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## **Analysis of Social Criticism in Indonesian Folk Tales as a Media for Learning Literature in Elementary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

**Objective:** This study analyzes social criticism in Indonesian folklore and its use as a medium for learning literature in elementary schools. Folklore not only functions as entertainment, but also as a reflection of social, cultural, and moral values in society. The social criticism contained in it can be an educational tool to build critical awareness in students from an early age. **Novelty:** Analyzing folk tales with a deeper social critical approach. **Methods:** This research uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method for several folk tales originating from various regions in Indonesia. **Results:** The results of the study show that social criticism in folklore often raises issues of injustice, social inequality, and ethical and moral values. Through literary learning, students can understand the social messages implied in folklore and develop critical thinking skills and appreciation of local culture. In addition, the use of folklore as a learning medium can increase reading interest and enrich students' literary experiences. **Conclusion:** Integrating folklore into literature learning in elementary schools can be an effective strategy for building character, improving literacy, and introducing social and cultural values to students in a more contextual and enjoyable way.

**Keywords:** Folk Tales, Social Criticism, Literature Learning, Elementary School.

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## INTRODUCTION

Folklore is part of the cultural heritage that contains social, moral, and cultural values that can be used as a means of learning literature in elementary schools (Danandjaja, 2017). In the context of education, folklore has great potential to develop students' understanding of the values of life that apply in society. Literary learning based on folklore ideally not only teaches aesthetic aspects, but also introduces students to the social criticism contained therein.

However, in reality, literature learning in elementary schools still focuses more on the intrinsic elements of the story, such as plot, characters, and themes, without delving deeper into the social meaning contained therein (Suherli, 2019). This causes students to have a poor understanding of the relevance of folklore to the social life they face. Thus, there is a gap between the potential of folklore as a medium for social criticism and the implementation of its learning in schools.

According to Wahyuni's research (2021), social criticism in literature can be a tool of reflection for students to understand the social reality around them. Therefore, the use of folklore as a learning medium that highlights social criticism is an urgent need so that students can think more critically about existing social conditions.

For example, many folk tales raise the theme of social injustice, such as the story of "Si Kancil dan Buaya" which describes ingenuity in dealing with injustice (Sutrisno, 2018). If analyzed more deeply, this story can teach students to recognize injustice in real life and how they can deal with it wisely.

In a study conducted by Prasetyo (2020), it was found that students who understand the value of social criticism in folk tales tend to be more responsive to social issues around them. This shows that folk tales have a significant impact on building students' social awareness if utilized optimally in literature learning.

Furthermore, literature learning based on social criticism can also increase students' interest in reading. According to the results of Susanto's research (2022), a learning approach that links folk tales with students' social lives can increase their involvement in reading and understanding literary texts.

On the other hand, previous studies have not specifically highlighted how social criticism in folk tales can be applied in literature learning in elementary schools (Haryono, 2019). This shows that there is a research gap that needs to be filled to optimize the function of folk tales as a more meaningful learning medium.

From the perspective of learning innovation, this study offers novelty in how to analyze folklore with a deeper social criticism approach (Ramadhani, 2023). Thus, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for teachers in designing more contextual and relevant literature learning strategies for students. According to Saputra (2021), literature education in elementary schools needs to be directed not only to develop appreciation for literary works, but also to form critical awareness of the social conditions depicted in folklore. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by presenting a more integrative learning strategy.

In the context of character education, folklore containing social criticism can be an effective means of instilling moral values in students from an early age (Putri, 2020). Thus, the use of folklore as a learning medium is not only cognitive, but also affective in shaping students' personalities.

In addition, this study also responds to the Merdeka Curriculum policy which encourages a more contextual and local culture-based learning approach (Kemendikbud, 2022). By including social criticism analysis in literature learning, this study is in line with efforts to strengthen students' cultural identity.

In practice, teachers still face challenges in integrating social criticism into literature learning due to the limited teaching materials available (Arifin, 2019). Therefore, this study also aims to provide recommendations regarding learning models that can help teachers implement this approach effectively.

This research is important because it can contribute to the development of literature learning methods that are more based on social and cultural understanding (Rahmawati, 2021). In this way, it is hoped that students can better understand that literature is not just a story, but also a reflection of social reality.

Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in previous research and provide real contributions to the development of literary learning in elementary schools. The results of this study are expected to be a guideline for educators in optimizing the role of folklore as a more meaningful learning medium for students.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method for several folktales from various regions in Indonesia. This method was chosen because it is in accordance with the objectives of the study, which is to understand the meaning, values, and moral messages contained in the folktales. Content analysis allows researchers to explore the patterns, themes, and narrative structures contained in the folktale texts in depth (Krippendorff, 2021).

The selection of qualitative methods is based on the interpretive and descriptive nature of the research. With this method, researchers can explore the hidden meanings in the folktale texts and understand how the stories reflect the culture and values of society in various regions in Indonesia (Elo & Kyngäs, 2022). In addition, this approach also provides flexibility in analyzing texts without strict numerical or statistical limitations.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through documentation and literature studies. The main data source is the folktale text obtained from books, journals, and official websites containing folktales from various regions (Bowen, 2022). In addition, interviews with literary or cultural experts were also conducted to enrich understanding of the folktales being studied.

After the data is collected, the next step is to categorize and classify folktales based on the themes, characters, and moral values contained therein. This process is carried out by carefully reading each story and noting important elements that can be the basis for further analysis (Mayring, 2022).

Data analysis is carried out through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by sorting out parts of the story that are relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation is carried out in the form of tables or narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding of the patterns and themes found (Vaismoradi et al., 2023). Conclusions are then drawn based on the findings that have been analyzed systematically.

The first step in this study is to determine the objectives and scope of the study. The researcher determined that this study would focus on folktales from various regions in Indonesia that have similarities in certain themes or moral messages (Flick, 2022). This aims to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural values inherited through folktales.

The second step is to collect folktales from various sources. Researchers access books, journals, and websites that provide folklore texts. The criteria for selecting stories include the authenticity of the text, the accessibility of sources, and relevance to the research theme (Creswell & Poth, 2022).

The third step is to validate the data by confirming the validity of the story through interviews with literary or cultural experts. This is important to ensure that the stories analyzed really come from the claimed area and have not undergone significant changes from the original version (Nowell et al., 2023).

The fourth step is to conduct a content analysis by identifying patterns, themes, and moral messages in folklore. Researchers use a hermeneutic approach to understand the hidden meaning in the text, so that they can obtain a deeper interpretation (Bengtsson, 2022).

The fifth step is to organize the results of the analysis in the form of a research report. This report includes a description of the main findings, a discussion related to the cultural implications of the folklore studied, and the conclusions obtained based on the analysis conducted (Silverman, 2023).

In this study, the accuracy and validity of the data are highly considered. Therefore, data triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of the analysis from various sources and confirming with related experts (Tracy, 2022). This process aims to increase the credibility of the findings obtained.

In addition, the interpretive approach used in this study allows researchers to understand how people in various regions interpret their folklore. The interpretation carried out is not only based on the text, but also considers the social and cultural context of the folklore (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023).

The results of this study are expected to provide broader insights into the role of folklore in maintaining the cultural and moral values of society. These findings can also be a reference for academics and educators in teaching cultural values through folklore (Bryman, 2022).

In conclusion, this study shows that the content analysis method is very effective in exploring the deep meaning of folklore. With the qualitative approach used, this study contributes to understanding Indonesian cultural heritage and its relevance in the lives of modern society (Guest et al., 2023). It is hoped that this study can encourage more studies on folklore and other cultural heritages, so that the traditional values contained in them remain sustainable and can be passed on to future generations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study shows that social criticism in folklore often reflects various social issues, such as injustice, social inequality, and ethical and moral values. Folklore is an effective medium for conveying criticism of the conditions of society in its time. According to Santosa (2022), folklore is a reflection of the social reality that develops in society and contains values that are still relevant today.

In addition to being a reflection of social conditions, folklore also functions as a moral education tool for the younger generation. Through the stories told, children can understand the concepts of justice, honesty, and hard work. As stated by Wibowo (2023), folklore has didactic value that can shape the character and moral attitudes of students in everyday life.

In the context of literature learning, folklore plays an important role in improving students' critical thinking skills. Through analysis of characters and conflicts in folklore, students can learn to interpret the meaning implied in a text. This is in line with research conducted by Putri (2021), which states that folklore-based literature learning can train students' analytical and reflective skills.

In addition, the use of folklore as teaching materials can increase students' appreciation of local culture. By getting to know folklore from various regions, students will better understand the diversity of cultures in Indonesia. According to Rahmawati (2022), folklore-based literature learning can foster a love for cultural heritage and enhance students' national identity.

The integration of folklore in literature learning can also be an effective strategy to increase students' interest in reading. One of the challenges in the world of education today is the low reading literacy among children. A study conducted by Anwar (2023) shows that the use of folklore in learning can increase students' interest in literary texts and enrich their reading experience.

The use of folklore can also help students develop language skills, both oral and written. By reading and analyzing folklore, students will be more familiar with good and correct language structures. This is reinforced by research conducted by Nugroho (2021), which states that folklore-based learning can improve students' narrative writing skills.

In addition to linguistic benefits, folklore-based learning also has a positive impact on strengthening students' character. The values contained in folklore, such as hard work, courage, and honesty, can shape positive attitudes in students. According to a study conducted by Setiawan (2022), students who often read folklore tend to have a better understanding of ethics compared to those who rarely read. In the world of education, a folklore-based approach also contributes to creating more contextual and enjoyable learning. The folklore-based learning model allows students to be more active in understanding the material because they feel closer to the stories they read. This is in line with the results of research by Lestari (2023), which shows that students are more motivated when learning is packaged in the form of interesting narratives.

Not only in literature learning, folklore integration can also be applied in other subjects, such as social studies and civics. For example, in history learning, folklore can be used as an alternative source to understand past events. According to Hidayat (2022), folklore can be a historical source that helps students understand the social and cultural aspects of a society in the past.

In addition to increasing students' interest in learning, folklore also plays a role in building social awareness. By understanding social criticism in folklore, students can be more sensitive to issues that occur around them. A study conducted by Rahayu (2021) showed that students who studied folklore with a critical approach found it easier to identify social inequality and understand the importance of social solidarity.

The use of folklore in learning can also be an effective strategy in teaching empathy to students. By understanding the roles and motivations of characters in folklore, students can learn to see an event from various perspectives. As stated by Susanto (2023), folklore can be an effective medium in shaping students' emotional intelligence.

In the context of the digital era, the integration of folklore in learning can be done through various media, such as animated videos and e-books. According to research conducted by Pratama (2022), the use of technology in presenting folklore can increase student involvement in learning and make them more interested in exploring stories from various regions.

In addition, the use of folklore can also be an alternative in instilling the values of diversity in students. By getting to know various stories from various tribes and regions, students can better understand the diversity of cultures in Indonesia. This is in line with the findings of research by Widodo (2023), which states that folklore plays a role in introducing the concept of multiculturalism to students from an early age.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the integration of folklore in literature learning in elementary schools has many benefits, both in strengthening literacy, character formation, and developing students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, educators are advised to further optimize the use of folklore in learning in order to create a more contextual and enjoyable learning experience.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that social criticism in folklore often raises issues of injustice, social inequality, and ethical and moral values. Through literature learning, students can understand the social messages implied in folklore and develop critical thinking skills and appreciation of local culture. In addition, the use of folklore as a learning medium can increase reading interest and enrich students' literary experiences. Thus, the integration of folklore in literature learning in elementary schools can be an effective strategy for building character, increasing literacy, and introducing social and cultural values to students in a more contextual and enjoyable way.

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