

Learning by Doing: Ritual Pedagogy and the Transmission of Moral Values in Balinese Hindu Families

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Abstract: *This study examines the role of ritual participation as a form of ritual pedagogy in the transmission and internalization of moral values among children in Balinese Hindu families. While character education is commonly associated with formal educational institutions, this research argues that family-based religious rituals function as significant informal learning environments that contribute to children's moral development. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of ritual practices within Balinese Hindu households. The study focuses on children's involvement in activities such as offering preparation (banten), daily worship, temple ceremonies, and ngayah (voluntary communal service). The findings reveal that ritual participation serves as an experiential learning process through which children acquire and internalize values of responsibility, discipline, respect, cooperation, sincerity, gratitude, spirituality, and environmental awareness. Moral internalization occurs through embodied practice, ritual repetition, social modeling, emotional engagement, symbolic meaning-making, and intergenerational interaction. The study further demonstrates that rituals function not merely as religious observances but as pedagogical mechanisms that integrate cognitive, affective, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions of learning. By introducing the concept of ritual pedagogy, this research contributes to the fields of character education, religious education, and cultural studies, highlighting the importance of indigenous traditions as effective frameworks for moral formation and cultural continuity in contemporary society.*

Keywords: ritual pedagogy, character education, moral values, Balinese Hindu families

Introduction

Character education has emerged as one of the most pressing concerns in contemporary educational discourse. Across the world, educators, policymakers, and scholars have expressed growing concern regarding the apparent decline of moral values among younger generations, manifested in increasing individualism, declining respect for authority, weakening social cohesion, and various forms of antisocial behavior (Lickona, 1991). Consequently, educational institutions have been encouraged not only to develop students' cognitive competencies but also to cultivate ethical dispositions, social responsibility, and moral integrity. Character education is therefore understood as a holistic process involving the development of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions that guide individuals toward responsible citizenship and virtuous living (Lickona, 1991).

Despite the increasing emphasis on character education, much of the existing literature remains heavily focused on formal educational settings, particularly schools. Research has explored curriculum design, classroom management, school culture, and instructional strategies as mechanisms for fostering moral development among children (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). While these studies have generated valuable insights, they often overlook the significant role of informal learning environments in shaping children's character. Character formation does not occur exclusively within classrooms; rather, it develops continuously through lived experiences, social interactions, and participation in meaningful cultural practices (Dewey, 1938).

From the perspective of experiential education, moral values are more effectively internalized when individuals engage directly in activities that embody those values. Dewey (1938) argues that education is fundamentally grounded in experience, and meaningful learning occurs through active participation rather than passive reception of information. Similarly, Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that children acquire values, attitudes, and behaviors primarily through observation, imitation, and participation in social practices within their immediate environment (Bandura, 1977). These perspectives suggest that moral development is deeply embedded in everyday social and cultural experiences.

Among the various contexts of informal learning, the family occupies a particularly important position. Families serve as the primary site of socialization where children first encounter social norms, ethical principles, and cultural values. Through interactions with parents and other family members, children gradually learn appropriate forms of behavior, responsibility, empathy, respect, and self-discipline. Such learning often occurs implicitly through observation and participation rather than explicit instruction (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, family-based cultural and religious practices constitute a potentially significant yet underexplored dimension of character education.

In Balinese Hindu society, religious rituals remain deeply integrated into everyday life and continue to function as essential mechanisms for transmitting cultural and moral values across generations. Ritual practices are not limited to ceremonial occasions

but permeate daily family activities, including the preparation of offerings (*banten*), household worship, temple ceremonies (*piodalan*), community service (*ngayah*), and various life-cycle rituals (*manusa yadnya*). Children are frequently involved in these activities from an early age, participating alongside parents, grandparents, and other community members.

The involvement of children in ritual activities represents a rich educational process that extends beyond religious instruction. Through participation in the preparation of offerings, children learn patience, diligence, precision, and responsibility. Through collective activities such as *ngayah*, they develop cooperation, solidarity, altruism, and commitment to communal welfare. Participation in prayer and ceremonial observances fosters self-discipline, respect for sacred values, and spiritual awareness. In this sense, ritual functions not merely as a religious obligation but also as a practical arena for moral learning through direct experience.

This understanding resonates with ritual theory, which views ritual as a socially embodied practice that shapes human perception, behavior, and identity. Bell (1992) argues that ritual is not simply a symbolic expression of cultural values but a strategic practice through which social norms and moral dispositions are reproduced and internalized. Through repetitive participation, ritual becomes a mechanism for the transmission of cultural knowledge and ethical orientations. Similarly, Turner (1969) emphasizes that ritual creates transformative experiences that reinforce communal values and social bonds. These perspectives suggest that ritual participation may serve as an important pedagogical process in the moral development of children.

Despite extensive scholarship on character education and ritual studies, a significant disconnect remains between these two fields. Existing studies on character education predominantly examine formal educational institutions, focusing on curriculum-based interventions, classroom practices, and school environments (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Conversely, studies on Balinese Hindu rituals have largely concentrated on their theological meanings, symbolic structures, social functions, and cultural significance (Geertz, 1973). While these studies provide valuable insights into the nature of ritual, they rarely conceptualize ritual as a pedagogical process through which moral values are intentionally or unintentionally transmitted to younger generations.

This gap becomes particularly evident in the context of Balinese Hindu families. Numerous studies have examined concepts such as *Tri Hita Karana*, *ngayah*, and Balinese religious traditions, highlighting their contributions to social harmony and cultural continuity. Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to understanding how children experience these rituals and how participation contributes to the development of moral character. The processes through which values are learned, embodied, and internalized through ritual participation remain insufficiently explored.

There is a broader theoretical gap concerning the cultural foundations of character education. Contemporary theories of character education are largely rooted in Western philosophical and educational traditions (Lickona, 1991; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). While these frameworks have significantly advanced the field, they may not fully capture the diverse ways in which moral learning occurs in non-Western societies. Indigenous cultural practices, particularly religious rituals, represent alternative educational mechanisms that deserve greater scholarly attention. Investigating ritual participation within Balinese Hindu families therefore offers an opportunity to enrich global discussions on character education by incorporating perspectives derived from local cultural traditions.

Another gap concerns the pedagogical dimension of ritual itself. Although scholars have acknowledged the socializing function of ritual, relatively few studies have developed a systematic conceptual framework that understands ritual as pedagogy. The notion of ritual pedagogy, learning through active participation in ritual practice, remains underdeveloped within educational research. Such a framework would help explain how moral values are transmitted not through formal instruction but through embodied experience, collective participation, repetition, and observation.

Given these gaps, this study seeks to examine how participation in Balinese Hindu family rituals contributes to the transmission of moral values among children. Specifically, it explores ritual as a form of experiential learning or *learning by doing*, through which children acquire and internalize character values such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, respect, self-control, and spirituality. By conceptualizing ritual as a pedagogical process, this study introduces the notion of ritual pedagogy as a theoretical lens for understanding informal character education within cultural and religious contexts.

The significance of this study is threefold. First, it contributes to character education scholarship by expanding the analysis beyond formal educational institutions and highlighting the educational role of family-based religious practices. Second, it contributes to ritual studies by emphasizing the pedagogical dimensions of ritual participation. Third, it provides an indigenous perspective on moral education, demonstrating how local cultural traditions function as effective mechanisms for character formation. In doing so, the study offers a valuable contribution to ongoing international discussions concerning character education, experiential learning, and culturally grounded pedagogical practices.

Method

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic approach to explore how moral values are transmitted through ritual participation within Balinese Hindu families. Ethnography was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of cultural practices, social

interactions, and the meanings participants attach to their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted in several Balinese Hindu households actively engaged in daily and ceremonial religious practices. Participants consisted of parents, children, religious leaders, and community elders who were purposively selected based on their involvement in ritual activities. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation of ritual practices, including household worship, *banten* preparation, *ngayah* activities, and temple ceremonies. Participant observation allowed the researcher to directly examine children's involvement in ritual activities and to identify forms of moral learning embedded within ritual practice (Spradley, 1980).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), involving data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Particular attention was given to identifying recurring moral values, modes of participation, and pedagogical processes through which children acquired ethical dispositions. The analysis was informed by Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasizes learning through observation and participation, as well as Ritual Theory (Bell, 1992), which conceptualizes ritual as an embodied practice that transmits cultural values and social norms. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentary sources. Member checking and prolonged engagement in the field were also employed to ensure the credibility and authenticity of the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Discussion

Children's Involvement in Ritual Practices within Balinese Hindu Families

The involvement of children in ritual practices within Balinese Hindu families represents a distinctive form of informal education that integrates religious, cultural, and moral learning into everyday life. Unlike formal educational settings, where learning is typically structured through curriculum, instruction, and assessment, ritual participation allows children to acquire knowledge, values, and behavioral dispositions through direct engagement and lived experience. This process reflects what can be conceptualized as ritual pedagogy, a mode of learning in which educational outcomes emerge through participation in embodied religious practices, observation of elders, communal interaction, and repeated ritual performance.

In Balinese Hindu society, ritual activities are deeply embedded in daily family life. From an early age, children are introduced to religious practices such as preparing offerings (*banten*), participating in household worship, attending temple ceremonies (*pidalan*), joining community service activities (*ngayah*), and observing life-cycle rituals (*manusa yadnya*). Their involvement is generally gradual and age-appropriate, allowing them to develop familiarity with ritual procedures while simultaneously internalizing the values associated with those practices. Consequently, ritual participation functions not only as a mechanism for religious socialization but also as a significant educational process through which children learn how to become morally responsible members of their families and communities.

One of the most common forms of children's participation is assisting parents and grandparents in the preparation of ritual offerings. The making of *canang sari*, *segehan*, and various ceremonial offerings requires patience, concentration, discipline, and attention to detail. Although children may initially participate through simple tasks such as arranging flowers or carrying ritual materials, these activities gradually introduce them to the symbolic and ethical dimensions of ritual practice. Through repeated involvement, children learn that ritual preparation requires commitment, care, and sincerity rather than mere technical competence.

From the perspective of experiential learning, such activities illustrate how knowledge is acquired through action and reflection. Dewey (1938) argues that meaningful learning occurs when individuals engage directly with experiences that connect action and meaning. In the context of Balinese Hindu rituals, children do not merely receive verbal explanations about religious obligations; instead, they learn through active participation in the ritual process itself. The repetitive nature of ritual activities reinforces habits of discipline and responsibility, transforming abstract moral principles into concrete behavioral practices.

The educational significance of ritual participation is further evident in household worship practices. Daily prayers conducted at family shrines (*sanggah* or *merajan*) provide opportunities for children to observe and imitate the devotional behavior of parents and other family members. Through these practices, children learn appropriate bodily postures, ritual etiquette, expressions of reverence, and the importance of maintaining spiritual discipline. Over time, such practices contribute to the development of self-control, mindfulness, and respect for sacred values.

This process corresponds closely to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes observation and imitation as primary mechanisms of learning. Children learn not only by listening to instructions but by witnessing how adults conduct themselves during ritual activities. The behavior of parents serves as a model that children gradually emulate. Consequently, moral values are transmitted through embodied examples rather than through explicit moral instruction alone.

Another significant aspect of ritual pedagogy can be observed in children's participation in *ngayah*, a voluntary form of communal service that occupies a central position in Balinese religious life. During temple festivals and community ceremonies, children often assist in cleaning temple grounds, preparing ceremonial equipment, distributing offerings, and supporting various communal activities. Although these tasks may appear simple, they expose children to fundamental values of cooperation, solidarity, humility, and collective responsibility.

Participation in *ngayah* teaches children that community welfare depends upon mutual contribution rather than individual achievement. In contrast to modern educational environments that often emphasize competition and personal success, ritual participation emphasizes interconnectedness and communal obligation. Through direct involvement in collective activities, children develop an understanding of social reciprocity and learn to place communal interests above personal convenience. Such experiences contribute significantly to the formation of prosocial behavior and civic responsibility.

The pedagogical role of ritual extends beyond practical participation to include emotional and spiritual engagement. Rituals often involve moments of reflection, gratitude, reverence, and collective celebration that foster emotional attachment to religious and cultural values. Children experience these emotions not as abstract concepts but as integral aspects of communal life. As Bell (1992) argues, ritual is an embodied practice that shapes dispositions, perceptions, and ways of being. Through ritual participation, children internalize values because they experience them emotionally and socially rather than merely understanding them intellectually. The importance of direct participation was emphasized by I Ketut Mahardika, a *Pinandita* and ritual practitioner in Denpasar, during an interview conducted on 12 April 2026. He explained:

“Children should not only be told about religious values; they must experience them through ritual activities. When a child helps prepare offerings, joins prayers, or participates in *ngayah*, they learn responsibility, patience, respect, and sincerity through practice. Ritual becomes a living classroom where values are learned naturally through participation rather than instruction” (Interview, April 12, 2026).

This statement highlights a central principle of ritual pedagogy: moral learning occurs through participation rather than passive reception. The ritual environment functions as a practical educational space in which values become meaningful because they are experienced directly. The notion of a “living classroom” reflects the idea that ritual activities create contexts where learning is embedded within everyday cultural and religious practices.

Children's involvement in rituals facilitates intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Ritual activities frequently bring together grandparents, parents, and children in shared practices that encourage interaction across generations. During these interactions, children acquire not only procedural knowledge concerning ritual performance but also stories, explanations, and cultural narratives that provide broader moral frameworks. Such intergenerational engagement strengthens family cohesion while ensuring the continuity of cultural traditions.

From a sociocultural perspective, this process aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of learning as a socially mediated activity. Knowledge is constructed through interaction with more experienced members of a cultural community. In Balinese Hindu families, elders serve as cultural mediators who guide children through ritual participation and help them interpret the meanings embedded within ritual practices. Consequently, ritual becomes a site where cultural knowledge, religious beliefs, and moral values converge.

The findings also suggest that children's involvement in ritual practices contributes to identity formation. Participation enables children to perceive themselves as members of a larger religious and cultural community. Through repeated engagement, they develop a sense of belonging, responsibility, and commitment to shared values. This process is particularly important in contemporary societies where globalization and technological change may weaken traditional mechanisms of cultural transmission. Ritual participation therefore functions not only as moral education but also as cultural education that sustains collective identity across generations.

Children's involvement in Balinese Hindu rituals demonstrates that ritual functions as a powerful pedagogical mechanism. Through preparing offerings, participating in prayers, engaging in *ngayah*, interacting with elders, and experiencing communal religious life, children acquire moral values through direct participation and lived experience. Rather than relying solely on verbal instruction, ritual pedagogy cultivates character through embodied practice, observation, repetition, and social engagement. The findings indicate that ritual participation provides an effective framework for transmitting values such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, respect, humility, and spirituality. As such, Balinese Hindu family rituals represent an important form of informal character education that contributes significantly to children's moral development and cultural continuity.

Moral Values Transmitted through Participation in Balinese Hindu Family Rituals

Participation in ritual practices within Balinese Hindu families serves as an important mechanism for transmitting moral values from one generation to another. While rituals are commonly understood as expressions of religious devotion, they also function as

educational spaces where children acquire ethical dispositions, social responsibilities, and cultural identities. Through active involvement in daily worship, offering preparation, temple ceremonies, and communal religious activities, children are exposed to a range of moral values that are gradually internalized through observation, repetition, and direct experience. These values are not transmitted through formal instruction alone but are embodied in ritual actions, interpersonal relationships, and collective religious practices. Consequently, ritual participation constitutes an effective form of character education rooted in cultural and religious traditions.

One of the most prominent moral values transmitted through ritual participation is responsibility. In Balinese Hindu families, children are often assigned specific tasks during religious activities, such as preparing flowers for offerings, arranging ceremonial items, assisting parents in ritual preparations, or helping maintain the cleanliness of family shrines. Although these responsibilities may initially appear simple, they cultivate a sense of accountability and commitment. Children learn that every individual has a role to fulfill in ensuring the successful performance of religious obligations. This understanding gradually extends beyond ritual contexts and shapes their attitudes toward family, school, and community responsibilities.

The development of responsibility through ritual participation reflects the broader Hindu understanding of *dharma*, which refers to duty, moral obligation, and righteous conduct. The Bhagavad Gītā emphasizes the importance of performing one's duties sincerely and responsibly as part of spiritual and ethical development (Radhakrishnan, 1948). Through ritual participation, children learn that fulfilling obligations is not merely a practical necessity but also a moral commitment that contributes to social harmony and spiritual growth.

A second important value transmitted through ritual participation is discipline. Religious rituals in Bali are often governed by specific schedules, procedures, and rules that require careful observance. Children learn to wake early for ceremonial preparations, follow prescribed ritual sequences, wear appropriate ceremonial attire, and maintain respectful behavior during worship. Repeated participation in such activities cultivates habits of punctuality, self-regulation, and consistency.

From an educational perspective, discipline is developed not through coercion but through habitual engagement in meaningful practices. Dewey (1938) argues that habits formed through repeated experience become foundational elements of character. In Balinese Hindu rituals, discipline emerges naturally because children participate in structured activities that require attentiveness and commitment. Over time, these ritual habits contribute to broader patterns of self-discipline in everyday life. Another significant value transmitted through ritual participation is respect. Rituals teach children to respect sacred spaces, religious symbols, elders, ancestors, and fellow community members. During ceremonies, children are expected to observe proper etiquette, use respectful language, and demonstrate appropriate behavior. Such practices reinforce the understanding that relationships are grounded in mutual respect and social responsibility.

The value of respect is particularly evident in intergenerational interactions. Ritual activities often involve grandparents, parents, and children working together in the preparation and performance of ceremonies. Through these interactions, children learn to appreciate the knowledge and experience of elders. This process aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning and development. Elders serve not only as instructors but also as moral exemplars whose actions communicate ethical values through practice.

Participation in Balinese Hindu rituals also fosters cooperation and solidarity. Religious ceremonies are rarely individual activities; instead, they require collective participation by family members and community groups. During the preparation of ceremonies, children observe and engage in collaborative activities that involve sharing tasks, helping others, and working toward common goals. These experiences teach children that successful outcomes depend upon cooperation rather than individual effort alone.

The communal tradition of *ngayah* provides a particularly important context for learning solidarity. Through voluntary service during temple festivals and community ceremonies, children learn the importance of contributing to collective welfare without expecting personal rewards. This experience encourages the development of empathy, mutual assistance, and social commitment. In contrast to contemporary social environments that often emphasize competition and individual achievement, ritual participation reinforces communal values and social interconnectedness.

Closely related to cooperation is the value of selflessness and sincerity. Hindu ritual practice emphasizes the importance of performing actions with pure intentions rather than seeking personal recognition or material gain. The concept of *yajña* in Hindu philosophy teaches that selfless service and sacrifice contribute to both individual spiritual growth and collective well-being (Radhakrishnan, 1948). When children participate in ritual activities, they learn that service to family, community, and the divine should be performed sincerely and wholeheartedly.

This value is often expressed through the preparation of offerings, which requires considerable time, effort, and dedication. Children observe that family members devote themselves to ritual activities not for material rewards but because such actions are considered

expressions of gratitude, devotion, and responsibility. Through participation, children gradually internalize the importance of acting with sincerity and integrity.

Another moral value transmitted through ritual participation is patience and perseverance. Many ritual activities require careful preparation and prolonged engagement. The construction of offerings, preparation of ceremonial spaces, and participation in lengthy ceremonies demand concentration and endurance. Children learn that meaningful achievements often require sustained effort and cannot be accomplished instantly.

The cultivation of patience is particularly relevant in contemporary contexts characterized by immediacy and rapid technological gratification. Ritual practices provide opportunities for children to experience slower, more reflective forms of engagement that encourage persistence and attention to detail. These experiences contribute to the development of emotional maturity and resilience.

Participation in ritual practices also nurtures gratitude. Expressions of thankfulness are central to Balinese Hindu religious life. Rituals frequently involve offerings and prayers that acknowledge the blessings received from God, ancestors, nature, and society. Through participation, children learn to recognize their dependence on forces beyond themselves and to appreciate the contributions of others.

The value of gratitude extends beyond religious devotion and influences social relationships. Children who regularly participate in rituals become more aware of the interconnected nature of human existence and the importance of acknowledging support received from family and community. Such awareness contributes to humility and social sensitivity.

Equally important is the transmission of spiritual awareness and reverence. Ritual participation introduces children to experiences of sacredness that shape their understanding of life and morality. Through prayer, meditation, offerings, and ceremonial observances, children develop awareness of transcendent realities and cultivate a sense of connection with the divine. This spiritual dimension provides an ethical foundation that guides behavior and decision-making. Bell (1992) argues that rituals shape dispositions by creating embodied experiences that reinforce particular worldviews and value systems. In the Balinese Hindu context, ritual participation encourages children to perceive moral conduct as inseparable from spiritual life. Ethical behavior is therefore understood not merely as compliance with social norms but as an expression of spiritual responsibility.

Ritual participation contributes to the development of environmental responsibility. Balinese Hindu rituals frequently incorporate elements of nature, including flowers, water, leaves, fruits, and agricultural products. Through these practices, children learn that humans exist in reciprocal relationships with the natural world. This perspective reflects the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmony among humans, nature, and the divine (Ardhana et al., 2015). By participating in rituals that honor natural elements, children acquire ecological awareness and develop respect for environmental sustainability. Such values are increasingly important in addressing contemporary environmental challenges and promoting responsible citizenship.

These findings indicate that ritual participation functions as a comprehensive system of moral education. Through direct involvement in religious activities, children acquire values of responsibility, discipline, respect, cooperation, selflessness, patience, gratitude, spirituality, and environmental stewardship. These values are transmitted not through abstract moral instruction but through lived experiences that integrate action, emotion, belief, and social interaction.

The process reflects what may be termed ritual pedagogy, a form of learning in which moral values are embodied, practiced, and internalized through participation in culturally meaningful activities. Unlike formal educational approaches that often separate knowledge from practice, ritual pedagogy integrates knowing, feeling, and doing into a unified learning experience. As a result, the moral values transmitted through Balinese Hindu family rituals become deeply embedded in children's identities and contribute significantly to their character formation.

Balinese Hindu rituals should not be viewed solely as religious ceremonies but also as powerful educational institutions that sustain moral development, cultural continuity, and social cohesion across generations. In an era characterized by rapid social change and increasing concerns about moral decline, understanding the pedagogical dimensions of ritual offers valuable insights into alternative approaches to character education that are culturally grounded, experiential, and community-based.

Internalizing Moral Values through Ritual Participation in Balinese Hindu Families

The transmission of moral values does not automatically guarantee their internalization. Children may be exposed to ethical teachings, religious doctrines, and social norms without necessarily incorporating them into their personal value systems. Therefore, a critical question concerns how moral values become internalized and transformed into stable dispositions that guide behavior. In the context of Balinese Hindu families, ritual participation plays a crucial role in this process because it provides a continuous framework through which values are repeatedly experienced, embodied, reinforced, and socially validated. Rather than functioning merely as a vehicle for transmitting information, ritual serves as a transformative pedagogical mechanism that integrates cognition,

emotion, behavior, and spirituality. Through this process, moral values gradually become part of children's identities and everyday practices.

From a developmental perspective, moral internalization occurs when external norms are transformed into personally endorsed principles that regulate behavior even in the absence of external supervision (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Contemporary theories of moral development emphasize that internalization requires more than verbal instruction; it depends upon meaningful participation in social practices that allow children to experience, interpret, and appropriate values within their own lives. Ritual participation provides precisely such an environment because children do not merely learn about values—they enact them through repeated engagement in culturally meaningful activities.

One of the primary mechanisms through which ritual participation facilitates moral internalization is embodied learning. Rituals involve the body as much as the mind. Children learn not only through listening to religious explanations but also through kneeling in prayer, preparing offerings, maintaining ritual purity, participating in communal service, and observing ceremonial etiquette. These actions create what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as *habitus*, a system of durable dispositions acquired through repeated social practice. Through continuous participation, moral values become incorporated into bodily habits and everyday routines.

For example, when children repeatedly assist in preparing *banten* (offerings), they develop habits of patience, attentiveness, and responsibility. Initially, these behaviors may be performed under parental guidance. However, through repetition, such actions become increasingly natural and self-regulated. The value of responsibility is no longer experienced as an external obligation imposed by adults but as an internal disposition that guides conduct. This transformation from external regulation to internal commitment represents a key indicator of moral internalization.

The process can also be understood through the concept of ritual repetition. Repetition is a defining characteristic of ritual practice. Daily prayers, periodic temple ceremonies, and recurring religious festivals expose children to the same values over extended periods of time. Educational psychology has long recognized repetition as a powerful mechanism for learning and habit formation (Schunk, 2020). However, ritual repetition differs from mechanical repetition because it is embedded within meaningful symbolic and social contexts. Each repetition reinforces not only procedural knowledge but also the ethical significance of the activity.

Through repeated participation, children gradually develop what Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe as the internalization of social reality. Values become taken-for-granted assumptions that shape perception and behavior. For instance, participation in *ngayah* repeatedly communicates the importance of communal service. Over time, helping others becomes perceived not as an exceptional act but as a normal and expected aspect of social life. Thus, ritual repetition contributes to the formation of enduring moral orientations.

A second mechanism involves social modeling and identification. Balinese Hindu rituals are inherently intergenerational. Children participate alongside parents, grandparents, religious leaders, and community members who embody the values being transmitted. Through observation, children encounter concrete examples of devotion, generosity, humility, and self-discipline. Such experiences are particularly influential because moral values are demonstrated through action rather than merely articulated through discourse.

The effectiveness of social modeling lies in its ability to connect abstract principles with observable behavior. Children witness family members dedicating significant time and effort to religious obligations, assisting others without expectation of reward, and demonstrating respect toward sacred traditions. These behaviors provide living examples of moral conduct. As children identify with respected adults, they become more likely to adopt similar attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, moral values are internalized through relational processes grounded in trust, admiration, and emotional attachment.

A third mechanism concerns emotional engagement. Moral internalization is not purely cognitive; it also involves affective experiences. Ritual participation often generates feelings of gratitude, reverence, belonging, compassion, and collective joy. Such emotions strengthen the connection between moral values and personal identity. Contemporary moral psychology emphasizes that emotions play a central role in shaping moral judgment and behavior (Haidt, 2001).

Balinese Hindu rituals create emotionally significant experiences that reinforce ethical commitments. Participation in family ceremonies fosters feelings of togetherness and mutual support. Temple festivals generate collective enthusiasm and communal solidarity. Prayer rituals cultivate gratitude and humility. These emotional experiences make moral values personally meaningful and memorable. As a result, values are not simply understood intellectually but experienced affectively, increasing the likelihood of long-term internalization.

The internalization process is further strengthened through symbolic meaning-making. Rituals are rich in symbols that communicate ethical and cosmological principles. Offerings, sacred spaces, ritual gestures, and ceremonial objects all embody cultural understandings of harmony, reciprocity, and devotion. Through participation, children gradually learn to interpret these symbols and relate them to their own lives.

Geertz (1973) argues that religious symbols establish powerful and enduring moods and motivations by formulating conceptions of reality that appear uniquely realistic. In Balinese Hindu rituals, symbolic actions continually reinforce values such as respect for the divine, gratitude toward nature, and responsibility toward the community. These symbolic meanings provide moral frameworks that help children understand why particular behaviors are considered desirable and necessary.

From a Hindu philosophical perspective, ritual participation also facilitates moral internalization by connecting ethical conduct with spiritual development. Hindu teachings generally reject the separation between morality and spirituality. Ethical behavior is regarded as an essential component of one's spiritual journey. This principle is clearly articulated in the Bhagavad Gītā:

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate.*
(Bhagavad Gītā 3.21)

“Whatever action a great person performs, ordinary people follow. Whatever standards such a person sets, the world pursues.” (Easwaran, 2007, p. 88)

This verse highlights the pedagogical significance of exemplary action. Moral values are transmitted not primarily through verbal instruction but through conduct that others observe and emulate. Within Balinese Hindu families, parents, grandparents, and ritual leaders function as moral exemplars whose actions provide standards for younger generations. The verse therefore offers a theological foundation for understanding ritual participation as a process of moral learning through observation and practice.

Another relevant dimension of moral internalization involves the philosophy of *Tri Kaya Parisudha*, which emphasizes the purification of thought (*manacika*), speech (*wacika*), and action (*kayika*). Unlike educational approaches that focus exclusively on behavior, ritual participation simultaneously engages cognitive, verbal, and behavioral dimensions of human experience. Children learn to think respectfully, speak appropriately, and act responsibly within ritual contexts. This holistic engagement contributes to deeper and more integrated forms of moral development.

The process of internalization is also reinforced through community validation. Moral values acquire greater significance when they are collectively recognized and supported by the social environment. Rituals provide opportunities for children to experience public affirmation of ethical behavior. Actions such as helping elders, participating in communal service, and demonstrating respect during ceremonies are positively acknowledged by family and community members.

Sociologically, such recognition strengthens commitment to moral norms because individuals seek consistency between their self-concepts and social expectations (Mead, 1934). Children gradually come to perceive themselves as responsible participants in religious and communal life. Moral values become incorporated into their sense of identity, thereby increasing the likelihood that such values will persist beyond specific ritual settings.

Ritual participation contributes to what Taylor (1989) describes as the formation of the moral self. Moral identity develops when individuals understand themselves in relation to broader frameworks of meaning that define what constitutes a good life. Balinese Hindu rituals provide precisely such frameworks by situating individual actions within larger cosmological, social, and spiritual contexts. Children learn that their actions affect not only themselves but also their families, communities, ancestors, nature, and the divine order. This awareness encourages a relational understanding of morality that transcends individual interests.

These findings suggest that ritual participation contributes to the internalization of moral values through multiple interconnected mechanisms: embodied learning, ritual repetition, social modeling, emotional engagement, symbolic meaning-making, spiritual orientation, community validation, and identity formation. These mechanisms operate simultaneously, creating a powerful educational environment in which moral values become deeply embedded within children's dispositions and worldviews.

The analysis demonstrates that ritual participation is not simply a means of preserving religious traditions. Rather, it constitutes a sophisticated pedagogical process through which ethical principles are transformed into lived realities. Through continuous engagement in ritual practices, children learn to integrate moral values into their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and identities. In this sense, ritual pedagogy functions as an effective model of character education that transcends the limitations of purely cognitive approaches to moral learning. It reveals how cultural and religious practices can serve as enduring institutions of moral formation, ensuring both the continuity of tradition and the cultivation of virtuous individuals within Balinese Hindu society.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that participation in ritual practices plays a fundamental role in the internalization of moral values among children in Balinese Hindu families. Rituals function not merely as religious observances but as pedagogical spaces where children actively engage in processes of moral learning through experience, observation, repetition, and social interaction. Through

involvement in activities such as preparing offerings, participating in prayers, attending temple ceremonies, and engaging in *ngayah*, children acquire moral values that are gradually transformed from external expectations into internalized ethical dispositions.

The study reveals that the internalization of moral values occurs through several interconnected mechanisms. First, embodied participation allows children to learn values through action rather than abstract instruction. Second, the repetitive nature of ritual practices reinforces moral habits and behavioral consistency. Third, the presence of parents, elders, and religious practitioners as role models facilitates value acquisition through observation and imitation. Fourth, emotional engagement within ritual contexts strengthens children's attachment to ethical principles, while symbolic meanings embedded in ritual practices provide interpretive frameworks that connect moral conduct with broader cultural and spiritual values. Furthermore, community recognition and participation contribute to the formation of moral identity, enabling children to perceive themselves as responsible members of both family and society.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the concept of ritual pedagogy, which understands ritual as a culturally embedded educational process that integrates cognition, emotion, behavior, and spirituality. Unlike conventional approaches to character education that often emphasize cognitive understanding, ritual pedagogy fosters moral development through lived experience and communal practice. Consequently, moral values become deeply rooted in children's everyday lives and personal identities.

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