

Internalizing Islamic Education Values in Saman Dance as Acehese Cultural Heritage: Efforts to Shape the Character of the Young Generation in the Digital Era.

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ABSTRACT

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The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the values, lifestyles, and behaviors of the younger generation, creating challenges for Islamic character education. One strategic effort to address this issue is by utilizing local cultural heritage as a medium for value internalization. This study aims to analyze the internalization of Islamic educational values embedded in the Saman Dance as an intangible cultural heritage of Aceh and its contribution to strengthening the character of the younger generation in the digital era. The study employed a qualitative approach through library research supported by content analysis. Data were collected from scientific journal articles, books, official documents, and relevant literature concerning Islamic education, character education, local wisdom, and the Saman Dance. The findings reveal that the Saman Dance embodies various Islamic educational values, including religiosity, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, mutual respect, leadership, sincerity, and social solidarity. These values are internalized through synchronized movements, poetic lyrics containing Islamic messages, collective learning processes, and the ethical norms practiced during performances. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values with local cultural traditions offers an innovative and contextual model of character education that is relevant to the challenges faced by today's youth. The study concludes that the Saman Dance functions not only as a cultural performance but also as an effective educational medium for strengthening Islamic character while preserving Acehese cultural identity amid the rapid transformation of the digital era.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the way the younger generation thinks, interacts, and behaves. Easy access to information through the internet and social media provides great opportunities for improving the quality of education, but on the other hand it also raises various problems, such as declining morality, weakening social ethics, low concern for local culture, and the increasingly strong influence of global culture on the identity of the younger generation. This phenomenon shows that education is no longer sufficiently oriented to cognitive aspects, but must be able to shape the character of students through the internalization of religious, moral, and cultural values in a sustainable manner. Therefore, character education based on Islamic values and local wisdom is one of the relevant strategies in facing the challenges of the digital era.

In the perspective of Islamic education, the main purpose of education is to form human beings who have faith, piety, and noble character. The process is carried out through the internalization of values, which is the process of instilling values so that they become part of a person's attitude, personality, and behavior. Internalization does not only take place through learning in the classroom, but also through example, habituation, social experience, and cultural activities that live in the community. Local culture can function as an effective educational medium because it contains religious and social values that are passed down from generation to generation. Research by Rosala et al. (2021) shows that dance art learning based on local culture is able to internalize character values such as mutual cooperation, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and cooperation so as to provide a meaningful learning experience for students.

One of the cultural heritage that has an Islamic education dimension is the Saman Dance which originated from the Gayo community, Aceh. Saman Dance has been recognized by UNESCO as *an Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding* in 2011, so it has an important value not only as a performing art, but also as a nation's cultural identity that must be preserved. The uniqueness of the Saman Dance does not only lie in the uniformity of its movements and rhythms, but also in the verses that contain the message of tauhid, da'wah, morals, life advice, Islamic ukhuwah, and respect for human values. In addition, each process of training and performance requires discipline, responsibility, leadership, cohesiveness, and mutual respect between dancers so as to make Saman Dance a medium for character learning that is rich in Islamic educational values.

Various studies have examined Saman Dance from various perspectives. Sari, Yetti, and Supena (2020) found that Saman Dance activities significantly improve students' social skills through strengthening cooperation, communication, and group interaction. On the other hand, Akhmad (2021) revealed that the Saman Dance contains religious, ethical, and social values which are reflected in its movements, poems, and implementation process. Recent research by Alfirdaus et al. (2025) also confirms that Saman Dance is a medium for revitalizing Islamic educational values through strengthening adab, Islamic ukhuwah, da'wah, and the formation of Islamic character of the Gayo Aceh community. The results of the study show that Saman Dance has a broader function than just performing arts, namely as a medium for inheriting values and character education.

However, previous studies generally still focused on aspects of cultural preservation, performance arts functions, social skills, and revitalization of da'wah values in Saman Dance. Studies that specifically integrate the concept of internalizing Islamic educational values with the character formation of the younger generation in the context of the digital era are still relatively limited. In fact, the current educational challenges demand a character education model that is not only oriented towards knowledge transfer, but also

able to integrate Islamic values with local culture as part of strengthening the nation's identity. Thus, there is still a *research gap* regarding the mechanism of internalizing the value of Islamic education through Saman Dance which can be implemented as a character education model for the younger generation in the digital era.

The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of the mechanism of internalization of Islamic educational values contained in the Saman Dance through three main dimensions, namely religious values reflected in da'wah verses, social values manifested through cooperation and ukhuwah, and character values built through discipline, responsibility, leadership, and example during the practice and performance process. This research also relates these values to the challenges of character formation of the younger generation in the digital era so as to produce a new perspective on the use of Acehese cultural heritage as a model of character education based on local wisdom and Islamic values.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the values of Islamic education contained in the Saman Dance as Acehese cultural heritage, describe the process of internalizing these values in the formation of the character of the younger generation, and explain its relevance as a model of character education based on local culture in the digital era. The results of the research are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education studies based on local wisdom as well as become practical recommendations for educational institutions in integrating local cultural arts into character learning.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with the cultural ethnography method. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal the meaning of culture in depth through an understanding of experiences, social practices, symbols, value systems, and patterns of interaction that live in a cultural community. According to Spradley (2016), ethnography is a research approach that aims to understand how a group of people builds meaning to social reality through their language, behavior, traditions, and cultural practices. In line with that, Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that ethnographic research allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the life of a cultural group through direct involvement in social activities, participatory observation, and interpretation of the cultural meanings that develop within it. The ethnographic approach is considered most appropriate to study the Saman Dance as an Acehese cultural heritage that not only represents artistic expression, but also becomes a medium for transmission of educational values

slam and character formation of the younger generation.

Saman dance is understood as a *cultural space* that represents the integration between Islamic educational values, the cultural identity of the Gayo Aceh people, and the mechanism of inheritance of values between generations. This perspective is in line with UNESCO's (2003) concept of *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which affirms that intangible cultural heritage is a cultural practice that is passed down from generation to generation through the process of social education, community participation, and collective experience. Thus, Saman Dance is positioned not only as an object of performance arts study, but as a *cultural-based education* system that internalizes religious values, discipline, responsibility, ukhuwah, leadership, mutual cooperation, and social concern through cultural practices that take place naturally in the community. This approach is also supported by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) who affirm that ethnographic research is oriented towards understanding culture as a social process that continues to evolve through interactions, experiences, and practices of people's lives.

The research was carried out on the Saman Dance community in Gayo Lues Regency and Central Aceh Regency as areas that until now still maintain the practice of Saman Dance in the social, religious, and cultural life of the community. The selection of the location was carried out *purposively* by considering the sustainability of tradition, the existence of art studios, traditional leaders, and the community of Saman Dance performers who are still actively carrying out cultural heritage to the younger generation. The research informants were selected using *purposive sampling techniques* based on their level of knowledge, experience, and involvement in the preservation of the Saman Dance. The informants consisted of Saman Dance maestros, traditional leaders, religious leaders, studio trainers, cultural arts teachers, academics, and the younger generation who actively participated in rehearsals and performances. Data collection is carried out until data *saturation* is achieved, which is a condition when the information obtained has shown a recurring pattern and no significant new categories or themes are found. The concept of *data saturation* is seen as an important indicator to ensure the adequacy of data in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2018).

Research data was collected through participant *observation*, *in-depth interviews*, documentation, and document studies. Participatory observation was carried out to directly understand social practices, interaction patterns, performance structures, training processes, and value inheritance mechanisms that take place in Saman Dance. In-depth interviews were used to explore the informants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings of Islamic education values contained in the poems, movements, performance systems, and traditions of the Saman Dance. Documentation includes photographs, videos, field notes, verse scripts, performance archives, as well as various relevant cultural documents. In addition, a study of documents was conducted on UNESCO documents on Intangible Cultural Heritage, government regulations, Islamic educational literature, character education, ethnopedagogy, cultural anthropology, and relevant scientific articles. The use of various data collection techniques aims to obtain a holistic *understanding* of the cultural phenomenon studied through the data triangulation process.

Data analysis uses the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data *condensation*, data *display*, and *drawing and verifying conclusions*. The analysis process begins with transcribing the results of interviews and observations verbatim, followed by the process of *open coding*, *axial coding*, category grouping, theme identification, interpretation of cultural meaning, to the preparation of a conceptual model for internalizing Islamic educational values in Saman Dance. The analysis focused on the identification of Islamic educational values represented in the poems, movements, performance structures, *sheikh leadership*, and social practices of the Gayo community. Furthermore, an interpretation of the internalization mechanism of values that shape the character of the younger generation is carried out based on the perspective of Islamic education and ethnopedagogy. The interactive analysis model was chosen because it allows the processes of data collection, reduction, analysis, interpretation, and verification to take place simultaneously resulting in more comprehensive, reflective, and contextual findings.

The validity of the data is guaranteed through the application of source triangulation, technique triangulation, time triangulation, *member checking*, and *peer debriefing*. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from Saman Dance maestros, traditional leaders, religious leaders, studio coaches, academics, and the younger generation. Technical triangulation is carried out through comparison of observations, interviews, documentation, and document studies. Furthermore, *member checking* is carried out by asking the informants to reconfirm the results of the researcher's interpretation to ensure the suitability of the meaning with the experience they convey. The

peer debriefing was carried out through scientific discussions with researchers who have expertise in the fields of Islamic education, cultural anthropology, and performing arts. The procedure is applied to increase the *credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability* of research results as stated by Lincoln and Guba (2019). With the application of this procedure, the results of the research are expected to have a high level of scientific validity and be able to provide a deep understanding of the internalization of Islamic educational values in Saman Dance as Acehese cultural heritage in shaping the character of the younger generation in the digital era.

Discussion and Results

1. Internalization of Islamic Education Values in Saman Dance

Saman Dance is an intangible cultural heritage of the Gayo people which not only functions as a performing art, but also as a medium for internalizing Islamic educational values that have been passed down from generation to generation. The results of the study show that these values are represented in poetry, movements, performance systems, *shaykh leadership*, and social interaction during the rehearsal and staging process. Poetry is a medium for conveying the teachings of monotheism, morality *karimah*, *ukhuwah*, *amanah*, *sura*, and *ta'awun*, while movements carried out simultaneously reflect discipline, togetherness, cooperation, and collective responsibility. Thus, Saman Dance becomes a culture-based learning space that integrates religious, moral, social, and aesthetic dimensions in the formation of the character of the younger generation.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the process of internalizing values in Saman Dance takes place through example (*uswah hasanah*), *habituation*, active participation, and cultural *experience*. This process is in line with the theory of internalization of values put forward by Muhaimin (2012), who explains that Islamic education is not only oriented towards *the transfer of knowledge*, but also *the transfer of values*, so that the values learned become part of the attitude, personality, and behavior of students. The findings of this study are also in line with the character education theory of Lickona (2019), which emphasizes that character is formed through the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In the Saman Dance, these three aspects are manifested through understanding the meaning of poetry, appreciation of values during the training process, and the implementation of values in real actions in the form of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, leadership, and social concern. This shows that the process of internalizing values in the Saman Dance takes place contextually through cultural experiences, so that Islamic educational values do not stop at the cognitive level, but develop into habits and characters that are inherent in the younger generation.

When compared to Islamic cultural traditions in various regions in Indonesia, Saman Dance has a similar function as a medium of value education, but with different characteristics. The Didong Gayo tradition uses poetry as a medium for conveying religious messages and social education, while the Zapin Dance in Riau developed as an Islamic *da'wah* medium that instills the values of politeness, manners, and togetherness. In Java, the Sekaten tradition is a means of spreading Islamic teachings through a cultural approach that integrates religious elements and community traditions. Although they have different forms of presentation, the three traditions show the same function as a medium for internalizing Islamic values through cultural practices. The uniqueness of Saman Dance lies in the combination of religious verses, movements that are carried out simultaneously, and the practice process that takes place collectively, so that the process of character formation occurs

simultaneously through social interaction, cultural experiences, and continuous habituation.

The findings of this study also have strong relevance to education policy and cultural preservation in Indonesia. This is in line with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, especially Article 3, which emphasizes that national education aims to develop students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are capable, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible. In addition, Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture places culture as a strategic instrument in the development of the nation's character through efforts to protect, develop, utilize, and foster the object of cultural advancement. In this context, Saman Dance not only has value as Acehese cultural heritage, but also functions as a character education medium based on local wisdom that supports the strengthening of the character of the younger generation.

This finding is in line with the direction of national education development which emphasizes the formation of students' character through strengthening religious, moral, social, and cultural values. Thus, Saman Dance can be positioned as a cultural-based character education model that is able to integrate Islamic educational values, cultural preservation, and national education goals in facing the challenges of the digital era.



Figure 1. The performance of the Saman Dance as a medium of internalizing Islamic educational values.

Source: Saman Dance Documentation, Aceh.

Figure 1 shows the parallel sitting formation, harmony of movements, and cohesiveness of the dancers as characteristics of the Saman Dance. The uniformity of movement not only shows artistic beauty, but also reflects the values of discipline, responsibility, cooperation (*ta'awun*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*). All dancers are required to maintain each other's rhythm, concentration, and coordination so that the performance takes place in harmony. In addition, the verses that are chanted contain praise to Allah SWT., salawat to the Prophet Muhammad (saw), as well as advice on morals, thus making the Saman Dance a medium of da'wah and character education that is inherited from generation to generation.

Table 1. Islamic Education Values in Saman Dance

Yes	Unsur algae together	The Value of Islamic Education	Character Implementation
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1	Poetry	Tauhid	Religious
2	Poetry	Akhlakul Karimah	Manners
3	Simultaneous Movement	Ukhuwah	Cooperation
4	Exercise	Istiqamah	Discipline
5	The Role of the Sheikh	Trust	Leadership
6	Deliberation	Shura	Democratic
7	Compactness	Ta'awun	Social Care
8	Exercise Evaluation	Muhasabah	Responsibilities

Source: Results of the researcher's analysis (2026).

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that each element in the Saman Dance represents Islamic educational values that are integrated with each other and contribute to the formation of the character of the younger generation. Syair is the main medium in conveying the teachings of monotheism, morality, and various moral and religious messages that form religious and polite characters. On the other hand, the movements carried out simultaneously reflect the values of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'awun* (help-help), which are manifested through an attitude of cooperation, solidarity, and social concern between dancers. The harmony of the movement shows that the success of the performance is not determined by individual ability, but rather by a collective commitment built on the basis of mutual trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

The training process that is carried out regularly and continuously is a means of *habituation* in instilling the values of *istiqamah*, discipline, and responsibility. In addition to improving technical skills, practice also forms commitment, consistency, and work ethic that are part of the character of the participants. The role of the *shaykh* as a group leader has a central function as an example (*uswah hasanah*) in directing, guiding, and maintaining the cohesiveness of members so that the values of trust, leadership, and responsibility can be internalized through real practice. Meanwhile, the tradition of deliberations before and after the performance reflects the application of *shura values* that foster democratic attitudes, openness, and the ability to respect the opinions of others. The evaluation of the exercise (*muhasabah*) is a medium of collective reflection to correct shortcomings, improve the quality of appearance, and strengthen individual and group responsibility. Thus, Saman Dance not only functions as Aceh's cultural heritage, but also as a character education medium based on Islamic educational values that integrates religious, social, moral, and cultural aspects in forming a young generation with noble character, integrity, and adaptive to the challenges of the digital era.

2. The Process of Internalizing the Values of Islamic Education

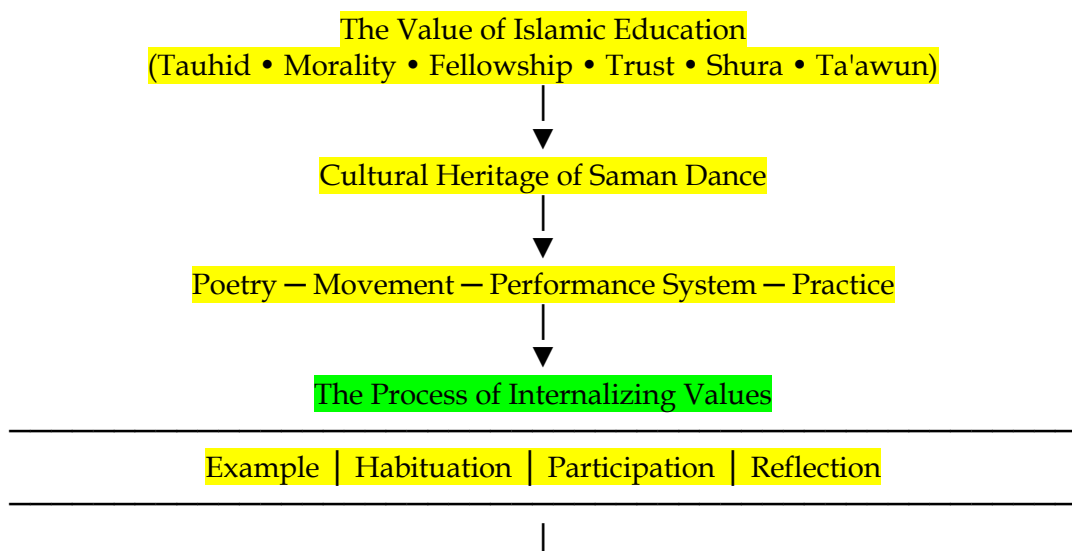
The internalization of values in Saman Dance takes place through a process of exemplary, habituation, active participation, and cultural experience. These values are not taught theoretically, but are realized through real practice that is carried out repeatedly during rehearsals and performances.



Figure 2. The process of practicing Saman Dance as a medium of inheriting Islamic educational values.

Source: Saman Dance Documentation, Aceh.

Figure 2 shows that the process of practicing Saman Dance is not only oriented towards mastering movement techniques, but also becomes an educational space that internalizes the values of Islamic education through habituation and collective experience. During the rehearsal process, each member is required to be present on time, obey the *shaykh's* directions, maintain cohesiveness of movements, and build harmonious communication with fellow dancers. These conditions foster an attitude of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, mutual respect, and concern for the group as part of the character formed through cultural practices. The continuous repetition of the practice makes these values not only understood as concepts, but internalized into habits and behaviors inherent in daily life. Thus, Saman Dance training functions as a character education medium based on local wisdom that integrates religious, social, and cultural values in shaping a young generation with integrity and adapting to the challenges of the digital era.



▼

Character Building for the Young Generation

**Religious • Discipline • Cooperation • Leadership
Responsibility • Social Care • Integrity**

Figure 3. Model of Internalization of Islamic Education Values through Saman Dance

The conceptual model in Figure 3 shows that the internalization of Islamic educational values in the Saman Dance takes place through an integrated relationship between Islamic values, cultural elements, and the learning process that takes place in a continuous manner in the life of the Gayo community. Values such as monotheism, morality, *ukhuwah*, *amanah*, *shura*, and *ta'awun* are transformed through poetry, movements, performance systems, and training processes so as to form a contextual learning experience. Through this process, Islamic values are not only understood as knowledge, but also practiced in real life in social life through example, habituation, active participation, and collective reflection.

3. Implications for the Character Formation of the Young Generation in the Digital Era

The internalization of Islamic educational values through Saman Dance has significant implications for the formation of the character of the younger generation in the digital era. The results of the study show that the process of training and staging carried out in a sustainable manner is able to form religious character, discipline, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and social concern through participatory cultural experiences. These values are not only understood as normative concepts, but are manifested in real behavior through interaction between dancers, obedience to rules, respect for the role of *the sheikh*, and responsibility for maintaining cohesiveness and harmony during performances. These findings show that Saman Dance is a culturally based educational space that allows the process of character formation to take place naturally through habituation and collective experience.

The findings of this study also strengthen the theory of character education put forward by Lickona (2019), that character is built through the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In the Saman Dance, the values of Islamic education are understood through verses that contain the messages of monotheism, morality, and *ukhuwah* (*moral knowing*), then lived through emotional experiences and social interaction during training and performance (*moral feeling*), and manifested in real actions in the form of discipline, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and social concern (*moral action*). The process shows that local culture is able to be an effective medium of character education because it integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in one complete and continuous learning experience.

The implications of this research are also related to cultural preservation efforts as part of the nation's character development. This is in line with Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture, which emphasizes that the promotion of culture is carried out through the protection, development, utilization, and development of the object of cultural advancement as the foundation of national development. In this context, Saman Dance not only functions as a performing art, but also as a medium for inheriting values, cultural identity, and intergenerational character education. The recognition of Saman Dance as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2011 further emphasizes that local culture

has a strategic function in maintaining community identity as well as being a means of education that contains universal values.

In the midst of the development of the digital era marked by increasing individualism, declining direct social interaction, and reduced appreciation for local culture, Saman Dance continues to show its relevance as a medium for internalizing Islamic educational values. The involvement of the younger generation in Saman Dance activities encourages the formation of mutual respect, solidarity, effective communication, and a sense of belonging to Acehese culture. This finding also supports the strengthening of character education based on local wisdom that places culture as a learning medium in forming a young generation that is religious, has integrity, is responsible, able to work together, and has social concerns. Thus, Saman Dance not only functions as a cultural heritage that must be preserved, but also as a model of culture-based character education that is able to integrate the values of Islamic education, cultural preservation, and national education goals in facing the challenges of the digital era.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the internalization of Islamic educational values in the Saman Dance as the cultural heritage of Aceh is a process of *cultural-based education* that takes place holistically through the integration of Islamic values, cultural traditions, and the social experience of the Gayo community. The values of monotheism, morality of *karimah*, *ukhuwah*, *amanah*, *sura*, and *ta'awun* are not only represented in the shaykh's poetry, movements, performance systems, and leadership, but are also lived through a process of practice that is carried out repeatedly, collectively, and continuously. Thus, Saman Dance not only functions as a performing arts and cultural identity of the Acehese people, but also as a medium of character education that is able to integrate religious, moral, social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions in the formation of the character of the younger generation.

The findings of the study show that the process of internalizing values takes place through the mechanism of exemplification (*uswah hasanah*), *habituation*, active participation, cultural *experience*, and reflection (*muhasabah*). The mechanism shows that the values of Islamic education are not taught verbally alone, but are instilled through cultural practices that allow the younger generation to experience, live, and implement values in daily life. This finding strengthens the theory of internalization of values put forward by Muhaimin (2012), that Islamic education is not only oriented towards *the transfer of knowledge*, but also *the transfer of values* until values become part of the personality and behavior of students. In addition, this study also confirms Lickona's (2019) theory of character education that character formation takes place through the integration of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. In the Saman Dance, the three dimensions are realized simultaneously through the understanding of verses that contain Islamic values, the appreciation of values through collective experience during training, and the implementation of values in real actions in the form of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, leadership, and social concern.

The main contribution of this research lies in the development of a conceptual model of internalization of Islamic educational values based on cultural heritage, which places Saman Dance as a medium of character education through the integration of cultural elements, the process of internalizing values, and the formation of the character of the younger generation. This model expands the study of Islamic education, character education, and ethnopedagogy by showing that local cultural heritage functions not only as an object of

cultural preservation, but also as a contextual, participatory, and relevant learning resource in responding to educational challenges in the digital age. Thus, this study provides a new perspective that cultural preservation and strengthening character education are two complementary processes in building a young generation that is religious, with integrity, adaptive, and rooted in the nation's cultural identity.

Practically, the results of this study confirm the importance of integrating the Islamic educational values contained in the Saman Dance into educational policies through intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities at various levels of education. This integration can be done through Islamic Religious Education, Cultural Arts, and *Project-based learning* that utilizes local culture as a learning resource. This effort needs to be supported through collaboration between schools, universities, local governments, traditional leaders, scholars, art communities, and the community so that the process of inheriting values takes place in a sustainable manner. In addition, the use of digital technology for documentation, digitization of cultural archives, development of interactive learning media, and the promotion of Saman Dance in digital space is an important strategy to expand the younger generation's access to Aceh's cultural heritage without eliminating the values of Islamic education contained in it.

As a practical implication, this study recommends that the Islamic educational values contained in the Saman Dance be systematically integrated into the Islamic education curriculum and extracurricular activities in schools. In the curriculum aspect, Saman Dance can be used as a contextual learning resource in Islamic Religious Education subjects through moral material, Islamic ukhuwah, leadership, and responsibility, and is integrated with Cultural Arts learning through a *project-based approach* and learning based on local wisdom. This integration allows students not only to understand the concept of Islamic values theoretically, but also to live and practice them through authentic cultural experiences.

In extracurricular activities, schools need to develop Saman Dance studios as a vehicle for character development involving teachers, art trainers, traditional leaders, and religious leaders. Routine training activities, cultural performances, art festivals, and collaborations with cultural communities and universities can be a medium to instill religious values, discipline, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and social concern in a sustainable manner. The implementation of the program needs to be supported by the local government through the preparation of local culture-based teaching materials, teacher training, and strengthening partnerships between schools and cultural communities so that the preservation of Saman Dance is not only oriented to the sustainability of Aceh's cultural heritage, but also becomes an integral part of strengthening the character education of the younger generation in the digital era.

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