

Human-Environmental Relations as Manifested in Central Java Folklore of Indonesia

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Abstract—Environmental damage is a severe problem in Indonesia. Efforts to educate the community, especially students, on ecological damage need to be carried out through education. Education must ensure students have the knowledge and awareness to preserve the environment. One uses folklore as a teaching material loaded with ecological wisdom in learning. This research aimed to find and explain the ecological wisdom contained in folklore. The research design used was qualitative research employing a literary ecology approach to analyze aspects of ecological knowledge in folklore. The ecocriticism approach described ecosystem elements, environmental wisdom, and forms of ecological damage in folklore. The research results showed that based on 40 works folklore from Central Java narrated ecological wisdom through the relationship between humans and nature from two perspectives: nature as a subject and nature as an object. The protagonists who positioned nature as the mother, ethics of life, and nature's holistic nature represented the relationship between nature and humans as subjects. Meanwhile, the relationship between humans and nature as antagonists in acts of exploitation and violence against the environment represented objects. The presence of these two relationships allowed readers to understand the concept of ecological wisdom in folklore. Thus, Central Java folklore could be used as learning material in elementary schools to internalize values of environmental wisdom in students.

Index Terms—ecocriticism, ecological wisdom, folklore, Central Java

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems have become a serious problem for humans this century (O'Connor et al., 2020). Environmental problems occur in various countries such as Indonesia (Amin, 2016), Malaysia (Salman et al., 2022), Thailand (Mostafanezhad & Evrard, 2021), and India (Shah & Narain, 2019). The problem has various concentrations of environmental crises such as pollution, water crises, fires, and floods. Amin's (2016) research biodiversity and non-biodiversity are exploited. Excessive exploitation of natural resources without real action to rehabilitate them can cause ecological disturbances, natural damage, and extinction of flora and fauna (Fios, 2019; Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI), 2019).

Environmental problems caused by human behavior have become important (Chapsos et al., 2019; Roos, 2023; Schmidt et al., 2022). Environmental problems begin with the human desire to dominate the environment, which results in environmental damage. It relates closely to an anthropocentric view that places humans at the center of the universe system and gives birth to a mental attitude of ruler (mental frontier). This attitude shows that humans are the most powerful species compared to other living things. This attitude is undoubtedly dangerous if humans always try to utilize nature by not being responsible for the impacts it causes (Rahmadi, 2015).

Therefore, efforts to overcome environmental damage must be made by changing mental thinking (mindset) and behavior. It can be done by instilling a positive attitude towards the environment through educational teaching materials. Teaching materials are designed to provide ecologically conscious attitudes to students in maintaining and preserving the environment. Ecologically conscious attitudes can be formed through how humans view nature, which recognizes that humans are an integral part of nature (Miklós, 2020). The availability of ecological teaching materials is an alternative solution to environmental problems. Humans have responsibilities, morals, and awareness as caliphs on earth (As-Sayyidi, 2016), and there is a need to realize aesthetics and appreciation for nature (Sponsel, 2018). Efforts to improve student's knowledge and attitudes toward preserving the environment can be made by strengthening competencies and characters based on ecological wisdom. Ecological wisdom can be found in many folktales. Environmental conservation awareness and attitudes can be planted through language and literature learning (Suwandi et al., 2016).

Folktales that can be found in many regions, including Central Java, represent some of the society's views on the sustainability of nature (Arico et al., 2023; Sumarwati, 2022). People view nature as human-like and worthy of respect (Triastari et al., 2021; Wibawa & Awaliah, 2023). This view differed from the younger generation, who thought that traditions were just ordinary, meaningless, and considered a form of religious deviation (Yuliarti et al., 2023). Hence, environmental literacy has attracted the attention of researchers in various countries, including Turkish researchers who focused their research on environmental education in teacher education departments at Turkish universities. The study stated that students needed adequate ecological knowledge in environmental education. For this reason, this study suggested that the quality of environmental education in teacher education in Turkey needs to be improved (Saribas et al., 2014).

In this regard, it is important to state some of the main points related to this research. First, environmental conservation is critical in life, so efforts to preserve the environment must be taught to students through teaching materials (modules), including Indonesian language materials. Meanwhile, in their research, Suwandi, Yunus, and Rahmawati (2015, 2016, 2017) concluded that the value of ecological intelligence contained in Indonesian language textbooks in general is still more dominant in presenting matters of knowledge and has not emphasized the internalization of values and their application. Based on the above explanation, it is essential to conduct folklore research whose results can be utilized to develop student teaching materials. For this reason, this research aims to find the relationship between humans and the environment in folklore. This research can describe and explain (1) the relationship between humans and nature as subjects and (2) the relationship between humans and nature as objects.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Ecological Wisdom*

The environment can be seen as the unity of all living things and creatures, including human behavior in relation to the universe. The idea of the environment includes harmony between nature and humans. Ecological wisdom is part of culture, one type of intelligence that shapes people's knowledge in managing and conserving nature. This wisdom can be in the form of a philosophy of life and life guidelines for preserving the environment, including activities carried out in preserving the environment (Jayadi et al., 2014; Thamrin, 2014; Yulisatiani et al., 2020).

Ecological wisdom is closely related to local wisdom. Local wisdom is the basic knowledge gained from living in balance with nature. It is related to the culture in the community that accumulates in abstract and concrete wisdom, but its important characteristic is the experience or truth gained from life. Wisdom from real experience integrates body, soul, and environment (Kohsaka & Rogel, 2021). Ecological wisdom is a form of community wisdom in maintaining and treating nature wisely in order to avoid environmental damage.

B. *Human and Environmental Relations*

Literary ecology is a study of literary works that focuses on the relationship between literary works and images of human relations with their physical environment and images of the natural environment (Buell, 1995; Garrard, 2004a; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). According to Clark (2011), Garrard (2004a), Kerridge and Sammells (1998), ecological studies of literature are not only used to trace ideas, reveal, explore, and determine ecological images in literary works but also to solve various environmental problems. The study of literary ecology can describe and reveal provocative actions related to morality and the aesthetics of nature in literary works.

In the study of literary ecology, Buell (1995) suggests considering several criteria, namely the criteria that the environment is present in literary works not only as a setting but also as a theme in literary works; the interests of humans and nature must be equal human responsibility for the environment is part of the ethical orientation in literary works and understanding knowledge about the environment in the text. Garrard (2004) states that literary ecological analysis presents environmental aspects in literary works that can be mapped into three parts: (1) identifying and detailing things from ecology, such as animals, plants, rivers, rocks, and so on; (2) displaying pastoral elements in a literary work, such as beautiful rural nature, beautiful forests, and various forms of harmony between living things with one another; and (3) identifying environmental damage as a form of consequence for environmental imbalances such as pollution, floods, forest fires, and so on.

Concerning the relationship between humans and nature in literature, Garrard (2004) divides it into two parts: (1) humans and nature as subjects and (2) humans and nature as objects. Nature as a subject places nature on par with humans, which includes nature as mother earth, ethics of care, and holistic nature. Nature as mother earth means that nature is the guardian and balancer of life. The ethic of care is the relationship between humans and nature, which must be based on ethics, protecting one another in their way, and having awareness. Holistic nature is knowledge and attitudes in overcoming various environmental problems by bringing up holistic actions (conservation) capable of overcoming ecological damage. Meanwhile, the relationship between humans and nature as objects is understood as an unbalanced relationship between humans and nature, referring to exploitation (the inability of humans to maintain the environment after being utilized) and violence against nature (violence against animals and plants).

C. Folklore

Folklore is a traditional work that is anonymous and hereditary, known and owned by every community and nation worldwide, including Indonesia. Folklore contains wisdom, love, and dreams that belong together and become a reference for people's lives (Sarumpaet, 2017). Folklore is often seen as a multicultural education tool to introduce students to the wisdom heritage of cultural diversity. By reading folktales, one not only gains knowledge but also empathy and understanding of other cultures, as well as the local wisdom of a community group (Debruijin, 2017). Folktales spread throughout the archipelago have an ecological view relevant to environmental conservation. Attitudes towards the environment must be in harmony with attitudes towards individuals and groups around them (Lustyantie et al., 2019).

In the treasures of Indonesian folklore, there are many contents of ecological wisdom. Each region has a distinctive folklore in packaging ecosystems and conveying ecological messages. Setyowati et al. (2020) gave an example of folklore from Central Java that is ecologically charged. In the Timun Mas folktale, for example, the findings of ecological narrative reflections on ecosystem destruction, such as environmental pollution, habitat destruction, and nature management, can be traced.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Type and Approach of Research

The type of research used was descriptive-qualitative with a content analysis approach. The content approach was used to find ecological wisdom in folklore, both descriptive and distributive. Through content analysis, researchers conducted an in-depth discussion of a text's visible and hidden communication content (Creswell, 2011). The texts analyzed were books of folklore collections in Central Java. The approach used in analyzing was literary ecology, or ecocriticism. According to Garrard (2004), ecocritical analysis was used to display environmental aspects in scholarly works. The study included three main aspects: identifying and detailing elements of ecology such as animals, plants, rivers, rocks, and so on; displaying pastoral elements in a literary work, such as beautiful rural nature, lush forests, and various forms of harmony between living things; and identifying environmental damage as a form of consequence for environmental imbalances such as pollution, floods, and forest fires (Garrard, 2004, 2012).

B. Source of Data

The data sources of this research were documents in the form of folklore collection books in Central Java that were used as teaching materials in elementary schools. A total of 40 folktales from various districts and cities in Central Java were analyzed. In addition, the subjects of this research were informants consisting of ecologists, education experts, and teachers. Ecology and education experts were selected to collect wisdom data from folklore books from the point of view of their expertise, which was also used to triangulate data from content analysis. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involved data collection with predetermined objectives and criteria, namely (1) folktales used in elementary schools and (2) folktale books found in school libraries.

C. Data Collection

The data collection techniques used were document analysis and interview techniques. Document analysis and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect ecological wisdom data from folktales with an ecocritical approach. Interviews were conducted in both structured and unstructured manners.

D. Data Validation

The data that had been explored, collected, and recorded in the research was reviewed or validated. Researchers chose and determined appropriate ways to ensure data validity by triangulating sources, data, and methods.

E. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used was the interactive analysis model of Miles et al. (2014). Activities in qualitative data analysis were carried out interactively and occurred continuously until completion, ensuring data saturation. The activities in data analysis were (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion drawing/verification.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The relationship between humans and nature can be identified in folktales because folktales always narrate the attitudes and actions of human characters in the context of the natural environment as a setting and problem (Lukens, 2003). In 40 folktales from Central Java that became the source of research data, the relationship between humans and nature is established through ecological wisdom, pastoral depiction of nature, and the impact of natural environmental consequences. Humans then perceive this relationship in two crucial ways: humans and nature as subjects and humans and nature as objects.

A. *The Relationship Between Humans and Nature as Subjects*

In Central Javanese folklore, the relationship between humans and nature as subjects means positioning humans and nature in an equal and balanced position, namely as actors. Folktales narrate the harmonious relationship between humans and nature in three perspectives: nature as mother earth (humans as guardians and balancers of life), ethics of care (human relations with nature must be based on ethics and awareness), and holistic nature (knowledge and attitudes towards environmental issues or conservation). Based on the study and analysis of 40 Central Java folktales, all folktales (100%) with 181 excerpts position the relationship between humans and nature as subjects. The distribution of these three perspectives is shown in the following table.

TABLE 1
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND NATURE AS SUBJECTS IN FOLKLORE

NO	The relationship between humans and nature as subjects	Frequency	Percentage	Quote
1.	Nature as Mother Earth	10	25%	36
2.	Ethics of care	21	52,5%	104
3.	Holistic	9	22,5%	27
		40	100%	181

The data in the table above informs that 21 folktales (52.5%) convey the perspective of the ethics of care. This shows that the ethic of care is dominantly expressed in folktales. This confirms that folktales focus more on discussing the relationship between humans and nature as subjects regarding attitudes and actions. The characters in folktales actualize many attitudes that show the ethics of care, namely attitudes toward maintaining and caring for the natural environment. This happens because folktales make it easier to understand the values and concepts through the attitudes and actions of the characters in protecting and caring for the environment. From this dominant frequency, children readers will better understand the attitudes and examples of characters caring for the environment through direct attitudes and practices in environmental ethics.

Meanwhile, other information found that 10 children's stories (25%) used the perspective of nature as Mother Earth, and 9 folktales (22.5%) used a holistic perspective. This happens because these two perspectives are conceptual. Of course, children as readers of folktales (Nurgiyantoro, 2021) will have difficulty understanding nature's viewpoint as Mother Earth and holistic.

(a). *Nature as Mother Earth*

Nature as mother means that folklore positions nature as the source of life. Nature exists before humans. Through the mechanism of nature, humans exist after nature has materialized. In this position, nature is not perceived as an object or inanimate object. However, nature is a subject that is equal to humans. Obedience that makes the relationship between nature and humans will run well, like a child with a mother. In Central Javanese folktales, ten folktales (25%) with 36 excerpts can be identified that position nature as the mother earth. The number shows that Central Javanese folktales with nature's position as a subject are not dominant.

Nature as a subject in folklore is metaphorized to a mother. A mother whose existence is respected and honored. A mother whose laws and norms are followed and obeyed. Nature, in its various pastorals, is narrated in an ideal existence. Nature is well preserved because of the characters' (human) respect for nature. This case, for example, is found in the *Makam Purwa Rugi* folktale that positions the earth as the subject that gives birth to and fertilizes rice plants. It is like a mother associated with the earth. The earth is the mother who gives birth to plants and trees, other natural objects.

Data 1

Swiftly and deftly, Prince Jati Kusuma stuck his stick again, and oil immediately came out of the place where the banyan tree had grown. In its development, the place where the oil came out that was overgrown with banyan trees was called Sringin, derived from the word *ngisor* 'under' and *ringin* 'banyan' (HPP).

Data 2

To his surprise, the magical tree grew on the earth. It was none other than the wijaya kusuma flower he had received from Dewi Wasowati. The tree leaves glistened in the sunlight and were smooth as velvet. In addition, the flowers were sparkling (AMNN).

The two data above emphasize that the earth, as a mother, has given birth to life, one of which is plants. The plants that grow are plants that give life and beauty to humans. Humans then position the earth as a source of life like a mother. The life born by the earth as a mother makes human life more beautiful. They can utilize and enjoy the plants and trees the earth produces. The earth is the source of creation and the guardian of plants and trees. Plants and trees grow, flower,

and bear fruit because of the earth's existence. This information emphasizes that the good relationship between humans and nature will produce goodness in the form of caring for the natural environment.

(b). *Ethics of Care*

Suppose nature as a mother is still conceptualized. This perception has consequences for humans in respecting and glorifying nature. In this effort to respect nature, humans rely on the ethics of care, which is the act of obeying the rules of nature. Humans regulate their behavior and actions in caring for nature through this ethic of care. A caring attitude is expressed through direct actions to properly care for, maintain, and preserve nature. In the folktales of Central Java, 21 folktales (52.5%) with 104 excerpts can be identified that build an ethical view of care. This number is the highest compared to nature as the mother earth and holistic.

This result confirms that folktales have narrated human attitudes in caring for the natural environment through, for example, the folktale *Asal-usul Blora*, which expresses the expression of environmental ethics in the attitude of being willing to sacrifice the homeland. The homeland in this context is land territory or land. The finding shows that the expression of care ethics is realized in the attitude of sacrifice to care for and maintain the land and water as a place for plant and animal life. For example, the characters' attitudes that show the ethics of care are found in the following data.

Data 3

The princess is named Dewi Rara Ayu. She is the guardian of the wijaya kesuma flower on Majeti Island (BWK).

Data 4

Cokrojoyo received the cat carefully. He held the cat to his broad chest. He did it with care (KTW).

Of course, the attitude of protecting, caring for, and nurturing plants and animals as elements of nature is a concrete expression of the ethic of care. The ethics of care are expressed in caring for and maintaining nature or homeland, animals, and plants or trees. The information in the data above confirms that humans with an ethic of care are individuals who express various concrete attitudes, for example, defending the homeland, caring for and protecting plants and animals, and caring for the environment. These expressions are narrated in the protagonist's behavior and attitude. Child readers will quickly identify the attitudes and behaviors of the protagonists. It is no wonder that this ethical aspect of care is dominant in Central Javanese children's stories.

(c). *Holistic Nature*

In the relationship between nature and humans, who are positioned as mothers honored by taking good care of nature, nature will unite with humans. Nature and humans merge into a holistic subject. This relationship makes nature and humans interdependent, protecting each other and keeping each other from damage. Both are fused with harmony to continue to survive together in the universe. This holistic unification is done as an effort to protect each other from damage and destruction that comes from outside humans. The holistic relationship between nature and humans is narrated in folk stories from Central Java. After being identified and studied, nine folktales (22.5%) with 27 excerpts narrate nature holistically with human life.

These folktales perceive that nature and humans are subjects that merge into one or holistic. Subjects cannot be separated from their existence because, in nature, there are humans and humans. Without humans, there is no nature. Nature and humans are an inseparable unity. This unity is narrated in the folklore of the *Punden Janjang Legend*, which positions nature in a holistic unity. This conception, for example, is found in the events below.

Data 5

Seeing this, Prince Jati Kusuma acted immediately. He used his magic to create a bridge over the river. The bridge made of earth was stretched, connecting two cliffs above the swift and steep river. Finally, the group could cross the river smoothly and safely (LPJ).

This data informs us that every natural object has its norms and mechanisms. A bridge is needed to unite two separate lands. Of course, the one who can connect two lands is human. Bridges are also created with natural materials. Through bridges, humans and animals can cross over to unite and preserve natural life. This information confirms that the characters in Central Javanese folktales present themselves as unifying the natural environment. Their role is narrated in conceptual attitudes or actions. It can be understood after identifying the whole narrative.

B. *The Relationship Between Humans and Nature as Objects*

In Central Javanese folklore, the relationship between humans and nature as objects is narrated by placing nature as a medium humans can utilize to fulfill their interests and needs. This relationship happens because the characters perceive that nature has provided all human needs for life. In this attitude and human efforts to utilize nature, there is a relationship between humans and nature that positions nature as an object, so humans' tendency to utilize nature is carried out by exploiting nature and natural violence. Exploitation means that humans overuse nature, so they cannot maintain it. In contrast, violence against nature means that humans commit deliberate acts of violence against nature to get satisfaction. Central Javanese folktales position nature exploitation more dominantly than nature violence. The data can be illustrated in the following table.

TABLE 2
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND NATURE AS OBJECT IN FOLKLORE

NO	The relationship between humans and nature as objects	Frequency	Percentage	Excerpts
1.	Exploitation of nature	10	62,5%	11
2.	Violation of nature	6	37,5%	7
		16	100%	13

The table above shows that out of 40 folktales in Central Java that convey the relationship between humans and nature as objects, only 16 folktales (40%) have only 13 excerpts. This information confirms that not all folktales convey the position of the relationship between humans and nature as objects. This data means folktales do not side with behaviors that exploit and abuse nature. When elaborated further, it is identified that all folktales convey the relationship between humans and nature as a subject 100% with 40 folktales, but only 40% or 16 folktales position it as an object.

This data shows that the basis of human relations with nature in Central Java folklore is positioned as a subject, not as an object. The position of nature as an object is presented by the attitudes of antagonists who exploit and commit acts of violence. Meanwhile, nature as a subject is narrated by the attitudes of protagonists who protect and care for nature. The narration of human relations with nature as a subject through the protagonist and as an object through the antagonist provides a balancing discourse in the relationship between thesis and antithesis. Two different narratives are used to compare the meaning of logical child readers. Children can build synthesis by understanding the good and bad effects of the protagonist and antagonist's attitudes towards the environment, synthesis in the dichotomy of the attitude of antagonists who destroy nature and protagonists who protect nature.

(a). *Exploitation of Nature*

Folktales narrate the exploitation of nature in the form of the antagonist's attitude and behavior in exploiting and using nature excessively. The goal is to fulfill human wants and needs. After utilizing nature, the characters then do not care about nature. Nature is left alone and not cared for and nurtured back. Ten folktales (25%) out of 40 were studied with 11 excerpts.

Many of the exploitation activities are carried out by antagonistic characters. The behavior and attitude of exploitation of nature carried out by the characters in the folklore are manifested in the form of, for example, characters cutting down trees for the village's opening, characters using plants to fulfill their food needs, and letting plants be damaged for pleasure. For example, this is identified in the following data.

Data 6

Data Nyai Ngabdulawal was shocked when she saw that wild boars had invaded her paddy crop. Meanwhile, Karso calmly did not chase the boar away. "Karso, why did you let the wild boar consume our rice crop?" asked Nyai Ngabdulawal. (KSAS).

Data 7

Kebo Kanigara immediately acted to burn the dense weeds. It was not long before flames raged through the forest. The bushes were burned to the ground. Only the ground and the giant trees were still growing (KTWK).

The attitudes and actions taken by the characters in the data above show an attitude that exploits nature. Plants are left as a food source or deliberately destroyed after being utilized. These narrative positions the characters who utilize nature without the responsibility to protect and preserve it. This narrative is presented by antagonistic characters who show the author's partiality in educating readers, especially children.

(b). *Violation of Nature*

If exploitation takes the form of an attitude of utilizing nature irresponsibly, that is, after utilizing it, violence against nature has a heavier impact on the environmental damage created. Nature is utilized on a large scale for satisfaction and wealth. Its utilization is done deliberately to destroy nature. Damage that has a severe impact on human life in the future. Here, it can be seen that acts of violence can be identified in terms of their motives and impacts.

The primary motive for violence against nature is to satisfy unlimited wealth or pleasure. Nature is seen to be freely utilized. With over-utilization, the impact of violence against nature is severe and dangerous environmental damage. With this limitation, of the 40 Central Javanese folktales studied, only six folktales (15%) with seven excerpts narrate violence against nature. In addition to the data in the table above, one piece of information on natural violence can be identified in the following data.

Data 8

One day, in his dream, Adipati Donan was given a hint that the most powerful weapon to kill the *manuk beri* was a cis-shaped heirloom (stick) called Kiai Tilam Upih. (K.D.).

Data 9

Kebo Kanigara immediately acted to burn the dense weeds. It wasn't long before flames raged through the forest. The bushes were burned to the ground. Only the ground and the big trees were still growing (KTWK).

The data above explains that violent attitudes towards nature, such as animals and plants, will lead to death or the most severe damage. Plants and animals that are part of the natural ecosystem should ideally live in harmony because

the relationship between humans and nature is always mutual. However, due to the motive of satisfaction and evil, the antagonist commits acts of violence that lead to death. The dead plants and animals once provided benefits to humans.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the above research, it is known that the 40 Central Javanese folktales studied are folktales that narrate the ecological wisdom of the community. The narratives reveal the relationship between humans and nature. Nature presented in folktales is narrated through the components of living things, the pastoral of the natural environment, and the identification of the consequences of nature's relationship with humans or characters (Amalia & Thohir, 2022; Garrard, 2004b; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). Based on these three components, nature in Central Javanese folklore is positioned in two perspectives: nature as a subject with the same position as humans and nature as an object that is a source for human use (Garrard, 2004). The data means Central Javanese folktales are more dominated by folktales that position nature as a subject, totaling 40 folktales (100%), rather than the position of nature as an object, totaling 16 folktales (40%).

This finding reflects the ecological wisdom of the ancients, who viewed nature as a subject whose existence must be respected and maintained (Forester, 2019; Grossmann et al., 2020). This care and maintenance activity shows an attitude of honoring nature like a mother, an ethic of care, and unification. The concept of glorifying the position of nature as a subject is followed by a process of activities to utilize nature as an object wisely (Kohsaka & Rogel, 2021; Wang, 2019)—the objectivation of nature by the community positions nature for mutual benefit. Utilization is also carried out to subjectivize nature. This position maps nature in Central Java folklore built with a paradigm of domination of nature as a subject, not an object of exploitation or violence. The paradigm shows Central Java folklore's ideality to maintain human relations with nature well. The ideality is narrated in the behavior of protagonists (Lustyantie et al., 2019; Sultoni et al., 2023). In folklore, who maintain and preserve nature, such as forests, flowers, plants, and animals. However, on the other hand, antagonists also use and utilize nature to fulfill their wants and needs arbitrarily.

In this position, the results of the study then further examine the position of nature as a subject built with three perspectives with percentages: nature as a mother is found in 10 folktales (25.5%), ethics of care is found in 21 folktales (52%), and holistic is found in 9 folktales (22.5%). The three perspectives build a praxis and conceptual relationship because nature is initially positioned in the concept of mother, which is actualized in the praxis of the ethic of care and becomes a holistic concept (Saribas et al., 2014; Serrano, 2023). Nature and humans are two subjects that merge, which, from a theological perspective, is called the union of nature and humans, representing God's greatness because of a mutually beneficial relationship.

From here, it can be discussed that the position of nature as a mother is in line with the theory of evolution popularized by Darwin (2020), who views that through the mechanism of natural selection, the evolutionary process occurs, one of which is human evolution selected by nature. Humans can survive if they follow natural laws and live to adapt to nature. In theological views, it is also emphasized that in the beginning was the universe, and humans were created in a lump of soil, which by God's power then gave birth to humans (As-Sayyidi, 2016). From here, humans have to obey the laws of nature through attitudes that protect nature as well as possible. This attitude is what is called ecological wisdom.

However, the concept of ecological wisdom in Central Java folktales does not only reach the attitude of total obedience but also positions nature as an object, namely nature as a means and vehicle that can be used and utilized by humans through attitudes: exploiting nature found in 10 folktales (25%) and committing acts of natural violence found in 6 folktales (15%). Central Javanese folktales raise the exploitation of nature and mini-style violence through the attitudes of antagonistic characters. This means that the finding of the domination of nature as a subject narrated through the protagonist and nature as an object through the narration of the antagonist is done with a comparative orientation, not persuasion. The goal is that child readers can compare and determine their attitude in favor of the ecological wisdom presented by folklore (Hilmi et al., 2024; Karmakar & Pal, 2024; Setyowati et al., 2020). For that reason, Central Javanese folklore still dominantly positions the preservation and utilization of nature correctly.

This finding is in line with studies on human attitudes towards nature. Harari (2023) asserts that the history of human civilization can be read from the nature it leaves behind. Nature is treated violently today as an attempt to extract as much natural wealth as possible. Meanwhile, in ancient times, people, as described in folklore, used nature only to fulfill their needs (Diamond, 2022). Here, the position of nature as a subject is more emphasized in human efforts to preserve and use nature wisely.

From this, the novelty of this research lies in the dialectic of human relations with nature as an inseparable subject and object narrated in Central Javanese folklore. Nature must be respected and honored as a subject, but on the other hand, it must also be appropriately utilized, not exploiting and committing violence against nature. This dialectical relationship between nature as subject and object creates hope. Hope to develop themselves so that children readers can learn from the ecological wisdom narrated by folklore (Thamrin, 2014; Tibbertsma, 2021). Central Javanese folklore reveals the position of the dialectical relationship between humans and nature. This relationship will open readers' insights and knowledge to be more mature in positioning nature correctly through attitudes that represent respect and wise utilization.

In education, an essential implication of this research is that Central Javanese folklore is an appropriate learning material (Yulianeta et al., 2022) in reflecting the relationship between humans and nature. The increasingly damaged nature makes folklore essential to learning in elementary schools (Chen, 2019). By utilizing folklore, learning can be designed to see ecological wisdom (Youpika et al., 2024). The wisdom that makes the relationship between humans and nature well established so that humans continue to try to maintain and care for the natural environment.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study examines ecological wisdom in human relations with nature contained in 40 folktales of Central Java. The findings of this study are that the relationship between humans and nature is built through the paradigm of nature as a subject and nature as an object. The relationship between nature as subject and object is dialectical. It is a relationship that cannot be separated because humans, on the one hand, respect nature, but on the other hand, also utilize nature. Respect and utilization constantly intertwine human relations with nature. In the relationship with nature as a subject, humans position nature as a mother, ethics of care, and holistic. Meanwhile, in the relationship between humans and nature as objects, they position the exploitation of nature and violence against nature. In this relationship, Central Javanese folklore dominantly positions nature as a subject metaphorized as a mother who is obeyed by ethics and norms and utilized properly and wisely to maintain and sustain nature. With these findings, the Central Java folklore book is appropriate for use as learning material and a resource in learning activities, learning to overcome the damage to the natural environment that is currently symptomatic and occurs everywhere.

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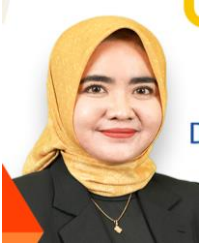
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