

Ngelmu Iku Kalakone Kanthi Laku: Knowledge, the Restraint of Angkara, and Relational Ethics in Serat Wedhatama

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Abstract

Peace education often emphasizes the acquisition of moral values, although knowledge of ethical principles does not necessarily translate into conduct. This article examines how selected opening stanzas of the Pocung section of *Serat Wedhatama* connect knowledge (*ngelmu*), disciplined practice (*laku*), the restraint of destructive impulses (*dur angkara*), and ethical relations with others. The study employs qualitative library research and focused textual analysis. A single verifiable edition of *Serat Wedhatama* serves as the primary source, while scholarship on Javanese Sufism, ethics, and peace education provides the interpretive context. The analysis traces key Javanese terms and the progression of ideas across the selected stanzas. The findings suggest that *ngelmu* is presented as incomplete without *laku*, which involves confronting *angkara* within oneself. The following stanza links this inward discipline with *ngaksama* and *sareh*, expressed through forgiveness and patience toward others, respectively. These stanzas can therefore be read as linking knowledge, self-cultivation, and relational conduct rather than presenting moral values as a disconnected list. The article concludes that this textual sequence offers a perspective on peace education that foregrounds the formation of ethical subjects, without assuming that inward discipline alone can resolve social or structural conflict.

Keywords: *Serat Wedhatama*; Javanese Sufism; Self-Cultivation; Relational Ethics; Peace Education

INTRODUCTION

Value education faces a problem that cannot be resolved simply by increasing knowledge about goodness. A person may understand religious teachings, master moral norms, and even speak eloquently about justice and peace, yet such knowledge is not always reflected in their conduct (Arystanbek et al., 2026). The problem lies not merely in a lack of knowledge, but in the relationship between what human beings know and how that knowledge shapes who they become. In the context of peace education, this issue is particularly important because the ability to recognize universal values does not necessarily entail the ability to exercise self-restraint, navigate differences, and treat others ethically. Kester and Cremin (2017) argue that peace education needs to critically examine its theoretical assumptions and practices through second-order reflexivity. Peace education, therefore, must question not only the conduct of those who are the objects of education, but also the assumptions and positions of those who educate them. This perspective raises a more fundamental question: has education paid sufficient attention to the formation of the human beings expected to embody the values they are taught?

This question can be explored through the intellectual heritage of Java, particularly *Serat Wedhatama*, a work composed by Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Arya Mangkunegara IV in the nineteenth century. This work belongs to the Javanese *sastra pinulang*, or didactic literary tradition, and addresses knowledge, spiritual life, the relationship between human beings and God, and the cultivation of noble character (Sugiarto & Suparno, 2025). Its moral teachings are conveyed not merely through conceptual formulations but also through *tembang macapat*, a traditional Javanese poetic form that combines instruction, reflection, and representations of human life (Chodjim, 2016). One of its widely known expressions is “*Ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku*.” The expression is commonly understood to mean that knowledge must be put into practice. However, this interpretation risks oversimplifying the issues embedded in the phrase (Alfiana, 2022). If knowledge comes to fruition through *laku*, how should the relationship between the two be understood? Is *laku* merely the action that follows the acquisition of knowledge, or is it a process of self-cultivation that shapes how knowledge is understood and embodied? These questions provide the starting point for reading *Serat Wedhatama* not merely as a source of moral teachings, but as a text that offers insights into the relationship between knowledge and human formation.

This study focuses on the opening three stanzas of the *Pupuh Pocung*, which address *ngelmu*, *laku*, *dur angkara*, *ngaksama*, and *sareh*. The first stanza reads: “*Ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku, lekase lawan kas, tegese kas nyantosani, setya budya pangekese dur angkara.*” These lines connect knowledge with practice, perseverance, and the overcoming of *angkara*, or destructive inner impulses. The following stanza portrays *angkara* as an inner force that gathers within the self and may develop into a source of disturbance when left unchecked. The third stanza introduces *ngaksama* and *sareh*, referring to forgiveness and patience toward others who have done wrong (Chodjim, 2016). This sequence is significant because the discussion moves from knowledge to the challenges encountered within the self, and then to one’s attitude toward others. This study does not assume that the sequence constitutes a modern educational theory systematically formulated by the author. Rather, the relationship between the stanzas serves as a basis for reconstructing conceptual connections that can be justified through close textual reading.

Research on Serat Wedhatama has developed through several approaches. Munandar and Afifah (2020), for example, identify seven elements of Sufism in the work: *tawaduk* (humility), the search for a good spiritual teacher, *zuhud* (detachment from worldly excess), *mujahadah* and *uzlah* (spiritual striving and withdrawal), *tawakal* (reliance upon God), *qanaah* (contentment), and *makrifat* (spiritual knowledge of God). Their study demonstrates the affinity between several teachings in Serat Wedhatama and Islamic Sufi traditions, particularly concerning the purification of the soul and the spiritual journey. These findings provide a foundation for understanding the relevance of the text’s teachings on self-cultivation to Islamic ethics and spirituality. However, identifying Sufi elements does not, in itself, explain how particular concepts relate to one another within the textual sequence. The present study does not seek to reproduce an inventory of Sufi teachings. Instead, it focuses on the relationship between knowledge, the practice of *laku*, the restraint of *angkara*, and ethical conduct toward others across the three selected stanzas.

The epistemological dimensions of Serat Wedhatama have also been examined in previous research. Mustofa (2020), in a study of the work’s religious principles, positions the concept of knowledge as a key to understanding its ethical thought. This approach underscores the importance of reading moral teachings holistically rather than treating them as principles detached from their epistemological foundations. The relationship between knowledge and ethics, therefore, is not an entirely unexplored subject. Nevertheless, there remains room for a more focused examination of the connections between stanzas,

particularly how *ngelmu* is linked to *laku*, how *angkara* is presented as an inner problem, and how self-cultivation relates to conduct toward others (Alfiana, 2022). By limiting the analysis to a specific sequence of stanzas, this study examines these relationships closely without attempting to reconstruct the entire epistemology of Serat Wedhatama.

The relationship between Serat Wedhatama and peace education has been addressed more directly by Tunjung and Fauzi (2023). Through library research employing content analysis and descriptive analysis, they identify teachings in Serat Wedhatama that can be categorized in terms of positive peace and negative peace. Their study relates the text's moral teachings to efforts to cultivate peaceful educational environments and noble character. This is significant because it demonstrates that the relationship between Serat Wedhatama and peace education has already attracted scholarly attention. Accordingly, the present study does not position the identification of peace-related values as its principal contribution. Rather than compiling teachings that appear conducive to peace, it examines how the text connects self-cultivation with attitudes toward others. This distinction determines the direction of the analysis: peace is not treated as a category of values waiting to be identified in the text, but as a possible ethical implication of the process of human formation represented through the sequence of stanzas.

Other studies have examined Serat Wedhatama in relation to its social context and the construction of Javanese-Islamic ethics. Syihabuddin et al. (2024), for instance, employ Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge to analyze the construction of Javanese-Islamic ethics in Mangkunegara IV's work. They situate its ethical teachings within the author's social and historical context and discuss human ethical relations with God and fellow human beings. Meanwhile, Sudrajat et al. (2018) examine Javanese leadership values derived from Serat Wedhatama, including courage, simplicity, sincerity, and religiosity. Together, these studies demonstrate the breadth of possible interpretations, ranging from the social construction of knowledge to leadership ethics. The present article, however, adopts a narrower approach. Rather than interpreting the entire ethical framework or the author's social context, it examines the progression of ideas across the opening three stanzas of the *Pupuh Pocung* to investigate how knowledge and self-cultivation are connected to ethical conduct.

Recent scholarship further underscores the need to establish clear analytical boundaries. Kurnia et al. (2025) examine Islamic educational values in Serat Wedhatama and

their application in teaching at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat Lamongan. By combining textual analysis, observation, and interviews, their study connects the work's teachings with religious educational practices. More recently, Mustofa et al. (2026) explore the concept of human perfection in Serat Wedhatama through a comparison with Ibn Arabi's concept of *insan kamil*, or the Perfect Human. Their study addresses spiritual discipline, the restraint of the lower self, ethical formation, and the spiritual journey toward closeness to God. These studies demonstrate that educational values, self-transformation, and the formation of the ideal human being have been examined from various perspectives. Consequently, the present study does not claim novelty on the grounds that Serat Wedhatama has never been read as an educational text, a work associated with Sufism, or a source of thought on human formation.

Against this background, the state of the art of this study lies in examining the relationship between knowledge, self-restraint, and social conduct through a limited textual sequence. Previous research has explained the work's Sufi teachings, epistemology, Javanese-Islamic ethics, peace education, and applications in educational settings. However, within the body of literature reviewed for this article, the sequential relationship between *ngelmu*, *laku*, *dur angkara*, *ngaksama*, and *sareh* has not been the principal focus of a study that reconstructs these concepts as a connected line of argument. This gap does not imply that the relationship has never been mentioned by previous scholars. The proposed originality is more specific: a focused reading of how each concept acquires meaning through its relationship with other concepts in adjacent stanzas.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how the opening three stanzas of the *Pupuh Pocung* in Serat Wedhatama construct the relationship between *ngelmu*, *laku*, and the restraint of *dur angkara*, and how this relationship is expressed through *ngaksama* and *sareh*. The study employs library research and focused textual analysis, paying particular attention to Javanese terminology, the context connecting the stanzas, and interpretations developed in previous scholarship. The analysis is expected to demonstrate that knowledge in this textual sequence extends beyond the possession of teachings and involves confronting inner impulses and cultivating attitudes toward others. In doing so, the article offers an interpretive contribution to the study of Javanese Sufism and Islamic education, particularly by understanding peace education not merely as the transmission of moral values, but also as a process of self-cultivation through which knowledge is ethically embodied in shared life.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research and focused textual reading (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach was selected to interpret the relationships between knowledge (*ngelmu*), the practice of living (*laku*), the restraint of destructive impulses (*dur angkara*), and attitudes toward others as expressed through *ngaksama* and *sareh* in Serat Wedhatama. Rather than cataloguing all the moral values contained in the work, the study seeks to reconstruct the conceptual relationships that emerge across the opening stanzas of Pupuh Pocung.

The primary source is the Javanese-language text of Serat Wedhatama, taken from a verifiable edition accessible through a digital text and a scan or facsimile. The Indonesian translation by Chodjim (2016) is used as a comparative source to assist in understanding the meaning of the Javanese text, rather than as a substitute for the primary source. Selecting a single edition is intended to maintain consistency in spelling, stanza segmentation, and the interpretation of terms. Where differences arise between the Javanese text and its translation, the analysis prioritizes the Javanese text while taking into account the context of the stanza and explanations provided in supporting sources.

The secondary sources consist of eight scholarly journal articles addressing Javanese Sufism, epistemology, Javanese-Islamic ethics, peace education, and reflexivity in education. Relevant studies include those by Munandar and Afifah (2020), Mustofa (2020), Tunjung and Fauzi (2023), Syihabuddin et al. (2024), Kurnia et al. (2025), and Kester and Cremin (2017). The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar, Garuda, Crossref, and the official websites of journals and publishers. The keywords included Serat Wedhatama, Javanese Sufism, epistemology, Javanese-Islamic ethics, peace education, and self-cultivation. Literature was selected based on its relevance to the research questions, the traceability of its bibliographic information, the availability of text for examination, the reputation of the publisher, and its relevance to the development of existing research. Articles that discuss moral values only in general terms, without a substantive connection to the object of this study, were not prioritized.

Data were collected through documentation and textual note-taking. The research instruments consisted of a reading sheet and an analytical matrix used to record key terms, the contexts in which they appear, the relationships between stanzas, and interpretations proposed in previous studies. The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the selected

sequence of stanzas was read and examined in the Javanese language. Second, the terms *ngelmu*, *laku*, *kas*, *setya budya*, *dur angkara*, *ngaksama*, and *sareh* were identified. Third, the relationships among these concepts were interpreted in light of the context of *Pupuh Pocung* and the findings of previous studies. Fourth, the implications of this reading for relational ethics and peace education were formulated.

The validity of the interpretation was maintained through cross-checking the primary text, its translation, and relevant secondary sources. The study also distinguishes between meanings explicitly expressed in the text and the researcher's contemporary interpretations. Accordingly, the implications for peace education are presented as an outcome of interpretation, rather than as a claim that *Serat Wedhatama* explicitly formulates a modern theory of peace education.

RESULTS

***Ngelmu*, *Laku*, and *Kas*: The Conditions for the Realization of Knowledge**

The first stanza of *Pupuh Pocung* establishes a relationship between knowledge, conduct, sustained effort, and the restraint of destructive impulses. It reads:

*Ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku,
lekase lawan kas,
tegese kas nyantosani,
setya budya pangekese dur angkara.*

The stanza brings together four key expressions: *ngelmu*, *laku*, *kas*, and *setya budya*. These expressions are not presented as separate moral qualities. Instead, they appear in a sequence that connects the realization of knowledge with a particular mode of conduct and identifies the restraint of *dur angkara* as its stated direction. Atmosaputro and Hatch's English translation renders the opening claim as "This knowledge is achieved through practice" and explains *kas* in terms of strengthening perseverance in suppressing evil passions (1972, pp. 172–173).

The relationship between *ngelmu* and *laku* is established in the first line, *ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku*. The wording places *laku* within the realization of *ngelmu*, rather than presenting conduct merely as a subsequent consequence of possessing knowledge. The

central finding of this stanza is therefore the close connection between knowing and doing. Knowledge is described through the process by which it is realized in conduct, although the stanza does not offer a formal definition of *ngelmu* or specify a systematic theory of how knowledge is acquired.

The second line, *lekase lawan kas*, introduces the quality required to undertake this process. Its meaning is developed in the following line, *tegese kas nyantosani*. In their translation, Atmosaputro and Hatch explain that *kas* strengthens perseverance in suppressing evil passions. The two lines therefore give sustained effort a central place in the realization of knowledge. The emphasis is not simply on performing an action, but on the firmness required to maintain a course of conduct. At the textual level, *kas* functions as the link between the general requirement of *laku* and the ethical task identified in the final line.

The final line, *setya budya pangekese dur angkara*, identifies the direction of the process established by the preceding lines. It places *dur angkara* in relation to the effort expressed through *setya budya*. The verse thus links the cultivation or steadfastness of one's disposition with the restraint of a destructive tendency. Although the exact semantic range of *setya budya* requires careful interpretation, its position in the stanza is significant: it connects the preceding emphasis on *kas* with the stated need to restrain *dur angkara*. The stanza consequently presents knowledge, sustained conduct, and self-restraint as related elements within one sequence (Mangkunegara IV, as reproduced in Atmosaputro & Hatch, 1972).

A further textual feature becomes visible when the first stanza is read alongside the second. Atmosaputro and Hatch note that the final word of the first stanza, *angkara*, links it to the opening of the next stanza, *angkara gung, neng angga anggung gumulung*. This connection is reinforced by the poem's sound patterns and alliteration. The transition is therefore not only conceptual but also textual: the first stanza names *dur angkara* as the object of restraint, while the second begins by elaborating the presence and potential power of *angkara*. This linkage provides the basis for examining the second stanza as a continuation of the first stanza's concern with the conditions under which knowledge is realized.

Dur Angkara and the Emergence of Rubeda

The second stanza of Pupuh Pocung reads:

*Angkara gung,
neng angga anggung gumulung,
gogolonganira,*

*triloka lekere kongsi,
yen den umbar ambabar dadi rubeda.*

Compared with the first stanza, which presents *dur angkara* as something to be restrained, the second offers a more developed depiction of *angkara* itself. The opening expression, *angkara gung*, emphasizes its magnitude, while *neng angga anggung gumulung* locates it within the embodied self and depicts it as gathering or coiling. Atmosaputro and Hatch translate these lines as referring to great passions that are “always coiled in the body.” The text thus presents *angkara* as an inward condition rather than initially identifying it with an external source of trouble (Atmosaputro & Hatch, 1972, pp. 172–173).

The expression *neng angga anggung gumulung* is particularly important to the stanza’s depiction of *angkara*. The phrase combines an indication of location, *neng angga*, with the dynamic expression *anggung gumulung*. Its wording conveys something that is present within the self and appears to accumulate or coil rather than remain inactive. The repeated sounds in *angkara gung* and *anggung gumulung* also contribute to the stanza’s acoustic texture. Atmosaputro and Hatch identify the use of alliteration as a characteristic feature of Serat Wedhatama and specifically note the connection between the first stanza’s final word and the second stanza’s opening. The imagery and sound patterns together make the presence of *angkara* a prominent feature of the passage.

The next expressions, *gogolonganira* and *triloka lekere kongsi*, extend the description beyond the initial image of *angkara* gathering within the body. Atmosaputro and Hatch translate the relevant lines by referring to the power of these passions as extending into the “three spheres.” This translation indicates the breadth or reach attributed to *angkara* in the stanza. However, the passage does not provide a detailed explanation of the cosmological meaning of *triloka*. The present textual analysis therefore records the phrase’s expansive function without assigning it a more specific metaphysical meaning than the available evidence supports.

The final line, *yen den umbar ambabar dadi rubeda*, introduces a conditional relationship between allowing *angkara* to develop and the emergence of disturbance. Atmosaputro and Hatch translate the line as stating that, if the passions are let loose, they develop and become disturbances. The sequence is significant because it distinguishes the presence of *angkara* from its unchecked development. The stanza does not merely identify an inward tendency;

it also describes a possible consequence when that tendency is allowed to expand without restraint. In the terms of the verse, *rubeda* marks the outcome of this process, although the stanza does not specify a single form of disturbance to which the term must refer.

Read together, the first and second stanzas form a connected textual sequence. The first associates *ngelmu* with *laku* and *kas*, directing sustained conduct toward the restraint of *dur angkara*. The second elaborates the problem by depicting *angkara* as an inwardly gathering force that may develop into *rubeda* when left unchecked. This relationship is supported by the explicit verbal link between the end of the first stanza and the beginning of the second. The resulting textual pattern connects the realization of knowledge with the need to confront an inner tendency that may obstruct its ethical expression, without requiring the broader claim that every form of social conflict originates in an individual's inner disposition.

***Ngaksama* and *Sareh*: Responses to the Faults of Others**

The third stanza of *Pupuh Pocung* reads:

*Beda lamun,
nus sengsem reb ing asamun,
semune ngaksama,
sasamane bangsa sisip,
sarwa sareh saking mardi martotama.*

The stanza shifts attention from the restraint of *angkara* to the way a person responds to others. Atmosaputro and Hatch (1972, p. 173) translate it as describing someone drawn to quiet matters, forgiving fellow human beings who have erred, and maintaining calm through patience. Read alongside the preceding stanzas, this shift brings the consequences of self-cultivation into the domain of interpersonal conduct.

The expression *reb ing asamun* is interpreted somewhat differently across translations. Atmosaputro and Hatch (1972, p. 173) render it as “a lover of quiet matters,” while Suharsono et al. (2020) associate it with an orientation toward inner calm. The stanza then specifies *ngaksama*, or forgiveness, as a distinguishing feature of this disposition. Rather than remaining an entirely inward quality, forgiveness becomes perceptible in one's response to others.

The phrase *sasamane bangsa sisip* identifies those toward whom this attitude is directed: fellow human beings who have made mistakes. Suharsono et al. (2020) similarly interpret the stanza as encouraging forgiveness toward those who have done wrong. The emphasis is therefore not simply on being kind, but on how one responds when another person's conduct is considered erroneous. The stanza acknowledges wrongdoing while presenting forgiveness as an appropriate ethical response to human imperfection.

The final line, *sarwa sareh saking mardi martotama*, adds patience and composure to this disposition. Atmosaputro and Hatch (1972, p. 173) translate it as being “always calm” through the practice of patience. Suharsono et al. (2020) likewise connect sareh with patience and forgiveness. Together, these expressions suggest that responding ethically to another person's fault involves not only a willingness to forgive, but also the composure to sustain that response.

Considered as a sequence, the three stanzas connect knowledge and conduct with the treatment of others. The first associates *ngelmu* with *laku* and the restraint of *dur angkara*; the second describes the disturbance that may arise when *angkara* is left unchecked; and the third foregrounds *ngaksama* and *sareh*. This sequence supports reading forgiveness and patience as relational dimensions of self-cultivation, although it does not establish that inner discipline automatically produces harmonious relationships (Atmosaputro & Hatch, 1972, pp. 172–173; Suharsono et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION

Ngelmu as Self-Cultivation: Beyond the Acquisition of Knowledge

The relationship between *ngelmu* and *laku* in Serat Wedhatama suggests a conception of knowledge that goes beyond intellectual acquisition. The phrase *ngelmu iku kalakone kanthi laku* does not simply prescribe the application of knowledge after learning has taken place. Rather, it presents *laku* as integral to the realization of *ngelmu*. This reading resonates with Mustofa's (2020) epistemological study, which positions knowledge as central to understanding the ethical teachings of Serat Wedhatama. The present analysis develops this perspective through a more focused textual sequence: knowledge is connected not only to conduct, but also to the discipline required to sustain that conduct and confront the tendencies that may obstruct it.

The expressions *lekase lawan kas* and *tegese kas nyantosani* further clarify this relationship. Atmosaputro and Hatch (1972, p. 173) interpret *kas* in terms of strengthening perseverance in suppressing evil passions. Its function in the stanza is therefore more specific than a general call to action. *Kas* suggests the firmness needed to maintain *laku*, while *setya budya pangekese dur angkara* directs that effort toward restraining destructive impulses. Taken together, these expressions allow *laku* to be interpreted as an ongoing process of self-cultivation rather than a mechanical application of previously acquired knowledge.

The second stanza deepens this interpretation by depicting *angkara* as a force that gathers within the self and becomes a source of disturbance when left unchecked. This concern has affinities with the Sufi teachings identified by Munandar and Afifah (2020), particularly *mujabadah*, which they associate with self-control in selected stanzas of *Pupuh Sinom*. Their analysis provides a relevant comparative perspective, but it does not establish that *dur angkara* in *Pupuh Pocung* is identical to *mujabadah* or to the entire Sufi concept of *hawa nafsu*. The contribution of the present reading lies instead in tracing how the second stanza elaborates the problem already named in the first: the realization of knowledge requires attention to inner tendencies that may interfere with ethical conduct.

The sequence therefore presents *laku* as more than the practical expression of an idea. It involves sustained effort, the cultivation of one's disposition, and the restraint of impulses that may prevent knowledge from informing conduct. This interpretation does not imply that every social conflict originates in individual shortcomings. Rather, the three concepts, *ngelmu*, *laku*, and *dur angkara*, provide a textual basis for understanding self-cultivation as one dimension of ethical formation. In this respect, the poem's treatment of knowledge invites a distinction between knowing what is desirable and developing the disposition needed to act accordingly (Atmosaputro & Hatch, 1972, pp. 172–173; F. Mustofa, 2020).

From Self-Restraint to Relational Ethics: The Meaning of *Ngaksama* and *Sareh*

The transition from the second to the third stanza extends the poem's concern from the restraint of inner impulses to conduct toward others. The second stanza depicts *angkara* and the disturbance that may follow when it is allowed to develop, whereas the third describes *ngaksama* and *sareh* in responding to fellow human beings who have erred. Atmosaputro and Hatch (1972, pp. 172–173) translate the latter stanza in terms of

forgiveness and patience. Read as a sequence, these stanzas suggest that the ethical significance of self-cultivation becomes visible, among other things, in how a person responds to another person's wrongdoing.

This interpretation is supported by Suharsono, Mustansyir, and Murtiningsih's (2020) study of Javanese forgiveness in *Serat Wedhatama* and *Serat Nitiprana*. They associate forgiveness with inner peace, the regulation of negative emotions and the desire for revenge, and the capacity to show compassion toward those who have done wrong. Their findings provide a useful comparison for reading *ngaksama* not merely as an abstract virtue, but as a moral response shaped by how a person manages their own emotional disposition. The present analysis adds a textual dimension by locating this response after the preceding stanzas' emphasis on *laku* and the restraint of *angkara*. This ordering invites a connection between self-cultivation and relational conduct, although it does not prove that inner discipline automatically produces forgiveness.

The meaning of *ngaksama* also requires a distinction between forgiving an action and declaring that action acceptable. Pettigrove (2007) examines the relationship between understanding and forgiveness, showing that understanding another person's circumstances can lead either to forgiveness or to excusing the wrongdoing. These are not the same moral response. Applied cautiously to *Serat Wedhatama*, this distinction means that *ngaksama* can be interpreted as a refusal to let another person's fault become an unrestricted warrant for hostility or revenge, without implying that the fault itself should be denied or justified. Forgiveness, on this reading, remains a considered ethical response rather than an automatic obligation (Pettigrove, 2007; Suharsono et al., 2020).

The expression *sarwa sareb* complements *ngaksama* by emphasizing patience and composure. Atmosaputro and Hatch (1972, p. 173) render the line as maintaining calm through the practice of patience, while Suharsono et al. (2020) connect the stanza's moral orientation with inner peace and the control of negative responses. Nevertheless, *sareb* should not be equated with passivity or an obligation to endure every form of mistreatment. The stanza describes a disposition toward fellow human beings who have erred, but does not specify procedures for accountability, protection, or the repair of harm. Those questions cannot be settled by translation alone; they require further ethical consideration.

Taken together, *ngaksama* and *sareb* give the sequence a relational dimension. The first stanza connects knowledge with disciplined conduct, the second depicts an inner tendency

that may generate disturbance, and the third presents forgiveness and patience as ways of responding to the faults of others. This reading suggests that the ethical realization of knowledge extends beyond inward reflection to the handling of interpersonal wrongdoing. It does not establish a comprehensive theory of social peace, but it does show how the selected stanzas connect self-cultivation with the possibility of more considered and humane relations (Atmosaputro & Hatch, 1972, pp. 172–173; Suharsono et al., 2020).

From *Ngelmu* to Peace Education: Implications for Islamic Education

The preceding analysis suggests that the opening three stanzas of *Pupuh Pocung* can be read as a connected account of ethical formation. The first stanza links *ngelmu* with *laku* and the restraint of *dur angkara*. The second describes how *angkara*, when left unchecked, may develop into *rubeda*. The third shifts attention toward *ngaksama* and *sareh* in responding to the faults of others. Taken together, these stanzas suggest that the ethical significance of knowledge extends beyond understanding moral principles to the cultivation of dispositions that shape one's conduct toward oneself and others.

This reading offers a different emphasis from Tunjung and Fauzi's (2023) study of peace education in Serat Wedhatama. Their research identifies teachings that can be classified as positive peace, associated with promoting goodness, and negative peace, associated with preventing blameworthy conduct. The present article does not seek to replace these categories with another list of peace-related values. Instead, it examines how ethical concerns are connected through the sequence of the selected stanzas: knowledge requires sustained conduct, this conduct involves confronting destructive tendencies, and its relational dimension becomes visible in forgiveness and patience. The contribution therefore lies in reconstructing a textual progression rather than proposing a new taxonomy of peace education.

Kester and Cremin (2017) offer a further point of dialogue by arguing that peace education requires greater reflexivity concerning its theoretical assumptions and social conditions. Their discussion brings established peace concepts into conversation with Bourdieu's notions of habitus and field. In relation to the present study, this perspective raises a relevant educational question: how might moral knowledge become an enduring disposition rather than remain an ideal that learners can merely articulate? *Laku* provides a culturally situated way to explore this question, although it should not be treated as a direct

equivalent of *habitus*. The two concepts emerge from different intellectual traditions, and their relevance lies in the question of how ethical orientations become embodied in conduct.

For Islamic education, this interpretation suggests that teaching values such as patience, forgiveness, and self-restraint can involve more than explaining their meanings or requiring students to memorize their definitions. Educators might also invite learners to reflect on situations in which anger affects their judgment, disagreement turns into personal hostility, or forgiveness must be considered alongside accountability. Such activities would connect moral understanding with reflection on conduct and relationships. Research on peace education has likewise emphasized the importance of attending to learners' own experiences and local contexts when designing educational approaches (Velez, 2021). These pedagogical possibilities are implications drawn from the textual analysis, rather than practices whose effectiveness has been demonstrated by this study.

The scope of these implications must nevertheless be acknowledged. The selected stanzas emphasize personal discipline and interpersonal conduct, but they do not provide a comprehensive explanation of structural violence, institutional injustice, or unequal power relations. Peace education informed by *Serat Wedhatama* should therefore not place the entire responsibility for peace on individuals or assume that self-restraint can resolve every social conflict. Kester and Cremin's (2017) emphasis on reflexivity is useful here because it encourages educators to examine the social conditions and assumptions through which peace education is developed and practiced. Self-cultivation remains valuable, but it needs to be considered alongside the wider conditions shaping human relationships.

Finally, this study is based on textual interpretation and cannot establish that teaching *Serat Wedhatama* automatically produces more peaceful learners. It identifies a possible ethical perspective and develops its relevance for Islamic education; it does not measure changes in students' attitudes, behaviour, or conflict-resolution abilities. Such claims would require empirical research into educational practice and outcomes. The contribution of this article is therefore more specific: it offers a focused reading of how the Javanese *sastra piwulang* tradition connects knowledge, self-cultivation, and relational ethics, opening a culturally grounded perspective for further discussion of peace education (M. Akkrom Tunjung P & Fathul Fauzi, 2023; Velez, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study addresses two interconnected questions concerning the relationship between knowledge, self-cultivation, and ethical conduct in the opening stanzas of Pupuh Pocung in Serat Wedhatama. First, the selected sequence of stanzas allows *ngelmu*, *laku*, and the restraint of *dur angkara* to be interpreted as a process of self-cultivation. Knowledge is not presented merely as something to be acquired or intellectually understood; its realization requires sustained conduct and the discipline to confront destructive tendencies within oneself. The second stanza develops this argument by depicting *angkara* as an inner force that may become a source of disturbance when left unchecked.

Second, this process acquires a relational dimension through *ngaksama* and *sareh*. The third stanza directs attention to how a person responds to the faults of others, linking self-cultivation with forgiveness, patience, and the cultivation of noble conduct. Read as a connected sequence, the three stanzas suggest that the ethical realization of knowledge extends beyond individual understanding or inward discipline to the ways in which people relate to one another. Nevertheless, forgiveness and patience should not be interpreted as requiring the acceptance of wrongdoing or the abandonment of accountability.

The contribution of this article does not lie in claiming that Serat Wedhatama anticipates or formulates a new theory of peace. Rather, it offers a focused textual interpretation of the relationship between knowledge, self-cultivation, and ethical conduct. By tracing the movement from *ngelmu* through *laku* and the restraint of *dur angkara* to *ngaksama* and *sareh*, the study identifies a culturally situated ethical perspective that can inform discussions of Islamic education and peace education. These implications remain interpretive; determining whether and how such teachings influence learners' attitudes and conduct requires further empirical research.

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