

Revitalizing the Folklore of Bukit Menoreh: Transmitting Cultural Values to Foster Social Awareness in Social Studies Education

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ABSTRACT

Folktales function as important tools for conveying cultural values and shaping social behavior. Yet in modern education, the meaningful messages embedded in traditional narratives, including those from Bukit Menoreh, often receive limited attention in classroom learning. This study explores how Bukit Menoreh folktales can be revitalized as creative Social Studies learning resources to enhance students' social awareness. Using a qualitative descriptive method with an ethnographic orientation, the research collected data through literature review, interviews with teachers and cultural informants, and content analysis of folktale texts. The analysis involved thematic reduction, organization, and interpretation to identify cultural values relevant to instructional goals. Findings reveal that Bukit Menoreh folktales highlight cooperation, solidarity, and social responsibility, which can be integrated through reflective learning activities. Revitalizing these stories encourages empathy and student engagement with surrounding social issues, demonstrating their significant potential as contextual learning resources that help strengthen students' character.

Keywords:

Bukit Menoreh Folklore; Cultural Value Transmission; Social Awareness; Social Studies.

ABSTRAK

Dongeng berfungsi sebagai alat penting untuk menyampaikan nilai-nilai budaya dan membentuk perilaku sosial. Namun dalam pendidikan modern, pesan-pesan bermakna yang tertanam dalam narasi tradisional, termasuk yang berasal dari Bukit Menoreh, seringkali hanya mendapat perhatian

terbatas dalam pembelajaran di kelas. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana dongeng Bukit Menoreh dapat dihidupkan kembali sebagai sumber belajar Ilmu Sosial yang kreatif untuk meningkatkan kesadaran sosial siswa. Menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan orientasi etnografi, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui tinjauan pustaka, wawancara dengan guru dan informan budaya, serta analisis isi teks dongeng. Analisis tersebut melibatkan reduksi tematik, pengorganisasian, dan interpretasi untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai budaya yang relevan dengan tujuan pembelajaran. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa dongeng Bukit Menoreh menyoroti kerja sama, solidaritas, dan tanggung jawab sosial, yang dapat diintegrasikan melalui kegiatan pembelajaran reflektif. Menghidupkan kembali cerita-cerita ini mendorong empati dan keterlibatan siswa dengan isu-isu sosial di sekitarnya, menunjukkan potensi signifikan mereka sebagai sumber belajar kontekstual yang membantu memperkuat karakter siswa.

Kata kunci:

Cerita Rakyat Bukit Menoreh; Transmisi Nilai Budaya; Kesadaran Sosial; Ilmu Sosial.

1. Introduction

Folklore, as part of cultural heritage, plays a crucial social role in shaping society's values and character. Folklore contains narrative structures that summarize social norms, symbols, and practices, thereby functioning as an "unwritten curriculum" for society, teaching behavioral norms, social responsibility, and the meaning of relationships among citizens. Ethnopedagogical studies and ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) studies show that folklore is effective as a source of contextual and meaningful values when incorporated into formal education (Qiu, 2023), (Yang et al., 2019). Folklore such as Bukit Menoreh is not merely entertainment, but also a means of transmitting cultural, moral, and spiritual values that reflect the local wisdom of the Javanese people. Studies of Javanese folklore have shown that local legends contain moral values (e.g., courage, honesty), spiritual practices (rituals, human relations with nature), and Javanese social norms such as cooperation and manners. All these elements are evident in the historical narratives and legends of the Menoreh region (Wdawati et al., 2022). Source: Local narratives and regional cultural studies document these values as part of Menoreh's cultural heritage. In the context of education, particularly in Social Studies (IPS) learning, folklore can serve as a context-rich resource that fosters social awareness and strengthens students' cultural identity. Empirical evidence from educational research shows that folklore-based storytelling activities enhance children's empathy and emotional engagement, thereby facilitating understanding of social norms and values, two central objectives of IPS learning. Emotional interaction with story characters facilitates the internalization of values (e.g., solidarity, cooperation), (Sekaringsih et al., 2024). However, the tide of globalization and digitalization has shifted the attention of the younger generation from local values to instant popular culture, necessitating revitalization efforts to keep the cultural values did have in folklore alive and relevant in the world of education (Kazangapova et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). While existing research has discussed the cultural significance of folklore

in general, there is limited empirical evidence on how the specific folklore of Bukit Menoreh can be utilized as a pedagogical resource in Social Studies education. Furthermore, studies rarely examine the potential of such local narratives to foster students' social awareness and character development.

The main issue this study addresses is how the cultural values embedded in Bukit Menoreh folklore can be effectively transmitted through social studies learning to foster students' social awareness. This question is crucial because modern education often emphasizes cognitive aspects over those derived from local culture, including affective and social aspects. Thus, this study seeks to answer how folklore revitalization strategies can be an innovative approach that not only preserves cultural heritage but also shapes the social character of students who are sensitive to the values of togetherness, solidarity, and social responsibility. This focus is essential because contemporary education often prioritizes cognitive achievement over affective and social dimensions rooted in local culture. Therefore, this study aims to identify revitalization strategies for folklore that not only preserve cultural heritage but also help shape students' social character, particularly their sense of togetherness, solidarity, and social responsibility.

Several studies indicate that integrating local culture into social studies learning remains limited and unsystematic. According to Supriatna (2016), social studies learning in schools tends to be oriented toward memorization and has not developed social awareness grounded in the local context. Studies show that ethnopedagogy functions as an educational approach that integrates local cultural values into the learning process to shape character, strengthen multicultural national identity, and involve the community in education. This aligns with research by Antika et al. (2024), which shows that folklore has great potential to strengthen character education by introducing cultural values. Integrating folklore and character education can produce a holistic educational experience. This aligns with the study (Farhin & Pratama, 2025) that the folk tales of Rawa Pening have strong potential to instill character values in elementary school students, such as responsibility, empathy, and humility, which can be internalized through classroom learning activities. In addition, the study by Firmansyah et al. (2025) found that local wisdom can foster social empathy and multicultural awareness. The pedagogical value of local wisdom in fostering critical thinking, cultural awareness, and identity-based meaning formation. Local wisdom-based learning is a powerful approach to revitalizing history education. Meanwhile, Niman E. M. (2025) has stated that the use of folklore in learning can have students' emotional engagement and social understanding. In this context, the use of Bukit Menoreh folklore as a source for social studies learning is relevant to address the need for more meaningful, contextual learning.

This research is significant in strengthening the culturally responsive education paradigm, which aligns with the objectives of social studies learning: to shape socially aware and character-building citizens. As stated, education grounded in local cultural values can shape students' understanding of diversity and social justice. This study also expands ethnopedagogical studies by examining folklore as an innovative learning medium that combines cognitive, affective, and social aspects. Furthermore, this research contributes to the development of a culture-based learning model adaptable across Indonesia's diverse multicultural educational contexts. Through an ethnopedagogical approach that integrates local wisdom values into the learning process, there is strategic potential to shape students' character and cultural identity (Khong et al., 2025; Rengganis et al., 2023).

This study offers a solution by revitalizing Bukit Menoreh folklore as a source of social studies learning, integrating cultural values, and fostering social awareness through an ethnopedagogical approach. Revitalization is achieved by adapting the values present in the stories into contextual learning activities, such as reflective discussions, social projects, and case studies grounded in local culture. Thus, folklore is not only taught as traditional literary texts but also interpreted as a living and applicable source of social values in students' lives. This approach is expected to strengthen students' social character, broaden intercultural empathy, and enhance awareness of the importance of cultural preservation in modern social life.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative, interpretive approach to understand the meaning and value of Bukit Menoreh folklore as a medium for cultural transmission and the formation of social awareness in the context of social studies learning. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the moral, social, and spiritual values represented in folk tales as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of the relevance of folklore in learning. This study design uses descriptive case studies. Case studies were chosen to analyze in depth how the cultural values in the Bukit Menoreh stories were revitalized and integrated into social studies learning in junior high schools in the Kulon Progo region, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Through this design, researchers could explore the context, process, and social dynamics surrounding the application of folklore as a source of contextual learning.

2.2 Population and Sample

The study population included all social studies teachers and students at junior high schools in the Bukit Menoreh area. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were considered to have a deep understanding of local culture and direct experience in teaching or learning social studies with a culture-based approach. The study population included all social studies teachers and students at junior high schools in the Bukit Menoreh area. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were considered to have a deep understanding of local culture and direct experience in teaching or learning social studies with a culture-based approach. The sample consisted of one principal and two social studies teachers of SMP Negeri Kokap 3 Kulon Progo, located in Plampang II Hamlet, Kalirejo Village, Kokap District, Kulon Progo, one principal and two social studies teachers of SMP Negeri Kokap 1, and one principal and one social studies teacher of SMP Negeri Kokap 2, also located in Kokap District, as well as two local cultural Pictures who understand the oral traditions of Bukit Menoreh, namely Mr. Anom Sucondro (Puppeteer) and Mr. Sigit Prihadi (Head of Hamlet).

2.3 Instruments

The main research instrument was the researcher himself, assisted by semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and learning documents (syllabus, modules, and social studies

teaching materials). Interviews were used to explore teachers' and cultural Pictures' views on the values in folklore, while observations documented their implementation in the learning process.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection stages included: (1) the preparation stage, which involved developing instruments and obtaining permission from the school; (2) the implementation stage, which involved in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and cultural Pictures; and (3) the secondary data collection stage, which involved searching for written documents and literature sources on Bukit Menoreh folklore. The research was conducted at public junior high schools in the districts of Samigaluh and Girimulyo, areas adjacent to the Bukit Menoreh region in Yogyakarta. Data collection was carried out over four months, from March to June 2025, in accordance with the school's learning activity schedule. Before data collection, the researchers prepared interview guidelines and provided brief training for research assistants to ensure consistency in recording and documentation. In addition, the instruments were tested to ensure the clarity of the questions and their cultural appropriateness.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was done using Creswell (2018) qualitative analysis model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Interview and observation data were coded to have main themes such as social, moral, spiritual, and cultural awareness values. The analysis was assisted by NVivo 12 Plus software to map relationships among categories and identify narrative patterns in folklore.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Folklore of Bukit Menoreh

The Menoreh Hills are a range of hills in Central Java. This area has a series of low mountains, dense forests, terraced rice fields, and other landscapes. The Menoreh Hills offer breathtaking natural panoramas and are rich in history and culture. The beauty of the landscape is not only pleasing to the eye, but also bears silent witness to the long struggle of the Javanese people against colonialism. It was in this area that a series of guerrilla wars took place between local rebel forces and the Dutch colonialists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This conflict is widely known as the Java War of 1903–1908, led by a local Picture named Kartosuwiryo. In historical narratives, this event is also referred to as the Menoreh Hills Rebellion, a term that emphasizes the strategic function of the rugged hills in the region as a natural fortress that was difficult for colonial forces to conquer (Peranginangin, 2022).

For the local community, the Bukit Menoreh Rebellion is not merely a historical event but a symbol of resistance against oppression and a tangible manifestation of the spirit of nationalism that has been deeply rooted since the colonial era. During the Indonesian National Revolution (1945–1949), the Menoreh region once again played a crucial role as a base for nationalist forces led by Prince Diponegoro, a charismatic Picture also known as Raden Mas Mustahar. He was a prince and national hero who developed guerrilla military strategies in this region, making Bukit Menoreh the center of resistance against colonialism and a symbol of the Indonesian people's steadfast struggle.

However, the importance of Menoreh lies not only in its historical struggle. This area also records the continuity of Javanese traditions and wisdom that are still preserved today. Folklore, traditional rituals, and local cultural expressions continue to coexist with its natural beauty, making Menoreh a destination that offers a blend of natural grandeur, historical richness, and cultural heritage rich in meaning. Thus, Menoreh can be seen as a "cultural living space" that offers a complete package: natural beauty, cultural attractions, rich symbolism in its myths, and educational historical narratives.

One of the region's strong cultural traditions is wayang, an integral part of Javanese identity. Legendary Pictures such as Semar and Punakawan hold a special place in the collective memory of the Menoreh community. According to local beliefs, they reside at Puncak Suroloyo, one of the highest peaks in the Menoreh Hills. This peak is not only a crucial geographical point, but is also considered a sacred space where gods reside, including Bathara Guru and Bathara Ismaya, better known as Ki Semar or Bodronoyo, along with the three other Punakawan: Petruk, Bagong, and Gareng (Bahri et al., 2023; Wicaksono et al., 2023)

In Javanese tradition, Ki Semar is depicted as a deity in human form, a member of the sudra caste. His simple appearance reflects humility, even though he is descended from the gods. In the puppet story, Semar serves as a loyal servant to the Pandawa family. In this role, he becomes a teacher of wisdom, instilling moral values such as humility, modesty, and a commitment to always being close to the people. The values of wisdom taught by Semar make the Pandawa a symbol of a leader loved by the community.

The story of Semar does not end with its mythological aspect but has deep philosophical relevance to the social life of the Javanese people. Semar's character, full of values such as sincerity, tolerance, freedom, honesty, brotherhood, and wisdom, reflects idealized social ethics. These attitudes, both implicit in his teachings and symbolized in his body language and behavior, guide society toward building social harmony amid diversity. This harmony is seen as the basis for creating peace, both in interpersonal relationships and between humans and nature.

Therefore, Semar is not only revered for his divine origins, but also for his down-to-earth wisdom. He has become a symbol of equality and a reminder that greatness is not determined by social status, but by virtue and sincerity in one's actions. In contemporary Javanese society, the values inherited from Semar continue to serve as moral and ethical guidelines. Semar's wisdom is a source of inspiration in facing the dynamics of modern life, which often erodes the values of togetherness and sincerity.

From a cultural perspective, the role of Ki Semar and the Punakawan stories in the Menoreh region shows that local folklore and mythology serve as a medium for transmitting noble values between generations. These stories are not only passed down as entertainment but also as a means of moral and social education. Through simple yet wise characters, the community learns the importance of living in harmony with others and with nature, fostering empathy and maintaining social balance.

These values form the basis of harmony in the Menoreh community and in Javanese culture as a whole.

Thus, the Menoreh Hills are not just a beautiful landscape or a historical site of struggle, but a symbolic space where the natural heritage, spiritual values, and cultural identity of the Javanese people meet. The beauty of the panorama, traces of heroism, and wisdom embedded in stories such as the legends of Ki Semar and Punakawan make Menoreh a living laboratory of " (the wisdom of the hills) for understanding the integration of humans, history, and culture. This heritage continues to inspire efforts to preserve noble values amid changing times.

The above findings are supported by interviews with several social studies teachers, students, and cultural experts who are familiar with the folklore of Menoreh Hill. An interview with a social studies teacher revealed that the historical and cultural narratives of Menoreh Hill have been used as a context for learning. The teacher utilizes geographical proximity and the richness of local stories to enhance students' understanding of history, nationalism, and moral values. The teacher explained that integrating the Menoreh locale has a significant impact on students' interest and engagement in the learning process. She said: "When the material on the national struggle is linked to the events of the 1903-1908 Java War and guerrilla strategies in Menoreh, students become much more enthusiastic because they feel a direct connection to the story." In addition to the historical aspect, the teacher also links the cultural values of Semar and the Punakawan to character learning in the classroom. According to her, "The values of simplicity, harmony, and honesty in the character of Semar are relevant for character education. Many students only understand its philosophical meaning after we link it to cultural locations such as Puncak Suroloyo."

These findings confirm that local wisdom and the concept of place-based learning can enhance the material's relevance and foster students' cultural identity. Student perspectives also indicate that learning based on Menoreh history and culture increases understanding, emotional closeness, and motivation to learn. One student stated: "I just learned that our region played an important role in the struggle against the Dutch. So learning history feels more intimate and not just memorizing." Students also acknowledged that the story of Semar and the Punakawan is not only mythological, but also contains moral values relevant to everyday life: "Semar is simple but wise. So when I learn about honesty and patience, I can immediately relate them to a familiar story." This statement reinforces the findings of teacher interviews that the local context helps foster pride in identity and enhances the internalization of social values.

Meanwhile, interviews with a local cultural expert revealed the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of the Menoreh area, enriching the community's understanding of Javanese cultural identity. The expert emphasized that Menoreh is a living cultural space that unites history, tradition, and philosophical values. He asserted, "Menoreh is not just a natural landscape. It holds memories of struggle and, at the same time, the values of Javanese life. Here, history and culture are never separated." Regarding the role of Semar and the Punakawan (Javanese priests), he explained: "Semar is considered the guardian of balance. The community still uses his teachings about honesty, humility,

and harmony with nature as ethical guidelines." The expert also emphasized the importance of preserving local values amidst changing times: "When the values of cooperation and compassion begin to fade, Semar's teachings serve as a reminder that leadership and virtue are not measured by status, but by sincerity."

These findings confirm that local cultural values have a transgenerational function that remains relevant in education and social life. Triangulation was conducted through three sources: a social studies teacher, students, and an expert.

Table 1. Triangulation was Carried Out through Social Studies Teachers, Students, and Cultural Experts

Source	Information Focus	Triangulative Description
Social Studies Teacher	Learning from the history of Menoreh and the values of Punakawan	Reinforces that locality enriches students' understanding
Students	Learning experiences and the meaning of locality	Confirming the effectiveness of the contextual approach
Culturalists	Philosophical and cultural dimensions of Semar and Menoreh	Deepen understanding of cultural values and context

Research source, 2025

Based on Table 1, the triangulation results show consistency: 1) Menoreh as a historical-cultural space has great potential as a source of social studies learning; 2) Local values such as simplicity, honesty, and harmony are proven to be still relevant and effective for internalizing character values; 3) A contextual approach based on local wisdom increases emotional closeness, pride, and students' cultural identity.

3.2 Cultural Values in Bukit Menoreh

A thematic analysis of interview data, classroom observations, and learning documents shows that the folklore of Bukit Menoreh contains several explicit and implicit cultural values, including cooperation, solidarity, social responsibility, manners, and the relationship between humans and nature, that have the potential to be internalized through contextual social studies learning practices. These findings are consistent with studies showing that folktales contain character values and can have students' empathy and emotional involvement when used pedagogically (Nurhamid, 2021; Uge et al., 2019).

Table 2. Cultural Values Commonly Held in Bukit Menoreh Folklore

Cultural Values	Relevance in Menoreh Folklore
Gotong-royong / social cooperation	In Menoreh, local narratives depicting village communities working together to face nature or enemies can be mapped as manifestations of the explicit value of cooperation in local folklore.
Solidarity and social responsibility	Menoreh folklore that features community or traditional leaders who make sacrifices, defend the group, and protect nature can be analyzed as a form of solidarity/social responsibility.
Etiquette / social norms / interpersonal ethics	In the context of Menoreh, folklore that includes customs, rituals, and symbols of relationships between community members, such as respect for

Human relationship with nature / environmental wisdom

or adherence to customs, can be studied as values of manners and social norms.

The Menoreh hills, as a natural landscape that is strong in folklore stories linking humans with nature, trees, mountains, and rivers, have the potential to contain values of environmental wisdom: respecting nature, maintaining balance, and understanding the power of nature.

Empathy, emotional involvement, and moral character

When Menoreh folklore is brought into the classroom (in contextual social studies), there is great potential to foster students' empathy for local communities, the environment, and the value of togetherness. These moral-affective values are crucial in cultural internalization.

Research source, 2025

Based on the Table 2, thematically, five categories of values stand out from Menoreh hill folklore, namely: (1) mutual assistance and collective work; (2) solidarity among citizens and empathy; (3) social responsibility, especially towards vulnerable groups; (4) manners and behavioral norms; and (5) human-nature relationships that emphasize balance and ecological responsibility. Interviews with traditional leaders and teachers reinforce that these values are not only preserved in oral texts but are also reproduced through ritual practices, music, and customs that make them a sensory and emotional experience, not just an abstraction. Classroom observations show that when teachers use local stories as a starting point for discussion, students engage more quickly in moral conversations and show higher emotional involvement than when the material is presented textually/abstractly. One of the dominant themes in the Bukit Menoreh narrative is cooperation, with stories featuring characters or communities working together to overcome common problems. When this value is raised in learning activities (e.g., community service projects or reflective discussions), students demonstrate a practical understanding of collaboration and the social consequences of collective action. These results align with studies that find that folktales are effective at reinforcing values of togetherness and social skills when integrated into character learning (Sakti et al., 2024).

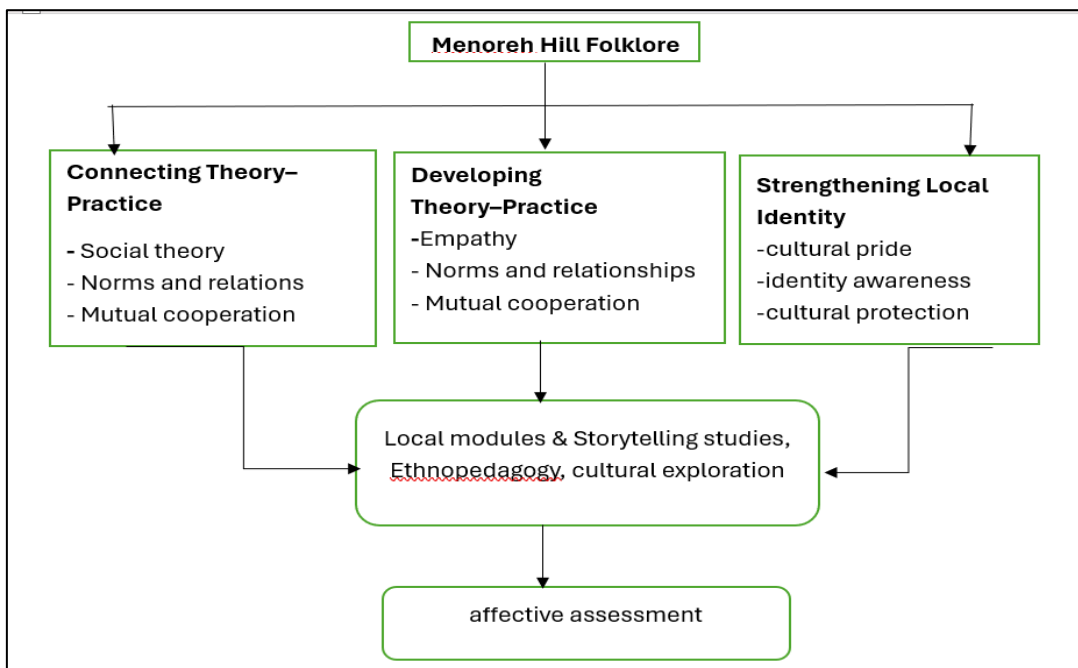
The narrative storytelling of Bukit Menoreh facilitates children's emotional experiences by positioning them in relation to the story's characters, thereby fostering empathy and understanding of different social situations. Field data show that students have engaged in moral discussions and reflections after storytelling sessions; they can relate conflicts in stories to social issues in their environment (e.g., cooperation among citizens and the resolution of local conflicts). Empirical findings support that folklore-based storytelling has students' empathetic behavior and social awareness (Putri et al., 2024b).

The local narratives of Bukit Menoreh contain elements of spirituality that emphasize harmony between humans and nature, such as respect for sacred spaces and ritual practices. When teachers open up space for reflection on these symbolic meanings, students demonstrate an understanding of environmental values and ecological responsibility as part of their cultural identity. This reinforces ethnopedagogical findings that folklore can be a means of instilling spiritual values and environmental ethics in (Adwiah et al., 2023; Ramadhani et al., 2024).

3.3 Transmission of Cultural Values to Build Social Awareness in Social Studies Learning

This study suggests that Menoreh Hill folktales can be optimized as a source of local case studies in the social studies curriculum with three main functions: (a) connecting social theory

concepts with community practices; (b) developing affective competencies such as empathy and social responsibility; and (c) strengthening students' local cultural identity. To achieve this, teacher training in pedagogical storytelling techniques, the development of value-based modules, and structured affective assessment are required. These recommendations are supported by literature reviews, including systematic reviews and ethnopedagogy, which emphasize the importance of teacher capacity and contextual teaching materials. In social studies learning, one challenge is to bridge the gap between abstract concepts (such as social structure, community relations, solidarity, and social responsibility) and students' real experiences in their surroundings. The folklore of Bukit Menoreh has the potential to serve as that bridge. These findings are shown in the chart titled "Menoreh Folklore as a Learning Resource."



Picture 1. The Chart "Menoreh Folklore as a Learning Resource, Research source, 2025

Picture 1, regarding the "Menoreh Folklore as a Learning Resource" chart, explains how the Menoreh Hills folklore serves as a contextual learning resource in social studies learning. Field findings indicate that folklore not only serves as supplementary material but also functions as a strategic tool for bridging social theory, building affective competencies, and strengthening students' local cultural identities. Menoreh Hills folklore can help students understand abstract social studies concepts, such as solidarity, social structure, and social responsibility, through examples close to their lives. This is in line with the statement of a social studies teacher: "The children more quickly understand the concept of cooperation when I tell the story of the Menoreh residents who worked together to protect the village from threats. The theory feels real to them." (Informant G1, Junior High School Social Studies Teacher)

The main strategies used in learning are a) Local case studies, namely, analyzing Menoreh stories and events as examples of the application of social theory. b) Community projects, such as

cooperation activities, village observations, or social actions based on the values in the stories. A community leader confirmed this finding: "Folk stories are not just fairy tales. In Menoreh, many of the life values are actually practiced by residents. If students learn from this, they will see for themselves the relationship between theory and reality." (Informant TM2, Community Leader). Meanwhile, the development of affective competencies such as empathy, caring, and responsibility is a strength of folklore. Teachers generally believe that the characters and conflicts in Menoreh stories provide students with space for moral reflection. One teacher said, "When students play characters who must choose between personal interests and the common good, they become more sensitive." Some even say, "It turns out it's hard to be a good person." (Informant G3, Arts & Language Teacher). Affective practices in social studies learning in the classroom include pedagogical storytelling, ethnopedagogy, cultural exploration, and reflection on local culture. One student also emphasized the emotional impact of story-based learning: "When it's told directly, I can better imagine the characters' feelings. It feels like I'm part of the story." (Informant S2, Grade VIII Student). This finding suggests that internalization of values is stronger when students not only read but also engage emotionally.

Menoreh folklore is an important medium for building local pride and cultural awareness. Through local cultural exploration, field trips, and cultural mapping, students learn to recognize their own cultural heritage. One student said: "I only learned the story of the origins of Menoreh Hill from activities at school. It turns out that the place I see every day has a lot of history." (Informant S5, Student). The social studies teacher also acknowledged the benefits of local identity in increasing learning motivation: "Once local stories are included in the lesson, the children become more engaged." They are proud because they are learning about their own culture." (Informant G2). Activities such as field trips to cultural sites and mapping local cultural elements help students understand the relationship between space, society, and identity.

The success of integrating Menoreh folklore depends heavily on: a. Teacher training: pedagogical storytelling & ethnopedagogy. Teachers require specific skills to manage stories as a learning medium. One teacher admitted: "We need training. Storytelling isn't just about reading stories; the technique must be precise so that the moral message is conveyed." (Informant G4). b. Development of cultural value-based modules. Folklore-based modules enable learning to occur systematically and structured manner. Teachers believe that affective aspects must be clearly measured.

One teacher stated: "The difficult part is assessing attitudes. With folklore-based modules, the instruments for observing them are clearer." (Informant G1)

Integrating Menoreh folklore into social studies instruction makes learning more meaningful because the subject matter connects to local social practices. Values are internalized through affective and reflective activities, strengthening students' local identities and fostering a sense of belonging and cultural relevance. A principal emphasized this crucial point: "If social studies incorporates Menoreh, students not only learn knowledge but also become part of their own community." (Informant KS1).

These findings suggest that local folktales serve not only as supplementary narratives but also as ethnopedagogical media that enrich cultural learning, strengthen identity, and enhance relevance. This study further highlights the need for teacher training in pedagogical storytelling, the development of values-oriented learning modules, and structured affective assessments. Overall, integrating Menoreh folktales into social studies provides a meaningful learning experience rooted in identity.

Through local stories that contain social conflicts, traditional norms, and human-nature relationships, students can see how theories such as cooperation, solidarity, and social responsibility apply in real community life. The integration of cultural values from folklore into education enhances student learning, cultural awareness, and moral development (Sawita, N., Nazurty, N., & Sulistiyo, 2024). Thus, utilizing folklore in social studies learning is not just a matter of "adding stories" but of making the local context an arena for testing and understanding social concepts. Learning modules that highlight local stories, followed by discussions and community projects (e.g., mutual assistance activities based on existing stories), will strengthen students' understanding that social concepts are not just theories on the blackboard but are alive in their communities.

Affective competencies in social studies learning, such as empathy, social responsibility, and caring for others and the environment, often receive attention but are difficult to measure and internalize systematically. Folklore, with its narratives of characters, social conflicts, and inherent values, can be an effective medium for internalizing affective competencies. For example, the study "Implementation of Storytelling Method with Folktales in Instilling Character Values in Children" (2023) shows that the folktale method significantly improves attitudes of honesty, responsibility, and independence in early childhood. (Adwiah et al., 2023). Another study, "Character Education Value from Ten Folktales in Indonesia as Cyber Literature" (2024), found that, among 10 popular folktales, the values of responsibility, hard work, honesty, and love for the country emerged as dominant. (Santosa et al., 2024). In the context of Bukit Menoreh, when students read or discuss local stories featuring characters who work together, protect nature, or fight injustice, they encounter moral scenarios that provoke personal reflection ("what would I do?", "how can I help?"). Supported by practices such as dramatization, role-play, or story-based community projects, affective internalization becomes more concrete. Teachers trained in pedagogical storytelling techniques will be able to facilitate reflective dialogue, elicit students' emotional engagement, and extend empathy towards story characters and real community groups. The literature also emphasizes that storytelling has students' emotional engagement: for example, the study "Internalizing the Cultural Values ... through Sociodrama Method" shows that dramatization deepens students' understanding of other people's feelings (Nugroho, 2019) Therefore, the Bukit Menoreh folklore-based module should include activities designed to stimulate affection and social action, not just cognitive understanding.

Students' local cultural identity is crucial in social studies learning because it provides relevance, a sense of belonging, and an authentic context that has motivation and engagement. Folklore that originates from students' own environment, such as the existence of Bukit Menoreh, will provide opportunities for students to "recognize themselves in stories," take pride in their cultural heritage,

and develop awareness that their culture has value worth teaching and learning. A systematic study by (Sawita, et al., 2024) shows that integrating folklore fosters cultural awareness and identity formation among students. This shows that learning strategies that highlight locality are not only beneficial for moral values but also for developing a positive identity amid the tide of globalization, which sometimes erodes locality. Teachers who understand the ethnopedagogical approach will be able to link social studies material to local heritage, for example, by exploring the story of Bukit Menoreh, conducting cultural mapping, organizing field trips, or undertaking student projects that highlight local wisdom. As a result, students become not only "recipients" of social knowledge but also "explorers" of cultural heritage, which in turn strengthens their social awareness of the local community and how they can contribute to it.

This research shows that the transmission of cultural values through local folklore, such as Bukit Menoreh, in social studies learning has three main functions: connecting social theory with community practice, fostering affective competence, and strengthening local cultural identity. These findings not only address practical needs in the field but also make theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature on cultural education and contextual learning.

3.4 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Menoreh Hills folktales not only serve as supplementary narratives in social studies learning but also function as ethnopedagogical media that enrich cultural understanding, strengthen students' local identity, and increase the relevance of learning. These results also extend previous research's findings. This study expands on both findings by demonstrating that affective values are not only understood cognitively but can also be internalized through specific pedagogical techniques, such as reflective dialogue, role-playing, and community-based projects. Thus, this study reveals a direct relationship between the delivery method and the level of success of value internalization, an aspect that has not been explicitly addressed in previous research.

Overall, this study contributes two novelties. First, it promotes the idea that Menoreh folktales can function as pedagogical tools that connect abstract social concepts with students' socio-community realities, a perspective rarely discussed in previous research. Second, this study confirms that integrating folklore into social studies does not simply reinforce cultural elements but also serves as a learning mechanism that taps into students' local identities, thereby creating a more meaningful, contextual, and relevant learning experience.

The results of the study show that through the integration of Bukit Menoreh folklore as a learning context, local ethical values, such as cooperation (Aryaningsih, Wardana, & Sheikh, 2024) mutual respect between communities, and responsibility for the cultural environment can be "brought to life" in the students' actual actions. This shows that character education grounded in local culture not only fills the gap left by abstract values but also facilitates the internalization of values into real leadership behavior. Previous studies have also shown that character education plays a role in shaping individuals who are honest, responsible, and have integrity (Rahiem, 2021; Putri et al., 2024a) .

Learning that incorporates local folklore creates a context-rich learning situation, so that students are not only given content but also trained to communicate actively and make decisions

based on cultural and socio-environmental values. In other words, the local context of Bukit Menoreh becomes a "praxis arena" where students practice effective communication through listening, dialogue, conveying ideas, and decision-making that considers cultural and social aspects. The literature supports that effective communication strengthens the role of leadership and decision-making in the context of character learning (Diana et al., 2025).

The use of folklore as a social studies learning material creates a "shared cultural space" that facilitates social interaction, mutual respect, and teamwork among students. Values such as kinship, mutual assistance, and social sensitivity, which are the core of Bukit Menoreh folklore, are internalized by students and translated into collaborative group dynamics. Thus, this program is not merely an individual improvement but also builds students' collective social capacity in social studies learning. As the literature states, character education that emphasizes cooperation and effective social communication can create a harmonious and collaborative learning environment (Buchari et al., 2024; Lestari & Riatun, 2024). After describing the three key findings, it can be concluded that character-based learning programs that highlight local folklore have simultaneously strengthened ethical leadership, communication, decision-making, and collaboration among students in the context of social studies learning.

This study supports the finding that character education grounded in local cultural values is effective in improving students' social agency. For example, the study (Plooy et al., 2024) shows that character education integrated with cultural values produces students who are more ethical and responsible (Hasni et al., 2024). Additionally, research by Ansori et al. (2024) has shown that character development through leadership in the school context significantly improves students' leadership aspects (Ansori et al., 2024.). Communication and collaboration are also identified as key competencies that grow through the character learning process, according to the report by Sihan et al. (2025) on the integration of character and communication skills. (Sihan et al., 2025). Furthermore, research by Cahyani & Ahmad (2024) shows that character education has a positive impact on students' social skills, including cooperation and communication (Cahyani & Ahmad, 2024). Thus, the findings of this study are consistent with international research trends that show that character, local culture, and experiential learning strengthen students' social-leadership competencies.

However, some literature indicates that the integration of local cultural values into learning is often limited due to a lack of continuity and teacher guidance (Hasni et al., 2024). In addition, research on "peer mentoring" shows that although collaboration has had, collective decision-making has not consistently translated into social action outside the classroom (Suswandari et al., 2024). Therefore, this study proposes that the effectiveness of folklore-based character learning will be higher when complemented by a mechanism of community reflection and follow-up grounded in the Bukit Menoreh community. Thus, the program does not stop at classroom activities but continues with student participation in sustainable local socio-cultural projects, so that the transmitted values are truly tested and influence the community. This shows that program design needs to be complemented with "field experience" and community involvement to maximize its impact.

The study shows that integrating Bukit Menoreh folklore into character-based Social Studies learning effectively strengthens students' social awareness. This addresses the identified gap regarding the weak integration of local cultural values. Three key outcomes emerged. First, students

demonstrated stronger ethical leadership by internalizing values such as cooperation, respect, and responsibility, supporting theories that local culture-based character education reinforces integrity and ethical behavior. Second, students' communication and decision-making improved as folklore created a context-rich learning environment that encouraged culturally grounded dialogue, aligning with theories on communication as a core component of leadership development. Third, collaboration skills increased as folklore provided a shared cultural space that fostered teamwork and social sensitivity, consistent with literature emphasizing cooperation in character education. Together, these findings affirm that local-culture pedagogy enhances students' roles as social agents and bridges the theory-practice gap in Social Studies.

The study has two main limitations. The sustained implementation of local culture-based learning depends on teacher consistency and institutional support. Additionally, the research did not assess whether improved collaboration and decision-making extended beyond classroom practice into real community action. Future work should involve community-based projects and longitudinal follow-ups to evaluate deeper and lasting impacts, as well as stronger partnerships with local institutions to enhance the effectiveness of folklore-based character education.

4. Conclusion

This study successfully achieved its objective of examining how Bukit Menoreh folklore can be integrated into character-based Social Studies learning to strengthen students' social awareness. The findings demonstrate that embedding local cultural values into instructional activities effectively enhances students' ethical leadership, communication, decision-making, and collaborative skills. These results confirm that the revitalization of folklore functions not only as cultural preservation but also as a pedagogical mechanism for transmitting social and ethical values in meaningful ways. The study's key contribution lies in its integration of three essential components: folklore-based value foundations, character-based learning strategies, and socio-cultural value transmission, showing that this design facilitates deep value internalization and promotes socially aware and socially responsible learners.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited by its small participant pool and its focus on a single cultural context. Future research should extend this model to more diverse educational settings, employ longitudinal approaches to capture long-term learning outcomes, and incorporate community-based socio-cultural projects to assess the real-world transfer of values into students' daily practices. Such expansions would strengthen the applicability and generalizability of folklore-based character learning within broader Social Studies education.

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