

# Moral Values in Lasaeo Folktale for the Character Building of Young Learners

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## Abstract

This study investigates the moral values of the Lasaeo folktale, a traditional folktale from Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, for character building in young learners. Employing a qualitative, descriptive approach, the research analyzes the narrative to identify embedded moral values. The researcher served as the primary instrument. The data were gathered through document analysis. The researcher then analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis revealed five core moral values within the Lasaeo folktale: obedience, responsibility, consequences of anger, importance of respect, and maintaining peace. The study comes to the conclusion that the Lasaeo folktale, which is rooted in culture, is a useful tool for promoting moral understanding, character growth, and a sense of social responsibility in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** *moral values, folktale, character building*

## Introduction

Character education and moral development are becoming increasingly important in modern educational discourse, particularly in early childhood education. Character development at a young age is crucial in schooling because it creates the groundwork for positive behaviors and beliefs that will last a lifetime. Recently, the younger are not familiar with their cultural heritage, so the integration of local literature in teaching is important. It is in line with (Adawiah et al., 2024) who state that if the younger generation abandons the native language in favor of another, the language may become endangered. The Lasaeo story, rich with moral lessons, presents an ideal medium for examining how narrative forms influence the formation of moral values in young learners. The previous study also showed the relevant finding that practical learning approaches, including introducing themes and character stories using storytelling and discussing character education within the stories, were effective in instilling moral values and receiving positive responses from children (Samsinar et al., 2023)

This research aims to analyze the moral values embedded in the Lasaeo story and explore how these lessons contribute to character building in young learners. Character education helps students develop strong moral values, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and tolerance. (Syahputra & Shylviana, 2023). By understanding the moral

lessons within this story, we aim to establish its potential as a tool for fostering ethical development in educational contexts. Furthermore, strong character education prepares students to face personal and professional challenges with greater proficiency. (Aslan, 2024)

The *Lasaeo* story, deeply embedded in a cultural and social context, allows young learners to explore moral values through interactions with family members, teachers, and peers. The communal nature of the story, in which characters often learn from one another's mistakes, encourages moral reasoning within a social framework. By discussing the actions of characters in the story, children can engage in dialogue with others, testing their understanding of right and wrong, and ultimately enhancing their moral development through these social exchanges. Narrative techniques such as stories and storytelling in Moral Education guide young children to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. (Rahiem et al., 2020). As such, the *Lasaeo* story serves not only as a medium for individual reflection but also as a tool for collaborative moral learning.

Furthermore, in an era of rapid social change, where traditional values are often neglected, character education becomes a strong foundation for developing individuals who are responsible, have integrity and ethics. Character education helps students develop strong moral values, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and tolerance (Syahputra & Shylviana, 2023). Character education, as defined by (Lickona, 1991), is an educational approach aimed at fostering ethical values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, and caring. By observing the characters' actions, learners are encouraged to reflect on their own values and choices. The characters in the *Lasaeo* story often embody virtues or fail to live up to moral standards, providing children with examples of both positive and negative ethical behavior. These stories serve as pedagogical tools for teaching virtues and help students see the tangible benefits of acting ethically. In this way, the *Lasaeo* story is not only a means of transmitting cultural knowledge but also an instrument for instilling character values that shape the behavior and attitudes of young learners.

Building on the educational benefits of folktales, narrative theory offers a compelling argument for the role of storytelling in the construction of moral identity. (Bruner, 1996), in his work on narrative construction of reality, emphasized that stories are fundamental in shaping how individuals perceive and interpret the world. Unlike other forms of organising human experience, such as mathematics or science, narrative represents ethical experience particularly well (Hunter & Eder, 2010). Thus, narrative theory suggests that the *Lasaeo* story functions as a tool for moral self-construction, allowing children to reflect on and adopt values that guide their behaviors.

The role of moral development in children's education has long been a focal point in educational psychology. Several journal articles highlight the importance of moral education in the formation of children's character. This encompasses building ethical values, empathy, and social responsibility (Hafizi & Wiyono, 2023). Research investigates methods for improving moral development, such as play-based approaches and the use of role models (Maharani & Wati, 2023; Tabroni & Suarni, 2022). Furthermore, the implications of moral education on children's character are explored in the context of religious texts (Rochmat et al., 2024).

According to (Lickona, 1991), character education can be most effective when it is integrated with meaningful stories that illustrate the consequences of good and bad behavior. Storytelling, particularly through folktales, has been identified as a key medium for character education. Folktales provide children with concrete examples of moral challenges, aiding reflection on values and choices (Kusuma et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024).

Storytelling creates an emotional connection that fosters a deeper understanding of moral principles and positively influences children (Putri et al., 2024). Folktales instill moral values, strengthen cultural identity, and develop empathy and tolerance in children (Kusuma et al., 2024). These stories convey moral messages and serve as a means of character education, shaping behavior and improving critical thinking (Akinwale & Ojakorotu, 2024; Supardjo et al., 2019). By immersing children in relatable narratives and depicting characters' daily lives, folktales encourage empathetic responses and social-emotional skills.

Cultivating moral values is a critical aspect of early childhood education, and integrating multicultural education can play a significant role (Kusumawati & Hasanah, 2024; Riyadi, 2023). Teachers can introduce diversity through various strategies, such as role modeling, incorporating culturally diverse materials into the curriculum, using engaging teaching methods, and celebrating cultural diversity (Kusumawati & Hasanah, 2024). By using such culturally relevant stories in educational settings, teachers can bridge the gap between students' personal cultural experiences and the broader ethical principles they are learning. This approach not only aids in moral development but also promotes cultural fluency and empathy, essential components of global citizenship. Folktales not only instill moral values but also strengthen cultural identity, and develop empathy and tolerance in children, making them an important tool in character education (Sarwar, 2023). Moreover, children can change the moral identity assigned to an image when faced with behaviors that contradict it, demonstrating that they can adjust their intuitive decisions based on new information. (Zhao et al., 2024)

## Method

This study used a qualitative approach to look into the moral principles intricately woven into Lasaeo folktales, with a particular emphasis on their ability to contribute to the character development of young learners. Qualitative research approaches, commonly referred to as naturalistic, are ideal for this kind of study. As (Sugiyono, 2008) describes, these methods are used in naturalistic contexts, allowing for an authentic examination of phenomena without artificial manipulation. The researcher served as an instrument in this process, carefully watching and evaluating the data to discover the underlying meanings and messages.

Descriptive analysis, as highlighted by (Sutedi, 2009), is the analytical foundation of this investigation. It refers to a systematic and rigorous set of scientific processes used to accurately depict real-world occurrences. Descriptive analysis focuses on providing a thorough description of events, experiences, and views as they naturally occur. This method is especially appropriate for studying Lasaeo folktale since it allows the researcher to dive into the narratives without imposing preconceived preconceptions or attempting to control the factors. According to (Yin, 2014), meaningful data in qualitative research are obtained through four field-based activities: interviewing, observing, collecting and studying (materials), and feeling. While all of these actions contribute to a comprehensive knowledge, this study collects data largely through observation and document analysis. The major item under consideration is an Ebook of Pamona folktales, with Lasaeo prominently featured.

Document analysis, as a result, provides a systematic and rigorous method for extracting significant insights from folktales while also guaranteeing that the study is grounded in the actual cultural context. Furthermore, the obtained data is rigorously analyzed using (Miles & Huberman, 1992) interactive model. The interactive model is made up of four interconnected stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and

conclusion/ verification. As previously stated, data collection entails obtaining relevant materials, such as the Lasaeo folktales. Following data collection, the researcher engaged in data reduction, which is the act of reducing, prioritizing, and arranging the information acquired. Data presentation is the process of visually showing reduced data in order to simplify analysis and comprehension. Finally, the researcher drew and verified conclusions, analyzed the provided data to generate insights and answer research questions. This cyclical procedure allows for continued improvement of the analysis, resulting in a more sophisticated understanding of the moral ideals underlying the Lasaeo folktales.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

Applying Miles and Huberman's interactive model, document analysis of the Lasaeo folktale revealed numerous major moral values that are consistent with character education principles. Table 1 summarizes these qualities and provides instances from the folktale to support them. This structured presentation enables an in-depth examination of the folktale's ability to teach desirable character characteristics in young learners.

Table 1. Moral Values in the Lasaeo Folktale

| Moral Values                                       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                               | Example in the Folktale                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Obedience<br><i>Kayoa ndaya</i>                    | The importance of following instructions or commands, especially from those in positions of authority or those who have entrusted responsibility.<br><i>Posoki malulu songka, pagonya ri topoparenta.</i> | Lasaeo's anger when Rumongi disregarded his order to care for their child.<br><i>Kasengke ndaya i Lasaeo ri Rumongi kabare'nya nalulu songkanya maurusi ana ntau se'e.</i>                       |
| Responsibility<br><i>Tumoro</i>                    | The duty and accountability involved in taking care of one's family, especially children.<br><i>Wulea mamporewu kasangkompō, mamporewu ananggodī.</i>                                                     | Lasaeo entrusting the care of their child to Rumongi, highlighting her responsibility as a mother.<br><i>Lasaeo mawai songka ri Rumongi damaursi ana ntause'e, nce'emo tetalnya samba'a ine.</i> |
| Consequences of Anger<br><i>Wua kasengke ndaya</i> | The negative outcomes that can result from uncontrolled anger and rash actions.<br><i>Wua kamanyamanya kamarau pai montowa.</i>                                                                           | Lasaeo's killing of his own buffalo in a fit of rage, leading to further consequences.<br><i>Napampepate i Lasaeo baulanya, mampare'e tetala ntaninya.</i>                                       |
| Importance of Respect<br><i>Posoki mPetubunaka</i> | Treating others with consideration and deference, especially towards those with authority or those in close relationships.                                                                                | Rumongi's disregard for Lasaeo's command demonstrates a lack of respect, leading to conflict and consequences.<br><i>Kabare'nya nalulu i Rumongi songka i Lasaeo mantuju</i>                     |

|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                    | <i>Mowia pai molengko ri<br/>petubunaka pagonya ri taua<br/>nu mosuka pai kita.</i>                                                                                                                        | <i>kabare'anya natubunka<br/>langkainya, mewali pu'u<br/>popaiso.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Maintaining Peace<br><i>Mangkogamaka Posintuwu</i> | The significance of preventing<br>conflict by communicating<br>well, not being selfish and<br>managing anger.<br><i>Posoki mancalapi popaiso,<br/>mampowelauka raya, pai<br/>manta'amaka sengke ndaya.</i> | Lasaeo could have discussed<br>the problem with his wife<br>instead of getting angry and<br>then killing his buffalo.<br><i>I Lasaeo liwonya<br/>mampombeto'ka mpodago<br/>kara-kara pai rongonya,<br/>banya masengke pai<br/>mampepate baulanya.</i> |

## Discussion

This part presents a detail explanation of the findings that have been presented on Table 1.

### 1. Obedience

The concept of obedience is centrally depicted in the folktale through Lasaeo's reaction to Rumongi's failure to follow his instructions. Obedience, in this context, extends beyond simple compliance; it represents adherence to established norms and a recognition of hierarchical structures within the family and community. The emphasis on obedience aligns with the broader cultural values often found in traditional societies, where respect for authority and adherence to social expectations are highly valued. Similarly, the Timun Mas folklore also showcases the potential of folklore to impart several moral values. The eight prominent moral values in Timun Mas are religious values, independent values, curiosity values, hard work values, responsibility values, honesty values, creativity, and the value of the spirit of hard work. These values show how folklore in general is able to teach children many moral values (Nanda et al., 2021). The concept of obedience is centrally depicted in the folktale through Lasaeo's reaction to Rumongi's failure to follow his instructions. Obedience, in this context, extends beyond simple compliance; it represents adherence to established norms and a recognition of hierarchical structures within the family and community. This emphasis on obedience aligns with broader cultural values often found in traditional societies, where respect for authority and adherence to social expectations are highly valued. For example, the Indonesian folktale Timun Mas highlights values such as respecting elders, which reinforces the importance of hierarchical relationships. This is also in line with Indonesians' belief that no one should be physically or spiritually restrained against their will. (Retnowati et al., 2018)

### 2. Responsibility

Responsibility, closely linked to obedience, emerges as another crucial moral value within the Lasaeo folktale. Lasaeo's act of entrusting the care of their child to Rumongi underscores her role as a mother and her duty to provide for the child's well-being. Her failure to fulfill this responsibility triggers a chain of events that ultimately lead to the tragic outcome of the story. This highlights the importance of fulfilling one's obligations and being accountable for one's actions. Similarly, a study of Toraja folklore found responsibility to be one of the moral values in the folklore named Seredukung (Tamrin et al., 2021) The study indicates that responsibility represents one's awareness of their

actions and consequences. Furthermore, the study also emphasizes that responsibility can instill awareness of one's obligations toward themselves, others and God.

### **3. Consequences of Anger**

The Lasaeo folktale serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive consequences of uncontrolled anger. Lasaeo's impulsive decision to kill his buffalo in a fit of rage demonstrates the potential for anger to lead to irrational behavior and devastating outcomes. This moral value underscores the importance of emotional regulation and the need to find constructive ways to manage anger, rather than allowing it to dictate one's actions. In this situation, it is important to have a self-monitoring. (Ariyani et al., 2024) The narrative serves as a powerful reminder of the long-lasting repercussions that can result from succumbing to anger's destructive influence, suggesting the need for thoughtfulness and control in emotional expression. The narrative serves as a powerful reminder of the long-lasting repercussions that can result from succumbing to anger's destructive influence, suggesting the need for thoughtfulness and control in emotional expression (Palop-Larrea, 2024). This is because anger may have extremely maladaptive effects on behavior, with serious consequences for the individual and the community. Specifically, anger relates to lower cognitive efforts, and that angry people tend to rely on heuristics and intuition in judgment-making. (Zhao et al., 2024) the Lasaeo folktale serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive consequences of uncontrolled anger. One way to prevent this is to wisely govern wisely make decisions (Br Sitepu et al., 2022). This moral value underscores the importance of emotional regulation and the need to find constructive ways to manage anger, rather than allowing it to dictate one's actions.

### **4. Importance of Respect**

The importance of Respect Respect plays a significant role in the dynamics of the folktale, particularly in the relationship between Lasaeo and Rumongi. Rumongi's disregard for Lasaeo's command can be interpreted as a lack of respect for his authority and his role as the head of the household. This lack of respect contributes to the escalating conflict between the couple and ultimately leads to the tragic ending of the story. This emphasizes the importance of showing consideration and deference to others, regardless of their position or status. Furthermore, honesty involves dealing with others in a respectful way. (Tamrin et al., 2021)

### **5. Maintaining Peace**

Maintaining peace is an important value in interpersonal relationships and within the community, which is subtly emphasized. Lasaeo could have maintained peace through communication and anger management. Rather than resorting to violence by killing his buffalo, Lasaeo could have solved the problem by discussing it calmly with his wife. Furthermore, being unselfish is also one of the solutions to maintaining peace. A study on East Javanese Folklore indicates the presence of moral and cultural values that are useful to create harmony. (Wedawati et al., 2022) The values of resolving conflict, empathy and understanding are the keys of creating and maintaining peace in society.

## Conclusion

This study has shown how the Lasaeo folktale can be a useful tool for character development, especially for young students, by shedding light on the deep moral ideals it contains. According to the study, the story revolves around five fundamental moral values: obedience, responsibility, the consequences of anger, the value of respect, and maintaining peace. These values offer timeless lessons that can support the growth of moral thinking, responsible behavior, and unity in society in addition to reflecting the cultural norms and expectations of the community from which the folktale is derived. To maximize the Lasaeo folktale's potential for character building, educators are encouraged to integrate it into curricula, facilitating discussions about its moral values and adapting it for modern audiences. Further research should explore its effectiveness in shaping ethical behavior and examine other folktales for additional moral lessons. By actively engaging with these stories, we can help young learners develop strong moral compasses and a sense of social responsibility.

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