with others' feelings, is also a vital aspect of preserving social harmony.[15] Consequently, Javanese social ethics do not only regulate interpersonal interactions but also serve as a moral and spiritual guide leading each individual to live in alignment with God's will, achieve inner peace, and build a harmonious societal structure full of respect for others.

In a modern context, rapid social changes have influenced parts of Javanese society, particularly in urban areas like Surakarta and Kartasura, which serve as the research locations for this document. Modernization and globalization bring impacts on shifting values. Pragmatic mindsets and fast-paced lifestyles have begun to replace

[14] Faqier 'Abdu'l Haqq Bratakesawa, Kunci Swarga Miftahul Djanati, (Yogyakarta: Keluarga Bratakesawa, 1979), cet. VIII, 8 in Nur Kolis, Ilmu Makrifat Jawa sangkan paraning Dumadi: Eksplorasi Susfistik Konsep mengenal Diri dalam Pustaka Islam Kejawen Kuci Sawrgo Miftahul Janati (Ponorogo: Nata karya, 2018), 2.

[15] Erna Widiyanti, "Tepa Selira sebagai Solusi untuk Bullying Pendidikan," *JSSH* (*Jurnal Sains Sosio Humaniora*) Vol. 8, No. 2 (2024): 84.

the values of patience, refinement, and humility. For example, the proverb *"Alon-alon waton kelakon"* (slowly but surely) is now often considered outdated and replaced by a new spirit of "the quick get the prize." This phenomenon shows a transformation of cultural meaning resulting from the interaction between traditional and modern values. Nevertheless, the core values of Javanese culture remain relevant because they are flexible and can adapt to the context of the times.

The social context of Javanese society is also closely linked to a hierarchical and communal kinship system. The family is the center of value education, where children are taught manners, respect for parents, and responsibility toward their social environment from a young age. Community life is regulated by the principles of gotong-royong (mutual cooperation) and social solidarity. Every individual is expected to be active in collective activities such as community service (kerja bakti), celebrations (hajatan), or traditional ceremonies, as social participation is seen as a form of loyalty to the community. Relationships between residents are not individualistic but collective and full of togetherness.

Aesthetic values in Javanese culture also reinforce its social character. In speaking, dressing, and behaving, Javanese society always emphasizes refined, orderly, and understated beauty. Beauty is understood not merely as outward appearance but as harmony between attitude, speech, and intention. Thus, beauty in Javanese culture is not physical but spiritual and moral.

Overall, the socio-cultural context of Javanese society is built on a balance between ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects. Ethics regulate moral behavior; aesthetics guide the refinement of feeling; and spirituality strengthens the human relationship with God. These three dimensions combine to form a harmonious and aligned pattern of life. Although modernization presents challenges in the form of shifting values, Javanese culture remains a solid moral foundation for its people. It is not merely a heritage of the past but a source of life wisdom relevant to the present and future.

The Context of Lamaholot Culture

The Lamaholot people inhabit the eastern parts of Flores Island, Adonara, Solor, and Lembata, and are renowned for their strong maritime culture. Geographically, their lives are intimately tied to the sea, shaping mindsets, behaviors, and value systems oriented toward the marine environment. In daily life, the sea is not merely a source of livelihood but also a symbol of life, wisdom, and spirituality.

In Bahinga Village, Tanjung Bunga District (where this research was conducted) the Lamaholot community lives in a balance between maritime and terrestrial activities.[16] The sea is a vital part of their social identity. This is reflected in their language and traditional expressions, which frequently employ maritime metaphors. The Lamaholot language, specifically the *Lamaojan* dialect used by the Bahinga community[17], serves as a vessel for conveying moral and social values through proverbs or symbolic expressions. Each expression illustrates the close relationship between humans and the environment, between individuals and the community, and between humanity and the Divine.

The Lamaholot people in Bahinga Village, Tanjung Bunga District, lead a balanced life between maritime and terrestrial activities. The sea serves not only as a source of livelihood but also as an integral part of their social and spiritual identity.[18] This attachment is evident in a worldview that positions the sea as a place of learning and a source of wisdom, where individuals understand the values of hard work, togetherness, and respect for nature. In this regard, the Lamaojan dialect plays a significant role as a medium for inheriting moral and social values. The language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a mechanism for transferring ancestral wisdom through proverbs, metaphors, and symbolic utterances laden with meaning.

Every expression conveys ethical messages regarding balance, commitment to the community, and environmental responsibility. Expressions using maritime metaphors, for instance, often offer counsel for one to live with perseverance and humility, while maintaining social solidarity to overcome life's challenges. These linguistic symbols also contain deep spiritual meanings, as they represent the connection between humans, nature, and God. In the Lamaholot view, preserving nature is equivalent to honoring God's creation that sustains life. Consequently, their social ethics are always based on the principle of balance between material and spiritual aspects. This link between language, culture, and the environment forms a strong collective identity for the Bahinga people and reflects local wisdom passed down through generations. These values serve as guidelines for maintaining social

[16] Lelu Skolastika, "Penghormatan kepada 'Ina Lefa' dalam Budaya Lamalera: Sebuah Pandangan Teologis dan Etika dalam Ensiklik Laudato Si," *Jurnal Reinha* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2024): 49.

[17] Fransiska Jone Mare, 35.

[18] Maria Felisitas Nitit Maran, Imelda Oliva Wissang, dan Pilipus Wai Lawet, "Nilai dan Fungsi Tarian Gawe Daku Masyarakat Desa Bahinga Kecamatan Tanjung Bunga Kabupaten Flores Timur," *Social Science Academic* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Juli–Desember 2023): 162.

harmony and environmental preservation, demonstrating that Lamaholot culture holds high relevance for modern life, which often loses the balance between humanity and the environment.

Socially, the Lamaholot people possess a communal character characterized by gotong-royong (mutual cooperation). They place togetherness and solidarity as primary values in social life. Culturally, they have a value system that emphasizes honesty, hard work, and responsibility.[19] Through a variety of expressions, the Lamaholot instill ethical principles of life that teach discipline, independence, and fortitude. Beyond social and ethical values, Lamaholot culture also encompasses aesthetic and spiritual values. Every action is viewed not only in terms of practical benefit but also through its harmony and moral beauty. Beauty, in the eyes of the Lamaholot, is the harmony between heart, mind, and action.[20]

Lamaholot culture also demonstrates a profound relationship between humanity and nature. The sea, the mountains, and the fruits of the earth are not merely economic resources but an integral part of spiritual life. Every natural phenomenon is understood as a sign and a moral lesson. Thus, individuals are expected to maintain a balance between personal needs and environmental sustainability. This principle serves as a tangible manifestation of local wisdom, passed down through generations as a guide for living.

In the context of modern education, the socio-cultural values of the Lamaholot people hold high relevance. Their traditional expressions contain moral teachings that align with national character education, such as religiosity, nationalism, responsibility, hard work, and social concern.[21] These values can serve as a learning resource rooted in local culture, thereby helping students foster pride in their own cultural identity.

Consequently, the socio-cultural context of the Lamaholot community can be understood as a harmonious system of life between humans, nature, and the Divine. They uphold the values of gotong-royong (mutual cooperation), honesty, sincerity,

[19] Arina Mustafidah dan Prasetio Rumondor, "Dari Flores Menjadi Njawani: Internalisasi Budaya Jawa ke Dalam Kepribadian Santri Asal Flores," *Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies* Vol. 21, No. 1 (2022): 37–48.

[20] Lelu Skolastika, 51.

[21] M. Shaleh, Tobing, S. M., Novariyanto, R. A, "Eksistensi Budaya Lewak Tapo di Tengah Arus Modernisasi: Studi Kasus di Desa Sukutokan, Kecamatan Klubagolit, Kabupaten Flores Timur, Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Paradigma: Jurnal Filsafat, Sains, Teknologi, dan Sosial Budaya*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2023) 24.

and balance. Through maritime language and expressions passed down across generations, the Lamaholot people continue to maintain their identity as a noble cultural community living in moral, social, and spiritual alignment.

Comparative Analysis

Proverbs are an oral cultural heritage containing moral teachings, ethics, and life wisdom passed down through generations. In every society, proverbs function as behavioral guidelines and a reflection of a unique worldview tailored to social experiences, the natural environment, and prevailing value systems. Two proverbs from different cultural backgrounds, the Javanese proverb *"Sopo nandur bakal ngunduh"* and the Lamaholot proverb *"Kata Ikan Ikan Matakena, Kata Ganto Ganto Ujong Bale"* serve as concrete examples of how traditional oral language represents the moral and social values of a community. Both originate from different cultures yet share commonality in instilling principles of virtue and responsibility as the foundation of human life.

Literally, the proverb *"Sopo nandur bakal ngunduh"* means "he who plants shall reap." In its literal sense, this proverb is rooted in the agrarian life of Javanese society, which is intimately familiar with the process of farming. "Planting" (*nandur*) and "reaping" (*ngunduh*) become natural metaphors for the cause-and-effect relationship in life. One will obtain results according to the effort exerted. Contextually, this proverb carries a moral and spiritual meaning: that every human deed, good or bad, will bear fruit according to the action. This principle emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and moral awareness. In the Javanese worldview, life is a process that must be navigated with caution. Every action has consequences that will return to the doer. Thus, this proverb teaches the ethics of hard work, honesty, and sincerity, instilling the value that the goodness planted will result in goodness reaped.

The Lamaholot proverb *"Kata Ikan Ikan Matakena, Kata Ganto Ganto Ujong Bale"* literally means "utterance is like a staring fish, and words are like waves turning back at the edge of the reef." This proverb depicts the behavior of fish and waves in the sea as a reflection of human behavior. It illustrates that one's words can have an impact, whether pleasant or painful, much like the sharp gaze of a fish or waves crashing back against the reef. Contextually, this proverb emphasizes the importance of speaking wisely and cautiously. In the maritime environment of the Lamaholot, the sea is a source of symbols and life philosophy. The coming and going of waves symbolize balance, while the staring fish depicts vigilance. This proverb teaches that

speech possesses great power that can bring peace or trigger conflict. Therefore, the Lamaholot instill the values of caution in communication, honesty in speech, and moral responsibility for the impact of every word. Thus, good words and sincere intentions are perfected when manifested in concrete actions that reflect honesty.[22]

Both proverbs share fundamental similarities regarding the moral teachings of cause-and-effect and personal responsibility. Both Javanese and Lamaholot societies believe that every action, whether in deed or speech will produce specific consequences. They both teach the importance of being careful in acting and speaking, instilling the belief that life must be lived with honesty and good intentions. Furthermore, both proverbs emphasize the importance of maintaining social harmony, both with fellow humans and the environment.

Despite these shared values, the two proverbs differ in their emphasis. The Javanese proverb focuses more on the dimension of action and deeds, teaching that the results of one's life are the fruits of what they have done. It is introspective and ethical, inviting humans to "plant" goodness as the basis for a just and harmonious life. Conversely, the Lamaholot proverb emphasizes the dimension of communication and social interaction. It focuses on the power of speech as a determinant of social relations. This proverb serves as a reminder that words have the power to build or destroy, thus requiring awareness and responsibility in speaking.

Javanese proverbs reflect the social system of an agrarian society that prioritizes balance, perseverance, and moral justice. The hierarchical and civilized social structure of Javanese society is mirrored in their outlook on life: every action has a consequence, and every individual must recognize their boundaries and responsibilities. Meanwhile, Lamaholot proverbs reflect a communal and maritime social system. The Lamaholot people live side by side with the dynamic marine environment, leading them to develop values such as togetherness, prudence, and social solidarity. Within this community, words and communication play a vital role in maintaining social harmony and balance. Their proverbs serve as a means of social control that guides the community to safeguard their speech and behavior for the sake of preserving brotherhood and peace.

[22] Nurul Hidayah, Kejujuran dan Akhlak dalam Pendidikan Islam, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, (2023); and Muhammad Zein Damanik, Dhea Melati Putri, Mutia Alamiah Warda, "Dalil Jujur Dalam Perkataan dan Perbuatan," *Jurnal Penelitian dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* Vol. 2 No. 1 (2024): 559.

In a modern multicultural society, both proverbs remain relevant as cross-cultural moral guidelines. The Javanese proverb *"Sopo nandur bakal ngunduh"* teaches the principles of responsibility and integrity in action. Amidst today's instant and pragmatic culture, this proverb serves as a reminder that true success can only be achieved through effort and good intentions. Similarly, the Lamaholot proverb *"Kata Ikan Ikan Matakena, Kata Ganto Ganto Ujong Bale"* highlights the importance of communication ethics in the digital age. In a world saturated with social media and rapid information flows, words have the power to either heal or harm. Therefore, the values of caution, honesty, and empathy in speech are essential for maintaining harmony within a diverse society.

CONCLUSION

Proverbs, from both Javanese and Lamaholot traditions, function not only as linguistic and oral literary heritage but also play a strategic role in shaping the character of modern society. Amidst the current of globalization and technological advancement which often trigger moral crises, proverbs serve as reminders of fundamental life values such as honesty, responsibility, politeness, and respect for others. The relationship between proverbs and character building lies in their ability to instill life wisdom simply yet meaningfully. Proverbs become a means for society to foster moral awareness, self-reflection, and the alignment of behavior with the values of goodness that are part of local cultural wisdom.

The application of the values within proverbs is highly relevant in the contexts of character education, social communication, and cross-cultural interaction. In education, proverbs can serve as contextual learning media that foster integrity, hard work, empathy, and tolerance. Through reflection on these proverbs, one understands that every action and word carries a moral impact. Proverbs across cultures serve fundamentally similar functions, such as instilling respect for differences, building polite dialogue, and avoiding egoistic or destructive attitudes. Thus, proverbs become a means of value education that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries, strengthening the character of a civilized and noble Indonesian identity.

Furthermore, in facing modern social challenges such as hate speech, intolerance, and social disintegration, proverbs can act as moral guides and social control tools. The values within them encourage society to think before acting, speak with empathy, and maintain conduct in social relations. Proverbs teach that words

and deeds possess power; they can foster peace or trigger conflict. Therefore, if local wisdom values in proverbs are revitalized through education, media, and social interaction, society will be wiser in behavior, more accepting of differences, and more resilient in facing the frictions of modern culture.

In conclusion, proverbs are an ethical heritage that remains relevant for the present and the future. They are a source of moral inspiration that affirms cultural identity, strengthens national character, and serves as a bulwark of human values in a changing world. Within proverbs lies an eternal message: that local wisdom is the foundation for a civilization that is ethical, just, and filled with integrity.

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