

The Integration of the Bailang Tradition in Strengthening Character Education in Hulu Sungai Tengah

Rahmat, J.*, Erliyanti, R. & Ilmi, Z.

Magister Administrasi Pendidikan, Universitas Islam Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al Banjari, INDONESIA

*Corresponding Author: jamaliuhu@gmail.com

To Cite This Article: Rahmat, J., Erliyanti, R., & Ilmi, Z. (2025). The Integration of the Bailang Tradition in Strengthening Character Education in Hulu Sungai Tengah. *ICCCM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(Special Issue), 32–36. <https://doi.org/10.53797/icccmjssh.v4isp.6.2025>

Received 15 September 2025, **Revised** 29 September 2025, **Accepted** 10 October 2025, **Available online** 25 October 2025

Abstract: The bailang tradition is a form of Eid al-Fitr social gathering in Hulu Sungai Tengah, plays a significant role in shaping character and strengthening social relationships. This study examines the practice of the bailang tradition and its contribution to character development among students. A qualitative approach was used in this study. Findings reveal that bailang tradition functions as an informal educational tool, promoting empathy, cooperation, respect for elders, and social responsibility. Despite its positive impact, the tradition faces threats from modernization and individualistic tendencies. The research advocates incorporating this cultural practice into school-based character education through the local curriculum on manners and conduct.

Keywords: Bailang tradition, banjar culture, character education

1. Introduction

Eid al-Fitr, commonly known as lebaran in Indonesia is an important religious celebration for muslims around the world, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. Within Indonesia's diverse cultural context, Eid al-Fitr is not only viewed as a religious event but also serves as a strategic moment for reinforcing familial bonds and social relationships across communities. This sacred occasion is celebrated not merely as a symbol of victory but also as an opportunity to strengthen social ties through the tradition of silaturahmi or visiting one another (Afriyani, 2024).

Silaturahmi is a central teaching in Islam, emphasizing the importance of maintaining fraternal relationships among human beings. The Qur'an (Al-Hujurat: 10) and the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) highlight that silaturahmi can extend one's life and increase sustenance. These values are not only spiritually significant but also function to enhance social solidarity within communities. As such, silaturahmi serves as a simple religious practice imbued with character education values such as compassion, mutual respect, and the promotion of social harmony (Hidayat, 2015).

In the Banjar community of Hulu Sungai Tengah, the Eid al-Fitr social gathering tradition is known as bailang (visiting others). This practice has been passed down across generations and involves visiting the homes of relatives, neighbors, and friends as a means of reinforcing social ties, restoring strained relationships, and practicing mutual forgiveness. The tradition reflects the internalization of Islamic moral values in daily life, functioning as a form of informal education that cultivates noble character within society.

The philosophy of Islamic education emphasizes the development of insan kamil, or the complete human being intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially (Fauziah et al., 2025). The Eid silaturahmi tradition aligns with this goal by fostering social ethics, empathy, responsibility, and brotherhood. In the context of formal education, (Sholeh et al., 2025) assert that local culture can be integrated into character education and local wisdom-based learning, thereby making education more contextualized, grounded, and meaningful for students.

However, with the advancement of modernization and shifts in lifestyle, the practice of silaturahmi among younger generations has begun to decline. Increasing individualism and a diminished awareness of local culture pose serious challenges to the preservation of these noble values. This situation calls for the revitalization of silaturahmi culture through educational pathways in schools so that Islamic teachings and local wisdom continue to shape the character of future generations. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore effective educational strategies for internalizing the values of silaturahmi and local culture into the process of forming student character.

2. Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the bailang tradition, a local Eid al-Fitr visiting practice in Hulu Sungai Tengah as a cultural expression with significant implications for character education. The specific objectives of this research are as follow:

- a. Analyze the current practice of the bailang tradition.
- b. Identify the character values embedded within the bailang tradition.
- c. Examine the challenges and transformations experienced by the bailing tradition in the context of modernization and shifting lifestyles
- d. Investigate the potential integration of these character values into school curricula through local content-based education.

3. Research Questions

There are four research questions in this research which are:

- a. How is the bailang tradition currently practiced in the community of Hulu Sungai Tengah?
- b. What character values are embedded within the bailang tradition?
- c. What challenges and transformations has the bailang tradition undergone in the context of modernization and changing lifestyles?
- d. How can the character values from the bailang tradition be integrated into school curricula through local content-based education?

4. Literature Review

Character education has become a central focus in the development of students in today's global era. One effective approach to building character is through the integration of local wisdom values into the formal education system. According to (Susanto & Rico, 2025), local wisdom is a body of inherited knowledge and practices that reflect a community's values and way of life, aligned with their natural environment. It plays a vital role in supporting sustainable development through responsible natural resource management and environmental preservation for the common good.

Character education based on local wisdom is a strategic means to shape a generation that is morally upright and culturally grounded. Research by (Nuraeni et al., 2024) shows that character education which incorporates local wisdom helps raise student awareness of the importance of cultural heritage, strengthens their sense of identity, and enriches the learning process.

In the context of the Banjar community in Hulu Sungai Tengah, one cultural practice with significant character-building potential is the bailang tradition, a customary house visiting ritual during Eid al-Fitr. This tradition serves as a means to strengthen familial and social bonds, while instilling social values such as respect for elders, tolerance, and solidarity.

However, this tradition faces significant challenges due to shifting lifestyles among younger generations, who tend to be more individualistic and increasingly disconnected from their cultural roots. (Susanto & Rico, 2025) note that the influx of global influences through digital media has proven more appealing to Banjar youth, particularly those from Generation Z, thereby decreasing their interest in local traditions.

The integration of local wisdom values into the formal education curriculum can serve as a strategic step in strengthening character education. A study by (Wulandari et al., 2024) indicates that embedding local cultural values into school learning can increase students' awareness of the importance of preserving cultural identity.

In conclusion, the strengthening of character education through the integration of local traditions such as bailang is a tangible step toward fostering a more relevant and culturally rooted educational experience. This approach not only supports the attainment of national education goals but also serves as a moral and cultural safeguard in navigating global challenges.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning, values, and practices of the bailang tradition in the Banjar community of Hulu Sungai Tengah, as well as its potential integration into character education. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the complexity of sociocultural phenomena that may not be fully captured through quantitative methods (Handoko & Lestari, 2024). Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach, which focuses on identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns or themes within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure data validity, this study employed source and methodological triangulation, comparing information from multiple informants and integrating various data collection methods.

5.2 Research Sample

The research was conducted in Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency, known as a cultural center of the Banjar ethnic group with a rich tradition of local practices that remain preserved to this day. The participants were selected using a purposive

sampling technique, focusing on individuals who are actively involved in the *bailang* tradition. The sample included community leaders who hold cultural knowledge, educators who are involved in character education, and local residents who participate in Eid al-Fitr traditions. These informants were considered key sources of insight into the transmission of cultural values through the tradition.

5.3 Research Instrument

To gather comprehensive and contextual data, this study used several qualitative instruments. Participatory observation was conducted during Eid al-Fitr traditions to directly experience and document the practices and symbolic meanings embedded in the *bailang* tradition. This was complemented by semi-structured interviews with community leaders, educators, and residents to explore their views and experiences related to character values and cultural transmission. Additionally, document analysis was carried out by examining written materials, such as local manuscripts, cultural records, and previous studies, which supported and enriched the primary data obtained from fieldwork.

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Analysis of Research Questions

6.1.1 Research Question 1: How is the *Bailang* tradition currently practiced in the community of Hulu Sungai Tengah? The tradition of *silaturahmi* (visiting and maintaining ties) during Eid al-Fitr in Hulu Sungai Tengah is locally known as *bailang* (visiting others' homes). Community members actively visit the homes of their parents, relatives, neighbors, and religious leaders to exchange forgiveness and strengthen social bonds (*ukhuwah*). This activity reflects the spiritual essence of Eid al-Fitr as a moment of returning to one's pure nature (*fitrah*) and renewing social relationships that may have weakened over the past year. The tradition typically begins on the first day of Eid and can continue for several days afterward.

In practice, this activity involves not only adult family members but also the wider community, including children and adolescents. From an early age, children are brought along, enabling them to learn moral and cultural values contextually through direct experience. During visits, children are introduced to the cultural practices of shaking hands, greeting elders, and sitting politely in the host's presence.

In each home visited, the host typically serves traditional Eid dishes such as *ketupat* (rice cake), *opor ayam* (chicken curry), *lemang* (bamboo-cooked sticky rice), *apam*, *tapai* (fermented cassava or rice), and a variety of cookies. The offering of food is not merely a gesture of hospitality but also a symbol of social solidarity and open-heartedness. (Alfisyah, 2019) notes that in Banjar culture, sharing food represents sincerity and respect for guests who have taken the time to visit.

The *bailang* tradition is not solely a religious ritual; it also serves as a vehicle for reinforcing social cohesion, strengthening familial relationships, and maintaining harmony among community members. Moreover, this tradition has been passed down through generations and remains a vital element of the cultural identity of the Banjar people in Hulu Sungai Tengah. A local community leader remarked, "*Bailang* has been a habit since I was a child, even from the time of our ancestors. If you don't *bailang* during Eid, then it's not truly Eid."

6.1.2 Research Questions 2: What character values are embedded within the *Bailang* tradition?

The *bailang* tradition embodies various important character values. Respect for elders is evident in the customary practice of prioritizing visits to older relatives and kissing their hands. The value of tolerance is reflected in the community's respect for differing habits and viewpoints among families. Empathy is expressed through the tradition of asking about each other's well-being and offering prayers. The spirit of mutual cooperation is demonstrated in collective efforts to prepare meals and welcome guests. Meanwhile, a sense of social responsibility is shown through the commitment to maintaining social bonds and ensuring that no community member feels neglected during the Eid celebration.

The *bailang* tradition serves as an effective form of non-formal education in shaping the character of children and adolescents. Children participating in this tradition indirectly learn manners related to visiting others, speaking politely, sharing food, and understanding kinship ties. They acquire values through contextual learning that engages both emotional and social dimensions. A local community member shared, "During *bailang*, children see older people offering greetings and sharing food, so they naturally learn proper manners from these actions."

These character values are passed down from generation to generation through direct experience, making them a meaningful and contextual form of non-formal education. This aligns with the view of (Sholeh et al., 2025), who argue that character education is more effective when integrated with local cultural contexts.

6.1.3 Research Questions 3: What challenges and transformation has the *Bailang* tradition undergone in the context of modernization and changing lifestyles?

Although the *bailang* tradition is still preserved, it faces challenges stemming from modern social dynamics. The advancement of technology and the rise of individualistic lifestyles have shifted the meaning of *silaturahmi* (social bonding) from face-to-face interactions to communication via social media.

The Banjar ethnic group, long known for its strong adherence to tradition and religious values, is now confronted with the erosion of cultural identity, particularly among Generation Z. The influx of global influences through digital media has introduced foreign cultures that often attract greater interest from the youth, thereby diminishing their engagement with local traditions (Susanto & Rico, 2025).

A community leader stated, “Nowadays, many people only return to their hometowns briefly; sometimes, they don’t even have time to visit homes like before. Sending a message or making a video call is often considered sufficient for maintaining silaturahmi.” This observation aligns with findings from (Putri et al., 2022), who noted that among teenagers, Eid greetings are frequently exchanged via social media, both in personal and group formats.

High population mobility also contributes to the decline in direct silaturahmi. Many family members must leave their hometowns for work or education in urban areas, making time and distance significant barriers to traditional Eid visits. Additionally, a growing trend toward consumerism during Eid has altered its meaning. As (Rahman et al., 2020) emphasize, Eid al-Fitr, which should signify a return to purity, is increasingly associated with consumer desires and the pursuit of self-image through the purchase of new goods.

The fast-paced lifestyle changes have also impacted the quality of social interactions during Eid. Many families now prefer to celebrate Eid in a more practical manner, focusing on the nuclear family and foregoing visits to neighbors or distant relatives.

6.1.4 Research Questions 4: How can the character values from the Bailang tradition be integrated into school curricula through local content-based education?

The bailang tradition, as a form of local wisdom, holds significant potential for integration into formal education. (Wulandari et al., 2024) assert that although local wisdom plays a critical role in shaping students’ character, its implementation within the school curriculum remains suboptimal.

As part of the effort to strengthen students’ character values, the Education Office of Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency has developed a local content curriculum titled *Pendidikan Adab dan Sopan Santun* (Education on Manners and Courtesy). This curriculum is designed to instill the noble values embedded in the local community. The Head of the Education Office of Hulu Sungai Tengah, H. Muhammad Anhar, S.STP., M.E., stated, “One of our key focuses is character education enhancement through the local content subject *Adab dan Sopan Santun*, which is an essential part of shaping a generation that is ethical and noble in character.”

The local content curriculum on *Pendidikan Adab dan Sopan Santun* is structured in response to regional priorities, aiming to instill in the younger generation not only intellectual capability but also the everyday embodiment of strong character values.

A school principal noted, “*Pendidikan Adab dan Sopan Santun* as a local content subject in Hulu Sungai Tengah has a significant impact on the future lives of students.” This statement is supported by research from (Quratul’aini et al., 2024), which emphasizes that character education can serve as a crucial step in shaping a young generation with integrity, empathy, responsibility, and the ability to coexist harmoniously within a diverse society.

The implementation of *Pendidikan Adab dan Sopan Santun* in Hulu Sungai Tengah is carried out progressively, from kindergarten to junior high school. At the kindergarten level, learning is adapted to the characteristics of early childhood; at the elementary level, it becomes a habituation phase; and in junior high school, it is further reinforced through more in-depth applications aligned with students’ developmental stages. This approach aligns with the findings of (Kollo et al., 2024), who state that strengthening character education can be realized through various strategies, including role modeling, classroom instruction, integration of character values into all subjects, and behavioral management through consistent discipline.

Therefore, integrating the bailang tradition as part of local wisdom into formal education through the *Adab dan Sopan Santun* local content curriculum in Hulu Sungai Tengah represents a concrete strategy for enhancing character education. This approach not only reinforces local cultural identity but also helps shape students into ethical, well-mannered individuals ready to face the challenges of the modern era

7. Conclusion

The bailang tradition is a form of Eid al-Fitr social gathering in Hulu Sungai Tengah, not only reflects the practice of religious values but also serves as an important medium for strengthening social bonds, shaping the character of the younger generation, and preserving the cultural identity of the Banjar community. Through this tradition, the community instills noble values such as respect for elders, empathy, tolerance, mutual cooperation, and social responsibility in children in a contextual and intergenerational manner.

However, this practice faces significant challenges due to technological advancements, shifts in modern lifestyles, and the influx of global cultures, especially among the younger generation. These challenges risk shifting the meaning and practice of silaturahmi from direct interpersonal interactions to virtual communication, which lacks the emotional and social depth of traditional gatherings.

To preserve the core values embedded in this tradition, strategic and sustainable efforts are required. One such effort is integrating the bailang tradition into formal education through local curriculum content focused on Adab (ethics) and social etiquette. This initiative serves as a concrete step to strengthen character education while safeguarding youth from the negative impacts of globalization, by upholding local cultural and spiritual values.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the fellow authors and organizations whose intellectual properties were utilized for this study

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

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