

A WAYANG GOLEK-BASED LEARNING MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING CHARACTER EDUCATION AND LITERACY AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT SDN LEMAH KEMBAR SUMBERASIH PROBOLINGGO

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model for strengthening character education and literacy among elementary school students at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews with teachers, documentation, and observations of educational activities utilizing Wayang Golek performances as instructional media. The findings reveal that integrating local cultural heritage into classroom learning creates an engaging and contextual educational environment that enhances students' participation, critical thinking, and literacy engagement. The storytelling embedded in Wayang Golek performances effectively promotes character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect while increasing students' awareness of social issues, including the importance of education and the prevention of early marriage. The study proposes a Wayang Golek-based learning model consisting of cultural orientation, interactive storytelling, collaborative reflection, literacy activities, and character reinforcement. This model demonstrates that local wisdom can serve as an innovative pedagogical approach for promoting meaningful learning, preserving cultural heritage, and developing students' character and literacy competencies in elementary education.

INTRODUCTION

Character education and literacy have become fundamental priorities in elementary education as schools seek to prepare students not only with academic knowledge but also with moral values, critical thinking, and social responsibility (Qomariah et al., 2026). In the twenty-first century, students are expected to possess strong literacy competencies alongside positive character traits that enable them to respond wisely to social and technological changes (Abd Salam et al., 2026). However, classroom learning often remains dominated by conventional instructional methods that provide limited opportunities for contextual and meaningful learning experiences (Sofa, 2026). Consequently, there is a growing need for innovative instructional models that integrate cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of learning (Putri & Sofa, 2026).

One promising approach is the integration of local wisdom into the learning process. Local cultural heritage provides authentic learning resources that are closely connected to students' social environment and identity (Haqqi & Sofa, 2026). Traditional arts such as Wayang Golek contain educational narratives that communicate moral values, cultural identity, cooperation, honesty, responsibility, and respect. As an instructional medium, Wayang Golek encourages students to learn through storytelling, dialogue, and reflection, making abstract moral concepts more understandable and relevant to their daily lives (Sa'diya & Sofa, 2026). Therefore, the integration of local wisdom into classroom instruction contributes not only to preserving cultural heritage but also to strengthening character education and literacy development (Wulandari & Sofa, 2026).

An example of this educational innovation is found at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo, where Wayang Golek performances have been utilized as an educational medium to convey messages related to character development, literacy, the importance of continuing education, and the prevention of early marriage (Putra et al., 2026). Through collaboration with local artists, students participate in interactive learning activities that combine entertainment with educational content (Sofa & Qomariah, 2026). This contextual learning environment enhances students' engagement while providing meaningful opportunities to internalize moral values through cultural experiences. The initiative demonstrates how schools can transform local cultural resources into effective pedagogical tools that support holistic student development (Zuhriyah et al., 2026).

Despite the growing implementation of culture-based learning in Indonesian schools, studies examining Wayang Golek as a comprehensive learning model for strengthening both character education and literacy remain limited (Efendi et al., 2026). Previous research has generally focused on traditional arts as cultural preservation rather than as an integrated pedagogical framework (Bukhori et al., 2026). Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model at SDN Lemah Kembar and analyze its contribution to students' character formation and literacy development (Ichsan et al., 2026). The findings are expected to provide both theoretical and practical insights into the integration of local wisdom into elementary education and offer an innovative model for creating meaningful, culturally responsive, and character-oriented learning environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character education is a fundamental component of elementary education that aims to develop students' moral, ethical, and social competencies alongside their academic achievement. According to Lickona, character education involves cultivating moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions through meaningful educational experiences. In the Indonesian educational context, character education is closely aligned with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes faith, integrity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. Consequently, learning activities should not merely transfer knowledge but also facilitate the internalization of positive values through authentic and contextual experiences (Bukhori et al., 2026).

Literacy has likewise evolved into a multidimensional concept that extends beyond reading and writing skills. Contemporary educational frameworks define literacy as the ability to access, understand, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information effectively across various contexts. Elementary schools play a crucial role in fostering

literacy habits by providing engaging learning environments that encourage students to interact with texts, stories, visual media, and cultural narratives. Storytelling-based learning has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing reading comprehension, communication skills, imagination, and critical thinking while simultaneously promoting students' emotional and social development (Qumariyah et al., 2026).

The integration of local wisdom into education has attracted increasing scholarly attention because it connects learning with students' cultural identity and everyday experiences (Laili et al., 2026). Traditional cultural media such as Wayang Golek preserve local values while serving as effective instructional resources. Through storytelling, dialogue, and symbolic characters, Wayang Golek communicates values including honesty, responsibility, perseverance, cooperation, and respect. The use of cultural heritage in classroom learning also supports contextual and experiential learning, enabling students to construct knowledge through observation, interaction, and reflection. This approach strengthens students' appreciation of national culture while making learning more meaningful and engaging (Islam et al., 2026).

Although previous studies have highlighted the educational benefits of local wisdom and storytelling, limited research has proposed a comprehensive Wayang Golek-based learning model that simultaneously integrates character education and literacy development in elementary schools. Most existing studies discuss traditional performing arts as media for cultural preservation or extracurricular activities rather than as structured pedagogical models. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by developing a conceptual learning model that integrates local wisdom, storytelling, literacy practices, reflective learning, and character education into a unified instructional framework. The proposed model is expected to provide practical guidance for educators seeking to implement culturally responsive and character-oriented learning in elementary education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model for strengthening character education and literacy among elementary school students at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo. The case study approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of learning practices within their natural educational setting, focusing on how local cultural heritage is integrated into classroom learning to promote students' character development and literacy competencies (Muchlis & Sofa, 2025).

The research participants consisted of the school principal, classroom teachers, students, and representatives of the artists involved in the educational Wayang Golek performances. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation of learning activities, school records, photographs, and relevant media reports (Sofa, 2026). Interviews with teachers and school leaders explored the objectives, implementation process, and educational benefits of using Wayang Golek as a learning medium, while student interviews provided insights into their learning experiences and perceptions. Documentation was utilized to support and verify the findings obtained through interviews and observations (Sukandarman & Sofa, 2024).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis aimed to identify patterns related to the implementation of the Wayang Golek-

based learning model, its contribution to character education, and its influence on students' literacy development (Sofa, 2026). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, documentation, and published reports. These validation strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo, represents an innovative strategy for integrating local wisdom into elementary education. Rather than functioning solely as a cultural performance, Wayang Golek was utilized as an instructional medium to deliver educational messages concerning character development, literacy, the prevention of early marriage, and the importance of continuing education. The learning activities created an engaging and contextual environment in which students actively participated in storytelling, discussions, and reflective learning. As a result, students experienced a meaningful learning process that combined cultural appreciation with moral and educational values.

The successful implementation of the program was supported by collaboration between the school and professional artists from the Pustaka Wayang Bergerak community. This partnership enabled students to experience authentic cultural performances while receiving educational messages embedded within the stories. As stated by Ambar Susanti, a classroom teacher at SDN Lemah Kembar, *"This activity is intentionally presented to entertain and educate students at the same time. We collaborate with artists to deliver educational messages through wayang golek performances."* This statement confirms that the school deliberately integrates local cultural heritage into classroom learning to create enjoyable, meaningful, and value-oriented educational experiences. The collaboration also demonstrates the importance of partnerships between educational institutions and cultural practitioners in promoting innovative learning.

The findings further reveal that the Wayang Golek performances significantly increased students' motivation and classroom engagement. Students showed greater enthusiasm during storytelling sessions, actively responded to questions, and participated in discussions concerning the moral messages presented in the performances. The narratives encouraged students to reflect on social issues such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, perseverance, respect for parents and teachers, the importance of education, and the negative consequences of early marriage. These findings suggest that storytelling through traditional performing arts facilitates affective learning by connecting educational messages with students' real-life experiences, thereby strengthening both character formation and literacy development.

Document analysis also indicates that the learning model promotes literacy through listening, speaking, reading, and reflective communication activities. Students were encouraged to interpret stories, express opinions, ask questions, and discuss the values represented by the puppet characters. Such activities fostered critical thinking and improved students' communication skills while expanding their understanding of local culture. The integration of literacy practices with cultural storytelling demonstrates that literacy education extends beyond reading and writing to include the ability to interpret,

analyze, and communicate ideas within meaningful social and cultural contexts. The above data is reinforced by the following documentation:

Figure 1. Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model for Strengthening Character Education and Literacy among Elementary School Students.



Figure 1 presents the Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model developed in this study to strengthen character education and literacy among elementary school students. The model consists of five interconnected stages: cultural orientation, interactive storytelling, collaborative reflection, literacy enrichment, and character reinforcement. These stages integrate local wisdom with experiential learning to foster students' moral values, literacy skills, critical thinking, and appreciation of cultural heritage through meaningful and contextual learning experiences.

From the perspective of educational innovation, the findings demonstrate that Wayang Golek functions as an effective local wisdom-based instructional medium that integrates character education, literacy, and cultural preservation into a unified learning process. Based on the empirical findings, this study proposes a Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model consisting of five sequential stages: (1) cultural orientation, introducing students to local cultural heritage and learning objectives; (2) interactive storytelling, delivering educational themes through Wayang Golek performances; (3) collaborative reflection, encouraging discussion and critical interpretation of moral values; (4) literacy enrichment, engaging students in reading, writing, and oral communication activities related to the stories; and (5) character reinforcement, enabling teachers to internalize the values learned into students' daily behavior. This model provides a systematic framework that integrates experiential learning, local wisdom, and literacy education in elementary schools.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that integrating Wayang Golek into classroom instruction creates meaningful, enjoyable, and culturally responsive learning experiences. The model not only strengthens students' literacy competencies but also reinforces character values while preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage (Sa'diya et al., 2026). Consequently, the proposed learning model offers a practical and sustainable innovation that can be adapted by other elementary schools seeking to integrate local wisdom into character education and literacy development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo, serves as an effective educational innovation for strengthening character education and literacy among elementary school students. By integrating local cultural heritage into the learning process, the model creates meaningful and engaging learning experiences that encourage students to internalize moral values while developing communication, critical thinking, and literacy skills. The collaboration between the school and local artists further enriches the learning environment by connecting classroom instruction with authentic cultural practices.

The findings demonstrate that the proposed learning model consists of five interconnected stages: cultural orientation, interactive storytelling, collaborative reflection, literacy enrichment, and character reinforcement. These stages enable students to actively participate in contextual learning while fostering values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect. At the same time, the model enhances students' literacy through listening, discussion, interpretation, and reflective communication activities, making learning both enjoyable and educational.

This study contributes theoretically by proposing a structured Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model that integrates local wisdom, character education, and literacy into elementary education. Practically, the model provides an alternative instructional framework that can be adopted by schools seeking to preserve cultural heritage while improving the quality of learning. Future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of this model in different educational contexts and to explore its integration with digital learning media and other local cultural resources to support sustainable educational development.

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