

From moral compass to classroom: The role of *Serat Labangkara I* in preserving Sasak identity and shaping character education



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Abstract As indigenous values in Indonesia face erosion, leveraging traditional literature as a source of moral resilience becomes critical. This study investigates *Serat Labangkara I*, a pivotal Sasak manuscript, to explore its potential for advancing character education and strengthening cultural identity. Adopting a qualitative descriptive approach, we analyzed the manuscript text and conducted semi-structured interviews with five Sasak cultural leaders recognized for their expertise in local traditions and religion. Data were processed using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, employing inductive coding and member checking to rigorously validate themes of governance, ethics, and spirituality. The findings reveal that the text functions as a comprehensive moral compass, embedding core values such as discipline, honesty, humility, and communal responsibility within a unique blend of Islamic teachings and indigenous Sasak poetics. This synthesis not only safeguards collective memory but also provides a pedagogical resource that aligns with national character education goals. Despite its value, the study identifies significant barriers to transmission, specifically the decline of oral performance traditions, generational disengagement, and the physical fragility of historical manuscripts. Therefore, we conclude that revitalizing *Serat Labangkara I* requires moving beyond static preservation toward dynamic adaptation. By utilizing digital media and community-based learning, educators can ensure that the text's ethical wisdom remains an impactful force for future generations.

Keywords: *Serat Labangkara I*, character education, cultural preservation, Sasak identity, traditional manuscripts

1. Introduction

Traditional texts play an increasingly vital role in shaping character education and preserving cultural heritage, particularly in societies undergoing rapid globalization (Burduk, 2021; Parmini & Whardani, 2025; Winarni et al., 2021). In Indonesia, local traditions are often overshadowed by global cultural influences, leading to an erosion of cultural identity. For the Sasak community of Lombok, this shift threatens the continuity of deeply rooted moral values. Among the significant cultural artifacts at risk is *Serat Labangkara I*. This traditional Sasak manuscript possesses literary merit and serves as a repository of governance principles, religious devotion, and ethical conduct. Deeply ingrained in the community, the text functions as a moral compass, reinforcing values such as discipline, responsibility, and spiritual commitment (Dacka & Rydz, 2023; Sulistyorini, 2024). Its integration into educational systems offers a strategic response to the decline of traditional values, simultaneously preserving cultural heritage and cultivating positive character traits in younger generations.

A growing body of research examines the educational functions of traditional texts, particularly regarding character education. Studies have investigated the preservation of manuscripts as components of ritual culture (Haile, 2024; Jayanthi, 2024; Mazzocato, 2024), developed methods for manuscript detection (Zheng, 2025), applied technology to digitize *lontar* manuscripts (Ayu et al., 2024; Perino, 2024), analyzed educational values in *Layang Candra Jagad* (Handayani, 2024), and interpreted songs within manuscripts (Freeman, 2025; Hanif, 2023). Collectively, these works highlight the significance of integrating local wisdom into contemporary education, suggesting that traditional texts such as *Serat Labangkara I* can make substantial contributions to moral and cultural development. Similarly, Goodman and Dyer (2023) emphasize the importance of religious teachings embedded in traditional manuscripts for fostering faith and discipline among youth. However, while these studies affirm the value of local wisdom, there is limited research on how *Serat Labangkara I* specifically functions as both a tool for character education and a mechanism for preserving Sasak cultural identity. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding how traditional texts can be adapted to counter the cultural erosion caused by globalization.

Consequently, this study examines the role of *Serat Labangkara I* in advancing character education and cultural preservation. This inquiry aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably Goal 4 on quality

education (Amoros, 2023; Buerkle, 2023; Carvalho, 2024; Costa et al., 2024) and Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions (Fabris, 2023; Kelly, 2025; Khorram, 2023). By exploring *Serat Labangkara I* as a pedagogical resource, this research advocates integrating local wisdom into educational systems to cultivate morally responsible individuals. Moreover, preserving such heritage supports Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities by ensuring that local traditions remain dynamic components of contemporary society (Alshami, 2025; Soeswoyo et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). The manuscript’s emphasis on honesty, responsibility, and religious devotion contributes to strong social institutions, reflecting SDG 16’s focus on justice and social harmony. Guided by these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) How does *Serat Labangkara I* function as a tool for character education in Sasak society?
- (2) In what ways does *Serat Labangkara I* contribute to the preservation of Sasak cultural identity amidst globalization?
- (3) How can the values embedded in *Serat Labangkara I* be integrated into modern educational frameworks?

Addressing these inquiries is crucial to preventing the further erosion of Sasak cultural identity. Without systematic analysis and educational integration, *Serat Labangkara I* risks becoming a passive historical artifact rather than an active cultural and pedagogical resource.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a focus on text analysis. The research method is rooted in a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, drawing upon Fairclough’s (2023) approach. This combination enables a detailed exploration of *Serat Labangkara I*, a traditional Sasak manuscript, and its functions in character education and cultural preservation. The approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the text’s social, religious, and moral dimensions, and how it can contribute to contemporary educational frameworks. By using qualitative data, this study emphasizes a deeper analysis of meaning, context, and cultural significance in relation to local wisdom. The study focuses on *Serat Labangkara I*, which is central to the Sasak people of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This manuscript has played an important role in both formal and informal education. The primary data source for this research is the text of *Serat Labangkara I*, obtained from Sasak traditional archives.

2.2. Research Procedures

The research was conducted through a systematic, multi-stage process to ensure a comprehensive and culturally grounded analysis of *Serat Labangkara I*. The process began with the identification and acquisition of an authentic copy of the manuscript from the Sasak traditional archives, following permission from local cultural authorities. The manuscript was then documented through meticulous transcription, preserving orthographic, linguistic, and stylistic features to maintain textual authenticity. To provide contextual depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with prominent Sasak cultural leaders selected for their expertise in local traditions, religious practices, and familiarity with *Serat Labangkara I*. The textual analysis stage examined the manuscript’s structural features, language use, stylistic patterns, and thematic content, focusing on how it conveys messages related to character education, moral development, and cultural preservation. This was followed by contextual interpretation, linking the textual findings to the social, cultural, and religious setting of the Sasak community, and examining how the text engages with its audience and reinforces societal norms. Finally, Fairclough’s (2023) three-stage CDA framework—description, interpretation, and explanation—was applied to both textual and interview data, enabling connections between linguistic features and broader social functions. The flowchart of the research procedure is illustrated in Figure 1.

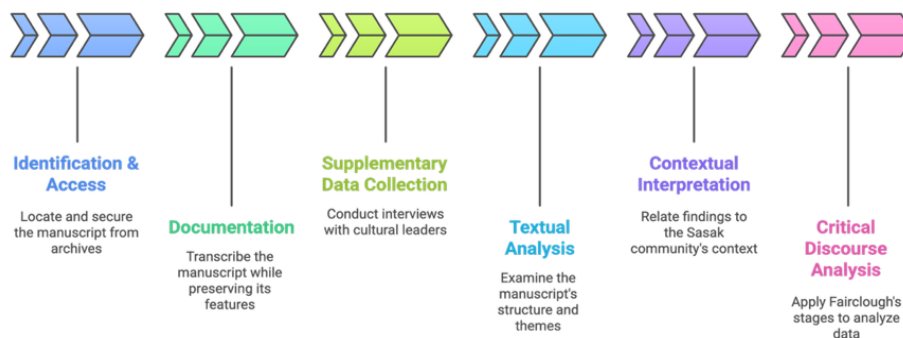


Figure 1 Flowchart of the research procedure for the study of *Serat Labangkara I*.

2.3. Data Sources

To examine the significance of *Serat Labangkara I* for character education and cultural preservation, this study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data includes the manuscript itself, accessed from Sasak traditional archives with

official permission, and semi-structured interviews with five Sasak cultural leaders. These participants were selected for their deep knowledge of local traditions, religion, and the manuscript (see Table 1 for demographics). However, it is important to note that this study relied on a small, expert-driven sample. While necessary to interpret the text’s complex meanings, this approach may reflect a pro-tradition bias and might not fully capture how the general public currently engages with the text. Secondary data—including scholarly literature and official reports on Indonesian character education—was used to provide context and support the analysis.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Interview Participants.

Code	Gender	Age	Occupation/Role in Community	Years of Cultural Leadership Experience	Area of Residence (District)
P1	Male	64	Religious leader (<i>Tuan Guru</i>)	35 years	East Lombok
P2	Male	58	Traditional manuscript keeper (<i>Penyimak Naskah</i>)	30 years	Central Lombok
P3	Female	52	Cultural historian and educator	25 years	West Lombok
P4	Male	60	Village elder and oral tradition custodian	33 years	North Lombok
P5	Female	55	Community leader in cultural preservation	28 years	Mataram City

2.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis followed Fairclough’s (2023) three-stage Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework—description, interpretation, and explanation—applied to both the *Serat Labangkara I* manuscript and the interview transcripts. In the description stage, the formal linguistic and structural features of the manuscript were examined, including vocabulary choices, grammatical patterns, stylistic devices, and narrative structure, to identify how the text constructs its messages. This stage also included coding relevant excerpts that reflect themes of character education, cultural preservation, governance, religious devotion, and moral development. To ensure transparency, an inductive coding process was employed where initial codes were derived line-by-line from the manuscript and interview transcripts, which were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories.

In the interpretation stage, these linguistic features were linked to the immediate situational context and the broader cultural and historical setting of the Sasak community, incorporating perspectives from the interviews with cultural leaders to ensure that the interpretations aligned with local understandings and lived experiences. The explanation stage extended the analysis to consider the wider social implications of the discourse, focusing on how the manuscript reinforces or challenges societal norms, authority structures, and value systems, as well as its potential application in contemporary educational contexts. To ensure analytical rigor, the coding and thematic categorization process was iterative, involving repeated readings of the manuscript and triangulation with interview data. Emerging themes were validated through member checking, where key interpretations were presented back to the interview participants to confirm that the analysis accurately reflected their cultural insights. This approach allowed for the validation of emerging themes and ensured that the findings were grounded in both textual evidence and community perspectives.

3. Results

The findings are organized according to the three research questions and draw on two data sources: textual analysis of *Serat Labangkara I* and interpretive insights from five cultural leaders. This combination allows the results to reflect both the intrinsic messages of the manuscript and their relevance in contemporary Sasak society. The following subsections address its role in character education, its contribution to cultural identity, and its potential integration into modern education.

3.1. RQ1 – Serat Labangkara I as a Tool for Character Education

The analysis indicates that *Serat Labangkara I* functions as a vital medium for transmitting values such as discipline, perseverance, responsibility, and honesty. One illustrative example comes from a passage in which the king commands a high-ranking official, or *patih*, to find a garden flower belonging to Tuan Putri Kendran:

"Yadian congko rogek tasira / Jambuluwa yen tan angsal ayuwa mulih / Lah lunga depun asruh / Age sun apanggi ya / Yen tan kapanggih yuakti / Mati tanpa tatu / Sira Patih tanpa ngucap / Ase mui kemengan ningngati//"

(Translation: Even if you are bent, uncle / Until your hair turns gray, if you do not succeed, you must not return / Now, go quickly / So that I may meet you soon / If you do not find it, then / Die without blemish / Patih, do not speak / His heart is filled with great sorrow.)

At the textual level, the phrases “if you do not succeed, you must not return” and “die without blemish” convey absolute authority and an uncompromising expectation of success. In discourse practice, the interaction reflects a one-way command, emblematic of hierarchical governance where subordinates cannot challenge orders. Socially, it mirrors traditional Sasak leadership models that prioritize loyalty, discipline, and perseverance.



The cultural leaders interviewed provided nuanced interpretations of this passage. CL1 emphasized that such orders were traditionally considered “a test of loyalty,” where fulfilling a leader’s request was tied to one’s honor and family reputation. CL2 added that the language used in the manuscript also conveyed “a warning about the consequences of neglecting duty,” which could extend beyond the individual to the community’s standing. CL3 reflected on its relevance today, noting that “young people can still learn from this discipline, even if the methods of instruction have changed.” CL4 viewed the passage as an example of “leadership that demands results, but also trust in the appointed person’s abilities.” CL5 saw it as a moral lesson in resilience: “When given a task, you finish it wholeheartedly, no matter the challenge.”

Moral instruction also appears in domestic contexts. In one narrative, a mother questions her son about the source of wealth he brings home:

"Lan narta den gawa iki / Saking pundi antuk kira / Menawi sira ulih anyolong / Aja mangkana anak king wang / Semaur putra nira / Mangsa mangkana kayeku / Arta hing srina rendra/"

(Translation: And the wealth you bring / Where did you get it, my child / Perhaps you have stolen it / Do not do that, my child / Said his child / It is not so, mother / This wealth is from the king.)

The exchange begins with suspicion and ends in reassurance, highlighting honesty and accountability as core moral values. CL2 remarked that this reflects “how elders safeguard the moral compass of the family.” CL4 linked it to the practice of “asking, listening, and clarifying before making judgments,” a principle they believe is crucial in modern parenting. CL1 emphasized that “a good name is more valuable than material wealth,” while CL3 and CL5 pointed out that the narrative also models respectful communication between generations.

Through the interplay of textual evidence and community perspectives, *Serat Labangkara I* emerges not only as a repository of cultural heritage but also as a living moral guide that continues to shape disciplined, responsible, and principled individuals within Sasak society.

3.2. RQ2 – Contribution to the Preservation of Sasak Cultural Identity

The analysis shows that *Serat Labangkara I* plays a vital role in safeguarding the cultural identity of the Sasak people by preserving religious traditions, poetic forms, and oral literature practices. One passage highlights the manuscript’s deep connection to Islamic values and local devotional customs:

"Wangtiki amarna ring gita / Lii wong cabol arsa Anggayuh langit / Sina wengi pupuh pangkur / Tan netang panca baya / Kangen teda maring Yang Suksma kang ngagung / Doh akeneng pancabaya / Tan kebletang tulah sari/"

(Translation: There is a story / There is a small person who wants to reach the sky / From Isha until true dawn / Unaware of danger / Ask the Almighty God / May danger be far away / And may you not encounter danger.)

Textually, the imagery of “wanting to reach the sky” expresses an aspiration beyond human capability, tempered by a humble appeal to divine protection. Structurally, the passage follows the *timbang pangkur* rhyme pattern, a hallmark of Sasak poetic tradition. The combination of Islamic prayer references with indigenous rhyme conventions exemplifies the fusion of religion and local artistry.

Cultural leaders offered varied perspectives on this integration. CL1 explained that the reference to praying from Isha until dawn is “a reminder of the sacred hours, when the body and mind are most receptive to God’s guidance.” CL2 viewed the passage as “a bridge between the mosque and the cultural stage,” showing that worship can be embedded within artistic performance. CL3 stressed the importance of the *timbang pangkur* as “a cultural signature that distinguishes Sasak literature from other traditions.” CL4 highlighted the role of the *bepaos* recitation tradition in keeping both the poetic form and its messages alive: “Every time we recite it, we are keeping the language, rhythm, and prayer intact.” CL5 noted its pedagogical value, saying, “Children learn their religion and their heritage together — that is what makes this text powerful.”

The preservation of Sasak identity is also supported through the manuscript’s consistent use of culturally specific literary aesthetics. The *timbang pangkur* pattern, with its fixed number of lines and vowel endings, not only gives musicality to the verses but also serves as a mnemonic device for oral transmission. In social practice, these structures are performed during community gatherings, reinforcing shared identity through collective participation.

Cultural leaders agreed that globalization poses a threat to these traditions, but they differed in emphasis. CL1 warned that “if younger generations cannot recite or recognize the *timbang*, they lose a piece of themselves.” CL2 emphasized the need for documentation: “If we only keep it in memory, it can vanish in one generation.” CL3 saw potential in adaptation: “It can survive if we bring it into schools and digital platforms.” CL4 underscored the communal aspect: “It’s not only about the text — it’s about gathering, singing, and feeling part of a lineage.” CL5 concluded that preserving *Serat Labangkara I* means “preserving our moral compass, our way of speaking, and our way of seeing the world.” Through its religious content, poetic form, and oral performance traditions, *Serat Labangkara I* not only preserves the linguistic and artistic heritage of the Sasak people but also reinforces a collective cultural identity that continues to be relevant in the face of global cultural shifts.

3.3. RQ3 – Integration into Modern Educational Frameworks

The analysis suggests that *Serat Labangkara I* contains values and pedagogical principles that can be adapted to contemporary educational settings, aligning with both Indonesia's character education goals and broader cultural preservation efforts. One passage explicitly addresses the pursuit of knowledge and the importance of humility in learning:

"Angling cira kang ngamaca / Den petits reke sawani ning tulis / Aja ketung kulan ning lagu / Aja wada wong anunurat / Sepelekara tanking besa sira weruh / Pan base siji sedasa / Yentan weruh beguru malik//"

(Translation: By you who read / So that it matches the sound of the writing / Do not enjoy the song / Do not blame the writer / I do not know grammar / One is called ten / If you do not know, learn again.)

Textually, the passage contains imperatives such as "do not enjoy the song" and "do not blame the writer," which shift the reader's attention away from aesthetic enjoyment toward the deeper purpose of learning and understanding. The closing line, "If you do not know, learn again," reinforces the principle of continuous education and respect for teachers — a concept deeply embedded in Sasak culture through *beguru* (learning from elders).

Cultural leaders offered different perspectives on how these messages could be integrated into modern education. CL1 stressed that humility in this passage "teaches students not to be arrogant with knowledge, because wisdom grows when we accept our limits." CL2 saw it as a reminder for active learning: "It tells young people to keep asking, keep practicing, until understanding is complete." CL3 emphasized its relevance for curriculum design: "Teachers can use this to show that learning is both intellectual and moral work." CL4 suggested that these lessons could be incorporated into project-based learning, where students analyze the text and present their interpretations, while CL5 highlighted the importance of digital adaptation: "If we record these verses and put them online with explanations, students everywhere can learn from them."

The manuscript's emphasis on discipline, honesty, and humility also aligns with the core values promoted in the national curriculum and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in fostering responsible, ethical, and culturally aware citizens. Cultural leaders agreed that integrating *Serat Labangkara I* into modern classrooms would require careful adaptation to suit contemporary learning styles without losing the integrity of the original text. CL1 cautioned against simplifying the language too much, as "the beauty of the old words is part of the learning." CL2 recommended combining the original text with translations to help younger audiences engage. CL3 advocated for teacher training on how to use traditional manuscripts in moral education. CL4 proposed community-school partnerships, where elders could come to schools to perform *bepaos* sessions, and CL5 saw the potential for using the text in extracurricular programs to encourage voluntary moral reflection. By embedding *Serat Labangkara I* into educational frameworks — whether through literature, civic education, religious studies, or digital platforms — its moral and cultural lessons can be transmitted to younger generations in ways that are both relevant and authentic. This ensures that the manuscript remains a living source of guidance, bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and modern pedagogy.

The findings reveal that *Serat Labangkara I* serves as both a repository of cultural heritage and a practical guide for moral development. The manuscript communicates values such as discipline, perseverance, honesty, humility, and responsibility through a combination of royal commands, moral dialogues, religious devotion, and educational advice. Its unique blend of Islamic teachings, traditional Sasak poetic forms, and oral performance traditions not only preserves cultural identity but also provides meaningful life lessons that remain relevant in contemporary society. Insights from cultural leaders underscore the manuscript's potential for integration into modern educational contexts through school curricula, community-led initiatives, and digital platforms. Overall, *Serat Labangkara I* emerges as a living cultural resource capable of bridging traditional wisdom with the moral and educational needs of present and future generations.

4. Discussion

The aim of this research was to examine the role of *Serat Labangkara I* in character education and cultural preservation within the Sasak community. The findings confirm the vital importance of traditional texts for moral education and cultural resilience. Crucially, *Serat Labangkara I* functions not merely as a literary artifact but as a moral compass, cultural archive, and pedagogical resource. Its narratives promote values such as discipline, perseverance, honesty, humility, and responsibility, demonstrating how traditional literature can effectively transmit ethical principles in ways that are contextually grounded and adaptable across generations (Na'amneh, et al., 2025; Parmini, et al., 2025).

What distinguishes *Serat Labangkara I* from many other traditional manuscripts is its distinctive blend of religious devotion, governance principles, and educational guidance. This synthesis reflects Sasak society, where faith, authority, and communal responsibility are intertwined (Dasopang, et al., 2023; Kholis, et al., 2023). The poetic structures, rhythmic patterns, and oral performance traditions ensure that the values it promotes are not only read but also heard and felt. These qualities give the text a living dimension, allowing it to remain relevant even as educational methods evolve (Ağbaht et al., 2024; Gowe, 2025). As globalization threatens local traditions, *Serat Labangkara I* stands as a testament to the resilience of indigenous knowledge systems. Its survival suggests that when communities actively engage with traditional texts, they can resist cultural homogenization (Dorji et al., 2024; Fox & Enari, 2025). Rather than being static relics, such texts function as dynamic tools for shaping identity, fostering social cohesion, and guiding moral development in contemporary society (Brady & Van Bavel, 2025; Vanello, 2024).

The moral teachings embedded in *Serat Labangkara I* align closely with the objectives of modern character education, especially in nurturing values such as integrity, empathy, self-control, and communal responsibility. These virtues resonate with national educational goals in Indonesia, where character formation is recognized as a fundamental pillar of schooling (Bonnefon et al., 2024; Safrilsyah, et al., 2024). Importantly, the text's guidance is not prescriptive in a rigid sense but is conveyed through narratives, symbolic language, and metaphors, encouraging learners to engage with moral concepts through personal reflection and contextual adaptation (Shadi et al., 2024; Sinnott, 2025). However, one of the critical challenges in contemporary moral education lies in translating these traditional values into frameworks that address present-day ethical dilemmas—such as those emerging from digital interactions, environmental crises, and shifting social norms. The implicit moral reasoning within *Serat Labangkara I*—emphasizing self-awareness, respect for others, and harmonious coexistence—remains highly relevant but requires reinterpretation to guide learners in contexts far removed from the historical realities in which the text was created (Hammerschmidt, 2025; Wang, 2025).

Nevertheless, the proposition of integrating traditional manuscripts into modern curricula must be tempered by a recognition of significant implementation challenges. While the values within the text are relevant, institutional reluctance often hinders their adoption, driven by rigid national curricula that prioritize standardized testing over local content. Furthermore, one of the critical challenges in contemporary moral education lies in translating these traditional values into frameworks that address present-day ethical dilemmas—such as those emerging from digital interactions, environmental crises, and shifting social norms. Additionally, within Indonesia's religiously pluralistic educational landscape, the specific Islamic-Sasak orientation of *Serat Labangkara I* may present barriers to universal adoption in diverse classrooms. Educators face the difficult task of contextualizing the manuscript's specific religious references so they remain inclusive without diluting the text's cultural authenticity. The implicit moral reasoning within *Serat Labangkara I*—emphasizing self-awareness, respect for others, and harmonious coexistence—remains highly relevant but requires reinterpretation and careful pedagogical framing to guide learners in contexts far removed from the historical realities in which the text was created (Hammerschmidt, 2025; Wang, 2025).

The erosion of traditional reading and oral performance practices further threatens the intergenerational transmission of these values. In many cases, cultural texts are preserved physically yet lose their performative and pedagogical dimensions (Buragohain et al., 2024; Yan, 2025). To counter this, educators and cultural activists have advocated integrating traditional manuscripts into both formal curricula and community-based learning programs, using face-to-face engagement alongside digital media to bridge generational gaps (Alhalasa et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2023). Viewed in this light, *Serat Labangkara I* is not merely a heritage artifact but a living repository of ethical wisdom. Its integration into moral education—through storytelling, dramatization, or digital adaptation—offers a way to address contemporary moral challenges while reinforcing cultural identity. Traditional texts like this one safeguard and transmit local wisdom, functioning both as cultural archives and as active instruments of moral and social guidance. They encapsulate a community's worldview, ethical norms, and practical wisdom, offering insights into harmonious living, social cohesion, and the human–nature relationship (Harahap & Hamka, 2023; Zaluchu, 2023).

Although deeply rooted in Sasak tradition, the text's resonance extends beyond local contexts. Similar to other regional manuscripts, it reflects values akin to *tepa selira* (empathy), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and *andhap asor* (humility), which remain vital for maintaining cultural integrity amid globalizing influences (Ozer & Kamran, 2025; O'Connor, 2025). Preservation, therefore, is not only about conserving the physical manuscript but also ensuring the continuity of cultural practices that animate it—such as ritual readings, interpretive discussions, and artistic performances (Shields, 2023; Van Dussen, 2023). Without these performative traditions, the text risks becoming a static relic, disconnected from its intended social functions. While digitization and archiving have expanded access, they also raise questions about whether deep cultural engagement can occur through digital-only formats (Berge & Haugsevje, 2024; Innocente, 2023). Educational integration offers one promising pathway to sustaining relevance. When taught in schools or community learning programs, *Serat Labangkara I* can foster cultural pride and intergenerational dialogue, connecting heritage-based wisdom with contemporary issues such as environmental sustainability, social justice, and ethical decision-making (Ferretti, 2023; Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025).

Revitalizing traditional manuscripts like *Serat Labangkara I* requires navigating a complex interplay between preservation needs, cultural relevance, and modern accessibility. One of the main challenges is the fragile state of many manuscripts, which are susceptible to environmental damage, neglect, and loss due to limited conservation resources (Hanif et al., 2023; Perino et al., 2024). Moreover, the decline in proficiency in reading classical scripts and the waning interest among younger generations further jeopardize their transmission (Krasa et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025). Another barrier is the perception that such texts are outdated or irrelevant to contemporary life. Without proper contextualization, the moral lessons and philosophical reflections within these manuscripts may be overlooked (Cajthaml, 2023; Geniusas, 2023). The challenge, therefore, is not only to preserve the physical form but to reinterpret the narratives so they resonate with present-day issues such as environmental conservation, interfaith harmony, and civic responsibility (Nigel, 2020).

At the same time, revitalization presents significant opportunities. Advances in digital technology allow for searchable archives, interactive learning platforms, and multimedia storytelling, making these works accessible to wider audiences (Schiff, 2023; Silberman, 2022). Collaboration between cultural custodians, educators, and technology experts can ensure that

digitization is not merely preservation but also cultural activation—sparking new forms of engagement such as virtual performances, annotated translations, and community study circles (Kpedekpo, 2024; Poddar, 2024). By balancing conservation efforts with adaptive interpretation, the revitalization of *Serat Labangkara I* and similar manuscripts can foster both cultural continuity and innovation, ensuring that local wisdom remains a living, evolving force in the community.

The implications of this study extend to multiple domains, highlighting the need for deliberate integration of traditional manuscripts like *Serat Labangkara I* into educational, cultural, and policy frameworks. For educators, the findings underscore the potential of heritage-based resources to enrich character education by embedding moral values within culturally resonant narratives. This approach not only strengthens learners' ethical reasoning but also fosters cultural pride and identity formation. For cultural policymakers and community leaders, the study points to the importance of preserving both the physical form and the performative traditions that animate such texts, ensuring their transmission through intergenerational dialogue and community engagement. At a broader societal level, the revitalization of traditional literature offers a means to counter the homogenizing effects of globalization by reinforcing local wisdom and values that are adaptable to modern contexts, including environmental stewardship, social harmony, and civic responsibility. By positioning *Serat Labangkara I* as both a cultural artifact and a living pedagogical tool, this research advocates for an educational paradigm that values local heritage as an essential component of sustainable cultural development.

5. Conclusions

This study explored the role of *Serat Labangkara I* in promoting character education and preserving cultural heritage within the Sasak community. The analysis reveals that the text is not merely a historical manuscript but a living source of ethical guidance, cultural identity, and social cohesion. Its narratives teach values such as discipline, honesty, humility, perseverance, and communal responsibility, using symbolic language and performance traditions to ensure they are passed down across generations.

The text's unique synthesis of religious devotion, governance, and educational guidance ensures its enduring relevance, mirroring the deep connections between faith, authority, and community in Sasak society. However, the study also highlights significant challenges to its preservation. These include the decline of oral traditions, fading proficiency in classical scripts, and the practical difficulties of integrating specific religious texts into pluralistic, modern school curricula.

In response, revitalization strategies—such as digital adaptation and community-based learning—offer pathways to sustain its role as both a cultural archive and a moral compass. The implications extend beyond the Sasak context. First, this research demonstrates that traditional texts can be adapted to address contemporary ethical challenges, such as environmental stewardship and social justice. Second, it underscores that heritage preservation must go beyond safeguarding physical artifacts to include the active cultural practices that keep them alive. Finally, the study suggests that collaboration between cultural custodians, educators, and technology experts is essential to create innovative platforms for heritage-based education. Through such efforts, manuscripts like *Serat Labangkara I* can remain vibrant tools for nurturing moral integrity and cultural pride in a globalized world.

6. Declarations

6.1. Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study. Each participant received a clear and concise explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of their participation. They were explicitly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or penalty. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that their identities would be anonymous in all reports and publications. Data was securely stored, accessible only to the research team, and all identifiable information was removed during analysis. Additionally, participants were made aware that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes and would not be shared with third parties without their explicit consent.

6.2. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that the generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool Gemini was used exclusively for language editing and/or grammatical improvement. The use of AI did not influence the scientific content, study design, data analysis, data interpretation, results, or conclusions of the manuscript. Full responsibility for the content remains with the authors.

6.3. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

6.4. Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

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