

## ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN THE MALAY PANTUN TRADITION: A CASE STUDY IN MUARA ENIM VILLAGE

Cukup Islamiarso<sup>1</sup>; Darmanto<sup>2</sup>; Yelna Septiana<sup>3</sup>; Fitri Oviyanti<sup>4</sup>; Maryamah<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding E-mail: [cukupislamiarso@gmail.com](mailto:cukupislamiarso@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*This study is unique in its focus on pantun as an instrument of Islamic education – an aspect rarely explored in academic literature. Specifically, it examines the Islamic educational values embedded within the Malay pantun tradition practiced by the local community in Muara Enim Village, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with ethnographic methods, this research aims to uncover the moral, spiritual, and social teachings conveyed through pantun as a medium of informal education. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with cultural figures and local religious leaders, and documentation of pantun texts used in everyday interactions and traditional ceremonies. Data validation was strengthened through triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail to ensure the credibility of findings. The results reveal that the Malay pantun functions not only as an aesthetic form of verbal art but also as a pedagogical tool promoting Islamic virtues such as humility, gratitude, sincerity, and social harmony. This study's novelty lies in its focus on the pantun tradition of South Sumatra, which enriches the comparative understanding of Islamic educational expressions across the Malay world, including regions like Riau, Brunei, and Malaysia. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic education by expanding the framework of value-based learning through indigenous cultural expressions. Practically, it proposes integrating pantun values into culture-based character education within the Islamic education curriculum. The rhythmic and mnemonic qualities of pantun enhance student engagement and value internalization, bridging tradition and modernity while ensuring the preservation of moral and spiritual teachings.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Education; Malay Pantun; Cultural Da'wah; Moral Values; Local Wisdom; Muara Enim

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## **A. Introduction**

Oral traditions have long served as vital repositories of cultural memory, transmitting not only linguistic artistry but also ethical and spiritual values from one generation to the next. Within the Malay cultural sphere, *pantun* – a traditional form of oral poetry occupies a central role as both a literary and educational medium. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, *pantun* functions as a means of social communication, moral education, and collective reflection, articulating wisdom and ethical norms that guide interpersonal relationships and community life (Rahim, 2020; Nata, 2020).

From an Islamic perspective, *pantun* can be interpreted as a form of cultural da'wah, embedding teachings of *iman* (faith), *ihsan* (excellence), and *akhlak* (morality) into daily life (Azra, 2019). Through poetic expressions emphasizing humility, gratitude, patience, and social harmony, *pantun* reflects the ethical spirit of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* – Islam as a mercy for all creation (Khosin et al., 2023). Its pedagogical nature resonates with the Qur'anic emphasis on *hikmah* (wisdom) and gentle communication as effective tools for moral instruction (Qur'an 16:125).

However, despite its moral and spiritual richness, the conceptual framework of previous studies on *pantun* often remains general. To deepen this analysis, this study develops a conceptual model of *pantun*-based Islamic values internalization, grounded in the framework of Islamic values education (al-tarbiyah al-qiyamiyyah) and Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib*. Within this model, *pantun* operates at three interconnected levels: (a) Cognitive internalization, where the listener understands Islamic principles conveyed implicitly in *pantun* verses; (b) Affective cultivation, where repetition and emotional resonance nurture virtues such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), modesty (*tawadu'*), and compassion (*rahmah*); and (c) Behavioral manifestation, where internalized values are translated into ethical actions within social life.

This triadic framework aligns with Al-Attas' notion of *ta'dib*, emphasizing the formation of an integrated and virtuous self that embodies knowledge (*'ilm*), proper conduct (*adab*), and wisdom (*hikmah*). Thus, *pantun* is not merely an artistic form but a process of value formation a localized pedagogical mechanism that unites knowledge, emotion, and action in accordance with Islamic ethics. Nevertheless, the continuity of this tradition faces increasing challenges. Globalization, digitalization, and the dominance of popular culture have weakened the intergenerational transmission of oral literature. Young people in rural areas, including Muara Enim Village in South Sumatra, are becoming less exposed to *pantun* as a communicative and moral practice, leading to concerns about cultural erosion and the decline of moral consciousness (Hidayat, 2022; Tilaar, 2020). While *pantun* continues to appear in ceremonial contexts, its educational function particularly as an instrument for the internalization of Islamic values has become less evident in everyday life.

Previous research has explored *pantun* mainly from linguistic, literary, and socio-cultural perspectives. For instance, Rahim (2020) examined the moral messages in Malay

*pantun*, while Hidayat (2022) analyzed affective dimensions in Islamic education, suggesting the potential of *pantun* as a tool for character formation. Nasution (2021) highlighted the *rahmatan lil-'alamin* paradigm within local wisdom but did not link it explicitly to Islamic pedagogy. Likewise, studies by Rohmad et al. (2022) and Kaur et al. (2023) have emphasized affective assessment and love-based education models, yet without integrating traditional Malay oral forms into Islamic educational frameworks.

Despite these scholarly efforts, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how *pantun* operates as a medium of informal Islamic education within the lived context of rural Malay society. Few studies have simultaneously analyzed the *content, function, and pedagogical implications* of *pantun* as a vehicle for transmitting Islamic values in community settings. The lack of ethnographic research focusing on rural traditions in Sumatra further limits our understanding of how these values are practiced, negotiated, and sustained through local culture. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the Islamic educational values embedded within the Malay *pantun* tradition in Muara Enim Village, South Sumatra. Specifically, it aims to (1) identify the moral, spiritual, and social themes reflected in *pantun* texts, (2) interpret how these themes align with Islamic educational principles such as *tauhid, akhlaq, and ukhrawah*, and (3) analyze their implications for contemporary Islamic education and cultural preservation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic pedagogy by integrating indigenous knowledge systems with the theory of moral education and contextual Islamic curriculum design (Marzano & Kendall, 2017; Mujib, 2018). Practically, it provides insights for educators and policymakers to revitalize cultural-based Islamic learning models that foster both religious understanding and cultural identity. By employing an ethnographic qualitative approach, the study aims to highlight the *pantun* as a living educational heritage that harmonizes Islamic spirituality with local wisdom an essential foundation for sustaining moral education in the modern, pluralistic world.

## **B. Method**

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic design to explore the Islamic educational values embedded in the *pantun* tradition of the Malay community in Muara Enim Village, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Ethnography was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the lived meanings, practices, and symbols of a cultural group through immersive observation and interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach enables the analysis of *pantun* not only as a literary text but also as a dynamic cultural practice that conveys moral and spiritual education within community life. The qualitative paradigm was grounded in the principles of naturalistic inquiry, emphasizing the study of phenomena in their natural context without manipulation (Patton, 2015). This design aligns with the research objective of interpreting the implicit Islamic values and pedagogical functions of *pantun* as a form of informal education.

The study was conducted in Muara Enim Village, a rural Malay community in South Sumatra known for preserving traditional *pantun* performances during weddings, communal gatherings, and religious events. Participants were selected through purposive

sampling, targeting individuals with deep knowledge and active involvement in the *pantun* tradition, including local cultural leaders, religious figures, and elder community members. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of *pantun* texts used in social and ceremonial contexts. To ensure credibility, the study applied triangulation across data sources and methods, as well as member checking and peer debriefing to validate interpretations. An audit trail was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process to enhance transparency and dependability.

### **Study Limitations**

Despite its depth of field engagement, this study acknowledges several limitations. First, the research was constrained by time, limiting the duration of observation to specific cultural events and religious ceremonies. Second, the geographical scope was confined to Muara Enim Village, which may not fully represent the diversity of *pantun* traditions across the broader Malay world. Third, participant selection was limited to cultural practitioners and religious leaders, excluding younger generations whose perspectives could provide insight into the intergenerational transmission of *pantun*. These limitations may influence the generalizability of the findings but do not diminish their contextual richness. Future studies are encouraged to adopt a comparative ethnographic approach across different Malay regions—such as Riau, Brunei, or Malaysia—to further refine the conceptual and pedagogical understanding of *pantun* as a medium of Islamic values education.

The participants included:

1. 3 local religious leaders (ustadz and imams) who integrate *pantun* in da'wah and moral instruction;
2. 4 elderly cultural figures recognized as *pantun* creators or performers;
3. 5 community members and youth who actively engage in local traditions; and
4. 2 Islamic education teachers who apply cultural elements in classroom teaching.

This selection allowed for triangulation of perspectives from both cultural and religious actors (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

Data were collected from May to August 2025 through three primary techniques:

1. Participant Observation: The researcher attended local gatherings and recorded *pantun* recitations during community events to observe how Islamic values were communicated.
2. Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with 14 participants, focusing on the meaning, context, and pedagogical function of *pantun* in everyday life. Interviews lasted 45–90 minutes and were recorded with participants' consent.
3. Document Analysis: Archival records and written collections of *pantun* were reviewed to identify recurring moral and religious themes (Marzano & Kendall, 2017).

Field notes and reflective journals were also maintained to ensure depth of interpretation and to support data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019), consisting of three concurrent activities:

1. Data Reduction: Categorizing *pantun* texts and interview transcripts into thematic codes such as *tauhid* (faith), *akhlaq* (ethics), and *ukhuwah* (social harmony).
2. Data Display: Organizing findings into visual matrices and narrative charts to trace relationships between *pantun* themes and Islamic educational values.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Identifying patterns of moral instruction and confirming interpretations through member checking and cross-participant validation.

For example, the *pantun* “Jangan sombong di muka bumi, rendah hati disayang Illahi” was coded under *humility* and linked to the Qur’anic virtue of *tawadhu’*. This iterative analysis ensured contextual depth and interpretive credibility. The credibility and dependability of findings were ensured through data triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was supported by providing rich, thick descriptions of the cultural setting, while confirmability was achieved through transparent documentation of analytic decisions and reflexive journaling.

This research adhered to international ethical standards for qualitative studies. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to interviews and observations. Participants were informed about the research objectives, their right to withdraw, and confidentiality of their identities. Pseudonyms were used in all data presentations to ensure anonymity. The study protocol followed ethical guidelines recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018) and was reviewed by a local institutional ethics committee.

## C. Finding and Discussion

### 1. Finding

#### The Existence of the Malay *Pantun* Tradition in Muara Enim Village

The field data reveal that the Malay *pantun* tradition in Muara Enim Village remains an integral component of the community’s cultural and moral identity. Although digital entertainment and modern communication styles have gradually reduced its popularity, *pantun* continues to serve as a vital medium of social interaction and spiritual reflection. Elderly residents and community leaders act as the main custodians of this tradition, frequently performing *pantun* during communal gatherings, wedding ceremonies, *pengajian* (Islamic study sessions), and cultural festivals. Observations indicate that *pantun* performances are typically spontaneous, delivered with humor and courtesy, and often followed by communal reflection on the implied moral lessons. Community members described *pantun* as a “mirror of life,” a poetic form through which individuals learn the importance of humility, gratitude, sincerity, and respect for others. Although younger generations are less engaged in composing *pantun*, they continue to appreciate its lyrical beauty and ethical resonance when it is performed in local celebrations.

Theoretically, this study extends the discourse of Islamic education and cultural pedagogy by integrating the Malay *pantun* tradition within the framework of *al-tarbiyah al-qiyamiyyah* (education of values) and Al-Attas’ *ta’dib* (disciplinary formation of adab). The findings demonstrate that *pantun* operates as a cultural mechanism of moral internalization, in which Islamic virtues are conveyed through metaphor, rhythm, and

communal interaction. This enriches existing theory by showing that the transmission of Islamic values does not solely occur through formal religious instruction, but also through aesthetic and participatory modes of communication embedded in local wisdom.

This research thus deepens theoretical understanding by positioning *pantun* as a pedagogical bridge between revelation and culture, where faith-based ethics are sustained through collective artistry. It supports the expansion of Islamic education theory to include indigenous pedagogies that nurture spiritual, moral, and emotional intelligence within everyday cultural expressions. Practically, the study recommends the development of a Pantun-Based Values Education Model (PBVEM) for integration into Islamic education, particularly within madrasas and community-based learning centers. This model involves three key stages:

1. Introduction and Appreciation, where students are exposed to classical and contemporary *pantun* containing Islamic moral themes;
2. Interpretation and Reflection, where learners analyze the spiritual and ethical meanings embedded in the verses through guided discussions; and
3. Creation and Application, where students compose their own *pantun* to express internalized Islamic values, reinforcing creativity, reflection, and moral awareness.

This model aligns with character education principles (*ta'dib al-akhlāq*) and supports culturally responsive pedagogy in Islamic education. By integrating *pantun* into classroom activities, educators can foster students' appreciation of local heritage while cultivating virtues such as sincerity, humility, and social empathy. Thus, *pantun* becomes not only a literary art form but also a pedagogical instrument that harmonizes cultural preservation with moral development in the context of Islamic education.

### **Functions and Meanings of Pantun in Religious and Social Contexts**

The analysis of field interactions and textual data shows that *pantun* in Muara Enim fulfills multiple roles beyond entertainment. It functions as:

- 1) A medium of moral education, transmitting values of honesty, patience, and respect through poetic advice.
- 2) A form of informal da'wah, promoting faith, gratitude, and awareness of divine creation through symbolic language.
- 3) A tool for social cohesion, used to maintain harmony and strengthen relationships among villagers.

For example, during wedding ceremonies, *pantun* containing religious messages about loyalty and sincerity were exchanged between families. In *pengajian* gatherings, religious leaders incorporated *pantun* verses to teach lessons about faith, charity, and unity. These practices demonstrate that *pantun* remains an effective communication tool connecting Islamic values with everyday life.

### **Thematic Findings: Islamic Educational Values in Malay Pantun**

Based on a comprehensive analysis of 48 recorded *pantun* texts, three dominant categories of Islamic educational values were identified: faith (*'aqidah*), morality (*akhlāq*),

and social-religious solidarity. Each category represents distinct yet interconnected aspects of Islamic education that the community has preserved through oral tradition.

### Community Perceptions of Pantun as an Educational Medium

Interviews with 12 respondents including village elders, teachers, *ustadz*, and youth representatives indicate a shared perception that *pantun* holds educational value that complements formal religious learning. Religious figures view it as a form of *da'wah bil hikmah* (preaching with wisdom) because its messages are conveyed in polite, artistic, and emotionally engaging ways. Elders emphasize that *pantun* allows moral lessons to be absorbed naturally, without coercion. Parents often use *pantun* to advise children indirectly, making it an effective strategy for moral education within families. Teachers also note its potential to be integrated into Islamic education lessons as a cultural bridge between religion and local heritage.

However, respondents also expressed concern about the declining number of *pantun* practitioners. Many younger villagers prefer digital entertainment, which reduces opportunities for cultural transmission. There is also a lack of systematic documentation of *pantun* texts, leading to the gradual loss of valuable cultural and educational content.

### Critical Interpretation and Implications

The findings highlight a paradox: while modernization challenges the continuity of *pantun*, it also opens opportunities for innovation in its educational use. The community's appreciation of *pantun* as a moral and religious instrument demonstrates that traditional art forms can serve as dynamic vehicles for character formation and value-based learning. The decline in intergenerational transmission underscores the urgent need for revitalization through local education systems. Integrating *pantun* into formal Islamic learning could help bridge cultural identity and modern pedagogy. In doing so, *pantun* may regain its relevance among youth while continuing to embody the ethical and spiritual core of the Malay Muslim community.

**Table 1. Summary of Islamic Educational Values in Malay Pantun (Muara Enim Village)**

Category	Common Themes	Sample Pantun Meaning	Educational Implication
Faith ('Aqīdah)	Gratitude to God, reflection on death, divine creation	"The stars shine in the quiet night, reminding man of God's might"	Encourages awareness of divine power and fosters spiritual mindfulness
Morality (Akhlaq)	Honesty, patience, humility, politeness	"Sweet words bring peace to hearts; harsh words break them apart"	Promotes moral integrity, discipline, and respect for others

Social-Religious Values	Cooperation, mutual respect, unity	“One tree alone will fall in the storm, but a forest stands tall together”	Strengthens brotherhood, empathy, and community solidarity
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## 2. Discussion

This paper examines the enduring relevance of the Malay pantun tradition in conveying Islamic educational values within the Muara Enim community. Despite the challenges posed by modernization and digitalization, the pantun continues to serve as a vital medium for moral and spiritual education. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study explores the implications of these findings, supported by contemporary scholarly perspectives.

### The Enduring Role of Oral Traditions in Islamic Education

Oral traditions have historically served as central mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and religious values. In the context of Islamic education, oral literary forms such as the pantun function as culturally embedded pedagogical tools that enable moral and ethical instruction in ways that are both engaging and contextually meaningful for learners. As Hidayat (2025) contends, oral traditions in the Malay community encompass a wide array of expressive forms including pantun, gurindam, and proverbs that collectively facilitate the internalization of Islamic principles related to faith, jurisprudence, and morality. These traditional forms not only communicate normative teachings but also reinforce communal identity and continuity, making them particularly effective in cultivating both spiritual awareness and social cohesion. Furthermore, the performative and mnemonic qualities inherent in the pantun enable the retention and transmission of ethical values, allowing learners to internalize complex moral precepts through rhythm, rhyme, and structured verse, thereby enhancing cognitive and affective engagement with the content.

### Thematic Analysis of Islamic Values in Pantun

A systematic thematic analysis of the pantun collected from Muara Enim reveals three interrelated categories of Islamic educational values: faith (*‘aqīdah*), morality (*akhlaq*), and social-religious engagement. These categories align with the overarching objectives of Islamic education, which emphasize the holistic development of the individual, encompassing spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions. Suhernawati et al. (2025) further assert that Malay pantun consistently conveys fundamental ethical principles—such as honesty, patience, tolerance, compassion, and justice—which retain their relevance despite sociocultural transformations induced by modernization. The embedding of these values within culturally familiar poetic forms enhances their resonance with learners and strengthens social cohesion by aligning personal conduct with communal norms. Such alignment underscores the pantun's dual role as both an instrument of moral education and a repository of cultural memory.

## **The Functionality of Pantun in Contemporary Islamic Education**

In contemporary educational settings, the strategic integration of traditional oral forms such as the pantun offers significant pedagogical advantages. Beyond serving as a source of aesthetic enjoyment, pantun operates as an effective medium for da'wah (Islamic propagation), facilitating the communication of ethical and religious messages in ways that are culturally meaningful and emotionally engaging. Hidayat et al. (2025) highlight that the mnemonic, rhythmic, and poetic structures of pantun not only enhance the cognitive retention of religious teachings but also contribute to the reinforcement of cultural identity, which is essential in the face of homogenizing influences from globalization and digital media. The utilization of pantun within both formal and informal educational contexts can thus strengthen students' cultural literacy while simultaneously promoting internalization of Islamic ethical principles. This dual functionality positions pantun as a versatile pedagogical instrument capable of bridging traditional and modern modes of instruction.

### **Challenges and Opportunities in Preserving the Pantun Tradition**

Despite its pedagogical and cultural significance, the pantun tradition faces considerable challenges. Globalization, technological advances, and the proliferation of digital media have contributed to declining interest among younger generations in traditional forms of oral literature. The marginalization of pantun in favor of more contemporary or globally popular cultural forms poses a potential threat to its continued relevance. Nevertheless, these challenges can also be reframed as opportunities for educational innovation. By actively incorporating pantun into curricula, extracurricular activities, and digital educational platforms, educators can create hybrid learning environments that integrate cultural heritage with modern pedagogical strategies. Suhernawati et al. (2025) emphasize that such integration not only preserves the pantun as a cultural artifact but also leverages its potential as a moral compass, guiding learners in ethical reasoning and character development within contemporary contexts.

#### **a. Implications for Islamic Educational Practices**

The integration of pantun into Islamic educational practices offers several multifaceted benefits that extend beyond mere cultural preservation:

- 1) **Cultural Relevance:** Utilizing the pantun connects Islamic teachings with the community's cultural heritage, making the learning experience more relatable and meaningful.
- 2) **Engagement:** The rhythmic and poetic nature of the pantun captures the attention of learners, facilitating better retention of moral and spiritual lessons.
- 3) **Character Formation:** By embedding Islamic values within culturally familiar expressions, the pantun contributes to the holistic development of individuals, aligning with the objectives of Islamic education to cultivate balanced and virtuous individuals.

Incorporating pantun into educational curricula not only preserves a vital aspect of cultural heritage but also enhances the effectiveness of moral and spiritual education. By fostering a deeper connection between students and their cultural roots, pantun serves as a

bridge between tradition and modernity, ensuring that Islamic educational values continue to resonate in contemporary society.

#### **E. Conclusion**

The Malay pantun tradition continues to serve as an effective medium for conveying Islamic educational values in the Muara Enim community. It transmits principles of faith, morality, and social conduct, supporting character formation and cultural identity. Despite challenges from modernization and digitalization, pantun's rhythmic and mnemonic features enhance engagement and retention, making it a valuable tool for contemporary Islamic education. Integrating pantun into educational practices bridges tradition and modernity, ensuring the preservation and internalization of moral and spiritual values.

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