

## CHARACTER VALUE FORMATION THROUGH MALAY GAMBUS ART IN “MESJID MEKKAH” SONG

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### Abstract

*The contemporary character crisis has raised a profound concern to Indonesian way of living. The spike of technological advancement has brought both positive and negative impact to the young generation. The government, on the other hand, has started to prioritize cultivating of character programme in each educational institution, particularly in Gambus music art. This research aims to explain character value cultivation in Malay Gambus art. This research was conducted at Pekanbaru City, with performing arts students of Islamic Riau University as the research subjects, and Riau Malay Gambus Art as the research object. This research had been done in a qualitative descriptive methods by using observation, interview, literature review and documentation while data analysis involved primary and secondary data that were gathered using qualitative descriptive method. The research results have revealed that the students who are studying Gambus art tend to have more understanding on character cultivation values and practice those values in their daily life compared to the students who are not studying Gambus art. In addition, character cultivation values in Gambus art can be divided into: Religious Value, Truth Value, Tolerance Value, Discipline, Creative and Democratic Value. There are a lot of messages and values gained from Gambus Art that are derived from its religious and moral functions which are applicable to everyday life. Therefore, values contained in the Gambus Art itself support the character cultivation in the young generation.*

**Keywords:** *Cultivating The Character Value; Art; Riau Melayu Gambus.*

### Abstrak

*Krisis karakter yang terjadi pada masa kini telah menimbulkan keprihatinan mendalam terhadap gaya hidup masyarakat Indonesia. Kemajuan teknologi yang pesat membawa dampak positif sekaligus negatif bagi generasi muda. Di sisi lain, pemerintah telah mulai memprioritaskan program penanaman nilai-nilai karakter di setiap lembaga pendidikan, khususnya melalui seni musik Gambus. Penelitian ini*



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*bertujuan untuk menjelaskan penanaman nilai-nilai karakter dalam seni Gambus Melayu. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Kota Pekanbaru dengan melibatkan mahasiswa seni pertunjukan Universitas Islam Riau sebagai subjek penelitian, dan Seni Gambus Melayu Riau sebagai objek penelitian. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik observasi, wawancara, studi pustaka, dan dokumentasi, sementara analisis data dilakukan dengan mengolah data primer dan sekunder menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa yang mempelajari seni Gambus cenderung memiliki pemahaman yang lebih baik terhadap nilai-nilai karakter dan menerapkannya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari dibandingkan mahasiswa yang tidak mempelajari seni Gambus. Selain itu, nilai-nilai karakter yang terkandung dalam seni Gambus dapat diklasifikasikan ke dalam beberapa aspek, yaitu: Nilai Religius, Nilai Kebenaran, Nilai Toleransi, Disiplin, Kreativitas, dan Nilai Demokratis. Banyak pesan dan nilai yang dapat diambil dari seni Gambus yang bersumber dari fungsi religius dan moralnya, yang relevan untuk diterapkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Oleh karena itu, nilai-nilai yang terkandung dalam seni Gambus sangat mendukung penanaman karakter pada generasi muda.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Penanaman Nilai Karakter; Seni; Gambus Melayu Riau.*

## **A. Introduction**

The decline in moral values among Indonesia's younger generation has become a serious concern. The uncontrolled development of technology has contributed to behavioral issues such as violence, student brawls, sexual harassment, and drug abuse (Anggraini, 2022; Irianto, 2022). According to Indonesia's National Narcotics Agency (BNN), teenage drug use has increased from 20% to 24-28%, affecting both adolescents and minors (Irianto, 2022). This alarming trend highlights the urgent need for effective character education to mitigate negative influences. Strengthening moral development through innovative educational approaches is essential to shape a generation with strong ethical values. Education must integrate cultural and traditional elements to reinforce character formation, ensuring that youth remain resilient in the face of modern challenges and societal shifts.

Character education plays a vital role in shaping a nation's future, and developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, and Finland have demonstrated that educational reform is essential for national development (Nuryanta, 2015). Indonesia also prioritizes education as a foundation for progress, as stated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms the nation's goal of fostering intellectual and moral excellence (Bambang Kesowo, 2003). However, existing formal educational systems often struggle to

instill values effectively, necessitating alternative approaches to character development (Sipahutar et al., 2023).

Numerous studies highlight the limitations of formal education in transmitting character values to students effectively (Cholilah et al., 2023). Hidayatullah (2023) suggests that character-building must incorporate engaging and relevant strategies for today's youth. Research also indicates that cultural elements, such as traditional arts, contain embedded values that contribute to moral development (Prasetyo & Kumalasari, 2021). Despite this, the specific role of traditional arts in shaping character—particularly through musical traditions—remains largely unexplored.

Existing studies on character education focus predominantly on formal educational settings, yet alternative approaches leveraging cultural traditions are often overlooked. Malay Gambus, a musical tradition in Riau, is rich in ethical and spiritual values, making it a potential vehicle for character education. However, no significant research has examined its lyrics as a source of moral guidance.

This study introduces a new dimension in character education research by analyzing the moral and ethical values present in "Mesjid Mekkah", a song within the Malay Gambus tradition. Traditional arts are not merely aesthetic expressions; they serve as powerful educational instruments that transmit virtues through lyrical narratives and musical structures (Prasetyo & Kumalasari, 2021). This exploration offers an innovative alternative for fostering character development in younger generations. This research aims to: 1). Identify and analyze the character values embedded in "Mesjid Mekkah", a Malay Gambus song. 2). Explore the song's potential as a culturally relevant tool for character education among youth. 3). Assess how traditional arts can serve as an effective medium for moral instruction.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of character education methods based on local arts and culture, offering innovative approaches for educational institutions in Indonesia, and enriching academic references on the integration of traditional arts in character formation. Thus, this research can serve as a foundation for the development of educational policies that are more rooted in local wisdom.

## **B. Research Methods**

Researchers conducted a university-level study at Riau Islamic University, located in Pekanbaru City, Riau. The research subjects were students from the Department of Performing Arts Education (Sendratasik) at Riau Islamic University, with interviews conducted over two months to obtain in-depth data. The research object was the art of Gambus Melayu Riau. The number of respondents selected was five, considering that all five subjects were Gambus players who had been studying

and playing Gambus since their school years. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which is also known as naturalistic inquiry, emphasizing the natural context of the data source (Nurlaelah & Subaik, 2023; Creswell, 2018). The data collection method used was purposive sampling, selecting informants with in-depth knowledge of the research problem based on the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2017; Patton, 2015).

The data analysis technique in this study involved collecting data through in-depth interviews, followed by data reduction, summarizing, and selecting relevant information according to key concepts and research objectives (Miles et al., 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the meanings behind Gambus Melayu Riau and its role in character education (Bungin, 2021). Additionally, data triangulation involves utilizing various sources of information, such as observations, documentation, and interviews with different parties, to compare and verify the accuracy of the data (Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, to ensure data validity, member checking can be employed. After data collection, researchers may request informants to review the interview results and provide feedback to ensure the findings align with their perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 2017). The purposive sampling process was carried out by selecting informants who were students studying and possessing skills in playing Gambus. Researchers posed several relevant questions to extract information about Gambus Melayu Riau, particularly regarding the character values embedded in the lyrics of Mesjid Mekkah (Hasanah, 2018).

In the applied data analysis technique, researchers gathered all interview data, reduced and summarized it based on the study's objectives. The strategic selection of interview subjects was conducted to obtain perspectives from both Gambus artists and government representatives, focusing on cultural preservation policies related to character education (Moleong, 2022).

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **Finding Result**

Gambus art is a traditional art of the Malay community, be it Malay mainland or Malay islands. In its performance, Gambus Melayu is a traditional musical instrument whose sound is produced by plucking strings. Gambus is played with drum accompaniment or marawis. Gambus plays Islamic poems that function as entertainment in traditional activities or performing arts. Gambus with its lyrics and poetry also functions as a medium of communication in conveying religious messages and also expressing themselves (Putra, 2016). The research was conducted by conducting interviews with several sources and then direct

observation of the learning process and playing of the Riau Malay Gambus art. The speakers played Gambus with several song repertoires such as Masjid Mecca, Lancang Kuning, and Ketan Hitam. Researchers saw that the lyrics of the Mecca Mosque song have a meaning that invites listeners of this song to always do good and always be related to religion and remember the creator. From this, the author sees many character education values that can be studied in more detail in this Gambus art.



**Picture 1.** Students Play Gambus Melayu Riau  
(Dokumentation: Laila Fitriah, February 2024)

From the results of interviews and observations that have been made, it appears that students who study and understand the art of Gambus Melayu Riau show more character education than students who have never studied and known Gambus art, this is because in their study of Gambus Melayu art traditionally they are also introduced to religious values as the main value that is prioritized in living life, they are bound by mosques and surau as a place to study the Koran and other Islamic religious understanding. This is because Gambus art is closely related to the Islamic world. Deepening their Islamic knowledge so that they can truly understand the meaning of the verses they play later. With this traditional and religious-based learning, understanding character values will be easier to teach them. The introduction of Islam provides a strong foundation for understanding the beliefs, moral values and ethics inherited in Islam (Jannah, 2023). With this, they will be able to apply it in maintaining their morals and behavior in everyday life, because they are more aware of the good and bad things to do in their relationships.

## **Discussion**

### **Character in Riau Malay Gambus Art**

Character in the Big Indonesian Dictionary has the meaning of character, temperament and traits that distinguish a person from others (Muhammad, 1996). Jack Corley and Thomas Philip, as cited in Muchlas Samani and Hariyanto, define character as a person's attitudes and habits that enable and facilitate moral action (Samani & Hariyanto, 2012). So character is a habit or temperament of a person that is different from others that characterizes or characterizes that person. According to David Elkind & Freddy Sweet, quoted in Zubaedi, character education is a deliberate (conscious) effort to help people understand, care about, and carry out core ethical values (Zubaedi, 2011). E Mulyasa also said in the guidebook for the implementation of character education that character education aims to improve the quality of the process of educational outcomes, which leads to the formation of character and noble character of students as a whole, integrated, and balanced, in accordance with the competency standards of graduates in each educational unit (Curriculum, 2011). So it can be concluded that character education is education that leads or shapes the morals and character and morals of students.

From the concepts of education and character that have been explained above, the term character education has begun to be widely discussed. In Indonesia itself, character education has begun to be launched and intensively socialized in educational institutions (Listiana & Rooselia, 2021). Art education has an influential role and benefits in the world of education. Art education, especially music education, has historically existed since ancient times. Traditional music can be used as a medium for art education, because many values and moral messages are contained in the art (Nugroho et al., 2022). The art of Gambus Melayu Riau is one example of traditional art that was originally known as a medium of da'wah to introduce Islam to the Malay community in Riau. In this case, there are many character values that can be learned and can be implemented in everyday life to improve the morals and morals of today's younger generation.

### **Character values in the art of Gambus Melayu Riau**

In the art of Gambus Melayu Riau, there are five character education points that are most appropriate to be implemented in character education, namely:

#### **Religious Value**

In the art of Gambus Melayu Riau, the poems or lyrics played in the show are always related to Islam, one of which is like in "*Masjid Mekkah*" Song with the following lyrics;



*Masjidlah Mekkah... masjidlah  
Mekkah menara tujuh 2x Hai  
tempat terahim Laila hailallah  
Allahurabbi*

*tempat terahim sembahyah subuh 2x*

*Imam berempat... imam berempat  
bersungguh - sungguh 2x Hai  
hentikan tegah Laila hailallah  
allahurabbi*

*Hentikan tegah kerjakan suruh 2x*

*Orang lah gasip... orang lah  
gasip membuat lading 2x Hai  
ladang dibuat Laila hailallah  
Allahurabbi*

*Ladang dibuat dengan sepadan 2x*

*Malang nya nasib... malang nya  
nasib tidak sembahyang 2x  
Menangis nyawa Laila hailallah  
Allahurabbi*

*Menangis nyawa menyeru Tuhan 2x*

The poetry of this *Masjid Mekkah* song conveys messages and meanings where humans live on this world should do religious commands and leave all prohibitions. The stories or messages conveyed relate to Allah, the prophet and the history of Islam. Indirectly, those who study Gambus art have a textual and contextual understanding of the verses delivered or played, so this encourages their personality to have a religious nature. In their daily lives, those who study Gambus art are also seen to have a nature that is different from those who do not study Gambus art. Judging from the religiousness of those who study and play the art of gambus are more obedient in carrying out worship than those who do not study this art.

#### **Discipline Value**

In this case, it can be connected to the learning process of Gambus playing practice. those who learn Gambus art must be disciplined to train themselves in order to get maximum achievement. Disciplining themselves with training schedules and memorizing verses while studying Gambus art

forges their souls to get used to bringing this discipline into other activities in life. Like students who are in contact with friends or lecturers, this is also illustrated, who study Gambus are more punctual when they have an appointment or enter the lecture class. Usually they have more respect for time, because they are used to the process of practicing for a performance. So the value of discipline has been embedded in him and is always applied in everyday life.

#### **Hard Work Value**

To learn Gambus art requires hard work and great willpower, because in learning the technique of playing Gambus it is not an easy thing to play Gambus melodies while singing verses that must be memorized, this indirectly makes children have the nature of hard work to learn techniques and types of songs in this art until they reach an advanced level in performing this art in a performance. Persistent willpower will forge their souls so that they do not want to just stand by and accept the circumstances that hit them in their lives later.

#### **Creative Value**

This point can train children to be more creative in developing Gambus playing patterns, they can create new things from a Gambus art performance. they can collaborate with modern art while still bringing out the touch and characteristics of Gambus art in their performance works. The presence of a creative spirit in them will help them in their daily lives in solving problems and finding solutions with creative ideas.

#### **Environment Caring Value**

In this value they are trained to care about the environment through Gambus art, without the willingness and concern of the younger generation, this Gambus art will be marginalized over time. With the concern of the next generation, this art will continue to grow. Because there is a successor generation who continues the running of this art in the community. This sense of care will later foster their concern and sense of responsibility for the environment around them. This is also contained in Islamic teaching where Allah not only emphasizes *Hablum minallah* (good relations with Allah) but also *Hablum minannas* (good relations with humans) (Nurasmawi, Ristiliana, Wardani Purnama Sari, 2021).

From the description above, it can be seen that the art of Gambus Melayu Riau has values that can support the learning of character education for the younger generation through two methods, namely the direct character education method



where character values are obtained directly from the traditional Gambus learning process. Then the second method is where young people are given character value education through the verses performed in the song at the Gambus performance. There is a lot of learning of character values itself, starting from strengthening friendship among social beings to approaching oneself to the creator. The introduction of traditional arts to the younger generation has an influential role and benefits in building character. Traditional arts training, especially the traditional art of Gambus Melayu Riau which has historically existed since long ago can be used as an alternative medium of education. Because so many values and moral messages are contained in the art. Gambus is one example of a traditional art that is known as a medium for folk entertainment but is also used as a medium to introduce Islamic religious values to the people of Riau. In this case, there are so many character values that can be learned and can be applied in everyday life to improve the morals and morals of today's younger generation.

#### **D. Conclusion**

From the research that has been done, it can be concluded that to provide character education knowledge to today's young generation, creative learning methods are needed and can attract their attention. The interest of the younger generation to want to relearn a traditional art activity which in itself trains and prepares them to become the next generation that has a strong character for the future. In the future, it is hoped that the government and institutions responsible for education will increase the intensity of introducing traditional arts to the younger generation both in formal and non-formal education, because in fact in a traditional art there are many contained and teach character values.

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