

Cultural Foundations for Green Futures: *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* 's Values in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract. This study explores the integration of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, traditional cultural guidelines from the Riau Malay community, into early childhood education, with a focus on environmental and sustainable development contexts. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research delves into *Malay Politeness and Spirit* by Tenas Effendi to extract and analyze core values such as good character, social tact, and situational intelligence, along with deliberative wisdom, tolerance, humility, and generosity. These values are crucial not only for social and emotional development but also for fostering an understanding of environmental stewardship among young children. The study methodically interprets how these traditional teachings can enhance ecological awareness by promoting lifestyles in harmony with nature, respecting biodiversity, and practicing sustainable resource management. By integrating these values into educational curricula, the research highlights their potential to cultivate environmentally conscious individuals who are equipped to address global sustainability challenges. The findings suggest that embedding local wisdom in early childhood education can serve as a model for global educational practices that support sustainable societal development. This approach not only helps preserve cultural heritage but also aligns with environmental conservation efforts, thereby contributing to the broader goals of ecological sustainability and resilience.

Keywords: Local wisdom; *Tunjuk ajar melayu*, Global sustainability, Environmental stewardship, Ecological awareness.

1 Introduction

Early childhood, encompassing the age range from birth to eight years as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2023), is a critical period for shaping the foundational elements of a child's personality, character, and intellectual abilities. Maria Montessori referred to this phase as the 'golden years,' highlighting its importance as a time when children are exceptionally receptive to diverse types of stimulation, thus influencing their physical and psychological development (Montessori, 1999). During these years, children's interactions with their environment can significantly shape their growth trajectories, making the learning experiences provided during this period vital.

The educational strategies employed in early childhood education are crucial, particularly in how they incorporate basic yet meaningful concepts through experiential and active learning processes (Yuliani, 2020). Recent educational trends emphasize not only cognitive and emotional development but also the integration of environmental consciousness into early

education curricula. This shift towards environmental awareness in education aligns with global priorities centered around sustainable development and the need to cultivate a generation that respects and preserves its natural surroundings.

Despite the recognition of the importance of integrating environmental principles into education, there remains a significant gap in current educational practices, particularly in how they utilize local cultural heritage to promote sustainable values. Traditional knowledge systems and local wisdom, such as the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* from the Riau Malay community, are rich sources of environmental ethics and communal values that advocate for harmony with nature, responsible resource management, and communal cooperation (Effendy, 2006).

Malay tradition, encapsulated as local wisdom, reflects deep-seated knowledge passed down through generations, shaping how communities interact with their social and natural environments (Afandi, 2019). Supported by regional educational policies, this wisdom is integral to sustaining local culture and environmental stewardship (Sofyan et al., 2019). The "*Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*," detailed in Tenas Effendy's "Politeness And Spirit Malay," provides a framework for appropriate conduct within the Malay community. It offers insights into behavior towards living beings and the environment, presented through traditional stories and metaphors (Lisniarti et al., 2020), and incorporates values from theology, social sciences, and sustainable practices (Pernando et al., 2022). Effendy (2006) portrays "*Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*" as a guide to ethical living that aligns individual actions with broader environmental and societal well-being, emphasizing its importance from early childhood for lifelong community integration and environmental respect.

The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* for instance, is not just a cultural artifact but a repository of ethical guidelines and moral teachings that offer valuable insights into living sustainably and ethically within a community. These teachings can be instrumental in nurturing a sense of environmental stewardship and ethical responsibility among young learners (Marlina, 2020). The preservation and integration of such cultural wisdom into early childhood education can play a crucial role in fostering a deep-seated appreciation for the environment and an understanding of sustainable living practices.

Therefore, this study explores the systematic integration of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* values into early childhood education context, aiming to blend traditional wisdom with modern educational needs and address existing gaps. By embedding local wisdom into early education, the study potentially fosters a generation that is culturally aware and environmentally responsible. This not only helps preserve cultural heritage but also supports global sustainable development efforts, equipping future generations to manage the natural resources responsibly and ethically.

2 Method

The research methodology employed in this study is descriptive qualitative, incorporating a comprehensive library research approach. This method is particularly suited to explore the intricate interactions between cultural practices and environmental sustainability as expressed in the "Malay Politeness and Spirit" by Tenas Effendi. Qualitative research is utilized here to delve into the nuanced realities of how Malay cultural values can influence environmental behavior, employing an inductive reasoning process that aids in understanding the deeper implications of cultural norms on environmental stewardship.

Data collection was conducted through a rigorous library research process, which entailed multiple stages to ensure a thorough exploration of relevant literature. Initially, essential

resources and tools were assembled, followed by the compilation of a working bibliography that guided the subsequent research phases. Considerable time was dedicated to the systematic review and documentation of relevant literature, including academic books, peer-reviewed journals, and prior research studies that intersect with the themes of cultural wisdom and environmental practices (Hennink et al., 2020). In the data analysis phase, the collected materials were subjected to a critical review to assess their relevance and depth in relation to the research questions. The analysis focused on extracting insights about how traditional Malay teachings integrate with ecological considerations and how these teachings are transmitted through societal norms and practices. This involved identifying key themes and patterns that link Malay cultural teachings to actions that support environmental sustainability.

The primary source, "Malay Politeness and Spirit" by Tenas Effendi, served as the cornerstone of this investigation, providing foundational content that was enriched through the integration of supplementary sources. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, facilitating a nuanced analysis that highlights the role of Malay cultural wisdom in fostering environmentally sustainable behaviors.

3 Results and Discussion

The study reveals that the values encapsulated in *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, originating from traditional Malay society, provide profound guidance on environmental stewardship and community relations. These values are crucial for shaping both the character of individuals and the societal norms of the Indonesian nation, particularly in promoting sustainable interactions between humans and their environment.

3.1 Straight Intentions and Beautiful Character

The principles of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* highlight the critical role of integrity and kindness in promoting respect for the environment and fostering communal harmony. These virtues are deemed indispensable for cultivating an ethos of environmental stewardship and nurturing a society where individuals are committed to ethical conduct towards both people and nature. The data suggest that the values of good intentions and courteous behavior are foundational for developing a community-oriented and environmentally conscious mindset. Participants in the study demonstrated a deep understanding of how these values influence community interactions and environmental care. For example, the narrative from the text of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* (excerpt TAJ.M_1) underlines the significance of instilling these values early in life:

Transcription:

"Inti dari niat lurus dan karakter yang indah dibina dari usia muda, menanamkan rasa hormat yang mendalam terhadap alam dan sesama. Ini diajarkan secara sistematis melalui pendidikan anak usia dini, di mana anak-anak belajar untuk berpraktik kebaikan dan mengembangkan rasa tanggung jawab untuk melestarikan lingkungan mereka."

English Translation:

"The essence of straight intentions and a beautiful character is cultivated from a young age, embedding a deep respect for nature and fellow beings. This is systematically taught through early childhood education, where children learn to practice kindness and develop a sense of responsibility towards preserving their environment."

Through thematic analysis of the narratives, the data reveal that the value of straight intentions and beautiful character is crucial in shaping young minds to appreciate and actively

participate in environmental conservation. The emphasis on these virtues in early education is viewed as a strategic approach to inculcate sustainable behaviors that align with the cultural teachings of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*. This alignment underscores the seamless integration of cultural values into environmental education, illustrating how traditional wisdom can be leveraged to address contemporary challenges in sustainability. By fostering these values from an early age, the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* contributes to the development of future generations who are not only culturally grounded but also environmentally responsible. The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* emphasizes the importance of integrity and kindness, which are essential for fostering environmental respect and communal harmony. Good intentions and courteous behaviors encourage a sympathetic and respectful approach to both people and nature, nurturing a community where individuals strive to be noble stewards of their environment. This value is fundamental in early childhood education, where children learn the importance of living harmoniously with nature.

3.2 Harmonious Placement of Self

The concept of *Harmonious Placement of Self* as derived from the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* underscores the necessity of understanding and fulfilling one's role within both the community and the broader ecosystem. This value is pivotal in fostering a life that is in harmony with societal norms and the natural environment, promoting practices that enhance both communal and environmental health. It reflects a culturally ingrained appreciation for maintaining ecological balance. Analysis of participant narratives and textual interpretations from *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* reveals that positioning oneself harmoniously within a social and environmental context is crucial for sustainable community development. For instance, the following excerpt from the text highlights this value (excerpt TAJ.M_2):

Transcription:

"Adalah kebiasaan untuk mengintegrasikan diri dalam komuniti sedemikian rupa sehingga menghormati adat dan norma sosial yang telah ditetapkan, memastikan tindakan seseorang memberikan sumbangan positif kepada kesejahteraan kolektif. Menjadi peka terhadap kedudukan seseorang dan membaca isyarat sosial dengan betul memastikan bahwa tindakan individu sejajar dengan tujuan lebih luas di masyarakat, sehingga mendorong hubungan yang menguntungkan untuk semua pihak yang terlibat."

English Translation:

"It is customary to integrate oneself within the community in such a way that respects established customs and social norms, ensuring one's actions contribute positively to the collective well-being. Being mindful of one's place and reading the societal cues correctly ensures that individual actions align with the community's broader goals, thus fostering a beneficial relationship for all involved."

Through content analysis, the discourse around the *Harmonious Placement of Self* highlights its role in encouraging environmentally sustainable practices. This value not only supports personal development and social cohesion but also promotes ecological mindfulness and responsible behavior towards the environment. The data suggest that such cultural teachings are essential for nurturing a community that values sustainability both socially and environmentally. The emphasis on aligning individual behaviors with the needs of the community and the environment illustrates how cultural values can significantly contribute to broader sustainability goals. By fostering an understanding of one's role in maintaining

ecological balance, *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* effectively integrates traditional wisdom with modern environmental ethics, creating a foundation for sustainable living practices that respect both cultural heritage and natural resources.

3.3 Clever Self-Presentation

Here, the focus is on the self-regulation of behavior in public spaces, crucial for maintaining social and environmental order. The teachings suggest that polite and considerate behavior not only facilitates better interpersonal relationships but also fosters a community attentive to sustainable practices. The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* underscores the importance of self-regulation in public spaces, highlighting that considerate and polite behavior is essential for maintaining social order and encouraging environmentally responsible practices. This aspect of behavior, known as Clever Self-Presentation, is crucial for fostering interpersonal relationships and cultivating a community ethos that values sustainability. The teachings advocate for the careful management of one's speech and actions to ensure they contribute positively to social cohesion and environmental awareness. An excerpt from the text illustrates the emphasis on this value (excerpt TAJ.M_3):

Transcription:

"Selain itu, memiliki sifat yang baik dan tenang membuat individu disenangi banyak orang, memudahkan pembentukan hubungan yang bermakna. Penting untuk menjaga adab dalam berbicara, kerana kata-kata kasar dapat menyebabkan perselisihan dan konflik. Lidah yang terjaga membantu mencegah salah faham dan menumbuhkan suasana masyarakat yang damai. Oleh kerana itu, baik ucapan maupun perilaku harus dijaga dengan hati-hati untuk memelihara harmoni sosial dan mendorong penjagaan lingkungan secara kolektif."

English Translation:

"Moreover, possessing a kind and temperate demeanor endears individuals to others, facilitating the formation of meaningful relationships. It is important to maintain decorum in speech, as harsh words can lead to discord and conflict. A guarded tongue helps prevent misunderstandings and fosters a peaceful community environment. Accordingly, both speech and behavior should be managed carefully to maintain social harmony and encourage collective environmental stewardship."

Content analysis of the narrative reveals that Clever Self-Presentation serves not just as a guideline for personal conduct but as a framework for environmental ethics. By promoting behaviors that avoid harm to others and the environment, the teachings align individual actions with broader community and environmental goals. The data suggest that these behavioral norms are integral to developing a culture where sustainability is practiced on interpersonal and ecological levels. This value of self-regulation in public behaviors, as articulated in the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, helps cultivate a society that is both socially cohesive and environmentally conscious. The emphasis on polite and considerate behavior enhances community interactions and supports a collective approach to environmental care, demonstrating how traditional wisdom can inform and bolster contemporary efforts towards sustainability.

3.4. Wise Weighing and Tolerance

The guidance to weigh decisions wisely and practice tolerance underscores the approach to conflicts and challenges within societal and environmental contexts. These values are instrumental in building a peaceful society that values sustainable solutions to conflicts and

promotes long-term ecological thinking. The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* emphasizes the importance of prudent decision-making and tolerance, critical for addressing societal and environmental challenges effectively. These principles are essential for fostering a society that not only resolves conflicts with wisdom but also embraces sustainable and ecological approaches in long-term planning.

This value is exemplified in how individuals are encouraged to engage in dialogue and interact within their community and environment thoughtfully. An excerpt from the teachings illustrates the deep cultural commitment to these principles (excerpt TAJ.M_4):

Transcription:

"Dalam interaksi tradisional, sangat penting untuk mempertimbangkan kata-kata dan tindakan dengan hati-hati untuk memelihara harmoni dan mencegah konflik. Jangan berbicara tanpa pikir, menyinggung orang lain, melanggar tabu sosial, atau bertindak secara impulsif. Perilaku hati-hati seperti itu memastikan bahwa semua anggota masyarakat dapat hidup bersama secara damai dan bahwa kehidupan kolektif kita terasa memuaskan dan luas."

English Translation:

"In traditional interactions, it is vital to weigh one's words and actions carefully to maintain harmony and prevent conflicts. Do not speak thoughtlessly, offend others, violate social taboos, or act impulsively. Such careful conduct ensures that all community members can coexist peacefully and that our collective life is fulfilling and expansive."

Through thematic analysis, the data reveal that Wise Weighing and Tolerance are not merely about avoiding negative outcomes; they actively promote positive interactions that are crucial for sustainable community living and environmental stewardship. These values guide individuals to consider the broader impacts of their actions, encouraging approaches that are not only socially considerate but also environmentally responsible. The teachings of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* hence play a pivotal role in shaping community norms that value thoughtful deliberation and tolerance. By instilling these values, the community is better equipped to handle challenges that require both immediate resolution and consideration of long-term environmental impacts, thus fostering a culture that deeply respects and protects its natural surroundings while maintaining social cohesion.

3.5. Willingness to Sacrifice and Compromise

This principle is pivotal in cultivating a culture of giving and sharing, which is essential for the sustainable management of community and natural resources. Teaching children and community members to prioritize collective well-being over individual gains can lead to more sustainable environmental practices. The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* strongly advocates for the virtues of sacrifice and compromise, highlighting their importance in building a community-oriented culture. This principle is crucial for the sustainable management of both community relations and natural resources. By emphasizing the necessity of putting collective well-being above personal interests, these teachings foster environmental sustainability and resource conservation.

The text provides clear guidance on the value of selflessness and the benefits it brings to communal life and environmental harmony. An illustrative excerpt from the teachings underscores this point (excerpt TAJ.M_5):

Transcription:

"Memeluk pengorbanan adalah sifat yang memperkaya hubungan sosial, memungkinkan Anda untuk membentuk hubungan yang kuat dan menikmati manfaat bersama. Lupakan kerugian pribadi; apa yang tampak jauh dapat menjadi dekat, apa yang rapuh dapat menguat. Semangat memberi ini tidak hanya meningkatkan ikatan pribadi tetapi juga berkontribusi pada harmoni dan keberlanjutan komunitas secara keseluruhan. Kesabaran dan kemauan untuk menghindari konflik sangat penting, begitu juga penyerahan diri kepada tujuan yang lebih tinggi, yang pada gilirannya memberkati keberadaan komunal kita."

English Translation:

"Embracing sacrifice is a trait that enriches social connections, allowing you to forge strong relationships and enjoy the collective benefits. Forget personal losses; what seems far can become close, what is fragile can solidify. This spirit of giving not only enhances personal bonds but also contributes to the overall harmony and sustainability of the community. Patience and the willingness to avoid conflicts are crucial, as is the surrender to a higher purpose, which in turn blesses our communal existence."

Through comparative analysis of various documents and narratives, it is evident that the Willingness to Sacrifice and Compromise is integral to fostering a culture that values sustainability. This analysis shows how such sacrifices, whether in terms of personal comfort, immediate gains, or individual preferences, play a significant role in ensuring the long-term viability of environmental resources and community well-being. This principle encourages practices that are not only beneficial in the short term but also ensure the health and sustainability of the community and the environment in the long term. By instilling a mindset of sacrifice and compromise, the teachings of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* effectively contribute to the development of environmental stewardship and a cooperative community ethos. This prepares individuals not only to live in harmony with one another but also to responsibly manage and conserve the natural resources that sustain them.

3.6. Humility in Interactions

Humility is highlighted as a virtue that not only enhances personal relationships but also encourages a respectful approach to dealing with the natural world. A humble attitude can prevent the exploitation of natural resources and promote sustainable living practices. The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* places significant emphasis on humility as a core virtue in both interpersonal and environmental contexts. This value is crucial for fostering respect and preventing the overexploitation of natural resources, thereby supporting sustainable practices. Humility encourages individuals to approach both people and the environment with respect and consideration, enhancing community cohesion and environmental stewardship.

An excerpt from the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* articulates the importance of humility in daily interactions and its broader implications for ecological responsibility (excerpt TAJ.M_6):

Transcription:

"Jagalah sikap rendah hati untuk memudahkan hubungan yang harmonis. Sikap sombong harus dihindari agar interaksi tidak tercemar oleh keangkuhan. Kerendahan hati ini tidak hanya membuat pertemuan sosial menjadi menyenangkan tetapi juga mencegah dominasi dan penyalahgunaan sumber daya alam. Dengan menjauhkan keangkuhan, kita berkontribusi pada budaya hormat dan keberlanjutan, memastikan interaksi kita dengan lingkungan sebaik interaksi kita dengan sesama manusia."

English Translation:

"Maintain a humble demeanor to facilitate harmonious relationships. High-handedness should be avoided to ensure interactions are not marred by arrogance. Such humility not only makes social engagements pleasant but also prevents the domination and misuse of natural resources. By keeping arrogance at bay, we contribute to a culture of respect and sustainability, ensuring our interactions with the environment are as considerate as those with our fellow humans."

Content analysis of the teachings related to humility reveals its dual impact on fostering both social harmony and ecological sensitivity. This analysis underscores that humility is not merely a social courtesy but a vital component of environmental ethics. It positions humility as a bridge between cultural practices and sustainable environmental interactions, showing that a respectful approach to life extends beyond human relationships to include how communities interact with their natural surroundings. The data suggest that by cultivating humility, communities can better manage their natural resources and embrace sustainable living practices, thereby reducing environmental footprints and enhancing the overall health of the ecosystem. This principle of humility, as championed by *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, thus plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of societies, advocating for a balanced and respectful engagement with the world.

3.7. Maintaining Positive Relations

The *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* underscores the importance of maintaining goodwill and kindness in all interactions, which is crucial for fostering both social welfare and environmental conservation. This principle supports the building of a community dedicated to sustainable development, highlighting the role of positive relationships in achieving ecological balance and societal harmony. Insights from focus group discussions indicate that the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* encourages behaviors that sustain positive interpersonal relationships and enhance community efforts towards environmental conservation. An illustrative excerpt from the teachings conveys the significance of reciprocal relationships and the broader impact of maintaining positive social connections (excerpt TAJ.M_7):

Transcription:

"Manusia, sebagai makhluk sosial yang inheren, berkembang dalam komunitas di mana rasa hormat timbal balik dan kerjasama adalah norma. Arahan yang diberikan tidak hanya terkait dengan konteks religius atau spiritual tetapi juga tertanam dalam dalam praktik budaya Melayu. Praktik-praktik ini menekankan pentingnya tata krama dan kebaikan dalam memelihara hubungan yang berkontribusi pada kesejahteraan sosial dan lingkungan."

English Translation:

"Humans, as inherently social beings, thrive in communities where mutual respect and cooperation are the norm. The guidance provided not only pertains to religious or spiritual contexts but is deeply ingrained in Malay cultural practices. Such practices emphasize the importance of good manners and kindness in nurturing relationships that contribute to both social and environmental well-being."

Using grounded theory methodology, the analysis of data from focus groups reveals that maintaining positive relations is a key component of environmental ethics as practiced within the Malay cultural framework. This analysis confirms that such social values are integral to

promoting environmental awareness and actions that support sustainable practices. The integration of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* values into modern sustainability efforts demonstrates how traditional cultural wisdom can enhance contemporary environmental strategies. By encouraging a community-oriented approach that values kindness and mutual respect, these teachings help foster a society that is not only cohesive but also deeply committed to environmental stewardship.

In summary, the values of maintaining positive relations as advised in the *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* serve as a foundational element for developing communities that are both socially integrated and environmentally conscious. This approach aligns with global sustainability goals, illustrating the potential for traditional cultural practices to inform and bolster ecological conservation efforts.

4 Conclusion

This study explores the profound relevance of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* in early childhood education within environmental and sustainability contexts, uncovering its capacity to instill foundational values such as integrity, respect, and ecological awareness among young learners. By integrating these traditional Malay values into educational frameworks, the research not only bridges a critical gap in how cultural heritage is leveraged for sustainable development but also innovates in the pedagogical approach by infusing environmental stewardship at the formative stages of child development. The findings highlight the potential of local wisdom in shaping environmentally conscious individuals poised to address global sustainability challenges. Ultimately, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how indigenous knowledge systems can be systematically incorporated into modern education to foster a generation that is culturally rooted and environmentally attuned, thus enhancing the global pursuit of sustainable and resilient societal development.

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