



A Narrative Engineering Model of Deli Serdang Regency Folk Tales for Bullying Mitigation

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify, analyze, and engineer the narratives of folktales from Deli Serdang Regency as an effort to strengthen anti-bullying values. This research employs a qualitative approach using a content analysis method on folktales collected through documentation studies and local narrative sources. The research data consist of four folktales: Panglima Denai, Batang Kuis, Sri Putih Cermin, and Asal Mula Sungai Ular. The findings reveal that the four folktales contain character values relevant to bullying prevention, including empathy, respect for differences, self-control, and peaceful conflict resolution. The analysis of narrative structures indicates that the social conflicts presented in the stories are associated with character differences, coercion, power dominance, and teasing behavior. These conflicts are resolved through moral values emphasizing mutual respect and justice. Furthermore, narrative engineering was conducted by strengthening social conflicts and moral values without altering the fundamental structure of the folktales. Based on this process, a narrative engineering model was developed, consisting of folktale identification, narrative structure analysis, social conflict engineering, and the reinforcement of moral values. This model produced folktales that are more contextualized to bullying issues while preserving local wisdom. Therefore, the folktales of Deli Serdang Regency have significant potential as a source of character education, particularly in preventing bullying through a narrative engineering approach.

Keywords: Folklore, Narrative Engineering, Local Wisdom, Anti-bullying, Character Education



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1. Introduction

Bullying cases in Indonesia show an increasing trend and have serious impacts on the psychological and social development of children and adolescents. Data from the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (SIMFONI PPA) of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection recorded 586 cases of bullying as of September 2025, with 86% of victims being female and 72% being children (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). At the regional level, North Sumatra also recorded a relatively high number of cases, with 59 incidents reported in 2024 (Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning of North Sumatra Province, 2024). These data indicate that bullying remains a significant issue requiring serious attention and more contextual and sustainable mitigation approaches.

Bullying not only affects victims' psychological well-being in the short term but also has the potential to cause more complex long-term consequences. Research shows that victims of bullying are at risk of experiencing pent-up anger, social withdrawal, and prolonged emotional distress (Nocentini et al., 2015). Furthermore, victims are also more likely to exhibit increased aggressive behavior and violations of social norms in response to negative experiences (Baltatzis et al., 2017). Under certain conditions, bullying can even trigger retaliatory actions when victims feel they have not received justice and lose trust in the social environment and institutions that are expected to provide protection (Tight, 2023).

The phenomenon of bullying is not only a problem in Indonesia but also a global issue that has received considerable attention in recent studies. International research publications indicate that efforts to mitigate bullying and violence against women and children in various countries have been developed through diverse intervention approaches. One emerging approach is empowerment-based parenting, which emphasizes strengthening the role of families in building children's psychosocial resilience and preventing aggressive behavior from an early age (Arslan, 2025). In the United Kingdom, bullying prevention strategies also focus on relational education through the internalization of social values and strengthening the active role of teachers in creating safe and inclusive school climates (Cole et al., 2025).

Several other studies confirm that increasing empathy and strengthening students' social and emotional competencies have proven effective in reducing the risk of bullying, including discrimination-based cyberbullying (Devleeschouwer et al., 2025; Xiang et al., 2025; Amadori et al., 2025). In the Asian context, the implementation of the Stop Bullying–School Intervention Program (SB-SIP) in India has also demonstrated effectiveness in reducing bullying behavior in school environments through structured and collaborative educational approaches (Velarde-Camaqui et al., 2026). Other quasi-experimental findings indicate that anti-bullying programs implemented through strengthening prosocial values, social skills training, and collaborative involvement of the entire school community can significantly reduce levels of violence (Talib et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these approaches depends largely on the consistency of implementation, the capacity of educational actors, and the program's ability to address affective and cultural dimensions of students in a sustainable manner (Shahrour et al., 2025; Melendez-Torres et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, the implementation of bullying mitigation programs still tends to show partial results. Several initiatives, such as the Roots Indonesia program in Jakarta, have reportedly increased students' awareness of bullying issues (Devi et al., 2024). Similarly, interventions through group counseling have been shown to contribute to improving students' social behavior (Salsabillah et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these mitigation efforts remains limited because educational practices in schools still tend to focus primarily on cognitive aspects, while strengthening the affective dimension and internalization of values have not been fully implemented (Widodo, 2018). Furthermore, policies aimed at strengthening character education still rely heavily on guidance and counseling services and have not been systematically integrated into regular learning processes, particularly through the use of literature as a medium for developing empathy and moral awareness. This condition differs from practices in several developed countries that have developed bullying mitigation models based on literature learning as an integral part of prevention strategies oriented toward strengthening students' values, empathy, and critical reflection (Guttesen & Kristjánsson, 2024; Wang et al., 2015).

In this context, the internalization of human dignity values is considered a strategic approach to mitigating bullying. The human dignity framework emphasizes respect for individuals, recognition of equality, and rejection of dehumanization, which are often the primary triggers of bullying (Spatscheck, 2012; Stefano et al., 2012). Several studies have shown that educational approaches that systematically internalize empathy, respect, and relational justice can reduce aggressive and violent behavior in educational environments (Nocentini et al., 2015; Tight, 2023). Therefore, narrative engineering of folklore based on human dignity values represents a relevant and contextual educational strategy, as it enables the internalization of human values through local cultural narratives that are closely connected to community life.

Deli Serdang Regency possesses a rich body of folklore that has the potential to be developed as an educational medium for bullying mitigation, such as the stories of Panglima Denai, Batang Kuis, and other folktales. However, the existence of these folktales has begun to decline due to modernization, as reflected in decreasing interest among younger generations and the diminishing number of oral tradition practitioners. This condition may hinder cultural transmission and threaten the sustainability of folktales as intangible cultural heritage (Finnegan, 1992; UNESCO, 2023; Danandjaja, 2007; Hafstein, 2009).

Based on these conditions, narrative engineering of folktales in Deli Serdang Regency is crucial as a culturally based effort to mitigate bullying. Through narrative reconstruction, anti-bullying values can be internalized without losing the essence of folktales as cultural heritage. This approach is expected not only to contribute to strengthening empathy and respect for differences but also to serve as an alternative, contextual, and sustainable educational medium for bullying mitigation in educational settings.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method aimed at engineering the narratives of folktales from Deli Serdang Regency as a medium for bullying mitigation. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on exploring the meanings, values, and narrative structures of folktales, which were subsequently reconstructed to produce story models oriented toward anti-bullying values. The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were in the form of folktales circulating within the Deli Serdang Regency community, obtained through interviews with community leaders and documentation of folktales that continue to exist in oral traditions. Secondary data were collected from books, scientific journals, cultural archives, and other documents relevant to folklore and the concept of bullying mitigation. Data collection techniques included documentation studies and in-depth interviews. Documentation studies were conducted to identify relevant folktales, while interviews were carried out to explore the cultural context and values embedded in the narratives. Data analysis employed an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage involved identifying narrative elements of the folktales, such as characters, plot, conflicts, and moral values. Subsequently, narrative engineering was conducted by incorporating bullying mitigation values, including empathy, tolerance, respect for differences, and peaceful conflict resolution. The final stage involved developing a folktale narrative engineering model that can be used as an alternative medium for bullying mitigation. To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation, along with expert validation involving experts in literature, education, and local culture. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to produce contextual, relevant, and effective folktale narrative engineering as an effort to mitigate bullying.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

This section presents the results of the narrative engineering of folktales from Deli Serdang Regency as an effort to mitigate bullying. The research findings include the identification of folktales, analysis of narrative structures, and reconstruction of anti-bullying values based on human dignity. These findings are subsequently discussed by linking the concept of bullying mitigation with the role of folktales as a medium for value education grounded in local wisdom.

1. Identification of Folktales from Deli Serdang Regency

Based on the data collection, four folktales from Deli Serdang Regency were identified as relevant to bullying prevention. These folktales convey values such as empathy, respect for differences, and mutual respect in social life. The results of the folktale identification are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Folktales from Deli Serdang Regency Relevant to Bullying Mitigation

No.	Title of Folktale	Brief Overview	Relevance to Bullying Issues
1	Panglima Denai	The story of three brothers with different physical characteristics and abilities who support one another	Teaches respect for differences and discourages belittling others

2	Batang Kuis	The story of Kecak Mendai as a strong and wise leader	Emphasizes empathy, self-control, and respect for others
3	Sri Putih Cermin	The story of a princess who defends her life choices against coercion	Teaches respect for others' decisions and discourages intimidation
4	The Origin of Sungai Ular	The story of a young man who experiences ridicule and develops empathy	Illustrates the impact of bullying and the importance of defending victims

2. *Analysis of the Narrative Structure of Folktales*

The analysis of narrative structures was conducted to identify key story elements, including characters and their traits, plot, social conflicts, and moral values contained in the original folktales. The results of the analysis of the four folktales from Deli Serdang Regency are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Narrative Structure Analysis of Deli Serdang Regency Folktales

No.	Story Title	Characters and Traits	Plot Summary	Social Conflict	Moral Values
1	Panglima Denai	Tumbara (strong leader), Tunapi (intelligent), Tunabu (gentle and obedient), Andam Dewi (wise)	Three brothers face various challenges before becoming just leaders	Physical differences and unequal abilities that potentially lead to discrimination	Respect for differences, cooperation, empathy, and fair leadership
2	Batang Kuis	Kecak Mendai (wise), Datuk Pulau Berayun (advisor), Datuk Pao (opponent)	Kecak Mendai's journey from conflict to leadership	Power struggles and conflicts between characters	Self-control, respect for opponents, and fair leadership
3	Sri Putih Cermin	Sri Putih Cermin (firm and empathetic), King of Overseas Land (forceful), King of Langka Pura	Rejection of a proposal leading to royal conflict	Coercion and intimidation	Respect for others' choices, empathy, and anti-bullying values
4	The Origin of Sungai Ular	Leman (victim of ridicule), Ramin (observer), youth group, wise snake	A young man mocks his friend and later realizes his mistake	Teasing and bullying among peers	Empathy, respect for differences, and courage to defend victims

Based on this analysis, the four folktales demonstrate narrative structures that include social conflicts related to interpersonal relationships. These conflicts are subsequently resolved through moral values such as empathy, respect for differences, and mutual respect. These values indicate that folktales from Deli Serdang Regency have the potential to serve as sources of character education, particularly in preventing bullying.

3. *Narrative Engineering of Folktales*

Narrative engineering was conducted on the identified folktales with the aim of strengthening character values, particularly anti-bullying values, without diminishing the essence of the original stories. The narrative engineering process involved adjusting characters, conflicts, and resolutions to emphasize empathy, respect for differences, and peaceful conflict resolution. The results of the narrative engineering of folktales from Deli Serdang Regency are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Narrative Engineering of Deli Serdang Regency Folktales

No.	Story Title	Narrative Engineering Focus	Value Reinforcement
1	Panglima Denai	Emphasis on the differences among the three brothers and their cooperation in resolving conflicts	Respect for differences, empathy, and fair leadership

2	Batang Kuis	Adjustment of conflicts by emphasizing peaceful resolution and character self-control	Respect for opponents, self-control, and non-violence
3	Sri Putih Cermin	Reinforcement of coercion-related conflicts concerning individual rights and decision-making	Respect for others' decisions and anti-bullying values
4	The Origin of Sungai Ular	Strengthening social conflict involving ridicule and transformation of character attitudes	Empathy, courage to defend victims, and respect for differences

Based on the narrative engineering results, each folktale underwent reinforcement in the conflict and resolution components. This engineering aimed to emphasize moral values relevant to bullying issues, such as empathy, respect for differences, and peaceful conflict resolution. Thus, the engineered folktales retained their fundamental narrative structures while conveying stronger and more contextualized moral messages.

4. Narrative Engineering Model

Based on the results of the narrative engineering of folktales from Deli Serdang Regency, a narrative engineering model was developed to strengthen anti-bullying values within the stories. This model was implemented by adapting the narrative structure without eliminating the core elements of the folktales, while emphasizing relevant social conflicts and moral values. The narrative engineering model developed in this study consists of several stages: (1) identification of folktales, (2) analysis of narrative structures, (3) social conflict engineering, and (4) reinforcement of moral values. These stages were conducted systematically to produce folktales that preserve local wisdom while conveying stronger moral messages related to bullying prevention. A detailed description of the narrative engineering model developed in this study is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Narrative Engineering Model for Bullying Mitigation Based on Deli Serdang Regency Folktales

Model Stages	Description
Identification of Folktales	Collecting folktales from Deli Serdang Regency that are relevant to character values and bullying mitigation
Narrative Structure Analysis	Identifying characters, plot, conflicts, and moral values in the original stories
Social Conflict Engineering	Adapting story conflicts to be relevant to bullying issues
Reinforcement of Moral Values	Emphasizing values such as empathy, respect for differences, and peaceful conflict resolution

Based on this model, narrative engineering is conducted while maintaining local cultural elements in folktales and strengthening character values aligned with educational needs. This narrative engineering model produces folktales that are more contextual and relevant to social life, particularly in fostering anti-bullying attitudes.

3.2 Discussion

The research findings indicate that the narrative engineering of folktales from Deli Serdang Regency was conducted by maintaining the basic story structure while strengthening social conflicts and moral values relevant to bullying prevention. This narrative engineering is reflected in adjustments to conflict emphasis, characterization, and story resolution, which highlight empathy, respect for differences, and peaceful conflict resolution.

Based on the analysis, the folktale Panglima Denai was engineered to reinforce character differences and emphasize cooperation as a solution to conflict. Physical differences and abilities are no longer positioned as weaknesses but as collective strengths. This narrative engineering emphasizes that every individual has equal value and should not be demeaned. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that folktales contain character education values such as empathy, cooperation, and justice, which can be

utilized to develop social character (Rahmawati, Sutrisna, & Nisya, 2023).

In the folktale *Batang Kuis*, narrative engineering emphasizes peaceful conflict resolution and the main character's self-control. In this story, conflicts are resolved not through violence but through wisdom and respect for opponents. This demonstrates that strength is not synonymous with domination, but rather with the ability to exercise self-control. These findings support previous research suggesting that folktales can instill character traits such as courage, responsibility, and social awareness through narrative conflict and resolution (Humairoh, Rahman, & Rasdana, 2024).

Narrative engineering in the folktale *Sri Putih Cermin* is reflected in the emphasis on social conflict involving coercion and intimidation. The main character is portrayed as defending her rights without demeaning others, thereby highlighting respect for individual decisions. This conflict illustrates a form of social and psychological bullying that is resolved through assertiveness and empathy. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that folktales function as a medium for character formation by conveying moral values relevant to social life (Hartati, Liana, & Rozani, 2024).

Meanwhile, narrative engineering in the folktale *The Origin of Sungai Ular* was conducted by strengthening conflicts involving ridicule and depicting changes in group attitudes after realizing their mistakes. This conflict directly illustrates verbal and social bullying. The resolution through collective awareness demonstrates that empathy and the courage to defend victims are key values emphasized in the story. These findings align with previous research indicating that folklore can serve as an effective medium for strengthening social character through understanding characters, conflicts, and moral messages within stories (Amin, 2022).

Strengthening the values of empathy and respect through folklore is also aligned with the respect education approach in literature learning. Research shows that developing respect education-based literary teaching materials aims to build humanitarian values and address bullying in educational contexts (Wasilah et al., 2025). This study also supports previous findings indicating that the need for respect education-based literary teaching materials arises from the limited integration of respect, empathy, and anti-bullying values in literature learning.

Overall, the narrative engineering model developed in this study demonstrates that folktales can be reconstructed by reinforcing social conflicts and moral values without eliminating their basic structures. This narrative engineering produces stories that are more contextual to bullying issues while maintaining local wisdom. These findings reinforce the argument that folktales have significant potential as sources of character development because they contain moral values relevant to social life (Kusmana & Nurzaman, 2020). Thus, the narrative engineering model developed in this study not only preserves the cultural function of folktales but also strengthens their role as a medium for character formation, particularly in preventing bullying through values of empathy, respect for differences, and peaceful conflict resolution.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, four folktales from Deli Serdang Regency were identified as relevant to bullying prevention: *Panglima Denai*, *Batang Kuis*, *Sri Putih Cermin*, and *The Origin of Sungai Ular*. These folktales contain moral values related to empathy, respect for differences, self-control, and peaceful conflict resolution. The results of the narrative structure analysis indicate that each story includes characters, plot, and social conflicts that reflect social relationships relevant to bullying issues. The conflicts presented in the folktales generally involve character differences, coercion, power dominance, and teasing behavior. These conflicts are subsequently resolved through moral values emphasizing mutual respect and empathy. Furthermore, narrative engineering was conducted by strengthening social conflicts and moral values without altering the fundamental structure of the folktales. This process resulted in stories that are more contextualized to bullying issues and emphasize the moral messages embedded in the narratives. Based on this process, a narrative engineering model was developed, consisting of folktale identification, narrative structure analysis, social conflict engineering, and reinforcement of moral values. Therefore, folktales from Deli Serdang Regency have significant potential as sources of character development, particularly in preventing bullying. The narrative engineering model developed in this study can serve as an approach for developing folktales that are more relevant to educational needs and social character development.

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