

## Research Article

# Critical Discourse Analysis of Neleng Neng Kung Nursery Rhyme: A Well-being Perspective on Mepende as a Sundanese Local Wisdom

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This research aims to identify *Neleng Neng Kung* nursery rhyme from the perspective of a child's well being. Child well-being is currently facing threats due to several factors, mainly the crisis of dominant values from modernization (identically to the westernization). Adding to the factor is the change in the current Western dominance in science and knowledge. In the child well-being context, each ethnic group has childcare traditions, specifically for nursery rhymes. Various studies have touched on this subject, but none of them relate to child well-being. Therefore, this study aims to cover the relation of *Neleng Neng Kung* as a nursery rhyme with child well being. This research uses the Norman Fairclough model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which includes three steps: description, interpretation, and explanation, and the UNICEF framework for child well being. The conclusion shows that the local wisdom covers a part of the child well-being framework and centers well-being to social relations. Physical and intellectual aspects must be guided by social ones.

**Keywords:** child well-being, local wisdom, nursery rhyme

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Child well-being is currently facing threats, such as climate change, conflicts, diseases and economic instabilit This crisis is visible from the direction of various countries and new developments in science. Turkey, which initially accepted modernization as westernization, later distanced itself from the West as discussed in "*The Effects of Westernization Efforts on the Turkish Education System*" [2] Similarly, Saudi Arabia agrees with modernity but rejects westernization as reflected on the results of a study entitled "*Modernization without Westernization*" [3]. Japan has its own version of modernization, distinguishing itself from the West as implied by the article entitled "*Modernization*

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as *Rejection of Westernization*” [4]. Meanwhile, Indonesia appears to be half-way in the face of modernization and westernization as discussed in “*Modernization and Westernization: A Never Ending Discourse in Indonesia*”. [5]

Western dominance in science is currently undergoing some changes [6]. The development of science today places local wisdom as one of the resources and bargaining power in facing global competition. In the context of child well-being, each ethnic group has a tradition of singing nursery rhymes for children’s healthy growth. [7] Sundanese, the largest ethnic group in West Java, refers to this activity of putting babies to sleep as *mepende* and the nursery rhymes as *hariring indung*. The typical *hariring indung* in Sundanese group has lyrics as follows: *Neleng neng kung; geura gede geura jangkung; geura sakola ka Bandung; geura makayakeun indung.*[8] [9]

Various studies on nursery rhymes from the aspects of education and communication have been conducted in reports as follows: “*Tradisi Mepende dan Nilai-nilai Pendidikan Agama: Studi Kasus di Masyarakat Ujungberung–Kota Bandung*” (*Mepende Tradition and Religious Values: A Case Study of Ujungberung Community in Bandung*) [10]; *Local Wisdom and Didactic Values in Lullaby Kawih Mepende Murangkalih*; and *Hariring Indung Sebagai Media Komunikasi Ibu dan Anak Usia Dini* means *Hariring Indung as a Media of Communication for Mothers and Early Childhood* [11]. However, this tradition has not been studied in relation to child well-being.

Child well-being in recent research has always been associated with economic aspects due to migration as seen in the research reports [12], such as [13] “*International Parental Migration and the Psychological Well-being of Children in Ghana, Nigeria and Angola*” [14]; “*Migration and Children’s Psychosocial Development in China: When and Why Migration Matters*” [15]; “*Internal Migration, International Migration, and Physical Growth of Left-behind Children: A Study of Two Settings*” [16]. Therefore, this study aims to identify *Neleng Neng Kung* nursery rhyme within the framework of child well-being using Critical Discourse Analysis. It can provide a wealth of information and perspectives that are highly relevant and beneficial for shaping child well-being profiles.

## 2. METHOD

The interpretation stage focuses on sociolinguistic interpretation or based on how the native speakers use the word and how Sundanese historically use it. In this stage,

the nursery rhyme is also analyzed through a multi-level framework of child well-being by UNICEF. There are seven categories in the framework and each comes with several dimensions: outcomes, activities, relationships, networks, resources, policies and contexts. At last, the explanation stage provides the arguments and sources that reinforce the interpretations. [19]

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Result

UNICEF views prosperous children to have positive childhood experiences and future prospects and, therefore, it develops child well-being framework based on mental well-being, physical health and skills. The categories include: (1) The activity category which covers play (especially outdoor play) and digital well-being; (2) the relationships category which includes family, peers and school relationships; (3) the network category which analyzes networks around the child, such as parent-workplace, parent-community and parent-school networks; (4) the resource category which covers house and neighborhood resources; (5) the policy category which includes family, education and health policies; and lastly, (6) the context category which includes economic, community and environmental contexts.

### 3.2. Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes, not just listening to a recording, are a live music performance and a social phenomenon. A direct contact between a mother and her baby creates affiliation, and, as such, it becomes the first social experience for the baby. Nursery rhymes are memorable to babies because it is especially for them. The feeling of awe to the singer makes the baby more engaged rather than listening to the recorded music. Similar to the effect of a live music performance in reducing anxiety, fear and stress, nursery rhymes have characteristics and impacts on communication that no recorded music could do.

### 3.3. Discussion

*Neleng Neng Kung* is onomatopoeia—derived from Greek, *ονοματοποιία*, which means an imitation of sounds and is arbitrary of the Sundanese *gamelan*, traditional ensemble

music from several ethnic groups in Indonesia [20]. Sundanese *gamelan* is both aesthetics and ethics [21]. The aesthetic aspects foster subtleness while the ethical aspects allow *gamelan* to be a character education medium [22].

*Geura* is a Sundanese word for *segera* (Indonesia), immediate (English), *mubashar* (Arabic) or *langsung* (Javanese). The word *geura* appears four times as: *geura gede* (grow bigger soon!), *geura jangkung* (grow taller soon!), *geura sakola ka Bandung* (go to school in Bandung soon!) and *geura makayakeun indung* (bring prosperity to your mother soon!).

*Gede* means ‘big’ or ‘great’. In the human development context, this relies on maturity, independence and no longer being a burden on parents.

*Jangkung* means ‘tall’.

TABLE 1: Description and Interpretation of *Neleng Neng Kung* Nursery Rhyme.

No	Word	Description	Interpretation
1	<i>Neleng neng kung</i>	An onomatopoeia of Sundanese <i>gamelan</i>	An affectionate call to the baby
2	<i>Geura</i>	Immediately	Hope
3	<i>Gede</i>	Big or great	The representation of power and influence due to a high status
4	<i>Jangkung</i>	Tall	The representation of a healthy body
5	<i>Sakola</i>	School	Formal education
6	<i>Ka Bandung</i>	To a big city	Mobility, going to another place to participate in building civilization
8	<i>Makayakeun</i>	Bring prosperity	Relieve and prosper
9	<i>Indung</i>	Mother	Mother and motherland

In interpretative meaning, *geura* or ‘immediately’ does not mean ‘in a fast pace’ but rather ‘in a fast way logically and naturally’. *Gede* could also refer to rank and influence, and thus, high rank and influential people are often called *gedean*. Meanwhile, in a sociological aspect, people who have these qualifications are considered ‘great people’, and they are agents of social change [23]. There are two types of social change: desirable and undesirable. Ira Kaufman refers to the desirable social change as change management [24], meanwhile Less and Presley term it as social engineering [25].

Then, there are ‘ordinary people’. Great people are influencers (influential people), but ordinary people are followers. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the spectrum from great people lies ‘small people’. What distinguish the three groups of people are their thoughts. Initially, all these groups are ordinary people, but great people usually talk about ideas, meanwhile ordinary people about circumstances and small people

complaining. For example, Prophet Muhammad SAW is known to be the Great Prophet because he had big ideas not only for Arab society, but also for all mankind. The term “big” in Indonesian for the Prophet Muhammad SAW is designated by Allah SWT. In the Holy Quran “*Wa innaka la 'ala khuluqin' adzim*—truly You (Muhammad) have high morals”. His big ideas are divided into three, namely liberation, humanization and transcendence.

*Jangkung*, which literally means “tall”, may be interpreted as a healthy grown person with good, fulfilled nutrition and regular exercise. The term is appropriate as the government is currently struggling to overcome the stunting phenomenon. “Tall” could also refer to people who may reach tall objects, and therefore, could see the situation below them more wisely. *Luhung* means magic, but not in the sense of being invulnerable to sharp weapons.

*Neleng Neng Kung*, which is onomatopoeia of *gamelan* sound, is an affectionate nickname from a mother to her baby in Sundanese. This interpretation is based on the fact that Sundanese *gamelan* has soft sounds. In Arabic, this nickname is similar to *ya bunayya*. This call makes no space and distance in communication between the mother and her baby, therefore, the relationship becomes intense and the baby may feel more comfortable. Within the framework of child well-being, this fulfills children’s rights to obtain mental health.

The word *sakola* (school) shows that Sundanese people have experienced a modern period marked by the emergence of hopes for science. Initially, they hoped for changes in the future of their children through *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and *kyais* (experts in Islam). However, in the era of Dutch colonialism, they finally recognized schools as formal institutions. This change attracted the attention of an Orientalist who wrote a book about changes in educational institutions in Indonesia entitled *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah*.

With the presence of formal school as the last institution did not mean that *pesantren* were abandoned. *Kyais* understood that the community’s expectations for *pesantren* were high; however, they realized that *pesantren* had not been able to provide the basic knowledge for school. Therefore, in the twentieth century, there were *pesantren* which established *madrassa* (religious formal schools) and formal schools. The curriculum in these institutions has its own dynamics as stated in the article entitled “*Dinamika Kurikulum Madrasah Berbasis Pesantren pada Abad ke-20: Analisis Historis Implementasi Kurikulum Madrasah*” (Dynamics of Islamic Boarding School-Based Madrasa Curriculum

in the 20th Century: Historical Analysis of Madrasa Curriculum Implementation) and “*Inovasi Kurikulum Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren dalam Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Masyarakat*” (Islamic Boarding School-Based Curriculum Innovation in Increasing Public Trust).

The word *sakola* in this nursery rhyme is backed with a proverb in Sundanese: *elmu tungtut dunya siar* (demand for knowledge and wealth for life). This proverb uses the instruction word “demand” which may refer to ‘search little by little’. Bandung is the capital city of West Java. The city has both public and private universities, as well as military and police educational institutions which were also established here. Therefore, Bandung deserves to be called the city of education following the graduates who would occupy various positions in companies, government and the military. This strengthens Hailmicheal’s thesis that cultural factors influence child well-being in addition to social and economic factors. This finding further support a research in Vietnam that household welfare has an effect on child well-being [26].

The phrase *ka Bandung* (to Bandung) represents mobility and the use implies that the Sundanese people expect their children to have the spirit to migrate to other areas. In the context of child well-being, this spirit, for early childhood, starts by playing outside as what UNICEF (2020) states: “*Children who play outside are often happier than children who do not*”. Opportunities to play outside are closely influenced by parenting styles, cultural differences and the safety of play facilities in the local area.

*Geura gede geura jangkung* (be big and tall soon) is a representation of a hope that children will grow up healthy. In the child well-being framework outlined by UNICEF (2020), this relates to environmental categories, specifically water quality and air pollution levels. The emphasis on air cleanliness is important due to possible damage caused by air pollution. Approximately, 4.2 million people globally have died from exposure to airborne poisons. Based on the policy category, this also relates to children’s health just as immunization and prevention of overweight do.

*Geura sakola* (go to school soon) is a representation of a hope that children will be educated. UNICEF (2020) categorizes schools as part of the relationship category within the child well-being framework. Therefore, attending school encourages *school belonging* and *school participation* by having experience in engaging in school.

For the Sundanese people, a hope to become an educated person is not only in terms of modern sciences, but also prophetic sciences. This could be seen from the Sundanese proverb: *Hiji tambah hiji dua; bisa ngaji bisa ngadu’a. Hiji tambah hiji dua*

(one plus one is two) is a representation of modern sciences while *bisa ngaji bisa ngadu'a* (being able to recite the Holy Quran) relates to prophetic science. Being an educated person does not mean equipping oneself on knowledge only, but also is an expression of success in school. This is reflected in the derivation of a vocabulary in Sundanese from *sakola* to *nyakola*. *Sakola* is a formal educational experience while *nyakola* relates to physical and ethical performance.[27]

*Geura makayakeun indung* is a representation of a hope that children will be devoted to their country. Serving the country is considered a form of happiness as implied in “*The State and My Happiness: Youth Mental Health, Citizenship Education, and Discursive Contestation in Contemporary Indonesia*”, which begins from the blessing of both parents. In UNICEF child well-being framework, this expectation is a part of relationship category related to families, including family support and family participation. (Arifin & Koentjoro, 2021) Family support and involvement among the Sundanese people could be seen in various ceremonies of welcoming the birth of children, such as *Aqiqah* and circumcision. [27]

## 4. CONCLUSION

The research shows that Sundanese local wisdom of *mepende* constructs a part of child well-being. The local wisdom features children whose well-being is represented in physical, intellectual and social aspects. The interpretation of the vocabulary *gede* (big) and *jangkung* (tall) in this nursery rhyme does not only refer to physical aspects, but also social ones. *Gede* means great influence as great people (great people) have a great opportunity to make changes while *jangkung* means wise in social interactions. In addition, *makayakeun indung* (bring prosperity to mother) does not merely refer to a mother biologically, but also the country they belong to.

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