Exploring Ethnopedagogy: Applying Ethnographic Studies in Thematic Learning in Elementary Schools

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This research aims to examine how ethnopedagogy is implemented in thematic learning at MI Ma'arif Setono Jenangan Ponorogo, and analyze the impact of ethnopedagogy on the thematic learning outcomes of students at the institution. By integrating local wisdom into the curriculum, the study seeks to enhance educational quality while preserving cultural heritage.

Methodology: This study utilizes a qualitative ethnographic approach, gathering data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The analysis is conducted using domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, component analysis, and cultural theme analysis. These techniques allow for a detailed exploration of how local wisdom is woven into thematic learning.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that ethnopedagogy is incorporated into thematic learning by adapting the curriculum to include local cultural elements. Textbook materials are enriched with local wisdom related to values, norms, beliefs, arts, culture, and natural resources. This approach fosters a deeper connection between students and their cultural environment. Ethnopedagogy positively impacts students' thematic learning outcomes, with students from grades 1 to 6 consistently scoring above the Minimum Mastery Criteria. Additionally, ethnopedagogy enhances students' character development, promoting stronger nationalistic attitudes and a sense of responsibility toward preserving local culture.

Novelty/Originality of this Study: This study offers a fresh perspective on integrating local cultural values into primary education curricula. By demonstrating how ethnopedagogy can improve both academic performance and cultural awareness, the research provides a model for sustaining local heritage in the face of globalization, contributing to the broader discourse on culturally responsive education.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a process that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, integrating economies, societies, and technologies on a global scale. It is characterized by the increasing interconnectedness of nations and the shrinking of barriers related to economics, culture, politics, and communication [1]. However, this rapid advancement also poses significant challenges, especially in countries like Indonesia, where globalization threatens to erode local cultural values and identities. One of the most significant concerns is the diminishing

appreciation for Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, particularly among the younger generation. The relentless influx of foreign influences, exacerbated by the limitless nature of globalization, can lead to the displacement of local traditions and values by foreign cultures [2]-[4]. This shift is particularly evident among children and youth, whose exposure to global trends often distances them from their own cultural roots.

The pervasive influence of globalization has contributed to the erosion of cultural identity among Indonesia's younger generation [5], [6]. Observable shifts in daily behavior-ranging from fashion choices, lifestyle preferences, language use, to entertainment consumption-indicate a growing disconnect from traditional values. For example, many Indonesian youth favor foreign songs, dances, and media over indigenous cultural expressions. This trend not only displaces local traditions but also highlights a critical gap in cultural transmission: many young Indonesians are unfamiliar with their own regional heritage. Local culture, which is highly regarded by indigenous communities, is gradually being overshadowed by foreign cultural influences, potentially leading to the loss of cultural knowledge and practices among future generations [7], [8].

To counteract the adverse effects of globalization on local culture, strategic interventions are necessary. One effective method is through formal education, particularly by integrating local cultural values into the curriculum-a concept known as ethnopedagogy. Ethnopedagogy is an approach to education that emphasizes the transmission of local wisdom, traditions, and cultural practices through the educational process [9]-[12]. As a transformative tool, education plays a pivotal role in cultural preservation, preparing students to become committed citizens who are aware of and loyal to their national identity. Moreover, a strong education system can enhance a nation's progress by nurturing a generation that is both knowledgeable and culturally grounded.

Ethnopedagogy promotes the view that local knowledge is a valuable resource for innovation and societal development [13]-[15]. It is an educational practice rooted in local wisdom, encompassing various domains such as the arts, medicine, environmental management, and more. By turning the values and content inherent in local wisdom into a learning resource, ethnopedagogy fosters cultural awareness and a sense of identity among students. Implementing ethnopedagogical-based learning is crucial in Indonesia, a pluralistic nation with diverse ethnic groups, as it fosters the preservation of local culture and identity [16], [17].

However, globalization and technological advancements pose an increasing threat to the cultural fabric of Indonesian society. Without the early implementation of ethnopedagogy, there is a risk that these external influences will continue to displace local wisdom, especially in primary education where foundational cultural values are taught. This potential cultural shift is a pressing concern, as the boundaries between local and foreign cultures are increasingly blurred [18], [19]. Therefore, incorporating ethnopedagogical learning at the primary education level is not only essential but urgent.

Despite the growing recognition of ethnopedagogy's importance, there remains a significant gap in research, particularly concerning its implementation in primary schools. Existing studies have focused largely on the theoretical aspects of ethnopedagogy or its application in secondary education, with few investigations into how this approach is practically integrated at the primary school level. Furthermore, while there is substantial literature on the role of ethnopedagogy in preserving cultural identity, less attention has been given to its impact on thematic learning outcomes in primary education. This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of rural or less-privileged areas, where access to formal education is limited, and local culture plays a more central role in daily life.

To address this gap, the present research will focus on the implementation of ethnopedagogy-oriented learning at MI Ma'arif Setono Jenangan Ponorogo, a primary Islamic school. The study will explore how local wisdom is integrated into thematic learning and assess the impact of ethnopedagogical approaches on student outcomes. This research is significant because it contributes to the relatively underexplored field of ethnopedagogy in primary education, offering new insights into how culturally-based education can support both academic achievement and cultural preservation in a rapidly globalizing world. By examining this school as a case study, this research aims to highlight effective strategies for incorporating ethnopedagogy into primary education and emphasize its role in safeguarding Indonesia's cultural heritage.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to uncover the social realities of the community being studied. Qualitative research seeks to present a truthful representation of social reality using an inductive approach, as it focuses on understanding processes, meanings, and complex social phenomena in their natural settings rather than on testing hypotheses or quantifying variables [20]. According to Bogdan and Biklen, as cited by Sugiyono, qualitative research is conducted in natural conditions where the researcher is the key instrument, and it emphasizes descriptive data-typically in the form of words or images rather than numbers [21]. The primary objective of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth and holistic description of social reality, capturing the characteristics, nature, and models of the phenomena under investigation.

This research employs an ethnographic study design to provide a detailed description of the cultural and social aspects of the learning environment at MI Ma'arif Setono Jenangan Ponorogo. Ethnography involves

exploring and learning about the world from the perspectives of people in specific social settings, focusing on how individuals have learned, acted, and interacted in distinct ways. Ethnographic research is fundamentally based on participant observation and reflection, allowing researchers to observe cultural practices, behaviors, and patterns within a community. In this study, ethnographic methods are used to analyze ethnopedagogical-oriented learning in thematic teaching practices.

Data were collected through a variety of qualitative data sources, including observations, in-depth interviews, documentation, and informal conversations. These methods allow the researcher to collect rich, descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words, as well as observable behavior. Specifically: Participant Observation, This involved the researcher immersing themselves in the community environment to observe and document cultural and social practices in their natural context. Observations were conducted within the school environment, focusing on teaching practices and student behaviors. In-depth Interviews, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including teachers, students, and school administrators, to gather detailed insights into their perspectives and experiences. The interviews allowed for deep exploration of the informants' knowledge, perceptions, and feelings. Documentation, Written documents (such as school records), photographs, and recordings were also analyzed to support the observational and interview data, offering additional context and evidence for the study.

The study employed two sampling techniques: Purposive Sampling, This technique was used to select key informants, including the head of the madrasah, six teachers representing grades 1–6, and six students from each of these grades. These individuals were chosen based on their expertise, involvement, and direct experience with the thematic learning process being studied. Snowball Sampling, This technique was employed when additional data or informants were required to complement the initial purposive sample. If the data obtained from the purposive sample was insufficient, additional informants were identified through referrals from the initial participants.

Data analysis followed James P. Spradley's four stages of ethnographic analysis, which are designed to uncover cultural themes within the social setting: 1) Domain Analysis, This stage involves identifying broad categories or domains that represent the research object or social situation. General and specific questions were used to uncover various categories or domains that helped shape the understanding of the research subject; 2) Taxonomic Analysis, In this stage, the selected domains are described in more detail, revealing their internal structure. Taxonomic analysis helped the researcher understand the components of the cultural practices observed, focusing on how each domain functions within the larger social context; 3) Componential Analysis, This step involves identifying attributes and contrasts within the categories discovered in the previous stages. The researcher systematically examined the differences and shared attributes related to cultural symbols or practices observed during the study, often through interviews and observation; 4) Cultural Theme Analysis, In this final stage, the researcher identified relationships between the domains and developed overarching themes that describe the cultural context. These themes provided a holistic understanding of the cultural practices and social interactions within the community.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Analysis of the Implementation of Ethnopedagogy in Thematic Learning at MI Ma'arif Setono Jenangan Ponorogo

Thematic learning is a learning approach that seeks to integrate various competencies from various subjects into themes with a meaningful learning process that is adapted to students' experiences and environments. Thematic learning emphasizes the active involvement of students or learners in a learning process, so that students can gain direct experience and be trained so that students can discover for themselves the various knowledge they learn. Thematic learning places more emphasis on applying the concept of learning while doing something or learning by doing. Therefore, teachers need to package and design learning activities so that they become a meaningful experience for students. Local wisdom in the Indonesian English dictionary consists of two words, namely wisdom and local. In other words, local wisdom is local ideas, values and views that are wise, full of wisdom and good value, which are inherent, embedded and followed by the citizens of the community .

At MI Ma'arif Setono, thematic learning is carried out based on ethnopedagogy or educational practices based on local wisdom. Thematic learning activities based on ethnopedagogy are carried out at MI Ma'arif Setono according to each theme and material, the source material comes from books and is then developed by incorporating local wisdom content in teaching and learning activities. Local wisdom can be understood as local values, rules, views that are good and full of wisdom and are followed by members of the community. Local wisdom can be in the form of agricultural products, artistic creations, cultural traditions, natural resources, human resources which are regional advantages.

Table 1. Local Wisdom Content in Thematic Learning

No	Variety of Local Wisdom	Subjects	Local Wisdom Content
1	Values and Norms	PPKn	Tolerance, respect, respect, show excellence in speaking and walking in front of parents.
2	Trust	Indonesian	The origin of Reog Ponorogo, the origin of Lake Ngebel.
		PPKn	Using traditional games for strategies in the learning process.
		Indonesian	Using traditional games for strategies in the learning process.
		IPA	Using traditional games for strategies in the learning process.
3	Art and culture	Social Sciences	Introducing traditional clothing Ponorogo, introducing dance from Ponorogo, traditional games, introducing local jobs such as reog craftsmen, sellers of reog clothes and attributes, makers of regional musical instruments such as gamelan and gongs.
		Mathematics	Using traditional games as a strategy in the learning process, using traditional house shapes to find flat shapes.
		SBdP	Regional songs, regional dances, traditional games.
4	Crops/wealth natural	SBdP	Utilize natural products such as leaves, banana stems, tree twigs, dry leaves, and seeds such as corn, soybeans, peanuts greens, peanuts, etc. to make crafts.
5	Natural resources	Indonesian	Create poetry, essays on local themes, such as environmental conditions, Ponorogo tourist attractions, etc. Determine the main idea, main idea, main sentence through reading or essays on local themes such as environmental conditions, Ponorogo tourist attractions, etc.
		PPKn	Introducing typical Ponorogo food, such as chicken satay, dawet jabung, gethuk golan, and jenang mirah.
		Social Sciences	Introducing the geographical conditions of the Ponorogo region that the average population works as a farmer, so we must protect our environment and not damage it

The integration of local wisdom in ethnopedagogy-based thematic learning at MI Ma'arif Setono primarily focuses on character education, reflecting Javanese values and manners. Students are consistently taught respect and courtesy, such as bowing when passing in front of elders or greeting others using Javanese, or polite Indonesian when Javanese is not possible. These practices emphasize the importance of cultural etiquette and communication, aiming to build a strong moral foundation among students.

In the Civics subject, tolerance is a key value taught, emphasizing the need to respect Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity. Students learn the significance of appreciating differences, fostering tolerance, and prioritizing local products over foreign ones. For instance, third-grade students are introduced to traditional foods from their region, such as Ponorogo's chicken satay, *gethuk golan*, *mirah jenang*, and *dawet jabung*, encouraging them to preserve their cultural heritage and take pride in local traditions.

Ethnopedagogy is also incorporated into language and social studies subjects. The origins of local cultural elements, such as the Reog Ponorogo and Lake Ngebel, are used as thematic content for composing teaching materials and fostering comprehension skills like identifying main ideas. Traditional games, such as *cublak-cublak suweng* and *srekdur-srekdur*, are used to engage students in thematic learning. In science, these games are incorporated into lessons on puberty and gender differences, making learning more relatable and grounded in local wisdom.

Furthermore, students are introduced to the local arts and crafts of Ponorogo, learning about occupations such as Reog artisans, *ganongan* mask makers, and *gamelan* craftsmen. In mathematics, students work with images of traditional houses to explore geometric shapes and calculate areas and perimeters. In the arts, regional songs and dances, such as the Peacock Dance and *jathil*, are woven into the curriculum, fostering an appreciation for local cultural expressions.

The use of natural and recycled materials is another distinctive feature of thematic learning at MI Ma'arif Setono. Teachers encourage students to create crafts using local resources like grains, dried leaves, and banana stems. These activities teach students not only creativity but also the value of sustainability and resourcefulness. Additionally, students write poetry and essays on local environmental and cultural themes, further deepening their connection to their surroundings and reinforcing language skills through culturally relevant content.

3.2. Analysis of the Impact of Implementing Ethnopedagogy on Thematic Learning Outcomes at MI Ma'arif Setono Ponorogo

The implementation of ethnopedagogy in thematic learning is closely related to students' thematic learning outcomes. By implementing ethnopedagogy in thematic learning, students are given local wisdom content in the learning process. These local contents are very beneficial for student learning outcomes in the form of cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning outcomes.

Based on research conducted by researchers, the impact of implementing ethnopedagogy in thematic learning at MI Ma'arif Setono has had a positive impact on student learning outcomes because teaching and learning activities are fun and contextual because they are linked to everyday life so students can better understand the material. be delivered. This can be seen from students' daily thematic test scores, which on average get scores above the KKM.

Table 2. Analysis of the Impact of Ethnopedagogy on Thematic Learning Outcomes

No	Variety of Local Wisdom	Subjects	Local Wisdom Content
1	Values and Norms	PPKn	There were 126 students who got scores above the KKM, and 19 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6)
2	Trust	Indonesian	There were 132 students who got scores above the KKM, and 13 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6) .
3	Art and culture	PPKn	There were 126 students who got scores above the KKM, and 19 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6)
		Indonesian	Students who get grades There were 132 students above the KKM, and 13 students who scored below the KKM (grades 1-6).
		IPA	There were 122 students who got scores above the KKM, and 23 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6).
		Social Sciences	There were 125 students who got scores above the KKM, and 20 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6).
		Mathematics	There were 61 students who got scores above the KKM, and 16 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-3).
		SBdP	There were 127 students who got scores above the KKM, and 18 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6).
4	Crops/wealth natural	SBdP	There were 127 students who got scores above the KKM, and 18 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6).
5	Natural resources	PPKn	There were 126 students who got scores above the KKM, and 19 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6)
		Social Sciences	There were 125 students who got scores above the KKM, and 20 students who got scores below the KKM (classes 1-6)

The data from grades 1 through 6 indicate that the majority of students at MI Ma'arif Setono achieved scores above the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM). In Civics, 87% of students (126 students) scored above the KKM, while 13% (19 students) were below it. Indonesian language results show a similar trend, with 91% of students (132 students) scoring above the KKM. In science, 84% (122 students) achieved above KKM, and in social studies, 86% (125 students) did so. The *Seni Budaya dan Prakarya* (SBdP) subject had 88% of students (127 students) above KKM. However, mathematics showed lower performance, with only 79% of grades 1 to 3 students (61 students) scoring above the KKM. Mathematics is a stand-alone subject for grades 4 to 6 and is not part of thematic learning.

In addition to improving academic outcomes, ethnopedagogy has been shown to positively influence students' attitudes in several key areas: 1) Moral Development: Through thematic learning, students are immersed in values that have long been embedded in their local culture, such as respect for elders, humility, and communal harmony. These values serve as a moral compass for students, helping them resist the potentially negative influences of globalization [22]-[26]. By internalizing these cultural norms, students are more likely to become modern individuals who still adhere to traditional moral and ethical standards; 2) Increased Nationalism and Love for Homeland: Ethnopedagogical learning fosters a deep understanding and appreciation of local culture and wisdom, nurturing a strong sense of ownership and responsibility toward preserving these traditions [27]-[30]. This has the effect of strengthening students' national identity and love for their homeland, as they gain a better awareness of their cultural roots and the importance of protecting them for future generations; 3) Cultural Preservation: The knowledge students gain about local wisdom and cultural heritage encourages them to actively participate in preserving these traditions. This is evident from the enthusiasm they show in playing traditional games and engaging in extracurricular activities like traditional dance [31]-[33]. The fact that both

male and female students take part in these activities reflects the success of the ethnopedagogical approach in making cultural preservation an inclusive and valued pursuit.

The novelty of this research is that the approach implemented by MI Ma'arif Setono stands out for its seamless integration of local wisdom across various subjects, fostering both academic excellence and moral development. By embedding traditional games, local folklore, crafts, and food culture into the curriculum, the school offers a holistic educational experience that nurtures intellectual growth while preserving cultural heritage. This ethnopedagogical method bridges the gap between modern education and local traditions, equipping students with practical skills while cultivating a strong sense of identity and community pride. What sets MI Ma'arif Setono apart is its unique approach to blending cultural values with formal education. By incorporating local wisdom into thematic learning, the school creates a contextualized learning environment that connects academic subjects with students' everyday lives. This method enhances academic understanding and strengthens character development by instilling a deep appreciation for cultural roots. Integrating Ethnopedagogy in core subjects is relatively innovative, as it merges cultural practices with educational goals, going beyond traditional teaching methods. This approach fosters a meaningful, engaging, and culturally relevant learning experience, encouraging students to develop cognitively and morally while maintaining a solid connection to their heritage. In doing so, the school sets a powerful example of how modern education can harmonize with cultural preservation, creating well-rounded individuals prepared for the future while deeply rooted in their cultural identity.

The findings from MI Ma'arif Setono highlight the transformative potential of Ethnopedagogy in improving academic performance and moral development. The data shows that most grades 1 to 6 students exceeded the Minimum completion criteria (KKM) in core subjects like civics, Indonesian language, and social studies. This indicates that embedding local wisdom into thematic learning can enhance student engagement and academic outcomes by making education more relatable and culturally relevant. The success of this approach could serve as a valuable model for other schools, demonstrating that traditional knowledge can coexist with modern educational objectives, enriching both. Moreover, the moral and social benefits of this pedagogical model are profound. Ethnopedagogy nurtures essential student attitudes such as respect for cultural diversity, a sense of responsibility for preserving traditions, and a love for the environment. These attributes are critical for students to successfully navigate the pressures of globalization while maintaining a strong cultural identity. By fostering a deeper connection to their heritage, Ethnopedagogy empowers students with a sense of belonging and pride, contributing to well-rounded character development. The implications of implementing Ethnopedagogy in thematic learning at MI Ma'arif Setono are twofold. First, it significantly enhances academic performance, as evidenced by the high percentage of students achieving above the KKM in multiple subjects. This suggests that integrating local wisdom into the curriculum can make learning more engaging and meaningful, boosting comprehension and retention. Second, Ethnopedagogy supports moral development and cultural preservation. Students learn academic content by incorporating local traditions and values into lessons and internalize essential life skills, such as nationalism, ethical responsibility, and cultural pride. These findings imply that the Ethnopedagogical approach improves academic success and plays a pivotal role in character-building. It equips students with the moral foundation needed to meet the challenges of an increasingly globalized world while staying grounded in their cultural heritage. This dual impact of Ethnopedagogy on academic and moral outcomes underscores its potential as a holistic educational model for schools worldwide.

Despite its success, the implementation of Ethnopedagogy at MI Ma'arif Setono faces several limitations that could affect its broader applicability. One major limitation is the reliance on the specific cultural context of Ponorogo, which may not resonate with students in regions with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The local wisdom and traditions integrated into the curriculum may not be universally relevant, and adapting the approach to other cultural settings would require significant customization. This limits the generalizability of the ethnopedagogical model across Indonesia's diverse regions, where varying local cultures may require distinct educational strategies. Another limitation lies in the potential trade-off between cultural preservation and the need to equip students with global competencies. While the emphasis on local wisdom enhances cultural awareness and moral development, it risks neglecting critical areas like science, technology, and advanced mathematics, which are essential in modern education. Finding a balance between fostering cultural identity and preparing students for a competitive, technology-driven world is a challenge that must be addressed to ensure that students are well-rounded and globally competent.

Furthermore, assessing the specific impact of Ethnopedagogy on student outcomes presents a challenge. The reliance on thematic learning may obscure the distinct effects of Ethnopedagogical practices, making it difficult to isolate their direct benefits from other instructional methods. This limitation complicates efforts to measure the unique contributions of local wisdom to students' academic and character development, potentially limiting its perceived effectiveness. Lastly, implementing Ethnopedagogy requires significant resources, including teacher training, curriculum development, and community involvement. Schools in less resourceful areas may struggle to adopt such an approach, which could create disparities in educational quality across regions. Despite these limitations, the ethnopedagogical model presents an innovative framework for integrating

cultural education with formal learning, provided that schools can adapt and balance it with broader educational demands.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that: (1) The implementation of Ethnopedagogy in thematic learning at MI Ma'arif Setono is carried out by adapting each theme and material, with the core content derived from textbooks, which is then enriched with elements of local wisdom. These local wisdom elements include values and norms, beliefs, arts and culture, and natural resources, all integrated into thematic learning activities. (2) The application of Ethnopedagogy in thematic learning positively impacts students' learning outcomes. On average, students from grades 1 to 6 achieved scores that met or exceeded the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). Furthermore, the integration of ethnopedagogy has positively affected students' attitudes, fostering better character development, enhancing nationalism and love for the country, and encouraging students to preserve local culture.

The results indicate that Ethnopedagogy, when incorporated into thematic learning, not only improves academic performance but also plays a crucial role in shaping students' values and attitudes. This suggests that integrating local wisdom into educational content can be an effective strategy for holistic student development. Beyond academic achievement, this approach helps students connect with their cultural heritage, reinforcing a sense of identity and belonging. The success of Ethnopedagogy in MI Ma'arif Setono suggests its potential applicability in other schools, especially in areas with rich cultural traditions. Schools and educators should consider using local wisdom as a resource for developing thematic lessons that meet educational standards and instill cultural pride and social responsibility. Additionally, educational policymakers can take inspiration from this model to create curricula that are more inclusive of local traditions and values, ensuring that students develop intellectual competence and cultural awareness. Implementing Ethnopedagogy more broadly could foster a stronger connection between students and their communities, preserving local traditions while enhancing educational quality. This approach can create culturally rich and contextually relevant education, essential for sustainable and equitable development in diverse societies.

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