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Investigating the influence of Beteri's social intelligence in 'Andai-andai' folktales on societal perspectives

Febi Junaidi¹, Andi Adam Rahmanto², Eka Fitriana³, Dannis Ni'matussyahara⁴,

Ariska Damayanti⁵, Ratnasari Dwi Riyanti⁶, Sunardy⁷

¹Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

⁷Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia

* Corresponding author: febijunaidi@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6290-4847>

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the values of social intelligence associated with the character of *Beteri* in folktales of Kedurang, Bengkulu, and to explore the community's perspectives about *Beteri*. Researchers collected folktales featuring *Beteri*, conducted interviews with informants, and analyzed the contents of the collected folktales to identify the values of social intelligence within them. The analyzed stories featuring various *Beteri* characters are *Beteri and Sinamnam*, *Beteri and Bujang Bekurung*, and *The Kindness of Beteri*. The results revealed that the social intelligence depicted in the story of *Beteri* encompasses two main dimensions: social awareness and social facilities. Researchers identified representations of social intelligence in the story, including caring, alignment, empathic accuracy, influence, and social cognition. This social intelligence is manifested in *Beteri's* actions during interactions with other characters and her attitude when facing problems. Findings from observations and interviews also indicate that people consider *Beteri* to be a model virtue, being described as a very good girl.

Keywords: Social Intelligence, Beteri, *Andai-Andai*, Folktales, Society



Public Interest Statement

This research focused on analyzing the values of social intelligence value attributed to *Beteri* in folktales from Kedurang, Bengkulu. The analyzed folktales revealed numerous social intelligence values, including social care, sympathy, alignment, empathic accuracy, and social cognition. Additionally, society perceives the character of *Beteri* as a virtuous and beautiful woman, making her a positive role model in real life.

Introduction

A literary work can serve as a medium of expression that simultaneously guides readers toward understanding freedom (Pamungkas, 2023). Literary creations are created not only for enjoyment but also for comprehension and practical application (Masjid et al, 2023). Folktales, as an integral part of literary works, reflect human life. They impart lessons on what is right and wrong, making their preservation essential. This makes the existence of folktales essential to maintain. Introducing and passing down folktales to the younger generation is crucial, as these tales can influence children's future behavior patterns. Folktales offer insights into past behaviors and lifestyles, providing essential lessons to emulate. Through folklore, we observe the behavior and lifestyle of characters from the past, offering valuable lessons. Reading folktales allows people to learn about ethics, discern between good and bad, understand exemplary things in behavior, and foster care for others. The existence of folklore is necessary to fortify human character, promoting better interactions with others. Folktales play a vital role in shaping students' character (Junaidi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Oromo-speaking children in Ethiopia construct social values through their participation in storytelling and subsequent meaning-making discussions (Jirata, 2018). Malay folklore from the Riau Archipelago is also a local wisdom that can be served as a solution to the rise of the nation's moral dilemma in the global era. This is because there are valuable virtues that must be instilled, nurtured, and realized in life, contributing to the preservation of the nation's culture (Zaitun, 2021).

Folktales offer a platform to reinforce positive values among the younger generation. The events depicted in folktales provide valuable lessons for the youth, addressing general problems in social life and family as a basis for resolving conflicts (Mathonsi, 2004). Presenting the young generation active participants and storytellers, enhances their understanding of social values within diverse stories and allows them to re-contextualize these values in their daily lives (Backer, 2019). Folktales can serve as moral guides for children in African societies, offering a renewed path toward increased societal stability (Olugbemi-Gabriel & Ukpi, 2022).

Similarly, the folktales in Kedurang Bengkulu hold the potential to exemplify positive values. Junaidi (2017) asserts that '*Andai-andai*' folktales contain many virtues, emphasizing the importance of preserving and passing down these stories from generation to generation. Research indicates that '*Andai-andai*' folktales in Kedurang Bengkulu play a vital role in enhancing the social intelligence of elementary school-age students. These stories imbue children with positive energy, encouraging them to apply behaviors and values they read and understand in real life. The various stories in '*Andai-andai*' folktales foster social sensitivity among students, promoting care for friends, parents, and teachers.

Understanding that folklore can shape the social intelligence of the next generation is crucial. Social intelligence is a skill that needs early development. '*Andai-andai*' folktales, according to Junaidi (2022), can significantly enhance the social intelligence of elementary school students. These folktales encompass a variety of virtues applicable to the educational realm. Through folktales, children encounter educational examples that touch their hearts, fostering empathy and encouraging care for one another. With well-developed social intelligence, students can adapt and interact effectively with new environments. This value is an important value internalized early on. In Kedurang folktales, the character *Beteri* served as an exemplary figure, promoting goodness and teaching empathy, moral and social values. Despite existing in a fictional world, *Beteri's* influence extends to shaping societal perceptions and inspiring positive actions in

real life.

Based on this description, further study is needed on ‘*Andai-andai*’ folktales in Kedurang Bengkulu, especially those featuring *Beteri*. Identifying and applying the positive elements within these tales can contribute to the broader community. In this study, researchers aim to reveal the social intelligence values embodied by the character of *Beteri* in these folktales, examining both societal perceptions and the content analysis of the stories.

Literature Review

Folktales

Propp (1968) states that folktales involve specific actions by people, things, and animals. Wundt explains that folktales encompass mythical, fairy, biological, animal, genealogical, and funny stories. Folktales convey the dos and don'ts of a story. Additionally, folktales reflect past realities, customs, morals, and social relations (Propp, 1984, p. 17). Folktales can spread from one region to another, becoming known to everyone. Suwardi (2003) argues that the community recognizes the characteristics of as follows: it contains traditional stories from ancient times and is in harmony with community life, describe the culture aspects of a region within society, though fictional, it holds significant meaning, orally transmitted since the time of the ancestors.

Each region has different folktales, with its customary values. Nevertheless, the value of the folktales in each region is nearly identical, as folktales vividly depict individuals' daily lives. In addition, according to Giolláin (2014), folktales are considered oral narrative stories. Folktales are constructed from the author's imaginative ideas and real-life experiences, serving as a guide to life with moral values addressing the meaning of life and interpersonal relationships. Folktales serve the purpose of conveying or understanding the world and local heritage of a particular region.

Social Intelligence

Sternberg (2011) defines intelligence as a mental activity aimed at adapting, selecting, and understanding the natural world and environment relevant to an individual's life. Buzan (2002) asserts that social intelligence is the capability of individuals to successfully engage and interact with others in the surrounding environment. Individuals are considered to possess good social intelligence if they exhibit the following characteristics (Alhamri & Fakhurrozi, 2015): maintaining close emotional relationship with their parents and bonds with individuals in their environment, the ability to sustain nurtured social relationships, influencing group opinions and activities, effective verbal and non-verbal communication, and the acceptance of the feelings, thoughts, motivations, behaviors, and ways of life of others.

Numerous factors influence the development of an individual's social intelligence, deriving from aspects such as social maturity, family dynamics, environment, economic conditions, education, experience, and others contributing elements (Goleman, 2006). The family served as the primary environment influencing various aspects of individual development, including social development. The conditions and dynamics of family life create a conducive environment for socialization. The educational process, directed towards the development of a child's personality, is largely influenced by the family; which establishes social patterns and ethical norms for interacting with others. Proper socialization necessitates both physical and psychological maturity. The ability to comprehend social processes, offer and receive advice, requires intellectual and emotional maturity. Additionally, linguistic maturity plays a crucial role. The socioeconomic conditions of families significantly influence social life.

Individual behaviors greatly influenced by the normative conditions instilled by their family. Education is a directed process aimed at the socialization of children. The nature of education, as a normative process grounded in science, adds depth to social life in society and individuals' lives. The ability to think can impact various aspects, including learning, problem-solving, and language. Emotional development profoundly influences social development. Individuals with high intellectual abilities tend to exhibit strong language

skills. Therefore, if the development of these three aspects is balanced, it will contribute to the success of the individual's social development. This perspective aligns with the comprehensive theory of social intelligence proposed by Goleman.

Goleman (2006) posits that social intelligence comprises two dimensions: social awareness and social facilities. Both dimensions are presented in detail as follows.

- 1) Social Awareness pertains to understanding the inner states of others, including feelings and thoughts, and includes:
 - a. Basic empathy is the capacity to perceive nonverbal cues during interactions with others and to sense their emotions spontaneously and rapidly. This ability involves a swift and automatic understanding of others' emotions.
 - b. Alignment transcends momentary empathy, extending to a sustained presence aimed at fostering positive relationships. It entails offering undivided attention and active listening, with a focus on comprehending the other person beyond conveying specific intentions. Deep listening is an inherent skill, but, akin to other dimensions of social intelligence, one can improve their alignment skills
 - c. Empathic accuracy builds upon basic empathy, introducing an additional dimension: the ability to comprehend the thoughts, feelings and intentions of others during interactions. This contributes to the creation of excellent and harmonious relationships.
 - d. Social cognition represents the fourth facet of social awareness, involving knowledge of how the social world operates. Individuals' proficient in this mental process possess a comprehensive understanding of what to anticipate in various social situations.
- 2) Social Facilities rest on social awareness to enable seamless and effective interaction.
 - a. Synchrony involves interacting seamlessly on a nonverbal level. As the foundation of social facilities, synchrony is the foundation on which other aspects are built. Failure in synchrony undermines social competence, resulting in misaligned interactions. Synchrony allows individuals to move gracefully through nonverbal interactions, from smiling or nodding at the right time to directing their body toward another person
 - b. Self-presentation is the ability to effectively present oneself to create the desired impression. A crucial aspect of self-presentation is the ability to exhibit "control". Individuals' adept at control exude confidence in all social situations and can act accordingly, quickly appearing calm and displaying self-control.
 - c. Influence involves shaping the behavior of others to achieve positive social interaction outcomes. This is achieved through careful speech, self-control, and approaching others professionally, calmly, and attentively.
 - d. Caring is an individual's capacity to be compassionate, attending to the needs of others and taking corresponding actions. Caring compels individuals to take responsibility for performing tasks well, fostering a community of concerned individuals who are willing to invest time and effort to assist colleagues.

Methods

The focus of this research is the social intelligence values contained in literary work, especially '*Andai-andai*' folktales in Kedurang. Qualitative research is considered an appropriate method for this study. Data in this study consist of '*Andai-andai*' folktales sourced from informants. Language can reveal many things about society (Aziz, 2019). However, the story observed is limited to those containing *Beteri*. This limitation is acknowledged in the analysis. Researchers specifically focus on comprehensive observations regarding *Beteri*, including people's views on *Beteri* characters, the influence of *Beteri* characters on social and cultural

life, and the values of social intelligence in stories about *Beteri*. The folktales analyzed in this research are: (1) *Beteri and Sinamnam*, (2) *Bujang Bekurung*, and (3) *The Kindness of Beteri*. This qualitative research adopts an ethnographic approach, with researchers directly immersing themselves in the ethnic Malay communities in Kedurang Bengkulu. Researchers observe behavior, conduct unlimited observation, interviews, and document analysis. There is no official documentation about folktales of Malay ethnicity in Kedurang. Researchers only record the storytelling process during folklore sessions and subsequently transcribe the recordings to facilitate the analysis process. Researchers refer to written texts to identify the values of social intelligence.

Additionally, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with several informants to gather more comprehensive information. These interviews are crucial for obtaining the needed information. Researchers also observe the ‘*Andai-andai*’ storytelling process and read various published articles, especially those in international journals, to validate the information obtained.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Researchers analyzed the values of social intelligence in ‘*Andai-andai*’ folktales within the Malay ethnic community, particularly focusing on the story of *Beteri*. The folktales examined in this study include (1) *Beteri and Sinamnam*, (2) *Bujang Bekurung*, and (3) *The Kindness of Beteri*. Folktales from around the world are often approached as representative of diverse cultures and are utilized to transmit knowledge and understanding of the literary, social, and cultural heritage of those cultures to children (de Bruijn, 2019). In many African societies, a fundamental aspect of traditional education involves teaching oral literature through folktales, riddles, and proverbs. These aim to shape character and instill moral values such as honesty, integrity, courage, and solidarity (Sone, 2018).

“*Beteri and Sinamnam*” Folktale

Care values

Beteri and Sinamnam folktales narrate the story of *Beteri* with her six older sisters, collectively known as *Sinamnam*. *Sinamnam* exhibited cruelty towards *Beteri*, but *Beteri* chose not to seek revenge and remained kind to her siblings. Researchers discovered several quotes illustrating *Beteri* as a highly socially intelligent woman, as evident in the following excerpt.

“While scouring the river searching for her drifting shawl, *Beteri* came across a huge old deer.”
Why are you weeping, O *Beteri*?” The Deer asked. “I’m looking for my shawl, Grandma.
Sinamnam washed me away in this river; did you see it?” said *Beteri*. The Deer smiled and said, “If that is what you want, close your eyes and grab my tail, dear, I’ll help you” (Data 1).

Despite facing unkindness from *Sinamnam*, *Beteri* displays deep care for them. *Beteri*’s remarkable patience, beauty, and kindness serve as examples for the people in Kedurang today. In real life, a beautiful and virtuous woman is often referred to as a ‘*Beteri*.’ Folk stories, as cultural products, and literary text, can serve as a medium to reflect the culture of a community. The content of literary texts is expected to initiate a revival aimed at addressing the crisis of morality and ethics. These stories embody the development of mental and intellectual activities, reading and writing through feathered Bob, an increased sense of humanity and social care, the growth of cultural appreciation, channeling ideas, growth of imagination, and increased creative and constructive expression (Septika & Prasetya, 2020).

Alignment Value

The value of alignment is evident in *Beteri*’s efforts to maintain good relations with the Deer by obediently following all its commands. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt.

“Beteri also followed the Deer’s orders. Soon, the Deer asked Beteri to open her eyes and release her grip on the Deer’s tail. When she complied, Beteri found a perfectly crafted shawl, a knife, and a basket. Pleased, she thanked the Deer.” (Data 2)

In this quote, *Beteri’s* positive response to the Deer is apparent as she adheres to all its commands. The attentive listening and compliance contribute to a harmonious relationship between *Beteri* and the Deer

Influence Value

The Deer exerted a positive influence on *Beteri*, alleviating all her sorrows. The Deer’s ability to make *Beteri* obedient to its commands ultimately results in positive outcomes.

“Before she went home, the Deer ordered her to pick up a young puar trunk with her knife. Beteri placed the puar rod close to her basket when she was about to bathe later in the afternoon. Beteri agreed, taking young, leafy puar stem. She then returns to the cottage to shower, obediently following all of the Deer’s instructions.” (Data 3)

This quote underscores the Deer’s positive influence on *Beteri*, as she willingly complies with its commands, leading to favorable outcomes.

“Bujang Bekurung” Folktale

Care Value

Beteri’s compassion extends beyond humans to the environment and animals, as evidenced when she encounters a shrimp. She brings the shrimp home and takes exceptional care of it, placing it in a well and feeding it regularly. He cares about his pet shrimp. This care for the shrimp is highlighted in the following quote.

“Beteri takes care of the shrimp and puts it in a pauk or well. Beteri feeds the shrimp every day.” (Data 4)

This quote illustrates *Beteri’s* sincere care for the shrimp, refraining from harming or cooking it and instead providing nurturing attention. *Beteri’s* compassion for other creatures is further exemplified when she aids *Bujang Bekurung*, who manifests as the shrimp she initially found. *Bujang Bekurung* expresses deep gratitude towards *Beteri*, as depicted in the following quote.

“The man’s name is Bujang Bekurung. Bujang Bekurung expresses his heartfelt thanks to Beteri and offers to assist her in return.” (Data 5)

This quote portrays *Bujang Bekurung’s* gratitude and willingness to reciprocate *Beteri’s* kindness, emphasizing the positive outcomes of caring for others. *Bujang Bekurung* expressed a sincere desire to repay *Beteri’s* good deeds and offered his assistance. This exemplifies that the care we extend to others can lead to positive returns for ourselves. The narrative reinforces the notion that no-good deed is in vain. The value of caring, as depicted in *Bujang Bekurung*, is further emphasized in the following quote.

“Nenek Sepat (a grandma) also complied with Beteri’s wishes. As a result, Beteri was successfully and safely rescued. Nenek Sepat brought Beteri back to her village home. Beteri feels at home living there with Nenek Sepat and her pets. Nenek Sepat is so kind to Beteri.” (Data 6)

Based on the information provided, it is clear that *Nenek Sepat* demonstrated kindness and concern for *Beteri*. The elderly grandmother rescued *Beteri* and took her to her house. *Nenek Sepat's* care and help certainly mean a lot to *Beteri*, creating a sense of comfort that encourages her to reside with *Nenek Sepat*.

Empathic Accuracy Value

Beteri's empathetic attitude is commendable. Upon learning about *Bujang Bekurung's* serious illness, she promptly expressed concern and hurried to visit him. This can be seen in the following quote.

“The next day, Beteri received news of Bujang Bekurung’s severe illness from Grandma Sepat. Bujang Bekurung lived in a village not far from theirs, prompting Beteri to quickly visit him.” (Data 7)

Beteri's empathetic demeanor serves as an exemplary demonstration of concern for others. Her genuine worry about *Bujang Bekurung's* well-being and the immediate visit to ailing individuals signify a high level of empathy for fellow humans.

“The Kindness of Beteri” Folktale

Care Value

Two buffaloes bid farewell to visit their offspring, all of whom exhibit excellent alignment values. They attentively listened to their parent's advice and did not contest it. This can be seen in the following quote.

“One day, the buffalo pair bid farewell to their seven daughters. They say they will go foraging, which may take quite a long time. Therefore, they told their children to get married immediately when their soulmate came. No need to wait for his parents to return home. His seven daughters agreed to this.” (Data 8)

The seven Buffalo daughters were originally obedient to their parents, following their instructions without interruption during the farewell. Ideally, care extends not only to others but also to one's own family. *Beteri* exemplified this, expressing deep concern for her parents. She held profound love for her mother and father as demonstrated in the following quote.

“They finally ran to the hut downstream that belonged to Beteri and her husband. Beteri was shocked and saddened to see her parents injured. She inquired about the cause of the wounds.” (Data 9)

The data above illustrates *Beteri's* deep affection for her parents, even though they are buffaloes. Witnessing her parents' injuries saddened and shocked *Beteri*, prompting her to inquire about the cause. Despite her sorrow, she took immediate action to save her parents. Actions that reflect *Beteri's* social intelligence can be seen in the following quote.

“She treated both his parents. She and her husband also made a bonfire to warm the bodies of her parents who were shivering from the cold.” (Data 10)

Beteri promptly attended to her parents. Her husband is also very kind. They tried hard to save their parents. *Beteri* was so devoted to her parents. *Beteri's* dedication to her parents serves as a noteworthy example in real life, explaining why many parents in the Kedurang community aspire for their daughters to emulate *Beteri's* positive attitude and cultural values.

Beteri demonstrated eagerness to assist her parents despite their increasing weakness and vulnerability. Her strong sense of social attitude and responsibility towards her parents can be seen in the following excerpt.

“Both his parents looked weaker and helpless. The two buffaloes told Beteri and her husband they were no longer strong enough to survive. They asked to be buried properly. They also explained that on top of his grave would grow a plant and requested that Beteri take care of him. Beteri agreed to her parents’ request. Shortly afterward, both her father and mother passed away. Beteri and her husband buried them not far from their cottage.” (Data 11)

The quoted passage highlights *Beteri’s* outstanding social attitude, and her earnest desire to assist her parents. *Beteri’s* deep affection and obedience to her parents are apparent in her actions. Narratives conveying such values hold great potential as educational tools for enhancing students’ social intelligence. The use of folktales could trigger students’ social intelligence (Junaidi et al., 2022).

Based on the above findings, the folktales entitled *Beteri and Sinammam*, *Bujang Bekurung*, and *The Kindness of Beteri* contained many values of social intelligence. Each story portrays *Beteri* as an intelligent and compassionate woman in Kedurang, Indonesia. *Beteri* serves as an exemplary figure in society, especially women, encouraging acts of kindness in everyday life. The analysis conducted reveals that the story of *Beteri* encapsulates social intelligence value, presenting *Beteri* as a socially adept individual. The exploration identifies values such as caring, empathy, social cognition, influence, empathic accuracy, and alignment. Among these, caring stands out as particularly significant, showcasing *Beteri* as a woman deeply concerned about others, even those who mistreat her.

Discussion

Dundes (2007) contends that various oral traditions, including myths, legends, proverbs, riddles, games, and others, can serve as vital resources for teachers. They offer effective means to educate students about the world and the human condition. The noble values embedded in Bangka Folklore remain pertinent to the current state of individualism. The spirit of social care, hard work, compassion, and religious values persists in rural communities in Bangka Belitung (Suryadin et al., 2022). In Norway, an increasing number of older individuals receive care services at home. Public policy aims to promote social safety, prevent social problems, and provide care recipients with the means to lead an active and meaningful everyday life in conjunction with others. (Schönfelder et al., 2020).

Undoubtedly, a crucial concern that must be instilled is care for fellow humans, other creatures, and the environment. The interaction between humans and ecology has become entangled with numerous issues such as deforestation, environmental pollution, loss of soil, problems of sanitation desertification, loss of biodiversity, soil fertility, water shortage including ozone depletion, population explosion, insufficient health care, and water supply. Human activities are primarily triggered by changing socioeconomic patterns resulting from technological advancements, leading to environmental deterioration. Thus, instilling environmental ethics in the human mind becomes imperative. To address this threat, folklore can be an essential tool (Biswas, 2018)

Andai-andai Folktales in Kedurang

Kedurang, located in the Malay tribal areas of South Bengkulu, Indonesia, boasts a rich cultural heritage that endures to this day. One prominent aspect of this cultural legacy in Kedurang is the tradition of *Bandai-andai*, denoting ‘*Andai-andai*’ folktales. The practice of narrating *Andai-andai* stories is a customary activity where individuals share tales with others. ‘*Andai-andai*’ refers to a collection of folktales specific to Kedurang. Typically, older members of the community engage in the tradition of telling ‘*Andai-andai*’ stories to children. For example, from a mother to her children, grandfather to her grandchildren, uncles to

her niece, and others. This storytelling activity, conducted in the afternoon, is a prevalent form of familial interaction. The afternoon serves as an opportune time, as many Kedurang residents, predominantly engaged in farming, are not at home during the day. Individuals typically tend to their rice fields or gardens during the day participating in agricultural pursuits in either their personal plots or those belonging to others. Concurrently, children are engaged in their educational endeavors, attending school throughout this timeframe.

In the afternoon, people usually get together. This is what ‘*Andai-andai*’ Folktales typically entail. The storytelling sessions are quite engaging, and children exhibit a keen interest in listening to each story. While absorbed in the narratives, the children are requested to reciprocate by giving a massage to the storyteller. Generally, this activity takes place in the afternoon after meals or in the evening following children’s study sessions. The storytelling sessions also commonly occur before bedtime, often resulting in sleepy and eventually slumbering children. Parents read folktales to their children at night and these folktales are integrated into the Indonesian language curriculum at the elementary education level (Sugiarti et al., 2022).

As the times has progressed, ‘*Andai-andai*’ activities have become less frequent, with children showing a preference for playing with cell phones or watching television. However, this shift does not imply that ‘*Andai-andai*’ is entirely inaccessible. There are still many individuals who possess the skill to narrate ‘*Andai-andai*’ tales. This condition makes researchers try to find solutions to ensure the sustainability of ‘*Andai-andai*’ folktales. One such effort involves creating products in the form of books containing folktales of Kedurang Bengkulu, commonly referred to as ‘*Andai-andai*’. *These stories come in various titles, each containing a multitude of exemplary values, including the importance of helping fellow humans, caring for others and one’s own relatives, encouraging worship, honesty, hard work, and responsibility.*

One of the well-known ‘*Andai-andai*’ folktales is the story of *Beteri*. *Beteri* is a beautiful, intelligent, and kind woman. In the story, the princess character serves as an excellent role model for girls. *Beteri*’s beauty and intelligence do not make her behave arrogantly; rather, she becomes a representation of female characters that deserve emulation. *Beteri* was very kind to all her siblings, obedient to her parents, and cared for others, making her a positive figure for women. The stories about *Beteri* try to reveal *Beteri*’s concern for others, depicting her as noble and kind. Although the character of *Beteri* only exists in *Andai-andai* folktales, the people of Kedurang are undoubtedly familiar with her. *Beteri*’s beauty positions her as a societal role model, presenting women as not only beautiful but also symbolizing nurturing qualities (Taringa, 2023). Women are socialized to be child-bearers and take on responsibilities such as caring for the elderly and sick within families and extended families (Mukurazhizha, 2023). Women’s roles in society are increasing, as they continue to be primary caregivers, serving as both mothers and caretakers to the earth (Greta, 2017).

Beteri in Societal Perspectives

A narrative reflects the distinctive social values and gender dynamics of a culture; how characters operate in tales mirrors the societal worldview (Musaev et al., 2022). Researchers conducted on-site observations and interviews to understand the perspective of the Malay community in Kedurang Bengkulu regarding *Beteri*’s character. While *Beteri* is not a tangible presence in people’s lives, she is a prominent figure in folktales. Recognized as a positive role model for girls, *Beteri* significantly influences the social life of the Malay community in Kedurang Bengkulu. Positive impressions of *Beteri* are deeply ingrained in people’s perceptions of this character. Based on interviews, it was found that the *Beteri* character serves as a figure for women in Kedurang Bengkulu. The societal perspective on *Beteri* can be seen in the following quote.

“Beteri is an example of a highly coveted figure. Although the character is only in a fictional story, the community greatly appreciates Beteri’s life story. Even though she often receives bad treatment from others, Beteri consistently exhibits kindness towards everyone, even

those who wrong her. This kindness is well known by the community. Anyone familiar with Beteri's story is amazed by her compassionate nature. Beteri is portrayed as a kind woman who cares for her brother and others" (Participant 1).

The quote passage illustrates Beteri's kindness, emphasizing her consistent benevolence even in the face of mistreatment. Beteri's actions serve as a rare and valuable example for younger generations, teaching that kindness knows no bounds, even towards those who have wronged us. Beteri's exceptional social intelligence is evident in her selfless care for others, without expecting anything in return.

Naturally, people hold Beteri's character in high regard. This also fosters an expectation for the embodiment of Beteri's virtues in the real world, inspiring children, adolescents, and women as they mature. With changing times, folktales, serving as role models for future generations, should continue to be instrumental in preserving these values while retaining their traditional narratives passed down through generations. Traditional depictions of female characters often emphasize physical beauty and gentleness, while male character portrayals tend to focus on physical strength, wisdom, and ability to protect and lead (Zahro et al., 2020)

Furthermore, other opinions assert that Beteri represents an exemplary female figure with timeless qualities. Beteri's virtues are considered essential lessons for generations. The following insights were gathered from interviews with the public regarding Beteri.

"Beteri is a familiar figure to us. We expect our daughter emulate Beteri's kindness. We hope Beteri's kindness becomes real, not just in the story. Kind-hearted girls in the village are often referred to as 'Beteri.' This association is not solely due to a beautiful face but stems from commendable behavior" (Participant 2).

From the above statement, it is evident that Beteri holds a positive influence in people's minds. The community's aspiration for girls to embody Beteri's virtues is a testament to her widespread recognition and impact on life. Beteri's role was modeled not because of her face but because of her behavior. Society highly values good deeds and character in women, reflecting a positive perspective. Beauty, it is believed, radiates from a good attitude. During other interviews conducted by researchers, a recurring perception of Beteri emerged: beautiful and kind. However, the emphasis consistently fell on her kindness rather than her beauty. The following interview underscores the community's profound admiration for Beteri's kindness in *Andai-andai* folktales in Kedurang Bengkulu.

"Beteri is known for her beauty but it is her kindness that astonishes us. We know that Beteri's character only exists in stories. However, every story about Beteri always conveys Beteri's kindness. For example, Beteri is filial to her parents, kind to her older sister, and lives happily. No story portrays Beteri's misconduct. All stories about Beteri always convey messages of kindness. (Participant 3)"

The quoted passage attests to Beteri's widespread recognition. Her kindness is not confined to a singular story but permeates through all tales featuring her, emphasizing the importance of a girl's benevolence. The public was indeed impressed by Beteri's behavior, making her well-known and an exemplary figure for girls to emulate in the real world. Fictional stories about Beteri consistently convey the admirable values of this character. Researchers did not uncover any tales depicting Beteri engaging in wrongdoing; she has always been described as a beautiful and kind girl. Society holds Beteri as a role model for the younger generation, especially women. The vital role of women in community development cannot be overlooked, and their presence should not be ignored. This is why they should be protected at the family level to enable more significant contributions (Matanga & Mukurazhizha, 2023).

Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussions, it can be concluded that stories about Beteri carry the value of social intelligence. These values, including caring, alignment, influence, empathic accuracy, and social cognition, are evident in Beteri's interactions with others, her approach to problems, and her behavior in daily life. Beteri character also greatly influence the lives of the people of Kedurang Bengkulu, known as a fictional female character characterized by reason, intelligence, and a caring nature. This is substantiated by the narratives featuring Beteri, which provide lessons promoting a culture of assistance and concern for others. Every Beteri story emphasizes empathy and concern for others, extending even to those who have wronged her. Beteri's presence has become a role model for women, offering inspiration to the next generation, to embody intelligence and kindness. Beteri only exists in the fictional world, but her influence extends into the real world. The character of Beteri has the power to reshape the societal perspective of the ideal woman. Thus, Beteri serves as a reference for societal behavior in everyday life. It's no surprise that a kind and beautiful girl is often referred to as 'Beteri', representing an idealized character from fictional stories.

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Biographies

Febi Junaidi is a Doctor of Indonesian Language Education.

Andi Adam Rahmanto is a graduate student at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

Eka Fitriana is a graduate student at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

Ariska Damayanti is a graduate student at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

Dannis Ni'matussyahara is a graduate student at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

Ratnasari Dwi Riyanti is a graduate student at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

Sunardy is a graduate student at Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu.

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