

Local Wisdom Values in the Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung Dance as an Ethnopedagogical Source for Social Studies Education

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Abstract

The Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung dance contains local wisdom values that can serve as an ethnopedagogical source in Social Studies education. This study explores (1) the manifestation of spiritual and respectful values within the dance and (2) its potential as a culturally based learning resource for Social Studies. A qualitative approach with an ethnographic design was used, involving observation, interviews, and document analysis, with data validated through triangulation. The findings show that the dance reflects spiritual values, reverence for ancestors, solidarity, and communal harmony. However, a shift in meaning among younger generations challenges its preservation. The dance has the potential to be integrated into Social Studies learning through an ethnopedagogical approach, particularly to instill character values and cultural appreciation. Challenges include limited instructional time and students' lack of understanding of the dance's philosophical meaning. Therefore, an integrated learning model involving cultural arts and community figures is recommended.

Keywords: Local Wisdom, The Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung, Ethno pedagogy

Abstrak

Tarian Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung mengandung nilai-nilai kearifan lokal yang dapat dimanfaatkan sebagai sumber etnopedagogi dalam pembelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji (1) wujud nilai spiritualitas dan penghormatan dalam tarian tersebut, serta (2) potensinya sebagai sumber pembelajaran IPS berbasis budaya lokal. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain etnografi, melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen, serta triangulasi data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tarian ini mengandung nilai spiritual, penghormatan terhadap leluhur, solidaritas, dan kebersamaan. Namun, pergeseran makna di kalangan generasi muda menjadi tantangan dalam pelestariannya. Tarian ini berpotensi diterapkan dalam pembelajaran IPS melalui pendekatan etnopedagogi, terutama untuk menanamkan nilai-nilai karakter dan penghargaan terhadap budaya. Kendala yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan waktu belajar dan minimnya pemahaman siswa terhadap makna filosofis tarian. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan model pembelajaran terpadu yang melibatkan seni budaya dan peran serta tokoh masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Kearifan Lokal, Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung, Etnopedagogi

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Introduction

Each ethnic group in North Sumatra possesses its distinctive traditional dance, which serves as a communication medium, conveying messages related to religion, marriage customs, funeral rites, and various communal traditions. These dances are characterized by unique movements and musical accompaniments that differ across ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the younger generation forgets many of these traditional dances due to the lack of clear and structured guidance in teaching them—despite their significant role in maintaining social harmony. Traditional dances in North Sumatra serve as channels for conveying messages during customary and

religious events. However, the influx of modern arts from Western cultures, driven by globalization, has gradually eroded the existence of traditional performing arts (Sumarni et al., 2024).

The modern mindset of today's youth often causes them to perceive traditional arts as outdated and irrelevant, leading to a decrease in interest toward local culture (Regensy & Kadir, 2024). They are more inclined to engage with modern art forms that align with their contemporary lifestyles (Reimers & Cliung, 2016) (Mufid & Suprijono, 2024). If this trend persists, traditional arts may gradually disappear. The decline is further compounded by the younger generation's lack of awareness of preserving traditional arts as a part of national identity.

In the context of education, local culture—including traditions, customary laws, indigenous knowledge, and languages—should ideally form the foundation for addressing various public issues. However, current educational practices often fail to balance social and instructional aspects, rendering learning experiences less meaningful in a social context (Musyarofah & Ahmad, 2021) (Tamama et al., 2023) (Indiarti et al., 2022) (Pratiti et al., 2019). This social perspective is essential for the effective implementation of public activities. Therefore, a reorientation in education is necessary—one that consistently integrates social aspects within both local traditional and global contexts (Wongkar et al., 2020) (Martanto et al., 2021) (Putra et al., 2025).

The *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* dance represents youth transitioning into adulthood, beginning to understand values in social relationships, where they are expected to demonstrate politeness, respect toward elders, and preserve family honour by avoiding negative behaviours such as intoxication, promiscuity, and gambling (Hasibuan, 2024) (Sukma, 2020). Beyond its function in traditional wedding ceremonies, the dance imparts lessons on respect, social harmony, politeness, and cooperation. Embedded within this dance are values and messages that parents can convey to children. Furthermore, *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* is an educational medium promoting values such as obedience to God Almighty, humility, empathy, mutual respect, and strengthening social bonds. Through this dance, parents can communicate advice and life guidance to their children, while educators can instil moral values, enabling dancers to understand the deeper meaning behind their performances. Unfortunately, in the modern era, awareness of dance as an educational tool has diminished, threatening preserving the noble values it conveys.

The performance of *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* is not limited to a specific number of dancers but typically involves male and female pairs. The dance retains strong traditional elements, reflected in its simple movements, circular and parallel floor patterns, and slow, repetitive rhythms. Key movements in this dance include *Manyomba Tu Raja* (paying respect to the king), *Markusor* (spinning), *Singgang* (squatting), and a closing gesture of reverence. The costumes are culturally distinctive—male dancers wear traditional shirts and long trousers, sarongs, *appu* (head covering), and draped over the shoulders. In contrast, female dancers wear *baju kurung* and *jarunjung* (head ornament). The accompanying music uses traditional instruments such as *gondang*, *suling* (bamboo flute), *ogung* (gong), and *momongan* or *tali sayak*. In customary ceremonies, *gondang* and *tor-tor* are performed together as a form of reverence—both to God and to individuals of high social standing within kinship systems or as guests.

In addition to its ceremonial use in traditional weddings, *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* is an educational medium that embeds moral values such as devotion to God, humility, compassion, mutual respect, courtesy, cooperation, and social solidarity. The messages and norms communicated through the dance can be passed on by parents to children or educators to students, with the dancers internalizing these lessons as part of their learning process. However, awareness of the educational role of this dance continues to decline, potentially eroding the noble values it upholds.

Ethnopedagogically-based Social Studies education emphasizes integrating local cultural values into the school curriculum to help students understand societal norms and traditions (Musyarofah et al., 2021). This approach enables students to explore and appreciate their local culture more deeply, thus fostering a stronger sense of pride and identity amid the currents of globalization. At the junior high school level, culture-based learning—such as through the *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* dance—not only enriches students' understanding of Indonesia's cultural diversity but also cultivates social awareness and moral character (Hijrati & Rahmah, 2018).

Regrettably, exposure to local culture, especially traditional arts like *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung*, is increasingly scarce among today's youth due to the pervasive influence of easily accessible foreign cultures. As a result, many adolescents are becoming unfamiliar with their heritage. Based on these challenges, this study aims to explore how *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* can be effectively utilized as a relevant and meaningful Social Studies learning resource in junior high schools and to examine the role of ethno-pedagogy in introducing local cultural and social values to students. Through this research, *Tor-Tor* is expected to serve as an educational tool that strengthens students' understanding of local culture and helps shape positive character and social attitudes.

Based on the issues outlined above, the researcher is interested in conducting an in-depth investigation on The Local Wisdom Values of the *Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung* Dance as an Ethnopedagogical Source for Social Studies Education.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, aiming to understand and describe the meaning of the Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung dance from the perspective of the local community and the school environment, as well as how the values embedded in the dance can be integrated into Social Studies learning through an ethnopedagogical lens. This approach emphasizes observation and interpretation of the research subject within its natural context, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument directly involved in the data collection and interpretation processes (Nugrahani, 2014).

The research was conducted at a public junior high school in Toba Regency, North Sumatra, which actively engages in preserving local culture, particularly the Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung dance. The key informants in this study include Social Studies teachers and cultural arts teachers familiar with integrating cultural elements into the curriculum, dance instructors or choreographers of the Tor-Tor dance, and traditional leaders or elders recognized as authorities in conducting customary ceremonies. In addition, supporting informants consist of students actively participating in traditional dance activities, parents or guardians involved in cultural programs at school, and representatives from the school committee. Informants were selected using purposive sampling and expanded using the snowball technique to identify individuals relevant to the research focus.

Data were collected using three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Agigito, 2018) (Moleong, 2009) (Sugiono, 2019). Observations were conducted directly during dance training sessions and traditional performances, focusing on movements, floor patterns, expressions, and interactions among the dancers and the surrounding environment. In-depth interviews were guided by semi-structured instruments to explore the informants' perceptions, values, and personal experiences related to the dance. Documentation involved collecting supporting materials such as school archives, photos of cultural activities, traditional costumes, and musical instruments accompanying the Tor-Tor performance. On several occasions, the researcher also conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to validate the collective understanding of the dance's values and its potential for integration into classroom instruction.

The data analysis process followed the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation phase, transcripts from interviews and observations were coded, categorized, and organized into preliminary themes. The data were then presented in matrices, concept maps, and descriptive narratives to facilitate the researcher's understanding of the relationships among themes. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions through an iterative process of interpretation, ensuring that the findings were valid, coherent, and meaningful.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied several verification strategies, including source and methodological triangulation. To ensure consistency, source triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from different informants—such as teachers, students, and traditional leaders. Methodological triangulation was carried out by comparing findings derived from observations, interviews, and documentation to strengthen the credibility of the data. Furthermore, member checking was used to validate preliminary findings with key informants. At the same time, peer debriefing sessions were conducted regularly with colleagues or qualitative research experts to review the research process and analytical decisions.

The researcher was engaged in fieldwork for more than three months, enabling prolonged observation of dance rehearsals, cultural performances, and the social interactions embedded within the cultural context of the Tor-Tor tradition. Reflective notes and an audit trail were systematically maintained to document every methodological decision and track the researcher's analytical thinking development throughout the study.

Through this approach, the study aims to produce a detailed and authentic description of the local wisdom values embodied in the Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung dance, as well as to explore its potential use as a Social Studies learning resource based on ethnopedagogical principles at the junior high school level.

Results & Discussion

Result/Findings

Spiritual Values and Reverence Embedded in the Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung Dance

Based on data gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation, this subsection discusses the spiritual and reverential values contained in the Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung dance. As outlined in the previous chapter, *Naposo Nauli Bulung* is a Batak term referring to unmarried youths: *naposo* means “youth,” while *nauli bulung* conveys the idea of beauty or vibrant spirit. The term depicts energetic young people who play an important role in Batak's social life. This dance embodies several vital forms of local wisdom—social, cultural, and spiritual.

According to Meiliza Hijrati (see theoretical review), Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung is performed only within wedding ceremonies and is considered one of the oldest Tor-Tor forms. Its role in ritual events follows the norms of the Batak kinship system; hence, its originator is unknown. Often called a youth dance, unmarried dancers perform in male-female pairs: the woman in front (*na member*) and the man behind her (*panyembar*). The pair must come from different *marga* (clans).

Naposo Nauli Bulung youths hold important social and cultural functions consistent with Batak's practice. They participate in communal labour (*gotong royong*), ritual events, and other social occasions. Through Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung, they express values such as cooperation, ancestral respect, and social solidarity. The spiritual and reverential dimensions of the dance show that it is far more than entertainment; it is a ritual laden with deep spiritual, cultural, and social meaning.

Through the dance, Batak Toba people convey reverence for ancestors and the spirit world, strengthen social bonds, and teach the importance of upholding cultural values in daily life. As a rich cultural heritage, Tor-Tor also plays a vital role in preserving Batak's identity amid modern challenges. It teaches etiquette, politeness, respect, and cooperation. Each gesture reflects customary values passed down through generations, instilling pride in Batak's cultural identity. Performed in ritual and community contexts, the dance further reinforces ethnopedagogical efforts to raise youth awareness of the need to preserve traditional culture in a globalized era. Thus, Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung becomes not merely entertainment but a learning medium that fosters love and appreciation for Batak heritage.

Findings indicate that the dance contains profound spiritual and reverential values. Spiritually, each movement communicates with the spirit realm and ancestors, serving as a prayer or petition to God and forebears for protection and well-being. Movements also symbolize harmony among humans, nature, and spirits. In terms of reverence, the dance affirms respect for ancestors who passed down culture and spirituality and for the younger generation expected to safeguard and continue the tradition.

The dance depicts social harmony: dancers cooperate in orderly formations that mirror community *gotong royong*. The traditional music that accompanies the dance acts as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. Amid globalization, Tor-Tor plays a crucial role in preserving Batak Toba culture, teaching young people to honour and maintain their ancestral legacy. In Hessa Air Genting, village authorities, residents, and customary leaders actively sustain the dance through regular training and support at ritual events, ensuring cultural values are transmitted early to youth. These preservation efforts heighten young people's awareness of the importance of Batak heritage.

Nevertheless, modernization poses challenges: a gap has emerged between elders, who understand the dance's philosophical depth, and youth, who often view it as mere entertainment. Globalization and popular culture have also diverted young attention from traditional arts, weakening cultural transmission. Furthermore, the commercialization of Tor-Tor in festivals and tourism frequently highlights its entertaining and aesthetic aspects, diminishing its sacred character and ethnopedagogical content.

Forms of Local-Wisdom Values in Tor-Tor as an Ethnopedagogical Social-Studies Resource

In Hessa Air Genting, local wisdom embedded in Tor-Tor is integrated into lesson content and learning activities for Social Studies through an ethnopedagogical approach. This integration helps students grasp academic knowledge while valuing, preserving, and practising local cultural values. It strengthens cultural identity and deepens understanding of social, moral, and character values inherent in their tradition. Education thus becomes not just a knowledge transfer but an enrichment of students' life experience, introducing them to a rich heritage relevant to an increasingly global world.

As stated earlier, Tor-Tor—rich in togetherness, cooperation, etiquette, and ancestral reverence—is a concrete example for exploring social concepts such as norms, values, and cultural identity. In practice, Social Studies teachers can employ the dance as a learning medium to introduce Batak culture and foster cultural awareness and intercultural tolerance. Teachers might guide students to study each movement's history and philosophical meaning, discuss symbolic meanings, and relate those values to everyday life.

Students have a primary responsibility for learning; through learning, they become better individuals. According to Slameto, learning is a process by which a person seeks to improve overall behaviour through experiences interacting with the environment. In a local-wisdom context like Tor-Tor, learning resources are crucial for developing cognitive abilities and skills—particularly in exploring local arts. Here, the learning resource is people themselves: students are trained in Tor-Tor to deepen their cultural understanding and skills.

Through mentoring by arts-group members, students are expected to develop their cultural potential. Such coaching also aims to preserve cultural arts for future generations. Arts mentors strive to impart the best knowledge and skills so students can appreciate and practice the dance, learning its history and values. This seeks to shape students as future custodians of Tor-Tor.

Dwi Erna Susilaningtyas argues that Social-Studies learning that uses the social environment as a knowledge source is essential for effective outcomes. Local wisdom should be leveraged to make the material relevant to the theme. A contextual, constructivist approach enables students to link knowledge with social experiences and find practical solutions, helping teachers address classroom challenges while enhancing planning, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies. Teachers can connect Social Studies content with local values, promoting cultural awareness, critical thinking, and appropriate actions in facing globalization's social and environmental impacts.

These findings align with evidence that local-wisdom values in Tor-Tor can be effectively introduced through ethnopedagogical Social Studies instruction. Students learn theory and experience social and cultural concepts—such as cooperation, ancestral respect, and solidarity—enriching their grasp of social structures. Some students, like Rizkina Dwi Putri, found it easier to understand Batak culture contextually. In contrast, others, like Karin Hazila, struggled with the dance's philosophical meaning and tended to view participation as an academic duty rather than cultural appreciation.

As a cultural heritage rich in meaning, Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung embodies various local wisdom values that are highly relevant for integration into Social Studies education at both primary and secondary school levels. These values deepen students' understanding of local culture and reinforce the goals of character and civic education. The following are five key values that can be developed through ethnopedagogical approaches in Social Studies learning:

a) Cooperation and Social Solidarity

The Tor-Tor dance is performed in coordinated groups and requires strong synchronization among dancers. Its movements reflect the importance of collaboration, mutual support, and solidarity within Batak society. Teachers can connect this value to Social Studies topics such as community cooperation, social development, and the role of individuals in societal life. Through observation and reflection on the dance practice, students gain concrete insights into how cooperation forms the foundation of social interaction.

b) Ancestral and Traditional Reverence

Tor-Tor is frequently performed in traditional rituals intended to honour ancestors and preserve cultural traditions. This reverence reflects a strong intergenerational connection between the present and the values of the past. In Social Studies education, this value is relevant to cultural preservation, national identity, and historical awareness. Teachers can encourage students to explore the symbolic meanings within Tor-Tor movements to appreciate history and cultural legacy.

c) Harmony with Nature and the Environment

Many movements in Tor-Tor are inspired by elements of nature, such as the wind, water, or plants, symbolizing the harmony between humans and the environment. This value aligns well with Social Studies topics related to ecology, environmental conservation, and sustainable development. Students can learn how indigenous communities like the Batak Toba incorporate environmental values into their cultural expressions.

d) Moral and Character Education

Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung conveys moral messages that reflect self-respect, respect for others, perseverance, and discipline. The dance serves as a medium for transmitting social norms and shaping the character of the younger generation. In the context of Social Studies education, these values support the strengthening of character education, particularly in areas of integrity, social responsibility, and care for others. Learning activities can encourage students to reflect on the moral values embedded in local cultural practices.

e) Unity in Diversity

Although each dancer may perform a different role, all movements are harmonized to achieve a common goal. This illustrates that diversity, rather than being a barrier, can strengthen the building of community. This value is especially relevant to Social Studies content focused on tolerance, nationalism, and unity in diversity. By learning about the structure and philosophy of the Tor-Tor dance, students understand how varied roles and backgrounds can be integrated into a shared, harmonious vision.

Time constraints remain a challenge, as Social Studies teacher Rusmala notes: the dense curriculum makes it difficult to explore Tor-Tor's cultural meaning deeply. To address this, the school integrates Social Studies with cultural-arts classes and invites knowledgeable community figures so students gain direct experience. Observations call for more comprehensive, interactive approaches so students not only recognize Tor-Tor as a traditional dance but also internalize its social values.

Discussion

Field observations reveal that Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung is not merely perceived by Batak Toba dancers and communities as a form of artistic performance but as a sacred communicative medium rich with meaning. Each movement in the dance is interpreted as a form of prayer and reverence to God and ancestral spirits. These spiritual expressions are inseparably intertwined with customary ethical values such as modesty in behaviour,

respect for elders, and harmony with nature and the spiritual realm. The paired dance pattern, known as na isembar–panyembar, performed across different clans, serves to reinforce both kinship boundaries and collective youth solidarity within the Batak community (Muzakkir, 2021) (Sugara & Sugito, 2022) (Faiqaersya & Desfiarni, 2024).

These findings are consistent with the perspectives of A.F. et al. (A.F et al., 2016) (Nainggolan, 2017), who interpret Tor-Tor as a form of spiritual education rooted in the Batak tradition. Similarly, Hijrati & Rahmah (Hijrati & Rahmah, 2018) (Zendrat et al., 2024) highlight the core values embedded in the dance, such as simplicity, cooperation, and ancestral reverence. These studies affirm that Tor-Tor functions as an intergenerational ritual that not only strengthens social bonds but also reinforces the collective cultural identity of the Batak Toba people. Thus, Tor-Tor goes beyond entertainment—it serves to transmit cultural values across generations.

The integration of Tor-Tor into ethnopedagogical Social Studies education, as implemented in Hessa Air Genting Village, demonstrates its strong pedagogical potential. The dance effectively cultivates values such as social cooperation, environmental awareness, character education, and unity in cultural diversity. This supports Susilaningtyas's view that local wisdom can be a meaningful and effective educational resource, making Social Studies more relevant to students' real-life experiences. Through this approach, students learn about Batak cultural values in theory and develop critical thinking and intercultural empathy through experiential learning (Salmah et al., 2025) (Sumarni et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, a generational gap in the interpretation of the dance is evident. While older generations continue to uphold Tor-Tor as a sacred cultural ritual, some younger individuals view it merely as a school assignment or as a form of festival entertainment. Similar concerns are found in studies of sacred dances in Bali, where the spiritual dimensions of traditional performances are at risk due to youth migration and increasing commercialization.

This situation underscores the need for more interactive and participatory teaching strategies that involve educators, cultural elders, and dance instructors in the learning process. Such collaborative efforts aim to ensure that learning extends beyond aesthetics and enables students to internalize the sacred and cultural values embedded in Tor-Tor. By doing so, preserving this traditional dance can go hand-in-hand with student character development and the continued strengthening of Batak's cultural identity amid the pressures of globalization.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Tor-Tor Naposo Nauli Bulung is a cultural expression of the Batak Toba community, rich in spiritual, social, and educational values. The dance serves as entertainment during traditional ceremonies and as a sacred medium for communicating with God and ancestral spirits. Values such as respect for elders, youth solidarity, communal cooperation, and devotion to tradition are strongly reflected in its movements. However, the sacred meaning of the dance is gradually fading among younger generations, who tend to perceive it merely as a school obligation or a festive performance, resulting in an intergenerational gap in understanding. Integrating the Tor-Tor dance into ethnopedagogical-based Social Studies education shows great potential in instilling character values such as cooperation, discipline, and appreciation of local culture. This approach allows students to connect academic content with real-life experiences and their cultural identity.

Nevertheless, challenges such as limited instructional time and students' shallow understanding of the dance's philosophical meaning must be addressed through more contextual and collaborative teaching strategies. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to develop interdisciplinary learning models that combine Social Studies with cultural arts and involve traditional resource persons to enrich students' understanding of the dance's meaning. Schools are advised to allocate adequate time and space in the curriculum for culture-based learning and to support extracurricular activities that strengthen students' cultural identity. Future researchers are recommended to explore the effectiveness of ethnopedagogical approaches in other cultural contexts and to develop evaluation instruments that measure the impact of cultural learning on students' character and intercultural empathy.

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