

Mass Ruwatan as a Medium for Introducing Local Cultural Values in Early Childhood Education in Kadilangu Village, Demak

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Abstract

The Murwokolo Mass Ruwatan is a local cultural tradition practiced by the community of Kadilangu Village, Demak, and transmitted across generations. The tradition is conducted twice a year, before Ramadan in March and in October. Amid social change and modernization, the continuity of local traditions involves not only the preservation of ritual practices but also the transmission of cultural values to younger generations. Young children, as future members of society, need opportunities to become familiar with local culture through meaningful experiences within their social and cultural environment. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Murwokolo Mass Ruwatan and examine its potential as a medium for introducing local cultural values to young children in Kadilangu Village, Demak. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through interviews and documentation. The main informant was Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., who served as the chairperson of the Murwokolo Mass Ruwatan procession. Documentation was used to examine children's involvement, particularly in the *siraman* ritual. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review addressing local wisdom-based early childhood education, cultural introduction, experiential learning, and cultural transmission. Data were analyzed descriptively and thematically by identifying the stages of the procession, their meanings, children's involvement, and the cultural values embedded in the tradition. The findings indicate that the Murwokolo Mass Ruwatan consists of several interconnected stages, including participant registration and classification, *selamatan*, *kirab*, *siweran*, *wayang kulit* performance, *sungkeman*, *siraman*, *tebusan sukerta*, *mbabut kupat luar*, and *wilujengan*. Children can participate directly in several stages, particularly the *siraman*, which is understood by the community as a symbolic process of removing and cleansing *sengkala*. The tradition also embodies customary, social, and religious values while creating intergenerational interactions among children, parents, elders, the *dalang*, and the wider community. These findings suggest that the Murwokolo Mass Ruwatan has potential as a contextual, participatory, and intergenerational medium for introducing local cultural values to young children. However, this study does not establish its effectiveness in influencing children's development or character formation; rather, it highlights the tradition's potential as a space for cultural experience and intergenerational transmission of local values.

Keywords: mass ruwatan, Murwokolo, local culture, early childhood, cultural transmission

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1. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is an educational stage that plays an important role in establishing various foundations of child development, including the development of religious and moral values, socio-emotional development, language, cognitive development, as well as an understanding of the social and cultural environment (Khaironi & Ilhami, 2018). At this stage, children learn not only through learning activities conducted in educational institutions, but also through direct experiences within the family and community environment. Therefore, the socio-cultural environment in which children grow can serve as a learning resource that provides contextual experiences while helping children recognize the values that exist in their surroundings (Islami et al., 2023). The introduction of culture from an early age is important because children are part of a community that will become the successors of a particular culture (Rizkiyani & Sari, 2022).

Local culture essentially consists not only of objects or artistic products, but also encompasses traditions, values, norms, knowledge, social practices, and various forms of community expression that are passed down across generations (Brata, 2016). In the context of early childhood education, the

existence of local culture can be utilized as a learning resource that is closely connected to children's lives (Muzakki & Fauziah, 2015). Children can become acquainted with culture through observation, participation, interaction with adults, as well as experiences of taking part in activities conducted within their living environment (Khofsah et al., 2023). Such an approach allows the process of cultural introduction to take place concretely and not merely through verbal explanations. Thus, traditions that remain alive within the community have the potential to become part of children's educational experiences, particularly in introducing social and moral values, togetherness, identity, and local wisdom (Karwati, 2016).

One of the traditions that is still practiced by the community of Kadilangu Village, Demak, is the Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo (Ashadi, 2020). This tradition has been carried out from generation to generation and, according to information provided by Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., as the head of the implementation of the mass ruwatan procession, is conducted twice a year, namely in March before Ramadan and in October. Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo involves various elements of the community and consists of a complex series of processions, beginning with participant registration, grouping of sukerta participants, selamatan, kirab, handover of participants, opening, siweran, a wayang kulit performance featuring the Murwokolo story, sungkeman, siraman, and wilujengan. This series demonstrates that ruwatan is not merely an individual ritual act, but rather a cultural activity involving interactions among children, families, elders, puppeteers, and the community (Anwar & Saraswati, 2025).

The presence of children in the ruwatan procession is one aspect that is interesting to examine from the perspective of early childhood education. In its implementation, children are not merely participants who undergo the procession, but are situated within a social environment that directly demonstrates the cultural practices of the community (Suprpti et al., 2019). Children can observe various forms of intergenerational interaction, participate in a series of activities with the community, gain experience regarding practices of showing respect to parents through sungkeman, and observe traditional artistic practices through wayang kulit performances. One part that visually demonstrates children's involvement is the siraman procession, in which children are bathed using water originating from seven wells and seven kinds of flowers. According to Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., the siraman procession is understood as an effort to remove and cleanse the sengkala present within the ruwatan participants.

Historically, Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu also demonstrates the relationship between Javanese culture and Islamic values. Based on information provided by informants, the practice of ruwatan in the past was utilized by the wali as one of the means of disseminating Islam. A tradition that had previously developed within the community was subsequently given an Islamic character and integrated with the context of Javanese culture. Within this context, ruwatan became part of a cultural practice that demonstrates the process of transmitting knowledge, values, and community identity from one generation to the next. The continuity of this tradition also demonstrates the existence of a space for interaction between culture, social life, and religious values that can be observed by children within their living environment (Maryano et al., 2022).

From an educational perspective, children's experiences in participating in local traditions can be understood as a form of environment- and culture-based learning. Children have opportunities to learn through real experiences, observe social practices, interact with community members, and recognize cultural symbols and activities present in their immediate environment. A number of studies on culture-based education indicate that the cultural environment can serve as a learning resource that helps children understand their social values and identity. The introduction of culture through direct experience is also relevant to the characteristics of early childhood learning, which places concrete experiences, play, interaction, and the environment as important components of the learning process (Saraswati, 2015).

Nevertheless, studies on the ruwatan tradition to date have predominantly been situated within the perspectives of culture, ritual, history, beliefs, and the continuity of traditions. Studies specifically examining the presence of children in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo as an experience of introducing local cultural values from the perspective of early childhood education remain relatively limited. In fact, children's presence in community cultural practices provides an opportunity to examine how traditions can function as social environments in which cultural introduction takes place naturally. This perspective is important to examine so that local traditions are not only understood as cultural heritage that must be preserved, but also as a source of experiences that can introduce cultural values to younger generations from an early age.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to describe Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu Village, Demak, and to analyze its potential as a medium for introducing local cultural values to young children. The analysis is conducted by utilizing interview data and activity documentation as sources of field data, which are then strengthened through a literature review concerning early childhood education, culture-based education, cultural values, and cultural transmission. This study is expected to provide an alternative perspective on the utilization of local traditions as part of children's learning environment while strengthening the understanding that cultural preservation can be carried out through the introduction of and experiences with culture from an early age.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the implementation of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu Village, Demak, as well as to identify the cultural values contained within it and its potential as a medium for introducing local culture to young children. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on understanding cultural practices, the meaning of the procession, children's involvement, and the values transmitted through the tradition within the natural context of community life (Moleong, 2017).

The research was conducted within the context of the Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo activity organized by the community of Kadilangu Village, Demak. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with three informants representing different perspectives on the ritual: Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., who served as the head of the implementation of the mass ruwatan procession; Farhan Julianto, a child who participated directly in the ruwatan procession; and Basuki Sutardjo, Farhan Julianto's parent. Adi Purnomo was selected because of his direct involvement in organizing the activity and his knowledge of the history, sequence, procedures, and cultural meaning of the ruwatan procession. Farhan Julianto was included as a child participant to provide a direct account of his involvement and observations during the ritual, while Basuki Sutardjo was included to provide a parental perspective on the child's participation and the cultural values encountered through the activity.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and documentation. Separate interviews were conducted with each informant using interview guides adapted to their respective roles and capacities. The interview with Adi Purnomo addressed the history of ruwatan, the timing and implementation of the activity, the sequence of processions, the purpose of ruwatan, the meaning of siraman, and the customary, social, and religious values contained within the tradition. The interview with Farhan Julianto focused on his participation, observations, and experiences during the ruwatan and siraman processions using age-appropriate questions. The interview with Basuki Sutardjo focused on his observations of the child's participation and his understanding of the cultural values conveyed through the ritual.

Activity documentation was also collected, particularly visual documentation showing children's involvement in the ruwatan and siraman processions. Documentation was used to describe the form and setting of children's participation and to complement the interview data. Visual documentation was not

treated as evidence of educational or developmental effects. Instead, it served as supporting evidence for interpreting the children's involvement within the cultural environment of the community.

The use of three informants with different positions, combined with activity documentation, enabled source and technique triangulation. Information obtained from the ritual organizer was compared with the account of the child participant and the observations of the parent. These interview accounts were further compared with the available documentation to examine the consistency of information concerning the implementation of the ritual, children's participation, and the cultural values encountered during the activity. Interpretations concerning children's cultural experience were therefore based not solely on the researcher's observations of photographs or on the organizer's account, but also on direct information from a participating child and the child's parent.

In addition to field data, this study employed a literature review as a secondary data source to strengthen the analysis of the relationship between local traditions and early childhood education (Snyder, 2019). The literature used included research and academic sources concerning early childhood education based on local culture, local wisdom, values education, contextual learning, cultural literacy, and intergenerational cultural transmission. Studies on early childhood education learning based on local culture indicate that community culture can be used as a learning resource and as a means of introducing values, norms, religion, and customs to children.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and thematically through several stages, namely reading and understanding the entirety of the interview and documentation data, identifying information relevant to the research focus, grouping the data based on themes, interpreting the relationships among themes, and presenting the research findings narratively (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of meaning emerging from the qualitative data and to organize them into relevant themes. The main themes in this study included: (1) the identity and continuity of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo; (2) the sequence and meaning of the ruwatan procession; (3) customary, social, and religious values; (4) children's involvement in the ruwatan activity; and (5) the potential of ruwatan as a medium for introducing local culture to young children.

Data validity was established through technique triangulation, namely by comparing information obtained from the interviews with activity documentation data. Meanwhile, the literature review was used to strengthen the interpretation of aspects related to early childhood education, rather than as a substitute for data concerning the implementation of the tradition (Moleong, 2017). Thus, this study was not intended to measure the influence or effectiveness of ruwatan on children's development, but rather to describe and analyze the potential of the tradition as an environment for cultural experiences that can support the introduction of local cultural values to young children.

3. Results

This study examines the implementation of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu Village, Demak, with particular attention to children's involvement in the ruwatan procession and the cultural values contained within it. The research data were obtained through an interview with Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., as the head of the implementation of the Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo procession, as well as activity documentation showing children's involvement in one of the main stages of ruwatan, namely the siraman procession. Based on the results of data collection, several main aspects were identified, including the identity and continuity of the tradition, its historical background, the sequence of the procession, the purpose and meaning of ruwatan, the meaning of siraman, children's involvement, cultural values, and the continuity of the tradition for the next generation.

3.1. Identity and Continuity of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo

The research results show that the activity conducted by the community of Kadilangu Village is known as Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo. This tradition is a cultural practice that has been carried out from generation to generation by the people of Kadilangu. Ruwatan is not conducted incidentally, but has a scheduled period of implementation that has become part of the pattern of organizing the community's tradition.



Figure 1

Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo (Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026)

Based on the information provided by Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo is conducted twice a year, namely in March, particularly before the month of Ramadan, and in October. Such periodic implementation indicates that ruwatan remains part of the cultural activities of the Kadilangu community.

In its implementation, the activity involves several parties with different functions. The informant, Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., serves as the head of the implementation of the mass ruwatan procession. In addition, there are committees responsible for organizing the activity, participants who take part in the ruwatan, parents or families of the participants, elders, puppeteers, as well as community members involved in the series of activities.

The involvement of these various parties indicates that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo is conducted as a communal activity. The implementation of the tradition does not only involve participants who undergo the procession, but also involves families and the community who support the continuity of the entire series of activities.

3.2. Historical Background of Ruwatan in Kadilangu

The historical background of ruwatan in Kadilangu is closely related to Javanese cultural traditions and the development of Islam within the local community. Adi Purnomo (2018), in his book *Ruwatan: Tradisi di Kadilangu*, describes the development of ruwatan in Kadilangu as part of the cultural life of the community and its interaction with the development of Islamic values. This historical account is consistent with the findings of the present study. According to Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., who served as the head of the implementation of the Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo procession, ruwatan was

historically associated with the wali as a medium through which Islamic teachings were disseminated through existing Javanese cultural practices.

In the historical development of the tradition, the implementation of ruwatan in Kadilangu was reportedly discontinued during the leadership of Raden Abdul Fattah Al Akbar Sayidin Panatagama. Adi Purnomo (2018) records that the discontinuation was related to the perception that certain elements of the ritual were inconsistent with Islamic teachings. The interview data obtained from Adi Purnomo further support this account, particularly regarding the community's response to the discontinuation of the tradition. The cessation of the ritual reportedly generated concern among community members because ruwatan had been transmitted across generations and had become part of local cultural life. The tradition was subsequently revived through adjustments that incorporated Islamic elements into its implementation.

According to Adi Purnomo (2018), the process of cultural adaptation was associated with the role of the wali in incorporating Islamic values into established Javanese cultural practices. The interview with Adi Purnomo similarly indicates that the revival of ruwatan was understood locally as an effort to maintain the continuity of the tradition while adapting its implementation to the religious life of the community. This process is subsequently associated with Sunan Kalijaga, who is described in the local historical account as having continued the integration of Islamic values with Javanese cultural forms.

The historical development of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu can therefore be understood as a process of cultural continuity and adaptation. The tradition was maintained through intergenerational transmission while undergoing adjustments in response to the development of Islamic values within the community. The account presented by Adi Purnomo (2018) and corroborated by the interview data provides a basis for understanding ruwatan in Kadilangu as a cultural practice shaped by the interaction between Javanese tradition and Islamic values.

This historical background also provides an important basis for understanding the contemporary practice of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu. The ritual is not positioned solely as a remnant of an earlier Javanese tradition, but as a cultural practice whose form and meaning have developed through continuous transmission and adaptation within the religious and social life of the community.

3.3. Sequence of the Implementation of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo

Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo consists of a series of processions comprising several stages. Based on the interview results, the first stage is participant registration with the committee. Participants who have registered are then grouped based on the type or category of sukerta children. Following the grouping process, re-registration is conducted as part of the preparation before participants take part in the ruwatan procession.

The next stage is changing clothes. Participants wear a single piece of white cloth known as kain mori or kain kafan. After the participants put on the clothing, the activity continues with selamatan as part of the ritual preparation sequence. Following selamatan, participants take part in the participant procession (kirab). The kirab is then followed by the handover of sukerta participants and the opening of the activity. After the opening, the process of tinampi participants sukerto to the ruwatan puppeteer (dalang) is conducted. This stage forms part of the process of receiving participants into the main sequence of the ruwatan procession.

The next procession is siweran. According to the informant, at this stage, sukerta participants are positioned as the puppeteer's children and are tied using a circular gawe rope. After that, the activity continues with a wayang kulit performance featuring the Murwokolo story. The performance is conducted by the puppeteer Ki Muharso, whom the informant refers to as Dalang Kondho Buwono.



Figure 2

Wayang Kulit Performance (Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026)

Following the wayang performance, the sungkeman procession is conducted. Participants perform sungkem to their parents to ask for prayers and blessings so that the sangkala present within them can be removed. This stage demonstrates direct involvement between the participants and their parents within the ruwatan sequence.



Figure 3

Sungkeman. Photograph published with informed consent from the child's parent/guardian (Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026)

The next stage is siraman, namely the bathing procession of the participants conducted by the puppeteer and other members. Siraman is one of the important stages because participants directly experience the procession. Following siraman, the sequence of activities continues with iberan peksi doro, tebusan sukerta, and mbabut kupat luar.



Figure 4

A child participating in the *siraman* procession during the Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu Village, Demak. Photograph published with informed consent from the child's parent/guardian.
(Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026)

The final sequence is *wilujengan*, namely an activity involving thanksgiving and collective prayer. Thus, the entire sequence of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo includes the stages of participant preparation, ritual implementation, wayang performance, interaction between participants and their parents, the *siraman* procession, and the closing activity in the form of thanksgiving and collective prayer.

3.4. Purpose and Meaning of Ruwatan for the Community

The interview results indicate that the primary purpose of implementing Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo is to remove the *sengkala* present within the participants. The informant explained that ruwatan is conducted as a means of casting away or removing misfortune through Javanese customary ritual processions. This interpretation constitutes one of the foundations for the community's continued practice of ruwatan. For the people of Kadilangu Village, ruwatan is not only related to participants who take part in the procession, but is also related to the existence of the tradition as part of community customs.

The informant stated that ruwatan carries meaning as a customary means and an effort to preserve customs from generation to generation. By continuing to conduct ruwatan periodically, the community maintains a cultural practice that has been inherited from previous generations.

The informant also explained that ruwatan participants are not limited to children. Individuals who have the intention of removing *sengkala* may also participate in the activity by following the provisions regarding the types or categories of *sukerta* participants. Thus, children constitute one of the groups involved in ruwatan, but are not the only group of participants.

3.5. Siraman Procession and the Meaning of Using Flower Water

One of the main findings of the study is found in the *siraman* procession, particularly because the research documentation demonstrates children's direct involvement in the procession. In the documentation, a child can be seen undergoing the ruwatan procession and being bathed by an elder.

According to the information provided by Adi Purnomo, S.Pd., M.Si., *siraman* carries the meaning of removing and cleansing the *sengkala* present within the participant. The procession uses water

originating from seven wells, which is then combined with seven kinds of flowers and oil that has been asma. The use of these elements constitutes part of the procedures contained within the siraman procession. Water and flowers are not merely used as ordinary bathing equipment, but constitute part of a ritual sequence that carries a particular meaning within the community's understanding of ruwatan.

The research documentation shows that the child is positioned as a participant undergoing the siraman procession. During the procession, there is an interaction between the child and the elder as the party carrying out part of the ritual. Thus, the child is directly present in one of the cultural practices that continues to be carried out by the Kadilangu community.



Figure 5

Child Siraman Procession in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo. Photograph published with informed consent from the child's parent/guardian (Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026)

3.6. Children's Involvement in Ruwatan Massal

Children's involvement in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo is one of the aspects examined in this study. Based on the interview results, children can become ruwatan participants if they fall within the categories determined in the sukerta tradition. Nevertheless, the informant emphasized that ruwatan is not specifically intended only for children. People who have the intention of removing sengkala may also participate in the procession. Children who become participants take part in a number of stages that have been determined within the ruwatan sequence. These stages include clothing preparation, selamatan, kirab, participant handover, participant reception by the puppeteer, siweran, wayang performance, sungkeman, siraman, and the subsequent series of processions through wilujengan.

This involvement indicates that children are situated within an activity environment attended by various age groups. Within a single series of activities, children may be together with parents, family members, elders, the puppeteer, the committee, and the community. Children also directly experience the processions carried out as part of the tradition, particularly during the siraman stage. The documentation obtained in the study reinforces these findings. The activity photographs show a child undergoing the siraman procession and directly interacting with the elder carrying out the procession. The documentation serves as visual evidence of the presence and involvement of children in the implementation of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo.

3.7. Values Contained in Ruwatan Massal

The interview results indicate that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo contains several values that the informant grouped into customary values, social values, and religious values. Customary values are related to the existence of ruwatan as a tradition passed down from generation to generation. The continued implementation of ruwatan on a regular basis indicates that the community continues to preserve the procedures and series of activities that constitute part of the tradition.

Social values are evident from the involvement of various parties in the implementation of the activity. Ruwatan involves participants, families, elders, the puppeteer, the committee, and the community. The activity takes place within a social space that brings various parties together in a series of collective activities. Religious values are related to the historical development of ruwatan in Kadilangu, as conveyed by the informant. Ruwatan is described as having undergone a process of incorporating an Islamic character and was subsequently developed within the context of an integration between Javanese culture and Islamic values. This aspect constitutes part of the background of the tradition maintained by the Kadilangu community.

These three values do not stand separately in the implementation of the activity. Customary values are evident through the continuity of the tradition, social values are present through community involvement, while religious values are related to the background of the development and implementation of the tradition in the life of the Kadilangu community.

3.8. Ruwatan as a Space for Introducing Culture to Children

The research data indicate that children's involvement in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo takes place through direct experiences within the series of cultural activities. Children become participants who undergo certain processions while also being situated within the community environment that is carrying out the tradition.

These experiences include children's presence in the kirab procession, wayang kulit performance, sungkeman, siraman, and the closing activity. At each stage, children encounter different forms of cultural activities. Children can observe the involvement of elders, parents, the puppeteer, and community members in implementing the tradition. Particularly in the siraman procession, children are directly involved as participants. Children are bathed by elders using the equipment prescribed by the tradition. Based on the information provided by the informant, the procession carries the meaning of removing and cleansing sengkala.

In addition to the siraman procession, the presence of a wayang kulit performance featuring the Murwokolo story also constitutes an important part of the cultural environment experienced by children. Children participating in the ruwatan sequence are situated in a setting that brings together ritual practices and traditional performing arts. Thus, the research results demonstrate that ruwatan provides experiences that directly introduce children to various forms of cultural practices. This introduction takes place through children's participation in the activities and their presence among community members who are carrying out the tradition.

3.9. Continuity of the Tradition and the Younger Generation

The interview results indicate that, according to the informant, Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo remains relevant to be conducted in the present. This relevance is related to the community's understanding of the function of ruwatan as a means of casting away or removing misfortune through Javanese customary ritual processions.

The continuity of ruwatan is also evident from its regular implementation twice a year. The tradition continues to be carried out and involves participants and the community in the series of activities. Children's involvement in the activity constitutes one form of the presence of the younger

generation in this cultural practice. Children can participate in the series of processions together with family members and the community, including taking part in the siraman procession, which is part of the ruwatan ritual.

Based on the overall research data, Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu Village is a tradition that continues to be conducted periodically and passed down from generation to generation. The tradition has a historical background related to Javanese culture and the development of Islam, a complex sequence of processions, as well as purposes and meanings related to the removal of sengkala. In its implementation, children can become participants and be directly involved in several stages, particularly the siraman procession. The tradition also contains customary, social, and religious values that constitute part of the cultural practices of the Kadilangu community.

The findings concerning children's involvement, the forms of the processions, and the cultural values subsequently serve as the basis for discussing the position of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo as a medium for introducing local cultural values to young children.

4. Discussion

4.1. Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo as a Practice of Local Cultural Transmission

The research results show that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo is a tradition that continues to be conducted periodically by the community of Kadilangu Village, namely twice a year. The continuity of its implementation indicates that ruwatan continues to hold a position in the social and cultural life of the community. The tradition is not only maintained as a ritual activity, but also becomes part of a cultural practice that continues to be presented and transmitted to the next generation.

In the context of early childhood education, local culture can become part of children's learning environment because children acquire knowledge not only through formal educational institutions, but also through families and communities. Ita and Ngonu (2025) explain that local wisdom-based learning can make the cultural environment a source of knowledge for children while also supporting the preservation of cultural heritage and the strengthening of identity. Thus, the presence of local culture surrounding children's lives has important value as an experiential context that enables children to recognize the culture that exists within their environment.

The research findings regarding the continuity of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo are consistent with this perspective. Ruwatan presents various cultural elements within a single series of activities, such as ritual procedures, the use of certain equipment, kirab, wayang kulit performances, sungkeman, siraman, and wilujengan. All of these elements form a cultural environment that can be observed and experienced by children involved in the activity.

Prastika et al. (2026) show that the introduction of local culture to young children can be carried out through activities that integrate local wisdom, such as traditional clothing, traditional games, regional songs, stories, and media relevant to the local culture. The study emphasizes that contextual experiences help children understand and appreciate local culture in a more meaningful manner. From this perspective, Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo can be understood as a form of cultural experience that naturally exists within community life.

Cultural transmission in ruwatan also takes place through the involvement of various generations. Children are present together with parents, elders, the puppeteer, the committee, and the community. Such interactions enable encounters between generations who have experience with the tradition and generations who are being introduced to the tradition. Therefore, the presence of children in ruwatan can be understood as one form of involvement of the younger generation in the continuity of local cultural practices.

4.2. Children's Involvement as a Direct Cultural Experience

One of the important findings of the study is children's direct involvement in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo, particularly in the siraman procession. The research documentation shows a child undergoing the bathing procession conducted by an elder. This finding indicates that children are not merely present as spectators, but become part of the participants who undergo certain stages of the tradition.

Direct involvement is important when associated with the characteristics of early childhood learning. At the early developmental stage, children acquire experiences through interaction with the environment, concrete activities, and direct involvement in various situations. Ita and Ngonu (2025) emphasize that the family, school, and community environments are sources of experiences that can enrich children's knowledge and development. Local wisdom-based learning is also considered relevant because it enables children to obtain contextual and meaningful experiences.

In the context of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo, these cultural experiences are formed through various activities. Children can observe the kirab procession, watch wayang kulit performances, participate in sungkeman, undergo siraman, and be present in a social environment involving various age groups. Thus, culture is introduced through concrete experiences, rather than solely through verbal explanations.

Prastika et al. (2026) found that the introduction of local culture to young children becomes more meaningful when conducted through activities that are close to children's experiences. This strengthens the position of the findings of this study that children's involvement in ruwatan provides a context that enables children to directly encounter forms of local culture.

Nevertheless, such involvement cannot automatically be understood as evidence that children have understood the entire meaning of ruwatan. This study did not measure the level of children's understanding after participating in the activity. Therefore, the finding that can be affirmed is that ruwatan provides a direct cultural experience that has the potential to serve as a means of cultural introduction, rather than that ruwatan has been proven to improve children's knowledge or development.

4.3. The Siraman Procession as an Experience of Recognizing Cultural Symbols

The siraman procession is one of the aspects that holds an important position in the discussion because it directly involves children. Based on the research findings, the community interprets siraman as a procession for removing and cleansing sengkala. The procession uses water from seven wells, seven types of flowers, and oil that has been asma.

From a cultural perspective, the use of these various items demonstrates that siraman is a practice that contains particular symbols and procedures. Children involved in the procession have the opportunity to directly observe the forms of equipment, activities, and parties involved in carrying out the ritual. Early childhood education based on local wisdom essentially positions culture as part of the learning experience. Ita and Ngonu (2025) state that local wisdom can be used as a relevant, contextual, and meaningful pedagogical approach. Thus, cultural elements present within children's environment can become a source of experience for understanding the life of their community.

In this study, siraman serves as a concrete example of how a cultural practice can be directly experienced by children. Children do not merely hear the terms ruwatan or siraman, but are situated in a situation in which the procession is actually carried out. If this experience is subsequently accompanied by explanations appropriate to children's developmental level, the elements of siraman can become an entry point for introducing concepts of tradition, symbols, cultural equipment, and intergenerational relationships. Wahyuni's (2024) research on local culture-based learning media also shows that cultural elements can be utilized as a source for introducing culture to young children. In the

context of this study, ruwatan even provides a more direct experience because children are present in an actual cultural practice.

Nevertheless, the meaning of “removing and cleansing sengkala” needs to be positioned as a cultural meaning believed by the community, rather than as empirical evidence concerning the disappearance of misfortune. The position of this study is to describe and analyze the meanings that exist within the community and their relevance to introducing culture to children.

4.4. Cultural Values, Intergenerational Relationships, and Artistic Expression

The research results show that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo contains customary, social, and religious values that position ruwatan as a cultural practice containing community knowledge and values. Customary values are evident in the continuity of ruwatan as a tradition passed down from generation to generation and conducted periodically by the community. Children who participate in the activity are situated within an environment where customary practices are directly carried out. Social values emerge from the collective involvement of participants, families, elders, the puppeteer, the committee, and the wider community. This collective structure brings together different generations within a shared cultural activity.

This finding is consistent with Halisa et al. (2025), who show that local wisdom can be integrated into early childhood education to introduce values such as mutual appreciation, mutual respect, mutual reminding, honesty, courage, and intellectual ability. In Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo, such values are not presented as separate character-learning materials, but are manifested through interactions and practices involving children, parents, elders, and the community. Religious values are related to the historical development of ruwatan as conveyed by the informant, who explained that the tradition underwent a process of incorporating an Islamic character. This indicates that ruwatan in Kadilangu brings together elements of Javanese tradition and the religious life of the community, resulting in multidimensional cultural content consisting of customs, social relationships, arts, and religious meanings.

The sungkeman procession provides a concrete form of these social and intergenerational relationships. The research findings show that participants perform sungkem to their parents to ask for prayers and blessings before continuing the series of processions. This practice manifests respect for parents through direct cultural action. Halisa et al. (2025) explain that local cultural values become relevant to character education when children encounter such values through activities performed within their immediate environment. In Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo, sungkeman also demonstrates a mechanism of intergenerational transmission because children interact directly with parents and elders who occupy positions as practitioners and inheritors of the tradition. Ita and Ngonu (2025) emphasize that family and community environments constitute important sources of children's experiences. Accordingly, the ruwatan provides a social setting in which cultural values are encountered through relationships between younger and older generations. This finding, however, does not establish changes in children's attitudes after participation, as the study did not measure such outcomes. The relevance of sungkeman is therefore limited to its potential function as an experience through which cultural values can be introduced.

Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo also incorporates traditional performing arts through a wayang kulit performance featuring the Murwokolo story. The presence of wayang demonstrates that ruwatan encompasses artistic expression alongside ritual practice. Prastika et al. (2026) show that local cultural activities, including stories, songs, games, and other cultural forms, can introduce culture to young children through experiences that are close to their lives. Within the ruwatan, children can observe the wayang performance, see the dalang as an artist, listen to the story, and experience the atmosphere of a traditional performance. Wayang Murwokolo therefore becomes part of children's cultural literacy experience by providing direct familiarity with traditional art within the community environment.

The combination of customary practices, social relationships, religious meanings, and performing arts demonstrates that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo contains diverse forms of cultural content within a single series of activities. Children encounter customs through participation, social values through interactions with parents and elders, religious meanings through the cultural development of the tradition, and artistic expression through wayang Murwokolo. These elements collectively demonstrate how cultural knowledge and values are transmitted through practices involving different generations. The findings position ruwatan as a cultural environment in which children can encounter local heritage through concrete practices and relationships, without implying that participation automatically produces measurable changes in children's character, cultural knowledge, or development.

4.5. Ruwatan as a Contextual Cultural Learning Space

Based on the overall findings, Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo can be understood as a contextual cultural learning space for early childhood because it brings together real cultural practices, children's involvement, and intergenerational social interaction within the community environment. Ita and Ngonu (2025) emphasize that learning based on local wisdom can support cultural heritage preservation, identity strengthening, and contextual and meaningful learning. Similarly, Devina et al. (2023), through a literature review, found that local cultural wisdom has the potential to strengthen early childhood character while helping children recognize and appreciate cultural diversity. The findings of this study demonstrate a concrete form of such a cultural learning environment. Ruwatan takes place within the community, allowing children to observe and experience cultural practices as they are actually performed rather than encountering culture solely through formal educational settings.

Prastika et al. (2026) show that the introduction of local culture becomes more meaningful when conducted through activities that are relevant to children's lives. This relevance is evident in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo because children participate in activities that occur within their own community environment. The tradition brings children into contact with cultural values, symbols, practices, arts, and social relationships through direct participation and observation. Accordingly, the term medium in this study does not refer to learning media in the form of tools, teaching materials, or technology, but to ruwatan as a mediator of cultural experience. The tradition provides a space in which children encounter various elements of Kadilangu's cultural heritage through an actual community practice.

The cultural experience provided by ruwatan is closely connected to the role of adults and the wider community. The research findings show that the implementation of ruwatan involves parents, elders, the dalang, the committee, and other community members. Ita and Ngonu (2025) explain that children's learning environment extends beyond schools to include families and communities, which provide experiences that contribute to children's knowledge and attitudes. Halisa et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that local wisdom becomes more contextual when cultural values are present in activities within children's immediate environment. In Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo, the involvement of different members of the community creates an environment where children encounter cultural practices through direct social relationships.

Parents and elders can function as links between cultural practices and children's understanding. Children may observe a cultural action, while adults have the opportunity to explain what is being done, who is involved, and what values are contained in the activity. This process of meaning-making is important because direct cultural experience does not necessarily result in complete cultural understanding without appropriate explanation and guidance. Therefore, the potential of ruwatan as a medium for introducing local culture becomes stronger when children's participation is accompanied by communication and guidance from parents, elders, teachers, or other community members. The findings position Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo as a contextual cultural learning space in which cultural experience, social interaction, and adult guidance intersect within the community's everyday cultural

environment, without implying that participation itself produces measurable changes in children's development or cultural understanding.

4.6. Cultural Transmission and Sustainability

The sustainability of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo is closely related to the transmission of the tradition to the younger generation. The research findings show that the community continues to conduct ruwatan periodically and that children remain involved as participants in accordance with the provisions of the tradition. Such continuity indicates that ruwatan remains part of community life and provides younger generations with opportunities to recognize and experience local cultural heritage.

From the perspective of early childhood education, introducing culture from an early age is relevant to the sustainability of cultural identity. Devina et al. (2023) show that local cultural wisdom can contribute to character strengthening while helping children recognize and appreciate cultural diversity. Ita and Ngonu (2025) similarly emphasize cultural heritage preservation and identity strengthening as important dimensions of local wisdom-based learning. Prastika et al. (2026) further show that introducing local culture through experiences based on local wisdom can help children understand, appreciate, and develop a sense of closeness to cultural heritage. In Kadilangu, children's participation in Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo therefore constitutes part of an ongoing process through which the tradition remains visible and recognizable to subsequent generations.

Cultural sustainability, however, does not depend solely on maintaining the ritual's implementation. Transmission also requires meaning-making so that younger generations can understand the cultural meanings and values associated with the tradition. Children's participation therefore needs to be complemented by explanations and guidance appropriate to their developmental stage. Parents, elders, teachers, and community members can contribute to this process by helping children understand what is being performed, who is involved, and what cultural values are contained within the activity.

Taken together, the findings indicate that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo has educational-cultural potential because its implementation contains direct cultural experiences, customary, social, and religious values, cultural symbols, traditional performing arts, and intergenerational interactions. This potential does not derive from ruwatan being formally designed as an early childhood education program, but from the cultural experiences embedded within an actual community practice. Ruwatan can therefore be understood as a socio-cultural space in which children encounter local cultural heritage through participation, observation, social relationships, and guidance from adults.

This interpretation does not establish that participation in ruwatan directly improves children's character, cultural knowledge, or development. The present study did not measure changes in such outcomes. The findings are therefore limited to demonstrating that Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo provides a cultural environment and experiences that have the potential to serve as a medium for introducing local cultural values to young children. This perspective extends the understanding of ruwatan beyond its ritual, historical, belief-related, and tradition-preservation dimensions by placing children's involvement within the process of cultural transmission. Cultural preservation is consequently related not only to maintaining the form of the ritual, but also to providing younger generations with opportunities to recognize, experience, and understand the cultural values contained within it.

5. Conclusion

Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo in Kadilangu Village, Demak, not only functions as a customary ritual passed down from generation to generation, but also serves as a socio-cultural space in which customary, social, and religious values, cultural symbols, traditional arts, and intergenerational

relationships take place simultaneously. Children's involvement in the ruwatan procession, particularly in the siraman, positions children as part of a real cultural experience within their living environment. This condition indicates that the introduction of local culture to young children can take place through direct involvement in the cultural practices of the community, thus ruwatan has the potential to serve as a contextual, participatory, and experience-based medium for introducing culture, rather than as a formal learning medium.

This potential does not mean that children's involvement automatically results in the understanding or internalization of cultural values. The meaning-making of the ruwatan experience is strongly influenced by the roles of parents, elders, educators, and the community in explaining the symbols, values, and meanings contained within it. Therefore, the sustainability of Ruwatan Massal Murwokolo as cultural heritage is not sufficient merely by maintaining the continuity of the ritual, but also requires ensuring the process of transmitting its meaning to the younger generation. Thus, ruwatan can be positioned as one source of local cultural experience that has the potential to support the introduction of cultural identity and values to young children, while its influence on children's development, character, or understanding still requires further research.

6. References

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