

Exploring the Ethics of Care in the Wayang Kulit Performance to Strengthen Student Character

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Abstract

In recent years, educators, researchers and policymakers have raised concerns about the moral development of Indonesian students. Some studies reveal a tendency toward radical and intolerant moral attitudes among students. The potential of Wayang performances can be utilized to strengthen students' character effectively. This article will explore the intersection between ethics and Wayang Kulit performance. There are two objectives to be achieved in this article: First, to identify the moral attitudes of the main characters in the dramatic structure of Wayang Kulit performances. Second, to analyze the ethics of care in the Wayang Kulit performance. This study uses a narrative analysis approach with an ethics of care perspective to Wayang Kulit performance art. The study results show that the ethics of duty need to be complemented by an ethics of care that are concretely based on empathy, kindness, or compassion and favoring the weak. Wayang Kulit has the potential to be a medium of character education for students through an ethics of care approach that emphasizes the values of empathy, caring and concern for the vulnerable. In particular, the ethics of care in Wayang Kulit performance provides moral education rooted in local culture and relevant to the problems of contemporary society. This study's main contribution is linking traditional art with contemporary ethics.

Introduction

Wayang Kulit performance is one of the classical performing arts in Indonesia. It originates from the tradition of Javanese culture as part of the Kawi¹ cultural heritage. Wayang Kulit performance is Java's most popular traditional theatre form (Lis, 2019). Wayang Kulit performances emerged in Southeast Asia at the end of the first millennium AD, marked by the adaptation of South Asian cultural elements based on the Sanskrit language (Manguin, 2022).

Wayang Kulit performances as intangible cultural heritage have two functions, namely as *tontonan* (aesthetics) and *tuntunan* (ethics) (Margana et al., 2023). As a *tontonan*, Wayang functions to entertain. Meanwhile, as a *tuntunan*, wayang contains examples of moral attitudes that can be utilized for character strengthening. According to Thomas Lickona, character is understood as knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good (Lickona, 1991). This definition is relevant to the function of Wayang Kulit performance as an art that contains good values that can be a moral reference in attitudes and actions in everyday life.

In recent years, educators, researchers, and policymakers have raised concerns about the moral development of Indonesian students. Several studies have shown an increasing trend of students being exposed to intolerance, radicalism and extremism. Research by Cardinale et al. (2021) titled *Analysis of Strengthening Character Education in Preventing Intolerance and Radicalism Using Enculturated Education*, identified four main causes of radicalism and intolerance, namely: personal factors, education, socio-economic-political-cultural issues, and lack of religious understanding. This research shows the importance of cultural education in building character and promoting tolerance (Cardinale et al., 2021).

Sirry (2020) conducted another study titled *Muslim Student Radicalism and Self-Deradicalization in Indonesia*. This research discusses religious radicalism among Muslim students based on research conducted at seven universities in Indonesia. It further states that many of these students have been significantly exposed to radical groups. However, the good news is that these radicalized students can also be easily deradicalized; they are able to disengage leave their newly adopted ideologies (Sirry, 2020).

The global geopolitical context is characterized by increasing ideological polarization, religious and cultural conflicts, and the spread of extremism through various digital media echo chambers. Extremist-promoting digital media encourages radicalization in sensitive

¹ Kawi culture is an ancient culture and literature that developed in the archipelago, especially in Java, Bali and parts of Southeast Asia, rooted in the Kawi language and literature.

areas such as politics, race, and religion (Pizolati, 2024). Higher education as a space for ideological contestation has become a critical site to prevent radicalism. Higher education faces serious challenges in maintaining the moral integrity and character of the younger generation. A strong character guided by the ethic of care becomes a psychological and social fortress for students so that they can ward off the influence of radicalism and extremism. Wayang Kulit performance has the potential to serve as a medium to convey ethical values of care more contextually.

Several higher education institutions have implemented various initiatives for moral and civic learning among students (Dalton et al., 2020). The moral values in Wayang, which emphasize care, empathy, and concrete personal relationships, can provide a relevant perspective for strengthening student character (Aloni, 2019).

This article will examine the intersection between ethics and Wayang Kulit performance. This study has two objectives: First, to identify the moral attitudes of the main characters in the dramatic structure of Wayang Kulit performance. Second, to analyze the ethics of care in the wayang kulit performance.

Wayang has great potential to counter radicalism and extremism by instilling values of care, empathy, and responsibility. This research is significant in helping higher education institutions create a conducive environment for developing robust and empathetic student characters. Wayang performances can enhance local culture-based pedagogical approaches pertinent to the moral and social challenges currently experienced in Indonesian higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Wayang Kulit performance has many moral values. Its representation in wayang can be seen in its reflection of moral issues (Pandin, 2020). On the one hand, these values are generally rooted in deontological ethics. Actions are judged right or wrong based on certain moral obligations, regardless of their consequences (Korsgaard, 2012; Magnis-Suseno, 1997). On the other hand, the ethics of care emphasizes empathy, relationships, and caring for the vulnerable. The ethics of care has not been widely applied to the analysis of traditional performances such as Wayang Kulit.

This study employs the ethics of care as a theoretical framework to analyze the moral values embodied in Wayang Kulit performances. In her seminal work *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan (1982) proposes a novel theoretical framework that challenges conventional moral approaches, which focus on empathy, relationships and contextual responsibility. The ethics of care reveals the central role of care in human moral life (Hamington & Fitz Gerald, 2022).

Gilligan (1982) argues that the focus of moral action should be on those who are most vulnerable and within contexts of systemic oppression. The ethics of care provides a relevant perspective for exploring moral values in Wayang Kulit performance.

For the audience, Wayang is not merely a spectacle but also a source of meaning in life. Every element in a Wayang Kulit performance is a symbol rooted in deep cultural and philosophical traditions. Wayang symbols represent the unique character and ideal views of the wayang-supporting community (Willyarto et al., 2021).

The dalang or puppet master in Javanese wayang kulit acts as an intellectual agent capable of conveying moral and social messages through wayang performances (Setyoutomo et al., 2024). The dalang often builds a dramatic flow to invite the audience to reflect on the importance of duty and obligation and to consider ethical decisions that favor those in a disadvantaged position.

This study addresses the moral dilemma between the ethics of care and the ethics of duty (deontological ethics) in Wayang Kulit performance. Such a dilemma can be seen in Karna's character, who is caught in a decision of action between the obligation to carry out his duties and the demands of care and feelings of empathy for the Pandawa (Pandavas in Sanskrit) as victims. In the Baratayuda war, although Karna sided with the Kurawa (Kauravas in Sanskrit), his conscience was on the side of the Pandawa, who were victims of Kurawa's injustice.

Care ethics is a relational ethic that recognizes the social and moral implications of all educative experiences (Rabin & Smith, 2013). In contemporary contexts, the ethics of care is relevant to character education. This is due to complex social challenges such as inequality, social polarization and empathy crisis. Nel Noddings in her book titled *A Relational Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* says that an education guided by care ethics aims to nurture the ethical ideal, which is based on maintaining and enhancing caring. This involves encouraging responsiveness, receptivity, dialogue, practice in caring, and confirmation (Noddings, 2013). Through the ethics of care approach, the students is invited to develop sensitivity to the real conditions of their fellow human beings.

By watching Wayang performances, students can learn about the importance of care in building healthy and meaningful relationships. Wayang conveys moral values such as loyalty, discipline, and empathy (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). Students can evaluate moral situations and reflect on moral decisions appropriately. Wayang performances provide moral insights and strengthen the values of social care and responsibility as individuals and members of society.

Literature Review

The storyline of *Karna Tanding* in wayang kulit performances can be found in Javanese texts such as the Baratayuda manuscript. This manuscript is an important source in Javanese wayang performances (Prasetya et al., 2023). This manuscript was originally written in Old Javanese by Mpu Sedah and Mpu Panuluh in 1157. Meanwhile, it was later rewritten in New Javanese by Yasadipura I during the era of the Surakarta Sunanate.

In the *Mahabharata* epic, Karna is famous for his loyalty to Duryudana. In the Javanese version, Karna is seen as an ideal leader (de Bruin & Brakel-Papenyzen, 1992). Although he was on the side of evil, Karna still fulfilled his duty as a warrior. Karna's leadership is immortalized in the *Tripama* manuscript, a Javanese literary work by Mangkunegara IV. It states that Karna is one of the three ideal leaders, alongside Kumbokarna and Sumantri (Priyatiningsih & Isnawati, 2019). Wayang Kulit performances frequently incorporate moral values, which play a pivotal role in fostering the strengthening of characters.

Based on a review of previous research, several studies discuss dance, novels, and poetry as means of strengthening student character. Dance research conducted by Herawati et al. (2023) shows that *Menak Sudarawreti Sirtupelaeli's* dance contains aesthetic values that are in accordance with character education, including noble ethics that are worth applying in everyday life.

Puspita et al. (2019), whose research on poetry appreciation textbooks focuses on higher education, explores the use of literary works as a medium for strengthening character. Their research shows that using literature can significantly improve the implementation of character education values among students. Literature and art can help humans find simple and universal moral truths recognized by humble people through folklore and aphorisms (Moulin, 2023). Arts and culture are essential in strengthening students' character by conveying moral messages.

Meanwhile, based on the bibliometric analysis of recent research from Scopus-indexed journals between 2019 and 2024, there are trends in themes related to character strengthening (see Figure 1), including empathy (Ökmen et al., 2022); virtue (Brant et al., 2019); phronesis (Lerner, 2019); curriculum (Hart et al., 2020); and ethics (Mathur, 2022). An examination of these thematic trends indicates no one theme about arts and culture discusses wayang performance for character strengthening among students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the author's writing titled *Exploring the Ethics of Care in the Wayang Kulit Performance to Strengthen Student Character* is truly original.

Third, to critically analyze the ethics of duty based on Carol Gilligan's ethics of care. Fourth, to analyze how the ethics of care in wayang kulit performance can be a reference for strengthening student character.

Results

The play *Karna Tanding* features characters who adopt moral attitudes through their actions and decisions. The ethics of care is an ethical approach emphasizing the importance of empathy, care, and human relationships. The following attitudes reflect the ethics of care of the main characters in the play *Karna Tanding*.

Duryudana

Duryudana is the King of Hastina. Duryudana is portrayed as a rude, arrogant, and power-hungry figure. His kingdom was obtained from the Pandawa illegitimately. His claim to the Pandawa kingdom resulted in a major war between the two brothers, the Kurawa and the Pandawa. Although Duryudana acted as an antagonist, he was responsible for the country and loyal to his followers. He believed he was obliged to defend his honor and rights as the heir to the throne. Duryudana also did not abandon his followers despite being in a critical position. Duryudana continued to fight in the Baratayuda war as part of his responsibility to the group loyal to him.

The play *Karna Tanding* shows Duryudana's persistence in maintaining power over the kingdom. Salya, his father-in-law, repeatedly reminded Duryudana to return the kingdom he obtained illegally to the Pandawa. Salya suggested to Duryudana that the death of Bisma, the respected elder of the Kurawa and Pandawa, should be a means to reconcile the Kurawa and Pandawa. However, Duryudana persistently refused to relinquish the Pandawa's rights. Duryudana said:

Tiba badhé kados pundi kuceméng kawibawan kula, menawi ngantos Baratayuda Jayabinangun punggél semanten, pratyayaning manah kula ibaratipun tiyang anyabrang benawi sampun dumugi tengah-tengah, menawi kantun wonten ngriku mboten wurung kula badhé kentir pejah sia-sia tanpa totog. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 37:57 – 38:26)

How will my authority as king decline if the Baratayuda is stopped? That is how my heart believes, like a person crossing the river who has reached the middle – if I stay in the middle, I will be washed away, dying in vain for nothing. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 37:57 – 38:26)

Duryudana's actions reflect the application of the ethical principle of duty. He acted out of obedience to his principles in his social and political role, which he viewed as a duty. His behavior did not consider justice or the results that could be achieved through peace. This adherence to his principles ultimately outcomes in the destruction of his country and the Kurawa.

Dursasana

The ethics of duty is strongly portrayed in Dursasana. He is Duryudana's brother. Dursasana is known as a brave but reckless person. Dursasana exhibits a cruel and arbitrary attitude. However, Dursasana showed strong loyalty toward Duryudana and his family. He often follows orders without regard for morality or propriety.

In the play *Karna Tanding*, Duryudana orders Dursasana to keep his wife Banowati. Although Duryudana is known to be arrogant and ambitious, he demonstrated an ethic of care toward a woman's vulnerability. Duryudana showed an attitude of care and emotional attachment. However, this order made Dursasana unhappy. According to him, a warrior must do his duty to fight on the battlefield, not to protect a woman safe. Dursasana has a strong desire to become the Senapati of war. Dursasana said:

Lho, kados pundi kulo menika perjurit isiné perang malah kon nunggu wong wedok.
(Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 1:21:43–1:22:01)

How come I am a soldier? My obligation is war; how come I was ordered to look after a woman?" (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 1:21:43–1:22:01)

Banowati looked down on Dursasana, saying that as a warrior, he should not avoid the battlefield. Her insult made Dursasana furious. Dursasana forced himself to enter the battlefield of Baratayuda even though Duryudana did not order him. In the end, he died horribly at the hands of Bima. Dursasana's behavior demonstrates the ethical principle of duty in a military context. For a soldier, fighting is the highest moral obligation that must be fulfilled unconditionally. However, his attitude can be criticized for ignoring vulnerability and emotional attachment in the ethics of care.

Arjuna

Arjuna is depicted as a knight who is simple and gentle. However, behind that simplicity lies extraordinary strength. Arjuna is a knight on the Pandawa side who upholds his duties. For him, duty is essential. This understanding of duty is shown by his pursuit of magic weapons. In the story of *Arjuna Wiwaha*, Arjuna is shown meditating on Mount Indrakila. His goal is to

find a magic weapon to defeat his enemies in the Baratayuda war.

However, when faced with the fact that the enemies he fought were people he deeply respected so much, such as Bisma, the respected elder of Hastina, and Durna, the teacher he respected so much and the people he loved then, Arjuna faced an extreme moral dilemma. After Kresna gave advice, Arjuna ultimately chose to do his duty as a knight. Arjuna steadfastly committed his duty to uphold justice despite fighting against his loved ones and brothers. In the Baratayuda war, Arjuna becomes Karna's opponent, who is in fact his own sibling. This duel ends with Karna's death at the hands of Arjuna.

Ki Nartosabdo's depiction of the war scene between Arjuna and Karna is deeply moving. In the story of *Karna Tanding*, Kresna orders Arjuna to get off his chariot to pay respect to his brother Karna. From the perspective of the ethics of care, Arjuna's attitude reveals a moral dilemma between moral obligation and emotional attachment.

However, Arjuna's respect for Karna did not weaken his duty as a warrior to fight the enemy. In this dilemma, Arjuna's attitude prioritizes responsibility to the *dharma* over concern for personal relationships.

This was a non-negotiable imperative, as described in the following dialogue between Kresna and Arjuna:

Yayi, dina iki ngeremna netra, nutupana talingan, ngesthiyå siji, yaiku dharmaning prajurit, yaiku tumunå satru murkå. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 7:11:58 – 7:12:09)

My brother, at this moment, close your eyes and ears; please focus on one goal: a soldier must destroy the enemy. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 7:11:58 – 7:12:09)

Kresna advises Arjuna to carry out his duties as a knight. A knight must fight against his enemies. Although Karna is his sibling, from a knight's perspective, he is an enemy that must be destroyed.

Kresna

Kresna is an avatar (incarnation) of Lord Wisnu, whose duty is to eradicate arbitrariness on the earth. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Kresna teaches Arjuna the ethics of duty. The book tells that Arjuna felt sad and helpless seeing the enemy troops. All his limbs trembled with fear, seeing the people on the Kurawa side whom he loved deeply, and his relatives was required to fight.

Kresna advised Arjuna that a knight should never be sorrowful. Fighting is the duty and obligation of a knight, as Kresna told Arjuna: “After all, fighting to uphold the truth with awareness of one’s duty of must not be feared, for a knight there is no greater happiness than fighting to uphold the truth” (Pudja, 2003, p. 50).

In the Baratayuda war, Kresna served as an advisor to the Pandawa. However, to carry out his duties, Kresna sometimes used indirect methods to win the battle. For example, Durna's death occurred after Kresna slyly leaked Durna's weakness. Durna weakness and spread of false news about would be powerless if his son Aswatama died. Kresna ordered to spread false news that Aswatama was dead.

Kresna's actions show a problematic application of the ethics of care. Kresna is an incarnation of Lord Wisnu who descends to the world to uphold dharma and restore moral balance and justice. However, in carrying out his duties, Kresna often violates ethics. In the final battle between Arjuna and Karna, Kresna deliberately encouraged Arjuna to attack Karna in a defenseless position. Kresna prioritized political goals over caring for emotional relationships and individual moral needs. From the ethics of care perspective, Kresna's action raises critical questions about the legitimacy of the Pandawa’s victory at the expense of the vulnerable. Kresna prioritized a winning strategy over the protection of individuals and humanity.

Salya

Salya is the King of the Mandaraka Kingdom. He is the father-in-law of Duryudana. He is also the father-in-law of Karna. Despite fighting on the side of the Kurawa, Salya showed concern for the Pandawa. Salya sympathized with the Pandawa, whom Duryudana cheated. Salya kept reminding Duryudana to return to the kingdom he had illegitimately seized from the Pandawa. As Salya said to Duryudana:

Kula kedah nrenggalangi Pandawa, nanging menawi kula nrenggalangi Pandhawa, Pandhawa menika dosanipun menapa kaliyan kula? Mila, ngger, pancèn ludhira ingkang tasih saged kabendung sarana ginem-ginem ingkang sakeca tuwin sarana cakcakaning ingkang tatakrama tuwin sarana petangan-petangan ingkang jangkep wau, keparenga Baratayuda punggel semanten kemawon, ngger. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 34:51–35:24)

If I am defending the Pandawa, it means I am fighting them, but what is wrong with them, so please end this preventable bloodshed immediately. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 34:51–35:24)

In the story of Karna Tanding, Salya faces a serious moral dilemma. Although in the end, Salya had to side with the Kurawa, he showed his concern for the Pandawa as the side on the right. In the war of Baratayuda, Salya died when he faced Puntadewa.

A violation of the ethics of care can be seen in Salya's attitude when he became Karna's charioteer in the Baratayuda war. Salya subtly weakened Karna's spirit with pessimistic words. When Karna was in a vulnerable position, on the verge of defeat by Arjuna, Salya did not show empathy or emotional protection but instead insulted Karna with his sharp words.

Karna

Karna is an essential figure in the play *Karna Tanding*. For Karna, defending Duryudana is an ethical choice that contains value even though he is evil. Karna often ignores his own needs for the welfare of others. His actions always prioritizes Duryudana's interests.

Karna's attitude was firm in his defense of the Kurawa. Karna stated that the return of Pandawa rights must be won by war. Karna disagreed with Duryudana's return of the Pandawa rights, and even Karna was willing to defend staunchly to protect Duryudana in the war. Karna's moral choice is driven by goodwill, which is the attitude of returning the favor to Duryudana. For Karna, returning the favor is an inviolable obligation despite having to fight his siblings.

However, Karna also showed concern for the Pandawa as the righteous side. It is no secret that Baratayuda is a divine destiny that must occur to annihilate the Kurawa. Karna's attitude consistently favored the Baratayuda war. Karna supports the evil Duryudana, but deep in his heart he longed to see injustice destroyed. Although Karna was on the side of evil, he was known as the ultimate warrior.

In the play *Karna Tanding*, the ethics of care is shown by Karna when he is about to fight against Arjuna, Karna is visited by a dragon-shaped creature named Yaksendra, who is a transformation of Prabu Hardowaleka. Yaksendra offers himself to Karna to help him kill Arjuna. However, Yaksendra's offer was rejected by Karna:

Janaka kuwi sedulurku, sanadyan pasulayan ping pitu sedina, ngibarataké tirta pinerang, mesthi bisa bakal pulih. Ora cocak nampa sabiyantumu. Malah dina iki, yèn ta aku nganti nyumurupi kowe cilik ngganggu gawe marang kadangku Arjuna, gedhene nganti kowe merwoso, aja takon dosa, tak loke sak dosamu. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 7:09:44–7:10:15)

Arjuna is my brother; even though we often fight seven times a day, it is like water splitting will eventually come together. I am not willing to accept your help. If I find out that you are a disturbance to my brother Arjuna, feel the severity of the punishment; you will suffer. Do not ask about your sin; I will punish you according to your sin. (Ki Nartosabdo, audio recording, 7:09:44 –7:10:15)

Karna's action in the context of the ethics of care can be seen as a concern for the value of honor. As a warrior, Karna should never cheat. This is a form of respect for the value of a warrior's soul. In addition, Karna's attitude also shows respect for Arjuna, even though Arjuna is his enemy. Karna's attitude also showed concern for justice. The help of supernatural beings is seen as a cunning and fraudulent act. As the ultimate warrior, Karna should never do anything unfair. Karna's attitude emphasizes personal relationships, sensitivity to vulnerability and rejection of unjust violence.

Discussion

Carol Gilligan criticizes ethics of duty by highlighting some of the main weaknesses of the ethical approach to duty. Carol Gilligan's ethics of care emphasize empathy, compassion, and context-specific decision-making over ethics of duty.

Criticism of the Ethics of Duty

Ethics of duty tend to focus on universal principles that are applied without considering the situational context. The ethics of duty view obligation as the core moral value of an action, independent of its consequences (Alston, 2019). This can lead to moral decisions that do not consider the individual's specific circumstances. Often, the ethics of duty ignore the human dimension of personal relationships.

As a philosophy of life, Wayang prioritizes the fact that humans must carry out their duties. The good and bad of a character can be measured by how far he can carry out his duties well. However, in specific contexts, an attitude of partiality and concern is very important. Karna is considered good because he can carry out his obligation to repay Duryudana's kindness. However, Karna also has concerns about the Pandawa being the righteous party. Karna is a figure who symbolizes the attributes of heroism and devotion that are ideal for a leader. Because of these main characteristics, KGPAA Mangkunegara IV mentions Karna in the manuscript of Tripama as one of the three main leaders (Priyatiningih & Isnawati, 2019). Karna is seen as a true leader because he still maintains his dharma as a knight.

The ethics of duty also prioritize morally correct actions but ignores the emotional and psychological aspects of others. In fact, the ethics of duty is often accused of being the cause of Prussian military obedience. Duty in the Prussian military is seen as absolute devotion to the state. The soldiers are obliged to serve the country unconditionally. This obligation is also a moral commitment to maintain the honor of the country. When an unfair regime is implemented, absolute obedience will be dangerous (Tkaczyk, 2007).

The play *Karna Tanding* shows that for the sake of duty, immoral actions can be used to win wars. For example, Kresna, who had deceived Durna, saying that his son Aswatama had died even though Aswatama was still alive. Hearing that Aswatama had died, Durna was no longer had the will to live. Durna then meditated to end his life. At that moment, Drestajumena cunningly killed him by beheading the helpless Durna.

From the perspective of the ethics of care, Wayang performances can make students care about moral issues. They will be able to distinguish between good and evil, kindness must be done, and evil should be avoided. Through imaginative language and literary works, students can feel empathy for the feelings of others (Hadinugraha, 2022). Watching wayang performances can foster awareness that people must do their best to interact with others. Cheating is not good, even if it is intended for a good reason. What is wrong, if done, will receive a bad reward; on the other hand, what is good will get a good reward. If it is not repaid in this world, it will be repaid in the afterlife (Lehtonen, 2023).

Ethics of Care and Radicalism

In the context of Indonesian education, the deterioration of character and the potential for radicalization in the campus environment have become prominent issues. Wayang Kulit performance arts and the ethics of care offer a potential solution because they can increase solidarity. According to Rorty, cruelty causes pain and humiliation, so becoming more sensitive to the suffering of others is the way to create solidarity (Rorty, 1989).

Wayang performances contain the beauty of art, thus making moral messages easily accepted by students. An attitude of care and empathy can be built by sensitizing ourselves to the fact that others are easily hurt. According to Rorty, solidarity is not found in reflection but created (Rorty, 1989). Philosophy, the art of theoretical reasoning, is useless in building solidarity. Rorty argues that solidarity can be strengthened through the role of poets, novelists, ethnographers, and journalists (Magnis-Suseno, 1984). In Wayang Kulit performance, the

dalang can act as a poet who sings beautiful verses such as *suluk*² and *janturan*³. The dalang can also act as a novelist who creates fictional stories and develops the characters. Moreover, wayang performances can display elements of art that arouse the audience's aesthetic sense. Therefore, wayang kulit can increase the sensitivity of the feelings to the suffering of others.

The Wayang Kulit performance, which tends to be deontological, can be seen from the perspective of a more humanistic ethic of care. Critical thinking and acting quickly and appropriately are traits that are inherent in every student. For students, the highest achievement of morality is when they can decide their moral considerations freely. Moral autonomy emphasizes that the development of moral consciousness is characterized by a belief in a person's ability to gradually adjust their actions under the accurate guidance of rational reasoning (Nucci et al., 2008). This view sees that moral strength emerges not from the outside but from within students. A moral consideration to act decisions is carried out because of his free decision. Students can decide for themselves; in other words, they have their moral authority. Students are believed to be able to make moral decisions based on their rational considerations. This is a characteristic of the ethics of duty based on human reason (Effendi, 2020).

However, the ethics of duty alone are insufficient, as they can lead to blind obedience. Radicalism and intolerance are often triggered in the name of practicing beliefs that are seen as obligations. Extreme violence associated with religion has become a global problem, not only in Muslims but also in Christian, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures (Juergensmeyer, 2021). Violence in the name of religion that occurs in various places illustrates that religious beliefs without concern turn into terror.

The ethics of care provide an ethical framework for empathy, love, and the need for personal relationships. Therefore, providing a combining duty ethics with an ethic of care for moral attitudes and actions is essential. The play *Karna Tanding* features wayang characters who are oriented towards ethics of duty. Wayang also has attitudes oriented towards the ethics of care.

By watching the Wayang performances, students are invited to think about moral issues through critical dialogues and purify their souls to reflect on themselves and whether their actions were moral or immoral. Ethics that are internalized in a person from the moral messages in Wayang performances will impact social interaction. The audience will bring the

² The dalang's voice is sung during wayang kulit performance to add atmosphere to the scene.

³ The genre of chess is the discourse of coding, accompanied by the gentle music of the gamelan.

moral values in puppetry into daily life to improve social relationships (Warsina et al., 2021). Moral messages about the ethics of care in Wayang performances can potentially be a solution to overcome radicalism and intolerance among students.

Conclusion

Wayang Kulit performances has the potential to be a medium for character education for students through an ethics of care approach that emphasizes the values of empathy, caring and concern for the vulnerable. Even though Wayang Kulit predominantly reflects the ethics of duty, as seen in the attitude and actions of the wayang characters, the ethics of duty need to be complemented by an ethics of care that are concretely based on empathy, kindness, or compassion. The essence of morality should not be an impartial obligation but a caring one's side, a warmth of heart, and an attitude that supports others in their distinctive situation. The ethics of duty tend to be dangerous if directed to obedience to an arbitrary regime. The results of this research will have an impact on the development of strengthening the character of students in higher education more adequately. In particular, the ethics of care in Wayang Kulit performance provides moral education rooted in local culture and relevant to the problems of contemporary society. The main contribution of this study is the link between traditional art and contemporary ethics. However, this study is still conceptual and has not presented empirical data on the impact of wayang kulit performances on students' character. Therefore, further research with a qualitative study approach to character education using Wayang Kulit performance as a pedagogical tool is needed.

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