

## Etnopedagogy of *Bali Aga* Parenting: Integration of Customary Values, Spirituality, and Family Education in Sembiran

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### Abstract

This study examines the ethnopedagogical dimensions of parenting practices among the *Bali Aga* community in Sembiran Village, emphasizing the integration of customary values, spirituality, and family-based education. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The data were thematically analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that *Bali Aga* parenting embodies a moral educational system rooted in Hindu cosmology and communal harmony. Parents serve as spiritual educators, transmitting the values of *satya* (truth), *siwam* (purity), and *suci* (sacredness) through ritual practices, storytelling traditions, and collective participation. The family operates not merely as a social unit but as a cultural institution for character formation grounded in local wisdom. In practice, the study suggests developing a culturally grounded family counseling model that leverages indigenous parenting values to strengthen children's resilience, spiritual awareness, and moral responsibility in both traditional communities and contemporary educational settings.

**Keywords:** ethnopedagogy, parenting, *bali aga*, cultural values, character education

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## INTRODUCTION

Family parenting is a fundamental component of character education and greatly influences children's moral, emotional, and social development. In the context of family guidance and counseling, parenting is the earliest and most consistent means of instilling values, shaping identity, and developing self-control (Santrock, 2019). In traditional societies, parenting is not merely understood as a psychological or pedagogical act but also as a cultural and spiritual practice that links individual development to collective values (Hurlock, 1996; Lickona, 1991). Therefore, the study of family parenting cannot be separated from the system of values and belief structures that support intergenerational cultural transmission.

As a multicultural nation, Indonesia exhibits a diversity of family patterns and parenting practices shaped by local wisdom and religious philosophy (Tilaar, 2020; Raharjo, 2021). The diversity of cultural foundations in Indonesian households illustrates how educational values are deeply rooted in local traditions, religious worldviews, and communal identity. Within Balinese Hindu society, family education is grounded in the principle of *Tri Hita Karana* the harmony between humans and God (*parahyangan*), among humans (*pawongan*), and between humans and nature (*palemahan*) (Sudiana, 2020). This principle is not only philosophical but also pedagogical, as it forms an ethical foundation for children's behavior in daily life through ritual, language, and symbol.

One of the most distinctive communities in Bali is the *Bali Aga* people, also referred to as "*Bali Mula*." They inhabit mountainous areas such as Sembiran, Sidatapa, and Tenganan and are known for preserving social and spiritual systems that predate the Majapahit influence (Reuter, 2005; Dharmayudha, 1995). In this society, the family functions as the guardian of moral order, cultural identity, and ecological awareness. The parenting model represents a form of local pedagogy in which the process of raising children becomes a living pedagogy for transmitting the values of *satya* (truth), *siwam* (purity), and *suci* (sincerity) values that are simultaneously ethical, religious, and ecological in nature (Suwarta et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the currents of globalization, digitalization, and social mobility have posed major challenges to the continuity of traditional parenting patterns. Modernization has shifted value orientations and weakened intergenerational communication within families (Aslan, 2019; Gao et al., 2024). The influence of media and technology has transformed parental authority so that parenting, which was once communal and spiritual in nature, now faces the dominance of individualistic values (Pakaya & Kumaidi, 2022). In this situation, indigenous family systems such as those of the *Bali Aga* community are crucial to study, as they demonstrate how traditional societies sustain and adapt without losing the essence of their moral foundations.

From a guidance and counseling perspective, understanding traditional parenting practices becomes a critical foundation for developing culturally sensitive counseling services. The ethnopedagogical approach, as described by Sutarno (2021), positions culture as a source of educational innovation and emphasizes that character education must be rooted in real community practices. Within the context of family guidance and counseling, an ethnopedagogical approach enables reflective dialogue between modern educational theories and local moral wisdom (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2022). By integrating customary values and spirituality into counseling programs, educators and



counselors can build a holistic and contextually grounded model of character education. This finding is consistent with Wibowo and Susanto (2017), who emphasize that culturally grounded family counseling strengthens the internalization of values and promotes cohesive parent–child communication within traditional communities.

The *Bali Aga* community in Sembiran Village, Buleleng Regency, serves as a concrete example of cultural resilience and moral transmission through family structure. Previous ethnographic research in Sembiran has mostly focused on language, ritual systems, and traditional attire (Oktapiani, 2023; Suartini, 2022), whereas the pedagogical aspects of parenting practices remain underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to examine how *Bali Aga* families integrate customary values, spirituality, and family education into their parenting practices, and how these elements contribute to character development and culturally grounded counseling.

This research is directed to answer three main questions: (1) What are the underlying reasons for the persistence of traditional parenting in *Bali Aga* families in Sembiran Village? (2) What forms and strategies of parenting reflect the integration of customary and spiritual values? and (3) What are the implications of such parenting practices for the moral and ecological awareness of children? The findings are expected to contribute to the field of guidance and counseling by developing an ethnopedagogical model of family parenting that demonstrates how indigenous families can serve as living laboratories for moral, spiritual, and ecological education.

## METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach framed within an ethnopedagogical paradigm to understand parenting practices among *Bali Aga* families as a form of cultural education embedded in community life. This approach enables the researcher to explore values, meanings, and mechanisms of cultural transmission as manifested through daily interactions between families and customary institutions.

The study was conducted in Sembiran Village, Tejakula District, Buleleng Regency, a *Bali Aga* community that continues to uphold traditional structures and cultural educational systems. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

1. *Bali Aga* parents who have practiced parenting for at least ten years.
2. Customary leaders and *pemangku* who play a role in transmitting cultural and spiritual values.
3. community members actively involved in socio-religious rituals.
4. individuals with knowledge and lived experience related to traditional parenting patterns.

A total of 10 informants participated in this study, consisting of fathers, mothers, customary leaders, *pemangku*, and active members of the banjar. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis.

The researcher took on the role of participant-observer in family and village activities, including *ngayah*, *metatah* ceremonies, *posyandu*, and banjar events. Observations were conducted from August to September 2024, with 2–3 visits per week (2–4 hours per visit). Field notes and photographic documentation supported the observational data.



Interviews lasted 45–90 minutes and used a semi-structured guide based on the research questions (provided in the appendix). Interview topics included ancestral values, parenting practices, customary discipline, role modeling, the function of customary institutions, and adaptation to modernization. All interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim.

Documents analyzed included village archives, photographs of customary activities, and local *lontar* manuscripts such as *Taru Pramana* and *Aji Gurnita*. These documents were used to verify and enrich data obtained from observations and interviews. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of: Data reduction (selecting relevant information, generating initial codes, and forming categories). Data display through thematic matrices. Conclusion drawing carried out inductively. Examples of open codes that emerged from the field include: genealogical identity, customary discipline, social role modeling, communal supervision, selective adaptation, and spiritual continuity. These codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories, including cultural identity, communal morality, practice-based learning, and cultural resilience.

Data credibility was ensured through:

1. Source triangulation (fathers, mothers, customary leaders, teachers).
2. Method triangulation (observation, interview, document analysis).
3. Member checking with key informants.
4. Audit trail, documenting analytical procedures.
5. Intercoder agreement: 20% of the dataset was independently coded by a second coder to ensure coding consistency.

Research permission was obtained from the village government and customary institutions. All participants were informed about the research objectives and provided informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained in accordance with ethical principles of qualitative research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This section presents three significant findings derived from the thematic analysis of parenting practices among *Bali Aga* families in Sembiran Village. First, religious role modeling and spiritual pedagogy serve as the foundation for children's internalization of moral and spiritual values. Second, customary collectivism forms a communal moral ecology that functions as a mechanism for social supervision, ethical transmission, and shared identity formation. Third, *Bali Aga* families demonstrate modern value adaptation through culturally grounded value filtering to maintain identity resilience. To provide a systematic overview, the three findings are mapped in Table 1. At the same time, empirical evidence, including verbatim quotes and detailed observation notes, is presented in Table 2 to strengthen the qualitative analysis's validity and credibility of the qualitative analysis.

As a more comprehensive and measurable form of data presentation, the three categories derived from the thematic analysis are summarized in Table 1, which maps their indicators, key activities, and contributions to character education.



**Table 1.**  
 Thematic Mapping of *Bali Aga* Parenting Practices: Categories, Indicators, Activities, Character Impacts, and Sources of Evidence

Category	Indicators	Examples of Activities	Character Impacts	Sources of Evidence
K1 – Religious Role Modeling and Spiritual Pedagogy	Parental exemplarity; ritual guidance	Daily prayers, ritual participation, ancestral storytelling	Truthfulness, emotional regulation, spiritual awareness	Observations; interviews; ritual documentation
K2 – Customary Collectivism and Communal Moral Formation	Intergenerational learning; communal oversight	<i>Ngayah</i> , <i>usaba desa</i> , banjar meetings, paruman supervision	Discipline, cooperation, communal identity	Interviews; observations; village archives
K3 – Modern Value Adaptation and Cultural Resilience	Integration of tradition & technology; value filtering	School cultural projects, digital archiving, online adat groups	Cultural resilience, critical thinking, responsible digital behavior	Interviews; document study; digital ethnography

To enhance analytical transparency and strengthen the empirical grounding of the thematic categories presented in Table 1. Table 2 provides direct verbatim quotations and detailed observational evidence. This additional table allows readers to trace how each theme emerged from the raw data and to evaluate the credibility and depth of the qualitative findings.

**Table 2.**  
 Empirical Evidence for the *Bali Aga* Ethnopedagogical Parenting Model

Category	Empirical Evidence (Verbatim Quotes & Observations)	Context and Analytical Notes
K1. Religious Role Modeling and Spiritual Pedagogy	“Children must see us pray first; only then will they follow.” (Mother S., 12 June 2024) Observation: Children followed the parents’ prayer movements without being instructed.	Demonstrates modeling and value internalization within a collective spiritual setting.
	“Stories of the ancestors are meant to remind them... so children know why rituals are performed.” (Customary Elder, 15 June 2024)	Highlights storytelling as spiritual pedagogy and a culturally embedded counseling approach.



K2. Customary Collectivism and Communal Moral Formation	“In the banjar, all children are watched. If they misbehave, it’s not only the parents who correct them.” (Banjar Leader, 18 June 2024)	Evidence of layered communal moral supervision consistent with ecological development theory.
	Observation: Children cooperated during ngayah, arranging offerings and cleaning temple grounds.	Reinforces Bronfenbrenner’s concept of a multilayered moral ecology.
K3. Modern Value Adaptation and Cultural Resilience	“Children may use a phone, but they must know what aligns with our customary values.” (Father M., 20 June 2024)	Demonstrates selective value filtering in navigating digital exposure.
	Observation: Youth documented ritual activities using digital cameras and uploaded them to customary online groups.	Supports modern cultural adaptation as a strategy for identity resilience.

The empirical evidence presented in Table 2 deepens the understanding of each thematic category by illustrating how values, norms, and parenting practices manifest in everyday interactions. These data points serve as the interpretive basis for the discussion that follows, in which the findings are linked to relevant theories and prior research.

The synthesis of findings shows that parenting practices among *Bali Aga* families in Sembiran Village form a unified system in which spiritual, communal, and adaptive dimensions operate simultaneously in shaping children’s development. These three themes do not stand alone but mutually reinforce one another, creating a distinctive parenting pattern that differs significantly from non-indigenous models. This conceptualization is directly derived from field data and therefore represents an original theoretical contribution to the study of indigenous parenting systems.

## Discussion

The findings reveal that parenting practices in *Bali Aga* families constitute a theo-sociopedagogical system, a value-based and spiritually grounded educational model rooted in customary norms, ritual practices, and communal social structures. This system shows that the family is not merely a domestic and biological unit, but also a value-oriented educational institution integrated with the community's customary and ritual life.

The core values satya (truth), siwam (purity), and suci (sincerity) serve as the basis for shaping children’s character, guiding the development of their moral reasoning, emotional awareness, and cultural identity. These findings align with those of Winarti (2021) and Makmur & Dastina (2018), who highlight the role of local cultural values in character development in indigenous communities.

Parents play a central role as moral and spiritual exemplars. Fathers are perceived as figures of discipline and responsibility, while mothers are perceived as embodying spiritual devotion and emotional warmth. This perspective reinforces Parsons’ (1951) idea of the instrumental–expressive family functions.



Beyond individual observation, as suggested in Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, children in Sembiran actively participate in daily prayers, ritual cycles, and other spiritual activities that create emotionally meaningful and morally formative experiences. These findings extend Bandura's theory by demonstrating that modeling is mediated by a collective spiritual environment rather than solely by parent-child interaction.

From a guidance and counseling perspective, rituals and spiritual routines serve as a form of preventive developmental guidance, cultivating emotional regulation, empathy, and moral clarity. Ancestral storytelling serves as a symbolic pedagogy and culturally embedded narrative therapy (Smith & Yang, 2019). Customary collectivism is a core element of *Bali Aga* parenting. Children are involved in *ngayah* (voluntary service), *usaba desa*, communal farming, and *banjar* meetings. Customary structures such as the *paruman banjar* function as moral regulators, behavioral overseers, and mechanisms of social control.

These findings support Parsons' (1951) pattern-maintenance theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological development model, which emphasize that moral values emerge from interactions across multiple social systems—family, community, and broader cultural environments. In the context of counseling, customary communities serve as natural counseling systems, providing guidance, conflict mediation, and reinforcement of collective values through shared activities and ritual settings.

Despite being deeply rooted in tradition, *Bali Aga* families engage in selective adaptation of modern values. Technology is used to strengthen customary identity, for example, by digitally documenting rituals or disseminating cultural information through online customary groups. Parents act as cultural gatekeepers by filtering values in children's digital exposure. These findings align with Maher (2021), who emphasizes cultural adaptation as a strategy for sustaining indigenous identity, and Wulandari et al. (2022), who found that integrating local cultural values into educational settings enhances students' value awareness and cultural engagement. This adaptive process is also significant in modern guidance and counseling, particularly regarding digital literacy, cultural identity development, and mitigating media-related risks.

Field evidence, such as "Children must see us pray first; only then will they follow," shows that spirituality and ritual practices are not merely religious obligations but also serve as continuous pedagogical mechanisms for moral internalization. This finding is consistent with Liu et al. (2022), who argue that ritual environments enhance children's emotional awareness, self-discipline, and moral reflection through repeated spiritual experiences. Such environments create structured routines that embed moral expectations into daily life.

Previous research also affirms the formative role of family religious practices. King and Boyatzis (2015) demonstrate that participation in family-based rituals significantly strengthens moral reasoning, spiritual identity, and value clarity among children. The present study mirrors these findings: parental exemplarity becomes the core of internalizing religious and ethical values within *Bali Aga* households.

Thus, the *Bali Aga* case extends Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory by showing that modeling is not limited to parent-child interactions but is also mediated by the collective spiritual atmosphere embedded in customary ritual life. Children learn not



only by observing adults individually but also by participating in rituals within a communal spiritual ecology.

Statements such as “In the banjar, all children are watched. If they misbehave, it’s not only their parents who correct them” illustrate how a broader social ecology shapes children’s behavior. The customary structures banjar, paruman, and the authority of elders serve as moral regulators embedded within daily life. These findings resonate with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory, which posits that children develop within nested social environments that jointly influence their values, attitudes, and behaviors. Research by Ardika and Pradnyawati (2021) further supports this view, showing that Balinese customary systems function as effective mechanisms for transmitting ethics and maintaining social order. Through activities such as ngayah and ritual participation, children learn discipline, cooperation, and collective responsibility, which strengthen communal identity and social cohesion.

Similarly, Makino (2019) found that many Southeast Asian indigenous communities practice collective parenting as an intergenerational value transmission system. The *Bali Aga* context exemplifies this pattern: the community acts as an extended pedagogical environment, providing guidance, supervision, and shared responsibility for character development. The moral ecology in this setting is therefore both lived and institutionalized.

The statement “Children may use a phone, but they must know what aligns with our customary values” illustrates the strategic value filtering implemented by *Bali Aga* parents in responding to modern influences. This adaptation is not passive; it is an intentional process to ensure the alignment between customary values and modern practices. Maher (2021) describes this strategy as controlled cultural adaptation, whereby indigenous communities selectively adopt modern elements that reinforce rather than undermine traditional values.

The findings also align with Wulandari et al. (2022), who argue that integrating local wisdom with modern educational tools strengthens students’ cultural awareness and internalizes their values. In Sembiran, youth often document rituals through digital media, upload them to customary online groups, and engage in digital archiving practices that reflect cultural resilience consistent with Kirmayer et al.’s (2011) concept of cultural continuity. From a counseling perspective, technology grounded in cultural values supports identity reinforcement and helps children develop ethical digital literacy. This approach ensures that modernization does not weaken cultural identity; rather, it becomes a tool for preserving and transmitting it across generations.

The three dimensions spiritual–pedagogical, communal–collective, and adaptive–resilient interact to form what this study conceptualizes as a theo-sociopedagogical parenting model. This model reflects:

1. Spiritual Foundations in Balinese Hinduism. Ritual practices, religious role modeling, and ancestral storytelling serve as stable instruments for transmitting value (King & Boyatzis, 2015).
2. Communal and Customary Structures as Moral Systems. Customary institutions operate as embedded moral frameworks that sustain the continuity of values across generations (Ardika & Pradnyawati, 2021; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).



3. Strategic Adaptation to Modernization. Families filter modern influences and utilize technology as a medium to strengthen traditional norms (Maher, 2021; Wulandari et al., 2022).

Thus, parenting among the *Bali Aga* is not simply a domestic responsibility but a comprehensive value-based educational system rooted in spirituality, social structure, and adaptive cultural strategies. This integrated model advances the theoretical understanding of ethnopedagogical parenting by providing a culturally grounded framework that highlights the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in indigenous communities.

## CONCLUSION

This study introduces the theo-sociopedagogical system as an original model derived from field data, demonstrating how *Bali Aga* parenting integrates spiritual values, communal structures, and family-based education into a unified cultural pedagogy. The findings extend Social Learning Theory, Structural Functionalism, and ethnopedagogical perspectives by revealing that collective spirituality and customary oversight function as core mechanisms of moral formation. This model highlights that children's character development emerges from the simultaneous interaction of ritual participation, parental exemplarity, and communal moral ecology. In practice, the study offers actionable recommendations, including developing local-wisdom-based training modules for counselors that incorporate ritual engagement, moral modeling, and community supervision as culturally grounded counseling strategies. Schools can further operationalize these insights by embedding a *Bali Aga* cultural character curriculum, integrating ritual literacy projects, and value-based digital education. Customary institutions and village governments may also apply these findings to design family and youth development programs that are culturally rooted yet responsive to contemporary challenges. Future research should test the applicability of the theo-sociopedagogical model in other indigenous communities and explore concrete forms of collaboration among school counselors, cultural leaders, and educators to strengthen culturally responsive character education.

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