

THE REPRESENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN THE NOVEL *NEGERI 5 MENARA* BY AHMAD FUADI: A STUDY OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore how cultural and educational values are represented in the book Negeri 5 Menara and how these values can be applied to literature for young adults and children. The novel portrays the educational journey of the main character at Pondok Madani, a place where important values like self-control, hard work, perseverance, and religious devotion are taught. Through the backgrounds of its characters, who come from various regions, as well as the traditions of Islamic boarding schools that shape their identities, the book also highlights Indonesia's cultural diversity. This research employs a literature review and content analysis of the novel to gather data, using a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. The results indicate that the cultural and educational values embedded in the novel have a significant impact on the development of young readers as individuals.

Keywords: *educational values, cultural values, children's and young adult literature, negeri 5 menara*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana nilai-nilai budaya dan pendidikan direpresentasikan dalam buku Negeri 5 Menara serta bagaimana nilai-nilai tersebut dapat diterapkan dalam sastra untuk remaja dan anak-anak. Novel ini menggambarkan perjalanan pendidikan tokoh utama di Pondok Madani, sebuah tempat di mana nilai-nilai penting seperti pengendalian diri, kerja keras, ketekunan, dan pengabdian terhadap agama diajarkan. Melalui latar belakang para tokohnya yang berasal dari berbagai daerah, serta tradisi pesantren yang membentuk identitas mereka, buku ini juga menyoroti keragaman budaya Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kajian pustaka dan analisis isi terhadap novel untuk mengumpulkan data, dengan pendekatan analisis deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai budaya dan pendidikan yang terkandung dalam novel ini memiliki dampak yang signifikan terhadap perkembangan pembaca muda sebagai individu.

Kata kunci: *nilai pendidikan, nilai budaya, sastra anak dan remaja, negeri 5 menara*

1. INTRODUCTION

Readers must engage with literature to develop their character and gain cultural awareness. Literary works often function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting educational and cultural values. One example is the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi, which contains rich educational and cultural messages that can

inspire readers, especially young people (Fuadi, n.d.; Nurgiyantoro, 2010) Besides presenting a motivational story, the novel reflects important educational principles such as discipline, perseverance, and the pursuit of knowledge. These values are illustrated through the experiences of Alif, a young student studying at Pondok Madani, an Islamic boarding school that emphasizes both intellectual and moral development.

The novel tells the life journey of Alif, a Minangkabau teenager who studies at Pondok Madani Islamic boarding school. Ahmad Fuadi portrays Alif's search for identity, his academic struggles, and the cultural values embedded in the pesantren environment and Indonesian society in a compelling narrative (Fuadi, n.d.). The boarding school setting reflects the traditions and cultural identity of Indonesian Islamic education, which emphasizes discipline, independence, and spiritual growth. Such cultural elements also illustrate the diversity of Indonesian society, as the students come from different regions and cultural backgrounds (Koentjaraningrat., n.d.). Through this setting, the novel demonstrates how literature can become a medium for the transmission of cultural values and moral education.

Children's and young adult literature plays an important role in shaping readers' perspectives about education, identity, and society. According to (Nodelman, P., & Reimer, n.d.) literature for young readers often contains implicit lessons about values, culture, and social interaction. In this context, *Negeri 5 Menara* serves as an example of a literary work that integrates educational and cultural messages through narrative structure and character development. Previous studies have also shown that the novel contains significant educational values that can be applied in literary learning contexts (Anwar, n.d.; Fitriyah, n.d.; Retnowati, n.d.).

This study is therefore based on the assumption that literature, particularly children's and young adult literature, has significant potential to shape young readers' understanding of education and cultural identity. Consequently, this research aims to examine how educational and cultural values are represented in *Negeri 5 Menara*. The analysis focuses on narrative elements such as character development, story structure, and sociocultural context in order to

understand how these values are conveyed to readers.

Furthermore, this study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates literary analysis, educational philosophy, and cultural perspectives. Qualitative research methods are used to interpret the meanings and values embedded in the text (Bungin, 2014; Moleong, n.d.). By combining textual interpretation with sociocultural analysis, the research aims to position *Negeri 5 Menara* within the broader discourse of Indonesian children's and young adult literature.

In addition, this research contributes to the enrichment of literary studies by highlighting how educational and cultural values are represented in literary works. The discussion is also related to the concept of multicultural education, which emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity and mutual understanding within educational environments (Banks, n.d.) In *Negeri 5 Menara*, students from different regions form a strong community through shared learning experiences and mutual support. This illustrates how education can foster intercultural understanding and strengthen social cohesion.

The novel also emphasizes the role of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in shaping students' character and social skills. The pesantren system integrates values such as independence, discipline, simplicity, and strong community bonds into daily life (Fuadi, n.d.; Ramlah., n.d.). Therefore, this study aims to analyze how *Negeri 5 Menara* represents cultural and educational values and how these values relate to the development of children's and young adult literature.

2. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical method, chosen for its ability to effectively explore and demonstrate how educational and cultural values are portrayed in the novel "Negeri

5 Menara." Literature Review This section gathers relevant sources connected to education, culture, and children's literature. Content Analysis Here, the focus is on recognizing and interpreting the educational and cultural lessons found within the novel.

Documentation This part includes referencing prior studies and academic articles to back up the analysis. By applying this method, the study seeks to uncover how "Negeri 5 Menara" communicates educational and cultural ideas to its young audience through characters, narrative, and setting. This approach allows for interpretive and contextual examination of literary elements, without relying on numerical data or statistical models

The study adopts an exploratory approach with the goal of identifying cultural themes, symbolic expressions, and hidden meanings in the narrative. Its foundation is the constructivist paradigm, which highlights how social, cultural, and experiential circumstances affect knowledge. By relating the story to more general educational and cultural frameworks, the researcher actively participates in the text's interpretation.

The novel *Negeri 5 Menara* by (Fuadi, n.d.), which is the main focus of literary analysis, is the study's major source. Scholarly publications, journal articles, theses, and online academic resources pertaining to literary theory, multicultural education, children's literature, and cultural anthropology are examples of secondary data. These resources enhance the interpretation of results and bolster the theoretical foundation.

The researcher closely examines the book to find passages, conversations, and character interactions that represent cultural and educational values in order to gather data. Important narrative passages are meticulously noted, and additional sources are compiled to put the analysis in context (Goodreads., n.d.).

Several interpretive techniques are used in data analysis. Textual elements are arranged using content analysis into thematic categories like religious devotion, discipline, perseverance, and multicultural awareness. To comprehend how values are conveyed through the story, structural analysis aids in dissecting the plot, character arcs, and setting. Greimas' actantial model, in example, is used in semiotic techniques to uncover symbols as well as cultural norms. Grouping values into meaningful patterns that support the goals of the study is made possible by thematic coding.

The analysis is guided by theoretical frameworks such as Cultural Anthropology (Koentjaraningrat., n.d.), Children's Literature Theory (Nodelman, P., & Reimer, n.d.) and Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, n.d.). These viewpoints aid in understanding how the book expresses cultural identity and educational ideals.

By examining several data sources, triangulation is used to guarantee the validity of the study. The analysis and interpretation are improved by peer review and expert judgment. By matching textual meanings with accepted theoretical frameworks, semantic validity is preserved.

The study is carried out with the utmost respect for scholarly integrity and ethical standards, and all academic sources are duly referenced. The goal of the study is to make a significant contribution to our understanding of literature as a reflective and educational instrument for forming young minds. (Greimas, n.d.)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ahmad Fuadi's novel *Negeri 5 Menara* presents a meaningful representation of educational and cultural values through the experiences of its protagonist at Pondok Madani, an Islamic boarding school rooted in pesantren traditions. The novel illustrates how

literature can function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting moral, cultural, and intellectual values to young readers (Nodelman, P., & Reimer, n.d.; Nurgiyantoro, 2010). Through the story of Alif and his friends, the narrative portrays the development of character, discipline, and spiritual awareness within an educational environment.

In terms of education, the novel emphasizes that learning is not limited to cognitive achievement but also includes character formation and spiritual growth. One of the most significant educational messages in the novel is expressed through the motto “**Man Jadda Wajada**” (He who strives will succeed), which becomes a guiding principle for the students at Pondok Madani. This phrase represents a philosophy of perseverance and determination that shapes the students’ attitudes toward learning and life (Fuadi, n.d.).

Alif, who initially feels reluctant to study in a pesantren, gradually experiences a transformation that leads him to become a disciplined and motivated learner. This process reflects the concept of holistic education, which integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (Anwar, n.d.; Fitriyah, n.d.). Educational values are also reflected in the structured learning environment at Pondok Madani. The boarding school emphasizes discipline, collaborative learning, and intellectual curiosity. Students are encouraged to learn multiple languages, particularly Arabic and English, and to engage actively in discussions and debates.

Such practices promote critical thinking and broaden students’ perspectives on the world (Fuadi, n.d.). This approach aligns with contemporary educational perspectives that emphasize character education and global literacy in the learning process (Sari, P. A., & Wijaya, n.d.).

From a cultural standpoint, the novel skillfully integrates Indonesia’s diverse heritage through its characters, setting, and daily interactions. The students hail from various regions across the archipelago, bringing together different accents, traditions, and values. This representation of multiculturalism affirms Indonesia’s motto “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” (Unity in Diversity) and introduces young readers to themes of tolerance, empathy, and unity (Banks, n.d.; Koentjaraningrat., n.d.).

Respect for elders and teachers is another cultural value portrayed throughout the narrative. In pesantren culture, the **kyai** and senior students are regarded as moral authorities who guide younger students in both academic and moral development. The novel portrays the pesantren as an institution that not only provides formal education but also preserves cultural traditions and moral values within the community (Ramlah., n.d.). These cultural elements are transmitted naturally through daily activities, reinforcing the importance of discipline, humility, and respect.

Language use in the novel also enriches its cultural dimension. Arabic expressions coexist with English vocabulary and Indonesian dialects, symbolizing the blend of local identity and global aspirations. This multilingual environment encourages readers to appreciate linguistic diversity while maintaining pride in one’s cultural roots (Ratna, n.d.).

In a broader context, *Negeri 5 Menara* presents children’s and young adult literature as a transformative tool for shaping identity and values. The story’s balance between inspiration and realism allows young readers to see themselves in Alif’s journey, not only as students but as cultural participants in a larger national narrative. Unlike many Western works that emphasize individualism and self-determination, Fuadi’s story highlights community, spiritual depth, and collective

growth an approach resonant with Eastern philosophies. (Ahmad Fuadi., n.d.)

Ultimately, the novel supports the integration of literature into formal education, particularly in promoting character building and cultural literacy. Its relevance is heightened by its alignment with educational objectives aimed at fostering responsible, value-driven youth who are conscious of their heritage yet open to the world (Nodelman, P., & Reimer, n.d.),

The book *Negeri 5 Menara* showcases different elements of education that aid in shaping its characters. These important educational principles can be divided into several categories:

4.1.1 Discipline and Work Ethic

The educational system at Pondok Madani is characterized by strict discipline and structured routines. Students are required to wake up early, attend congregational prayers, and participate in intensive learning activities throughout the day. This disciplined environment helps students develop strong study habits and a sense of responsibility in their educational journey (Fuadi, n.d.). Such discipline is considered an important element of character education in many educational institutions (Anwar, n.d.)

4.1.2 Perseverance and Motivation in Learning

Perseverance is one of the most prominent educational values presented in the novel. Initially, Alif feels disappointed because he cannot attend the public school he desires. However, his experiences at Pondok Madani gradually change his perspective. He learns that success is determined not by the location of education but by determination and hard work. This idea is symbolized through the motto “**Man Jadda Wajada,**” which motivates students to persist in pursuing knowledge (Fuadi, n.d.; Retnowati, n.d.)

4.1.3 Religious Values in Education

Cottage Madani, an Islamic boarding school or pesantren, emphasizes the significance of religious values. Here, education isn't just about academics; it also prioritizes personal growth and spiritual development, guiding students to form a balanced view of life (Ramlah., n.d.)

4.1.4 Learning Through Solidarity and Cooperation

The learning environment at Pondok Madani also encourages cooperation among students. They frequently support each other in academic activities, share knowledge, and work together to achieve collective goals. This collaborative atmosphere strengthens social bonds and reinforces the importance of solidarity in the learning process (Fuadi, n.d.).

4.2 Representation of Cultural Values in *Negeri 5 Menara*

In addition to its educational ideals, the book emphasizes a number of cultural components that represent Indonesia's diversity. These elements consist of:

4.2.1 Cultural Diversity in Islamic Boarding Schools

Students at Pondok Madani come from various regions across Indonesia, each bringing distinct cultural traditions. This diversity illustrates how education can function as a unifying force within a multicultural society (Banks, n.d.; Koentjaraningrat., n.d.)

4.2.2 Pesantren Traditions and Social Values

Numerous pesantren customs are depicted in the book, such as group prayers, rigorous discipline, and a modest way of life. In addition to influencing students' education, these customs uphold their moral and social principles (Ramlah., n.d.).

4.2.3 Gotong Royong (Mutual Cooperation) and Social Solidarity

The concept of **gotong royong**, which emphasizes cooperation and communal responsibility, is frequently illustrated in the narrative. Students work together to clean the pesantren environment, organize events, and support one another during challenges. This value reflects an important aspect of Indonesian cultural identity (Koentjaraningrat., n.d.)

4.2.4 The Influence of Local Culture in Education

The book demonstrates how the pesantren's educational system—including teaching strategies, student-teacher interactions, and community involvement—is greatly influenced by the local Indonesian culture (Ratna, n.d.)

4.3 Relevance in Children's and Young Adult Literature

Because it can inspire educational principles, the novel *Negeri 5 Menara* is a significant work of children's and young adult literature. It inspires young readers to recognize the value of education and diligence. Teach the next generation about cultural diversity: The book imparts tolerance and unity lessons through its multicultural cast of characters. Tell a tale that teens can relate to: Young readers who are struggling in life and in school can find inspiration in Alif's story of a student pursuing his goals (Nodelman, P., & Reimer, n.d.)

Culturally speaking, the book depicts the characters' many social backgrounds and places of origin, which enhances our comprehension of Indonesia's plurality. The students' diverse backgrounds, languages, and viewpoints are brought from all around the archipelago. In overcoming common obstacles, their relationships demonstrate the virtues of tolerance, collaboration, and solidarity. Through customs, language, and the everyday lives of the characters at the pesantren, Fuadi depicts local wisdom,

illustrating a living cultural legacy in an educational setting. (Darusman, H. S., n.d.)

The analysis of these results demonstrates that *Negeri 5 Menara* fulfills a significant educational and contemplative purpose in addition to being a fun book. For its readers, particularly children and teenagers who are growing up, it imparts lessons on the value of tenacity, the spirit of learning, and social adaptation. Theoretically, these results lend credence to the idea that literature is important for cultural literacy and character education. Literature imparts values that mold the reader's character in addition to telling stories. (Izzati, n.d.)

This study's analytical technique, which concentrates more on the narrative's explicit aspects, has limits, too. The author does not always express values directly, and the researcher's viewpoint greatly influences how some meanings are interpreted. However, the study offers a thorough grasp of how this book might be utilized as an engaging and instructive tool (Nurgiyantoro, 2010)

1. Educational Values in *Negeri 5 Menara*

a. Hard Work and Perseverance The protagonist, Alif, exemplifies a strong commitment to learning despite his modest background.

“Man Jadda Wajada. He who strives will succeed.” This recurring motto becomes a motivational mantra for the students and teachers at Pondok Madani.

b. Discipline and Time Management Pondok Madani enforces a strict daily schedule, instilling responsibility and structure.

“By five in the morning, we had to be in the mosque. No excuses for being late.” This discipline shapes the students' habits and moral character.

c. Independent Learning and Critical Thinking Students are encouraged to

read, discuss, and interpret texts independently.

“We learned not only from books, but from experience and discussion.” This fosters intellectual curiosity and reflective thinking among young readers.

2. Cultural Values Reflected in the Novel

a. Religious and Moral Culture The Islamic boarding school setting nurtures spiritual growth and ethical behavior.

“Every night we recited the Qur’an together, reminding each other to stay on the right path.” These practices reinforce moral values and communal bonds.

b. Pluralism and National Identity Characters come from diverse regions across Indonesia, promoting unity in diversity.

“We came from all corners of Indonesia, but here we were one: students of Pondok Madani.” The novel celebrates tolerance and national pride.

c. Local and Linguistic Culture Regional languages and customs are naturally woven into the narrative.

“Alif often slipped Minang words into conversations, making us laugh.” This introduces young readers to Indonesia’s rich cultural tapestry.

3. Relevance to Children's and Young Adult Literature

a. Inspirational Role Models Young characters demonstrate growth, resilience, and ambition.

“I came as a village boy from Maninjau, but I wanted to return as someone useful.” This message resonates with youth seeking purpose and direction.

b. Coming-of-Age Narrative Alif’s journey from a rural boy to a visionary student reflects personal transformation.

“The world is vast, and I want to explore it.” Such themes inspire young readers to dream beyond their circumstances.

c. Accessible Language and Relatable Themes Ahmad Fuadi’s writing is simple yet profound, making it ideal for young audiences.

“This story felt like our own lives—just written more beautifully.” The relatable tone enhances engagement and emotional connection.

4. CONCLUSION

The book *Negeri 5 Menara* highlights important educational values, including discipline, dedication, perseverance, and faith. It describes the educational system of the Madani cottage as one that shapes students' characters through structured learning and strong ethical teachings. The characters show a great enthusiasm for education, demonstrating that learning is not only about academics but also about personal development and character building. Furthermore, the characters’ varied backgrounds reflect the cultural diversity found in Indonesia, as each comes from a unique region. Islamic boarding school traditions are essential in building students' discipline, community spirit, and modesty (Anwar, n.d.)

Life at pesantren emphasizes working together and collaboration, showcasing Indonesia's vibrant social culture. This novel is significant in children’s and young adult literature, offering valuable insights into education and culture that aid in character building for younger readers. Alif’s challenges and victories inspire teenagers, motivating them to stay committed to their learning journey despite facing difficulties. Additionally, *Negeri 5 Menara* introduces the pesantren culture to youths, promoting a better appreciation of Indonesia’s educational variety.

The novel *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi proves to be a meaningful

literary work that embodies strong educational and cultural values. Through vivid character development and authentic storytelling, the novel offers profound lessons in perseverance, discipline, and social harmony—especially relevant to children and adolescents navigating personal growth and identity. Educationally, the story highlights the transformative power of learning and the importance of adaptability in pursuing knowledge. Culturally, it celebrates Indonesia's diversity, demonstrating how differences can unite individuals through shared experiences and mutual respect.

Despite its limitations in analytical depth regarding implicit values, the study affirms the novel's potential as an enriching resource in character education and cultural literacy. It goes beyond entertainment, functioning as a reflective and motivational tool that nurtures young minds.

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