



Character Education Values in Jambi Malay *Seloko*

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Abstract

Traditional *seloko*, as part of the oral cultural heritage and local wisdom, contains moral teachings passed down from generation to generation and reflects the Jambi Malay community's outlook on life, which highly values ethics and spirituality. This study aims to identify and analyze the Islamic character education values contained in the traditional *seloko* of the Jambi Malay community and examine their relevance to character education in a modern context. The research method used is a literature study with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained from various relevant literature, documentation of traditional *seloko* texts, and in-depth interviews with Jambi Malay traditional figures and cultural figures to explore the philosophical meaning and educational values contained therein. The analysis was conducted using a hermeneutic approach to interpret the moral and social messages implied in these traditional expressions. The results show that traditional Jambi Malay *seloko* is rich in Islamic character education values, such as honesty, discipline, hard work, responsibility, tolerance, mutual respect, and love of the homeland. These values align with the basic principles of Islamic teachings on the development of noble morals and good behavior (*akhlak al-karimah*). The relevance of these values in modern character education is crucial, particularly in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses moral integrity and social awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country rich in culture, has a diverse heritage of noble values embodied in the traditions and customs of its people. One form of local wisdom still preserved in Malay society is the traditional *seloko*. *Seloko* are expressions or proverbs that describe a community's outlook on life, moral values, and principles held firmly in daily life. Amidst the ongoing development of modernization and globalization, the existence of Malay traditional *seloko*, particularly in Jambi society, is crucial for rediscovering the values of character education that can be applied in contemporary life (Purba et al., 2025; Ulum et al., 2018).

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Indonesia boasts a vast cultural diversity, one of which is found in Jambi Province, located on the island of Sumatra. In this province, the Malay people are one of the main ethnic groups, with a diverse culture resulting from the activities of their people. One form of Jambi's distinctive culture is *seloko*, a part of traditional customs consisting of expressions and adages containing moral messages, advice, and ethical values (Sinaga, 2023; Warni & Afria, 2023).

In the midst of globalization and social change, the traditional *seloko* as Jambi's cultural heritage is threatened with extinction if it is not preserved, because the influence of outside culture and lifestyle changes can weaken local cultural identity, especially among the younger generation (Rosdiana et al., 2024).

The local culture, which has been a guiding philosophy of life since before the birth of Pancasila, is now under scrutiny because it is increasingly being abandoned by society, despite being an integral part of the nation's identity (Istiwati, 2016). Wigunadika (2018), stated that the process of modernization tends to erode local culture by replacing it with Western culture, while puritanical views often view culture as a form of syncretism that should be avoided.

Khoirina (2018), also explained that local culture reflects values born of human wisdom and intelligence in the pursuit of an ideal life. These values become the distinctive identity of a community group, each with its own set of beliefs, and influence individual behavior based on their choices and beliefs (Rasimin et al., 2023).

Character education is currently a highly relevant issue, especially given the increasing challenges of developing individuals with noble morals in an era of rapid technological and global cultural development. Numerous studies have shown that character education, which encompasses the development of good morals and behavior, is crucial in shaping a young generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also virtuous. However, character education that focuses solely on the formal curriculum often fails to encompass all aspects of life, particularly in local contexts steeped in traditional values (Salsabilah, 2019; Yulia et al., 2025).

Education is a strategic tool for developing the quality of human resources. Through education, individuals are formed who are intelligent and possess strong character. This character is related to moral strength, which carries a positive meaning rather than a neutral one. Advances in science and technology, although beneficial, can hurt students' humanitarian values, thus potentially threatening the nation's religiosity and integrity if not balanced with strong character education (Hermawan & Kusniasari, 2023; Setyowulandari et al., 2025).

The sustainability and existence of a nation are greatly influenced by the character it possesses. Only a nation with strong character is able to uphold its dignity and earn respect from other nations. Developed countries are making serious efforts to prepare themselves for globalization, which increasingly brings together various cultures and civilizations, resulting in every nation, including Indonesia, being affected by changes whose direction remains uncertain. Therefore, Indonesia is focusing on strengthening national resilience through character education, while still paying attention to other areas of education (Rofi'ie, 2019).

This is where the Jambi Malay traditional *seloko* plays an important role. As a form of local cultural expression, *seloko* holds great potential in shaping individual character, particularly in social, moral, and spiritual values. However, although this traditional *seloko* is still practiced in the lives of the Malay Jambi community, systematic studies on the Islamic character education values contained within it remain limited. Many previous studies have focused more on literary aspects or local wisdom in general, without exploring in greater depth the contribution of *seloko* to

religion-based character education, particularly in the context of Islam (Angelita, 2024; Fitriyanti et al., 2024; Rahma, 2022).

Although Malay culture is widely recognized for its richness in moral and social values, few studies have linked traditional *seloko* with Islamic character education grounded in religious teachings. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring and identifying the Islamic character education values embedded in the Jambi Malay traditional *seloko*, as well as analyzing their relevance in the context of contemporary character education (Rahima, 2018; Warni & Afria, 2023).

The development of character education studies should not only refer to the formal curriculum or modern educational theories, but also to local wisdom that has long existed. Thus, this study not only focuses on the moral values contained in the Jambi Malay traditional *seloko*, but also examines how these values can be integrated into Islamic character education as a solution to strengthen character education in the modern era (Pahlepi & Putra, 2023; Rahima & Zahar, 2023; Taufikin, 2025).

Through this study, it is expected that various Islamic character education values contained in the Jambi Malay traditional *seloko* can be identified, as well as how these *seloko* can be utilized in character education within the family, school, and community settings. Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of character education based on local wisdom that emphasizes spirituality and noble character in everyday life.

METHOD

This study employed a library research method, aiming to explore and analyze the character education values contained in Jambi Malay traditional *seloko* expressions. The study focused on a review of literature and written sources related to Jambi Malay culture and character education. The research approach employed enabled the researcher to critically analyze the *seloko* texts, identify their values, and understand how these values can be applied in the context of character education. The primary data source in this study is the Jambi Malay traditional *seloko*, which can be found in various written sources, including books, scientific articles, local literary works, cultural documents, and interviews with Jambi Malay traditional and cultural figures. In addition, references from books and literature on Islamic character education, including the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic education literature, will be used as a theoretical basis for analyzing the Islamic character values contained in the *seloko* (Engkizar et al., 2025; Samsuddin & Holila, 2024; Sinulingga et al., 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Character Education

Character education in the 21st century is closely linked to efforts to understand, internalize, and practice the cultural values of the Indonesian nation that have grown and developed, such as cooperation, kinship, politeness, tolerance, friendliness, mutual respect, and prioritizing deliberation in resolving problems, including those related to religious teachings. These values are reflected in various local wisdoms spread throughout Indonesia (Aziz, 2016; Jayanti & Wulandari, 2024; Makmur & Dastina, 2018).

Character education aims to improve the quality of educational implementation and outcomes in schools, directed toward achieving the formation of students' character and noble morality in a holistic, integrated, and balanced manner, in accordance with graduate competency standards (Susanti et al., 2024).

Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System states that

education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process in which students actively develop their potential to possess spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed for themselves, society, the nation, and the state (Cahyani et al., 2023; Engkizar et al., 2023; Rokhim et al., 2024).

Character isn't formed instantly, but rather through a long and challenging process. However, this doesn't mean character education can't be implemented in the school environment. Character education can still be implemented both in the classroom and outside of school activities. Character itself refers to a person's traits, behaviors, or habits, which can be shaped and influenced by their environment (Rintoni et al., 2025; Yulia et al., 2025).

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, character is defined as traits or disposition, namely psychological qualities, morals, or ethics that distinguish one person from another; a person's nature. Character education is a system that instills character values in students, which includes components of knowledge, individual awareness, determination, as well as the willingness and actions to implement these values towards God, oneself, others, the environment, and the nation ultimately aiming to form the a complete human being (*insan kamil*). It can thus be understood that education must balance all aspects, such as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, so that students are ready to contribute to society (Handika & Darmiyati, 2022; Nurfalah, 2016).

Character education is therefore one of the most important aspects of education, as it not only focuses on the development of intellectual intelligence but also on the formation of personality and noble character (Walker et al., 2015). The goal of character education is to shape individuals who possess strong moral values, are able to distinguish between right and wrong, and can apply these values in their daily lives. In the Indonesian context, character education plays a vital role given the increasingly complex challenges of the times, where technological development and globalization have significant impacts on the morality and behavior of the younger generation (Herak, 2025).

From an Islamic perspective, Islamic character can be understood as a reflection of behavior that is in accordance with Islamic teachings, including human relations with God, oneself, others, and the environment, and is reflected in attitudes and actions that emulate the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (Susilo et al., 2022).

From the perspective of the term *akhlak* (Islamic ethics), it can be understood that *akhlak* refers to an inner disposition that drives a person to act spontaneously without prior deliberation (Engkizar et al., 2025). Several scholars, such as Imam Ghazali (2016), define *akhlak* as a character ingrained in the soul, which naturally produces actions with ease without requiring deep thought or consideration.

Discussing character education through local wisdom is essentially an implementation of Government Regulation Number 19/2005 on National Education Standards, particularly Article 17 paragraph 1, which states that "the curriculum at the educational unit level of elementary to senior high schools, or their equivalents, is developed based on the characteristics of the educational unit, regional potential, socio-cultural aspects, and students." However, the government often takes firm steps regarding various views on diversity from outside the administration, and frequently sets aside local wisdom values in pursuit of efficient governance and national development (Khusyairin et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2024).

Character education is not merely aimed at transferring knowledge, but also at shaping individuals with noble character through the development of values such as

integrity, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and social concern. Character is part of a person's inner personality that is reflected in consistent behavior, whether positive or negative, and becomes the distinctive identity of the individual (Anshori, 2017; Barokah & Sari, 2024). It is also stated that moral education is a learning process that emphasizes the inculcation of moral principles and noble values, as well as the formation of character and positive habits that children need to acquire from an early age until adulthood, when individuals are considered capable of bearing life's responsibilities independently (Sodik et al., 2025; Supiyardi et al., 2024).

The Ministry of Education and Culture gradually launched the Character Education Strengthening Program in 2016. However, this program is not entirely new, as character education had already become a National Movement in schools since 2010. Schools play a strategic role in shaping the nation's character because they have systems, infrastructure, and the support of an educational ecosystem spread across Indonesia, both in urban and rural areas. Although many schools have implemented good practices in strengthening character, numerous challenges remain to ensure that the cultivation of character values can take place continuously (Fitri & Wahyudi, 2018). In addition, more comprehensive policies based on local wisdom are needed to address the increasingly complex challenges of the times, ranging from threats to national integrity to global competition. Such policies are expected to serve as a foundation for formulating concrete steps so that the cultivation and internalization of national character values can be carried out more effectively and comprehensively. It is evident that character education continues to be promoted as a response to the evolving challenges of the times (Kusnadi & Utomo, 2023; Layli et al., 2023).

In essence, character education has long been a focus in the world of education. Article 1, paragraph 1 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education aims to develop students' potential so that they possess spirituality, self-control, personality, noble morals, and skills that benefit themselves and the nation. Character education is a national movement to create an ethical, responsible, and caring young generation through role models and the teaching of character values (Zubaidah, 2019).

Jambi Malay Traditional *Seloko*

Jambi Malay traditional *seloko* is part of the oral cultural heritage of the Malay community in Jambi Province. *Seloko*, often expressed in the form of wise sayings or proverbs, reflects the worldview, norms, and values upheld in the daily life of the Malay people. These expressions function not only as moral and ethical guidance but also as an educational medium that teaches wisdom, honesty, responsibility, and harmonious relationships with others as well as with nature. Thus, Jambi Malay traditional *seloko* serves not only as a symbol of cultural identity but also as a form of local wisdom rich in character education values, which remain highly relevant for shaping a society of noble character (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Purba et al., 2025).

Jambi traditional proverbs are not merely expressions such as proverbs, sayings, or rhymes, but rather a reflection of the outlook on life and philosophy that form the basis of the entire culture of the Jambi people (Warni & Afria, 2023). Historically, *seloko adat* (oral tradition) among the Malay community during the spread of Islam functioned as a medium for conveying Islamic teachings. This dissemination was carried out by utilizing oral traditions that had long been part of classical Malay life, enabling Islamic values to be embedded in various aspects of their daily existence. Therefore, *seloko adat* holds an important role that must be preserved and passed down from generation to generation (Indrayani & Syuhada, 2020). The

symbolic meanings contained in the texts of customary *seloko* represent a codification of the cultural values of the Jambi Malay community, reflecting their worldview, including religious, ethical (moral), social, and educational values (Fitriyanti et al., 2024; Rahma, 2022).

Seloko is an oral literary form that contains cultural elements and moral messages, playing a significant role in shaping the life of society. The cultural and moral values embedded within it originate from past traditions that were believed in and practiced by the communities that created them (Jannah et al., 2023). As an ancestral oral tradition that existed long before the arrival of Islam in Jambi, *seloko* has played an important role in preserving culture, transmitting customary values, and maintaining the identity and social harmony of the Jambi Malay community (Pramudita & Muslihata, 2024; Stiawan, 2024).

As part of the Malay cultural heritage, *seloko adat* plays an essential role in the transmission of cultural values to younger generations. The expressions contained in *seloko adat* often reflect life experiences, moral teachings, and advice that emphasize the importance of maintaining good character and behavior in accordance with societal norms and religious teachings. Although *seloko adat* has existed for a long time, its relevance remains intact, and even becomes increasingly significant amid the currents of globalization that tend to erode traditional values (Al Munir et al., 2024; Putriyanti et al., 2019).

The *seloko* of Jambi Malay also has the power to strengthen social bonds among community members, as it contains messages that emphasize the importance of mutual respect, cooperation, and maintaining balance in life. Thus, these *seloko* expressions not only convey local values but also touch on the dimension of spirituality, particularly those related to Islamic teachings that greatly influence the mindset and daily life of the Jambi Malay community (Purba et al., 2025; Ulum et al., 2018).

Seloko are traditional expressions rich with advice, messages, teachings, and values that reflect the customs and traditions of the Jambi Malay community. Each *seloko* is delivered according to the context and purpose of the ongoing event. Generally, there are three types of *seloko*: those related to customary law, those used in wedding ceremonies, and those that contain teachings about life. These traditional expressions serve as a guide to life for the Jambi Malay people, as they are formulated based on religious perspectives that are well-suited to be applied within the Jambi Malay community (Irawati et al., 2019).

***Seloko* Expressions Containing Character Education Values**

Seloko of Jambi are expressions that contain moral messages, advice, or counsel imbued with ethical values, serving as reminders to uphold societal norms. The content of *seloko adat* Jambi encompasses rules of daily conduct as well as laws or norms that must be respected and followed by the community, since violations are subject to sanctions. These *seloko* expressions may take the form of proverbs, rhymes (*pantun*), or traditional aphorisms (*pepatah petiti*) (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

Among these *seloko* are the following:

"*Adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah*"

"Custom rests upon religious law, and religious law rests upon the Book of Allah."

The expression above explains that *adat* (rules or customs accepted within society) must be guided and based on *syara'* (Islamic law). Likewise, *syara'* itself must be grounded in the *Kitabullah*, namely the Qur'an, as the primary source of Islamic law. This also indicates that, in essence, the Jambi Malay community generally

adheres to the teachings of Islam, particularly in relation to the development of religious character (Rahman & Rahman, 2017).

“Bagaimano nian kelamnyo kabut, Mato jangan di pejamkan, Bagaimano susahnyo hidup, Namun sembahyang jangan ditinggalkan.”

“No matter how dark the fog may be, do not close your eyes; no matter how difficult life becomes, never abandon prayer.”

The above quote explains that even though life is full of difficulties and challenges as dark as fog, we must never give up or lose hope. Even in difficult circumstances, we must still strive to uphold our obligations, especially in performing worship and prayer, as a reminder that in every difficulty, we must remain close to God (Sampoerno, 2024).

“Beternak bakandang malam, bahumo bakandang siang.”

“Raising livestock requires a pen at night, farming requires a field by day.”

In addition to agriculture, the Jambi Malay community also relies on livestock farming. Therefore, rules were established to maintain social harmony between farmers and livestock keepers, aiming to ensure that livestock do not disturb, damage, or consume crops. Livestock owners are required to take responsibility for their animals so that they do not harm the farmers’ fields (Purba, 2021).

“Kato pantang dak sampai pagi, kato pagi dak sampai petang.”

“A word spoken at night should not be delayed until morning, and a word spoken in the morning should not be delayed until evening.”

The above expression means “words spoken in the evening do not last until the morning, and words spoken in the morning do not last until the evening,” which signifies people who are inconsistent with their words. This type of person cannot be trusted, as they may also be considered dishonest (Tuo & Indonesia, 2023).

“Ambek benih capaklah sarap.”

“Take the good and throw away the bad.”

This expression contains advice related to education, emphasizing that every person should be able to distinguish between what is good and what is not. The presence of the words *benih* (seed) and *sarap/sampah* (waste) suggests that this expression originated from an agricultural community, as is common among the Malay people of Jambi. In this context, *benih* symbolizes something good and beneficial for human life, which must be taken, while *sarap/sampah*, such as dry leaves, represents something useless that should be discarded.

“api terebang malam

inggap di ujung Jagung mudo

biar tujuh kali dunio karam

balik ke dusun jugo”

“Even though the world changes many times, in the end, a person will return to their origin to their hometown.”

The expression embodied in this *pantun* contains a moral message about the meaning of love for one’s homeland. A person does not easily forget their homeland, even if it is just a small village; however, this homeland, which begins as a village, will eventually develop into a nation. Even if the world inhabited by humans were to experience destruction seven times, one could never forget their homeland. Love for the homeland encourages a person to take action for example, to promote development, defend it from enemy attacks, and so on. Such habits are very important to instill in every student as the next generation who will carry on the legacy of those who came before them (Sampoerno, 2024).

“kalan memabat di atas baris,

*kalau mengaji di atas kitab,
rumah sudah
ganden dan pahat idak bebunyi lagi”*

“All matters are finished, there is nothing more to do, a sign that life has come to an end.”

The expression above means that every problem resolved wisely will no longer cause issues in the future. It symbolizes the spirit of peaceful relationships that must be continuously maintained among people (Ramli, 2018).

*“Teluk tenang rantau selesai,
padi menjadi
ke ayek cemetik keno,
ke darat jerat keno,
balik ke rumah durian runtuh,
naek ke rumah anak la lahir,
ke dapur lemang la tejulur,
rumpun mudo kerbaunyo gemuk,
aek jernih ikannyo jinak”*

“All matters have been settled and have borne fruit. Life is full of blessings, abundant sustenance, a happy family, and harmony with nature.”

This expression depicts life in a region filled with good fortune, prosperity, and peace. It illustrates a calm and harmonious atmosphere where every effort yields satisfying results like rice that ripens into a good harvest, fish easily caught in clear waters, and traps that bring gain on land. Every step in life is blessed with unexpected sustenance, like the sudden fall of a durian, the joy of a child’s birth, and the delight of lemang ready to be served. Life is likened to fertile grass and tame fish, symbolizing continuous harmony and prosperity. This expression also reflects a character that values and cares for the environment (Fitrah, 2018).

*“Basusuk basengkan, berumah
batanggo, bajamban batepian, pergi
pagi balek malam, sayang dibini
ditinggal-tinggal, sayang dianak
dilepas-lepaskan”*

“Family life is full of responsibility. Even though one loves their family, they must be willing to be apart for a while in order to earn a living.”

The expression describes someone who works hard from morning until night, having to leave their wife and children to provide for their needs. It also reflects the character of diligence and hard work.

“Mudik Setanjung Ilir Serantau”

“From upstream to downstream, we remain one region, one origin, one family, one homeland.”

This expression conveys the meaning that building character is a gradual process requiring patience, consistency, and perseverance through small steps, rather than instant change or quick success (Putri et al., 2024).

Traditional *seloko adat* contains various philosophical meanings and noble Islamic values, making it natural that *seloko adat* serves as a guide for life, both for society in general and particularly for the Malay Jambi community. The values contained within *seloko* remain relevant and are not affected by the passage of time, as their teachings can serve as life guidance for every generation. The values embedded in religion indeed have a positive influence, which is why the people of Jambi have made them a foundation in their daily lives. Therefore, *seloko adat* is highly worthy of

being used as a reference for the Jambi community, as it contains many meaningful and beneficial pieces of wisdom. *Seloko adat* is not only relevant but also highly appropriate to be used as a way of life. Its existence must continue to be preserved so that younger generations can recognize and appreciate the local wisdom of the Jambi people, namely *seloko* (Rahma, 2022).

CONSLUSSION

The *Seloko Adat* of the Malay Jambi people is an essential part of the oral cultural heritage that reflects local wisdom while also embodying character education values relevant to contemporary development. Through its traditional expressions, the Malay Jambi community instills moral, social, and spiritual teachings that shape individual character, maintain social harmony, and strengthen Islamic values. *Seloko*, which upholds the principles of goodness, honesty, peace, and love for the homeland, plays a vital role in shaping the character of the nation's younger generation. In the context of character education, *seloko adat* functions not only as ancestral advice passed down through generations but also as a medium for reinforcing education based on local wisdom. The integration of *seloko* values into both formal and informal education whether within the family or the wider community can help shape a young generation that is intellectually intelligent, morally upright, and strong in character. Values such as discipline, hard work, honesty, and mutual respect serve as a solid foundation for building a dignified national character. Therefore, the study of *Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi* not only enriches understanding of local culture but also emphasizes the importance of applying the noble values of tradition as the foundation for forming a nation that is virtuous, responsible, and deeply rooted in a strong sense of togetherness.

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