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Beyond the Morning Assembly: Parental Meaning-Making and the Enactment of Tri Hita Karana Values in Early Childhood Character Education

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ABSTRACT

The transmission of culturally grounded values in early childhood education extends beyond school activities and requires meaningful engagement within family environments. This study examines how parents interpret and enact Tri Hita Karana values in early childhood character education and how these values are negotiated between school and family contexts. Employing a qualitative intrinsic case study design, the research was conducted at PAUD HEPI Kids in Denpasar, Bali. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, parental reflective narratives, and document analysis, involving parents as primary informants and teachers and the school principal as supporting informants. The analysis focuses on parental understanding of *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan*, their translation into everyday parenting practices, and communication between school and family. The study conceptualizes the relationship between these environments through three analytical patterns: continuity, adaptation, and discontinuity. It proposes a School–Family Value Translation Framework to explain how cultural values are interpreted, adapted, and enacted across educational and domestic settings. This framework highlights parental meaning-making and reciprocal school–family relationships as important dimensions of culturally grounded character education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood represents a formative period in which children begin to develop moral dispositions, social competencies, emotional regulation, and fundamental patterns of behavior through interactions with their immediate environments. Character development during this stage is not exclusively determined by formal educational experiences but is also shaped by parenting practices, daily routines, and the quality of relationships within family and educational settings. The family constitutes children's earliest social environment, while early childhood education institutions provide structured opportunities for experiencing values through social interaction, habituation, and pedagogical engagement. Consequently, the

development of children's character requires continuity between educational experiences at school and the values practiced within family life. Research on parenting interventions has demonstrated the importance of responsive caregiving and parental engagement in supporting early child development, emphasizing that children's developmental experiences are shaped by the quality of interactions within their immediate environments [1]. Similarly, character education in early childhood requires contextual and sustained practices that connect moral development with children's everyday experiences rather than relying solely on instructional activities [2]. The integration of local cultural values into early childhood education further provides opportunities to establish meaningful connections between children's developing character and the cultural environments in which they grow [3].

In the Balinese cultural context, Tri Hita Karana offers a holistic philosophical foundation for character education through three interconnected dimensions: *Parahyangan*, which represents harmonious relationships with the Divine; *Pawongan*, which emphasizes harmonious relationships among human beings; and *Palemahan*, which concerns harmonious relationships with the natural environment. These dimensions provide an integrated framework for cultivating spiritual awareness, social responsibility, empathy, and ecological sensitivity from early childhood. Previous studies have established the relevance of Tri Hita Karana in character education and highlighted the recognition of its values among teachers and parents, although much of the existing discussion has focused on educational perceptions and institutional implementation rather than the everyday processes through which families interpret and enact these values [4]. Within the family environment, parental involvement becomes particularly significant because parents do not merely reinforce values introduced by educational institutions but also interpret them through their own cultural understanding, parenting orientations, and everyday interactions with children. Differences in parental understanding of character education demonstrate that the translation of educational values into family practices is neither automatic nor uniform [5]. Furthermore, parental participation in character education involves more than attending school activities [6]; it encompasses knowledge, modeling, habituation, and the consistent enactment of values in children's everyday experiences [7][8].

Although research on culturally grounded character education has increasingly examined the integration of local wisdom into early childhood learning environments, the relationship between institutional value transmission and parental meaning-making remains insufficiently explored. Existing investigations have examined local-wisdom-based character learning models, the implementation of Tri Hita Karana in school environments, and parental perspectives on character education, but these discussions have not adequately explained how parents interpret, negotiate, and translate culturally embedded educational values into everyday parenting practices. Research on early childhood character learning based on Indonesian local wisdom, for instance, has primarily emphasized the development and implementation of pedagogical models within educational institutions [9]. More recent investigations have begun to examine parental perspectives on character education across home and school environments, demonstrating the relevance of family participation, yet the culturally situated processes through which parents interpret and enact particular philosophical values remain an important area for further investigation [10]. Moreover, the multidimensional nature of school–family partnerships indicates that communication and parental engagement should be understood through the relational experiences of both educational institutions and families rather than through participation indicators alone [11]. Addressing this concern, the present study moves beyond the examination of Morning Assembly as a

school-based character education practice by positioning parental meaning-making and the enactment of Tri Hita Karana values within everyday family interactions as its central analytical focus.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how parents understand and interpret Tri Hita Karana values introduced through educational practices at HEPI Kids, how *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan* are translated into everyday parenting practices and family interactions, and how parents and teachers negotiate the meaning and continuity of these values across school and home environments. Using a qualitative intrinsic case study, the research examines parental experiences alongside teachers' perspectives and institutional practices to develop a contextual understanding of the relationship between cultural value transmission and family-based character formation. The study is expected to contribute to early childhood character education by extending the discussion of Tri Hita Karana beyond institutional pedagogical implementation toward the relational processes through which cultural values acquire meaning within family life. Its conceptual contribution lies in developing a School–Family Value Translation Framework that explains how culturally grounded values are interpreted, adapted, and enacted across educational and familial environments. Such an understanding may inform the development of more contextually responsive approaches to school–family engagement, particularly in educational settings seeking to sustain local cultural wisdom through meaningful parental participation. Recent work on home-visiting and parenting initiatives further underscores the importance of strengthening the relationship between educational institutions and families in supporting children's character development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tri Hita Karana as a Foundation for Holistic Character Education in Early Childhood

Tri Hita Karana provides a culturally grounded framework for holistic character education through three interconnected dimensions: *Parahyangan*, which cultivates spiritual awareness; *Pawongan*, which encourages respect, empathy, and social responsibility; and *Palemahan*, which nurtures care for the natural environment. In early childhood education, these values acquire meaning when translated into concrete experiences, social interactions, and everyday habits rather than delivered merely as philosophical concepts. The integration of these dimensions positions character formation as a process of developing harmonious relationships with God, other people, and the environment [12][13][14].

2.2 Parental Meaning-Making and Value Enactment in Early Childhood Character Formation

Parents are not merely transmitters of values but active interpreters who translate moral principles into practices shaped by family routines, beliefs, and interactions with children. Character formation therefore occurs through everyday experiences, including parental modelling, conversations, guidance, and responses to children's behaviour. Research on parental involvement in early childhood character education highlights the importance of parental knowledge and understanding, while studies of values education demonstrate how communication between parents and educators shapes the meanings attached to particular values. These perspectives position parental meaning-making as an essential process through which educational values are interpreted, adapted, and enacted within family life [15][16].

2.3 School–Family Relationships in Culturally Grounded Character Education

School–family relationships are essential to character education because children encounter and interpret values across interconnected environments. Such relationships should not be

understood merely as parental participation in school activities, but as reciprocal processes involving communication, recognition of family experiences, and negotiation of educational meanings. A culturally responsive partnership also requires schools to acknowledge that families may express and practice values differently from the formal expectations of educational institutions. Consequently, continuity between school and home depends not on identical practices, but on meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding between educators and parents [17][18][19].

3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design to explore parental meaning-making and the enactment of Tri Hita Karana values in early childhood character education. The research was conducted at PAUD HEPI Kids, located at Jl. Waribang No. 30 A, Kesiman Petilan, East Denpasar, Bali. The institution operates under Yayasan Widya Kusuma Sari and provides Kindergarten, Playgroup, and Day Care services. It implements the Merdeka Curriculum enriched with a Deep Learning approach emphasizing mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, aligned with the principles of Merdeka Bermain and Merdeka Belajar. The school's vision explicitly incorporates Tri Hita Karana values alongside Pancasila and technological adaptability. These institutional characteristics make PAUD HEPI Kids a relevant setting for examining how culturally grounded educational values are interpreted and translated across school and family environments.

Data collection was conducted over a two-month period from December 2025 to February 2026, covering the semester transition and an active period of character reinforcement within the school calendar. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and familiarity with the introduction of Tri Hita Karana values in the school environment. Parents served as the primary informants, particularly those whose children participated in the school's educational activities and Morning Assembly. Supporting informants included the school principal and teachers involved in facilitating the program and communicating its values to families. This composition enabled the study to examine parental experiences while incorporating institutional perspectives on the relationship between school practices and family engagement.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, parental reflective narratives, and document analysis. Interviews explored parents' interpretations of *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan*, their experiences of receiving information about these values from the school, and the ways they translated them into everyday parenting practices and family interactions. Interviews with teachers and the principal examined the school's approaches to introducing Tri Hita Karana values to parents, including informal communication and parental involvement. Participatory observation focused on relevant educational activities and interactions within the school environment, while parental reflective narratives captured experiences and reflections concerning the enactment of these values at home. Documentary analysis covered institutional materials, including the school curriculum (KSP), teaching modules, Morning Assembly standard operating procedures, teacher reflection notes, activity photographs, and relevant samples of children's work. These sources provided contextual information about how the values were articulated institutionally and communicated to families.

Data analysis followed Reflexive Thematic Analysis, involving familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the analytical narrative. Particular attention was given to how parents interpreted, negotiated, adapted, and enacted the three dimensions of Tri Hita Karana within their

family contexts. The analysis also examined the relationship between school-introduced values and family practices, including patterns of continuity, adaptation, and discontinuity. These patterns were treated as analytical possibilities rather than predetermined findings. Ecological Systems Theory, particularly the mesosystem concept, informed the interpretation of relationships between school and family environments. This perspective helped explain how communication, interactions, and differences in expectations across these settings shaped the ways parents understood and practiced culturally grounded values.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Parents' Understanding of Tri Hita Karana Values

Parents' understanding of Tri Hita Karana constitutes an important starting point for examining how cultural values are interpreted and incorporated into early childhood character education. The three dimensions—*Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan*—represent interconnected principles governing relationships with the spiritual world, other people, and the natural environment. Within family life, these principles acquire practical meaning through everyday experiences, parenting routines, and interactions between parents and children. Consequently, the educational significance of Tri Hita Karana lies not only in its philosophical foundations but also in how families interpret its relevance to children's moral and social development [20].

The dimension of *Parahyangan* concerns the cultivation of spiritual awareness through prayer, gratitude, and respect for religious practices. *Pawongan* emphasizes social relationships through empathy, respectful communication, sharing, and consideration for others. Meanwhile, *Palemahan* extends character formation to environmental responsibility through cleanliness, caring for plants, and respect for living things. These dimensions should not be understood as isolated behavioural categories. Their interconnectedness reflects a holistic conception of character in which spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and environmental sensitivity develop as complementary aspects of children's everyday experiences. Research on local wisdom integration in early childhood education similarly demonstrates that cultural values provide meaningful foundations for developing cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility [21].

Parental understanding, however, extends beyond the ability to recognize or define these philosophical dimensions. The more important distinction concerns how parents interpret their educational relevance and connect them with family experiences [22]. Parents bring different cultural knowledge, parenting traditions, and expectations into the educational process [23]. These perspectives influence how they understand their roles in supporting children's learning and character development. A culturally inclusive approach therefore requires educators to recognize parents as knowledge holders whose experiences contribute to the construction of meaningful family–school relationships [24]. The involvement of parents and communities also represents an important dimension of character education because values are reinforced through interactions extending beyond the classroom [25].

This perspective positions parents as active meaning-makers in the transmission of Tri Hita Karana values. Their contribution is not limited to reproducing the concepts introduced by teachers; it also involves interpreting, adapting, and connecting those values with everyday family practices [26]. Understanding this process provides an analytical foundation for examining how culturally grounded character education moves across school and family environments. It also highlights the importance of examining parental

perspectives independently rather than assuming that institutional explanations of cultural values are automatically understood and practiced in the same way at home.

4.2 *Translating Tri Hita Karana Values into Everyday Parenting Practices*

The enactment of Tri Hita Karana values in early childhood character education takes place through the translation of philosophical principles into everyday parenting practices. Within the family environment, values become meaningful when children encounter them through repeated interactions, parental guidance, and observable examples of behaviour. This process places parents in a central position because children do not learn character solely through verbal instructions; they also construct understanding by observing how parents communicate, make decisions, respond to others, and interact with their surroundings. Accordingly, the translation of *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan* requires more than introducing children to the names of these values. It involves embedding their meanings in ordinary family experiences.

The three dimensions are expressed through different forms of parenting practice. *Parahyangan* is reflected in the introduction of spiritual routines, such as praying before meals, expressing gratitude, and participating in religious activities with family members. These experiences provide opportunities for children to recognize spirituality as part of everyday life rather than as an activity restricted to formal religious occasions. *Pawongan* is enacted through parental modelling of respectful communication, sharing, helping others, and resolving interpersonal disagreements. Through ordinary conversations and shared activities, parents introduce children to expectations concerning appropriate behaviour and their responsibilities toward others. Family interactions thus become an important setting for moral learning, as everyday conversations and domestic activities provide opportunities for children to understand culturally shaped ideas of right and wrong [27].

The enactment of *Palemahan* extends parenting practices to children's direct engagement with the natural environment. Activities such as watering plants, maintaining household cleanliness, caring for animals, and exploring outdoor spaces provide concrete experiences through which environmental responsibility becomes part of family routines. These practices are significant because children's relationship with nature develops through both direct environmental experiences and parental attitudes toward outdoor activities. Research demonstrates that parental encouragement and family engagement with natural environments are associated with children's connection to nature [28][29]. In this respect, *Palemahan* positions environmental care as an everyday moral responsibility rather than merely a school-based learning topic.

The translation of these values into parenting practices also illustrates that character education is shaped by the consistency between parental guidance and parental behaviour. Children encounter the meaning of respect, responsibility, gratitude, and environmental care through what parents demonstrate in everyday situations. Consequently, the enactment of Tri Hita Karana cannot be reduced to the frequency of activities associated with its three dimensions. Its deeper significance lies in the meanings attached to those activities and the relationships through which children experience them. This understanding positions family practices as an important space for translating culturally grounded principles into lived experiences during early childhood.

4.3 Informal Communication and Value Negotiation between School and Family

Communication between schools and families constitutes an important mechanism through which educational values acquire meaning beyond the classroom. In culturally grounded character education, communication serves not only to inform parents about school activities but also to connect institutional expectations with family experiences and parenting practices. At PAUD HEPI Kids, the introduction of Tri Hita Karana values provides a context for examining how this relationship develops through everyday interactions between educators and parents. The distinction between formal socialization and informal communication is particularly relevant because the exchange of information about children's experiences does not necessarily guarantee a shared understanding of the philosophical values underlying school activities.

Informal communication provides opportunities for parents to become familiar with the values introduced through educational routines. Conversations with teachers, brief explanations of children's activities, and communication through parent groups can create connections between school experiences and family practices. However, communication that primarily conveys information from teachers to parents has limitations in establishing reciprocal understanding. Parents also need opportunities to communicate their interpretations, describe practices within their households, and express difficulties in reinforcing particular Communication as an important dimension of teacher–family engagement [30], while Chen and Rivera-Vernazza emphasize the importance of bidirectional, personalized, and responsive communication in developing preschool teacher–parent partnerships [31].

The relationship between school and family therefore involves a process of value negotiation rather than the straightforward transfer of educational messages. Teachers introduce Tri Hita Karana through institutional activities, while parents interpret these values through their own cultural experiences, family routines, and expectations concerning child development. Differences between school and family practices do not necessarily indicate rejection of institutional values. They may instead reflect different ways of understanding how spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and environmental care should be introduced to young children. This perspective is consistent with the ecological understanding of children's development, in which interactions between home and school constitute a mesosystem that connects two important developmental environments.

A meaningful school–family relationship consequently requires more than the frequency of communication or parental attendance at school activities. Its significance lies in the quality of dialogue through which both parties recognize their respective experiences and responsibilities in children's character formation. A systematic review of interventions to strengthen parent–teacher relationships in early care and education, highlight the importance of understanding the social processes underlying these partnerships [32]. In the context of Tri Hita Karana, reciprocal communication creates opportunities for schools to understand how cultural values are interpreted within families, while parents gain a clearer understanding of the educational principles introduced at school. This relationship positions communication as a connecting process through which culturally grounded character education can acquire relevance across children's everyday environments.

4.4 Continuity, Adaptation, and Discontinuity in School–Family Value Enactment

The relationship between school-based character education and family practices involves a process of interpreting and translating values across two interconnected environments. Tri Hita Karana, as introduced through educational activities at PAUD HEPI Kids, provides a cultural reference for character formation, while the family environment provides the context in which these values acquire meaning through everyday parenting practices. The relationship between these environments does not depend on the exact reproduction of school activities at home. Instead, it involves the ways parents understand educational messages, relate them to family experiences, and incorporate their meanings into children's daily lives. This perspective positions the relationship between school and family as a dynamic process of value translation rather than a one-directional transfer of educational principles.

Three analytical patterns help explain this relationship: continuity, adaptation, and discontinuity. Continuity refers to the alignment between values introduced at school and practices maintained within the family. This pattern occurs when educational messages concerning spiritual awareness, respectful social relationships, and environmental responsibility are reinforced through corresponding family routines. Adaptation describes the reinterpretation of school-introduced values according to family traditions, parenting approaches, and everyday circumstances. Parents may preserve the underlying principles of Tri Hita Karana while expressing them through practices that differ from those implemented at school. Discontinuity, in contrast, refers to differences between institutional expectations and family practices, particularly when communication is limited or when parents interpret the relevance of particular values differently. These patterns illustrate that the relationship between school and family is neither uniform nor automatically harmonious.

The distinction between continuity and adaptation is particularly important in culturally grounded character education. Identical practices across school and home environments are not a necessary condition for meaningful educational continuity. A family may express *Pawongan* through household responsibilities, interpersonal respect, or cooperation among family members, while the school introduces the same principle through collective activities and classroom interactions. Such differences represent contextual translations of shared values rather than deviations from their philosophical foundations. Continuity between home and preschool environments develops through the interaction of culturally responsive educational practices, family knowledge, and reciprocal relationships between parents and educators. Their conceptual model reinforces the importance of recognizing family agency in the construction of educational continuity [33].

Discontinuity also requires careful interpretation because differences between school and family practices do not necessarily indicate parental disengagement. They may reflect differences in expectations, interpretations, or opportunities for participation. Shared beliefs between early childhood professionals and parents remain an important dimension of partnership development, particularly when children experience different social and cultural environments [34]. Similarly, a study show that parent–teacher collaboration is shaped by cultural recognition and the extent to which educational institutions acknowledge parents' perspectives and experiences [35]. These findings reinforce the

argument that school–family relationships should not be evaluated exclusively through visible parental participation or the degree to which families reproduce school practices.

Taken together, continuity, adaptation, and discontinuity provide a framework for understanding how Tri Hita Karana values move between institutional and family environments. The process is shaped by parental interpretation, everyday parenting practices, communication with educators, and the recognition of family experiences within the school environment. This analysis establishes the conceptual foundation for a School–Family Value Translation Framework, in which culturally grounded values are introduced through school practices, interpreted by parents, translated into family routines, and negotiated through interactions between educational and domestic environments. The framework emphasizes that character education becomes meaningful across contexts when schools and families recognize one another as active contributors to children's moral development.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examines how parents interpret and enact Tri Hita Karana values within early childhood character education and how these values are negotiated across school and family environments. The central argument is that the transmission of *Parahyangan*, *Pawongan*, and *Palemahan* extends beyond their introduction through school activities; it involves parental interpretation and the translation of cultural principles into everyday parenting practices. The relationship between school and family therefore represents an important process in connecting institutional character education with children's experiences at home. Through this perspective, parental meaning-making becomes central to understanding how culturally grounded values acquire practical significance within early childhood education.

The findings suggest that strengthening the relationship between school and family requires more consistent and reciprocal communication concerning the values introduced through educational activities. Schools are encouraged to create opportunities for parents to share their experiences, interpretations, and parenting practices, rather than limiting engagement to informal information exchange. Parents, in turn, can reinforce children's character development by incorporating spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and environmental care into everyday family interactions. Future research should involve a broader range of families and educational institutions, as well as longitudinal observations, to examine how the interpretation and enactment of Tri Hita Karana values develop across different family contexts and over time.

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