

# Conserving Artistic Expression and Cultural Education through the Gending Sriwijaya Dance

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## ABSTRACT

The Gending Sriwijaya dance, a classical performance from South Sumatra, holds deep cultural, historical, and educational significance. However, its presence in formal education remains limited, raising concerns about cultural sustainability and the weakening of traditional identity among younger generations. This study investigates how Gending Sriwijaya can be integrated into educational contexts to promote cultural conservation, artistic expression, and character development. This qualitative study employed a combined approach of library research and limited field-based inquiry, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Data were sourced from academic literature, cultural policy documents, and direct engagement with dance educators and practitioners at Universitas PGRI Palembang. Thematic analysis and data reduction techniques were used to interpret both documentary and empirical findings. The findings reveal that Gending Sriwijaya serves as a powerful medium for transmitting cultural values such as spirituality, hospitality, ecological awareness, and discipline. The dance's symbolic movements and properties convey rich semiotic meanings that can support progressive learning goals. Its inclusion in university curricula fosters bodily coordination, creativity, cultural pride, and social cooperation among students. Integrating Gending Sriwijaya into educational programs not only preserves regional heritage but also aligns with progressive education principles that emphasize experiential and culturally relevant pedagogy. This study recommends structured curriculum development, teacher training, and institutional collaboration to ensure the dance's sustainability and educational impact.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping human character and unlocking individual potential in accordance with the cultural values of society. According to *Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003*, education entails deliberate and systematic efforts to develop learners spiritually, emotionally,

intellectually, and socially. In addition to cognitive development, education must also nurture creativity, cultural identity, and aesthetic awareness—dimensions often overlooked in conventional academic models.

Art-based education serves as a powerful tool to foster holistic human development. It facilitates exploration, expression, appreciation, and creation—skills that link learners with their cultural heritage while also promoting critical and creative thinking (Lahdesmaki et al., 2022; Mok, 2019). Recent studies reinforce the value of integrating arts into the curriculum as a means to enrich learning experiences and strengthen cultural identity (Kurniawan, Purwoko, & Setiana, 2024). However, despite this potential, traditional arts—particularly regional dances—remain underrepresented in formal education. Research by Ramadhanti & Kumala (2022) and Nurhasanah, Siburian, & Fitriana (2021) shows that traditional performance arts are often sidelined, which undermines intergenerational cultural transmission and leads to a weakening of local identity among youth.

One of the most culturally significant yet increasingly marginalized traditional dances is Gending Sriwijaya, a classical dance originating from South Sumatra. Symbolizing the grandeur of the ancient Sriwijaya Kingdom, this dance embodies historical narratives, spiritual symbolism, and regional pride (Sartono, 2019; Mareta, Sutimin, & Sariyatun, 2019). Despite its richness, recent studies highlight its declining presence in school-based education and extracurricular activities (Rusmana et al., 2024; Aditya, 2024). Few educational institutions incorporate this dance into their curriculum or use it as a medium for value-based learning. The lack of structured pedagogical models supporting the transmission of Gending Sriwijaya exacerbates its detachment from the younger generation.

The gap between cultural preservation and formal education calls for urgent intervention. Dewey (2024) and Bae-Dimitriadis (2024) argue that art is central to meaningful learning and human development. Aligning with this view, recent scholarship supports the idea that integrating local arts into education not only preserves cultural heritage but also increases student engagement and promotes cultural pride (Nuraini, Eko Wati, & Puspitasari, 2019; Salam, 2020). Nevertheless, little empirical research has explored practical strategies for incorporating Gending Sriwijaya into contemporary pedagogy, especially in a way that aligns with national curriculum standards and 21st-century learning goals.

The objective of this study is to investigate how the traditional dance Gending Sriwijaya can be effectively integrated into educational settings to serve three core purposes: (1) preserving cultural heritage, (2) enhancing students' artistic and aesthetic expression, and (3) enriching learning experiences through culturally relevant pedagogy. This study addresses the existing gap by proposing contextually grounded educational strategies that combine cultural revitalization with creative learning models.

By situating Gending Sriwijaya within an educational framework, this research aspires to contribute both to cultural sustainability and to the innovation of art-based learning practices. It emphasizes the importance of embedding traditional arts in education—not only to protect regional identities, but also to foster the growth of students as creative, culturally aware individuals.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach by combining library research with limited field-based inquiry. The primary aim is to explore the conservation of the Gending Sriwijaya dance as a cultural heritage practice that holds significant educational value within arts and character education.

### 2.1 Research Approach and Design

A qualitative approach was chosen to examine the symbolic, contextual, and interpretive dimensions of traditional dance. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the cultural meanings embedded in Gending Sriwijaya and how these values are transmitted through educational settings.

The research design integrates documentary analysis (library research) and limited fieldwork through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, allowing for data triangulation. The library research was conducted by analyzing secondary sources such as academic journals, books, cultural

policy documents, and credible online publications. These provided theoretical and contextual insights into traditional arts and education.

In parallel, field-based inquiry was conducted to enrich the data through firsthand engagement with practitioners and educators involved in Gending Sriwijaya dance instruction.

## **2.2 Data Collection Techniques**

The data were gathered using three main techniques:

- a. Document Analysis: Reviewing scholarly literature, policy documents, and educational materials relevant to traditional dance, cultural preservation, and curriculum integration.
- b. Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted with key informants, including dance instructors, lecturers from Universitas PGRI Palembang, and cultural practitioners. The interviews followed an open-ended protocol to elicit detailed insights into pedagogical strategies and cultural meanings associated with the dance.
- c. Participant Observation: Undertaken during dance learning sessions in university classes and local dance studios. The observations focused on how the dance is taught, the pedagogical interactions, and how cultural values are embodied through performance and instruction.

All field activities adhered to ethical research procedures, including informed consent from all participants.

## **2.3 Data Analysis**

The data analysis followed a process of data reduction, thematic categorization, and descriptive-narrative interpretation. This involved:

- a. Filtering and summarizing both textual and field data relevant to the research objectives, particularly regarding educational values, cultural symbolism, and pedagogical integration.
- b. Grouping the data into thematic categories such as symbolic dance movements, character-building values, teaching practices, and spiritual-ecological dimensions.
- c. Developing a coherent narrative that synthesizes empirical findings with theoretical frameworks, offering interpretive insights into how the Gending Sriwijaya dance functions as both a cultural artifact and an educational resource.

Through this integrated methodology, the study aims to present a comprehensive view of the pedagogical potential of traditional dance in fostering cultural identity, character development, and progressive learning practices.

# **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

## **3.1 Conservation for Arts Education**

In the era of globalization, cultivating national culture and character becomes a critical component of educational practice. Culture functions as a system of shared symbols, values, and behaviors transmitted across generations (Spradley, 1980). This process of cultural transmission occurs both formally, through education, and informally, through communal practices and artistic traditions. One such example is the Gending Sriwijaya Dance of Palembang, South Sumatra, which serves as a cultural artifact that integrates identity, hospitality, and historical continuity.

Based on interviews conducted with practitioners and educators—following ethical procedures including informed consent and a semi-structured interview protocol—the Gending Sriwijaya Dance is consistently described as a ceremonial performance intended to welcome esteemed guests, embodying the values of honor and hospitality within Palembang society (Rudy, Personal Interview, Jan 5 & 12, 2023). This dance is typically performed during the *sekapur sirih* ceremony, a traditional welcoming ritual that utilizes symbolic elements such as *sirih* (betel leaf), *tepak* (ceremonial trays),

prindon (textile offering), and ceremonial umbrellas (payung), all of which contribute to reinforcing cultural identity.

Costume aesthetics are deliberately constructed to reflect social roles within the performance. For instance, three dancers carrying the ceremonial trays wear aesan gede attire, symbolizing nobility, while two dancers follow in aesan gandrik and the remaining four in aesan pak sangkong, visually narrating the hierarchy and structure of Palembang's cultural heritage. The performance consists of nine dancers, deliberately referencing the Batang Hari Sembilan, the nine major rivers flowing through South Sumatra, a symbolic motif that connects the performance to the region's geographic identity.

The Gending Sriwijaya Dance is named after the accompanying musical piece composed by A. Dahlan Mahibat with lyrics by A.R. Nungcik. Its choreography, originally developed in 1944 by Miss Tina Haji Gung and Sukainah A. Rozak, was the result of collaborative artistic input from various local dancers (Marruf, 2020). These origin details highlight how traditional arts are rarely the product of single authorship but instead evolve through collective and intergenerational engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, this cultural continuity aligns with the views of Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) on cultural transmission theory, which suggests that traditions are perpetuated through vertical (parent-to-child), oblique (older-to-younger generation), and horizontal (peer-based) learning. In the context of Gending Sriwijaya, all three modes are present: senior dancers instructing youth in art studios (oblique), formal education through curricular inclusion in higher education (vertical via academic lineage), and collaborative performance practices among peers (horizontal).

Furthermore, based on empirical observations during participant-based field research, the Gending Sriwijaya Dance is formally taught as part of the core curriculum in the Sendratasik (Art and Music Education) Program at Universitas PGRI Palembang. Educators and students who participated in this study affirmed that the dance promotes not only physical and artistic skills (wiraga, wirama, wirasa) but also fosters values such as discipline, cooperation, and cultural pride (Rudy, Interview Data, 2023). These findings support the argument that traditional performing arts function as dynamic pedagogical tools, not merely aesthetic presentations.

In summary, the conservation of Gending Sriwijaya through arts education reflects both a commitment to cultural sustainability and a practical application of educational theory. It showcases how the strategic integration of traditional art into formal and informal educational spaces can serve as a bridge between generations, thereby supporting national identity formation and cultural resilience.

### ***3.2 The Influence Education***

Traditional dance education, such as the Gending Sriwijaya Dance, functions as an effective medium for cultural transmission and character education from an early age. Dance, as a form of art, provides engaging, multisensory learning experiences that support child development across multiple domains. According to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983), artistic expressions such as dance help develop bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences simultaneously. Moreover, through Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), dance education is seen as a learning process that is socially constructed, relying on interaction with more capable others (such as dance instructors) to internalize cultural knowledge.



**Figure 1.** Nine Gending Dancers Sriwijaya

The Gending Sriwijaya Dance holds an important cultural status in Palembang, not only as a ceremonial performance but also as an educational tool. It is integrated into both formal and non-formal educational settings. Formally, it is taught in schools—both public and private—as part of extracurricular activities and local content curricula. At the tertiary level, it forms a core component of coursework in the Department of Art and Music Education (Sendratasik) at Universitas PGRI Palembang. Here, students are required to study the Gending Sriwijaya Dance under structured academic guidance. Based on documented interviews conducted with lecturers at Universitas PGRI Palembang (e.g., Elly Rudy, Jan 2023), this dance is part of the Palembang Traditional Dance course designed to instill cultural values and pedagogical skills.

The growing interest in traditional dance among younger generations can be observed through the high enrollment rates in the Sendratasik Department since its establishment. This suggests that traditional arts remain relevant and appealing when presented within meaningful educational frameworks. The active role of educational institutions in including traditional dance in curricula contributes significantly to the preservation and sustainability of this cultural heritage.

Dance education also plays a formative role in character development. In the context of traditional Indonesian dance, three core concepts are often emphasized: *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa*. According to Soedarsono (1999), *wiraga* refers to the physical execution of dance movements, helping learners develop bodily coordination and discipline. *Wirama* pertains to the dancer's ability to synchronize movements with musical rhythm, enhancing auditory and timing skills. *Wirasa* involves the expression of emotion and feeling within the dance, fostering emotional intelligence and empathy. When integrated, these elements create a holistic learning process that not only enhances artistic competence but also cultivates aesthetic sensitivity and emotional balance.

In educational settings, the Gending Sriwijaya Dance can serve as a platform for social development. Collaborative learning during dance practice supports the development of interpersonal skills such as cooperation, mutual respect, and solidarity. This aligns with Vygotsky's emphasis on the Zone of Proximal Development, wherein learners benefit from social interaction in mastering complex cultural tools.

Philosophically, the educational function of traditional dance aligns with the principles of Progressivism, a school of educational thought that views knowledge as dynamic and education as a medium for cultural renewal (Dewey, 1938). Progressivist education emphasizes learning through experience and adaptation to real-world contexts. In this light, the incorporation of Gending Sriwijaya into educational practice reflects not merely preservation but also transformation—an evolving cultural expression adapted by new generations to meet contemporary challenges.

Thus, traditional dance, and specifically the Gending Sriwijaya Dance, offers educational value beyond performance. It acts as a culturally rooted learning medium that promotes intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development, contributing meaningfully to the formation of well-rounded learners and culturally literate citizens.

### 3.3 The Progressive Education

The core aim of progressive education is to equip learners with practical abilities and competencies that enable them to adapt to an ever-evolving environment. This philosophy contrasts with traditional education models, which often position teachers as sole authorities and students as passive recipients. Instead, progressive education emphasizes the learner's active role, where prior knowledge, cultural context, and experience are recognized as essential components of the learning process. Teachers, in this view, function as facilitators—guiding students through exploration, discovery, and reflection.

In the Indonesian context, especially within the realm of art instruction—including traditional dance education such as Gending Sriwijaya—progressivism offers practical alignment. First, traditional dance instruction naturally fosters experiential and participatory learning. Students learn through movement, collaboration, repetition, and reflection, all of which are cornerstones of a progressive classroom. Second, art education in Indonesia often blends formal and non-formal learning environments (e.g., schools and dance studios), aligning with progressive principles that advocate for flexible and context-sensitive curricula.

Progressive education encourages the development of creativity, problem-solving skills, and cultural literacy. These are directly applicable in dance pedagogy, where students are not only expected to master movements but also understand the cultural narratives, values, and aesthetics embedded in the dance. In the case of Gending Sriwijaya, learners engage with the philosophical and ethical meanings behind the dance, including its associations with royal dignity, hospitality, and local identity. As students interpret these meanings and integrate them into their performances, they engage in higher-order thinking and reflection—key objectives of progressive learning.

John Dewey's educational philosophy is particularly relevant in this context. Dewey emphasized learning through doing and the importance of experience in education. According to Dewey (1934), art is not only a product but also a process that emerges from meaningful human interaction with the world. This view is highly compatible with how traditional dance is taught in Indonesia: as a lived experience rooted in community, emotion, and social participation. In this sense, incorporating Dewey's ideas into dance pedagogy in Indonesia legitimizes traditional dance not only as a cultural form but as an educational method.

While Plato's philosophy of mimesis suggests that art imitates reality and therefore holds a lower epistemological status, this view must be reconsidered within the framework of Indonesian traditional art. In his later dialogues, such as *Symposium*, Plato did acknowledge that artists could access deeper truths through inspiration. This perspective can support the idea that dance—especially traditional forms like Gending Sriwijaya—is more than imitation; it is a way to transmit cultural values, emotions, and communal identities. When students engage in dance not only to imitate but to internalize and reinterpret cultural narratives, they are participating in a reflective artistic process, thus aligning with progressive and even Platonic ideals of seeking truth and beauty.

Art education in Indonesia serves multiple roles: it fosters creativity, builds national and local identity, and cultivates social and moral values. The core components—such as creation, appreciation, presentation, and criticism—are taught through integrative and collaborative methods (Ardena & Fatimah, 2021; Muliadi et al., 2024). For instance, students in traditional dance classes work in groups to develop performance pieces, reflect on their cultural significance, and perform for audiences, often in community settings. These practices support progressive aims of student-centered, socially meaningful education.

In conclusion, progressive education and art instruction in Indonesia—particularly through traditional dance like Gending Sriwijaya—share foundational values. They both emphasize learning as a process of active engagement, cultural meaning-making, and personal growth. Integrating progressive principles into traditional art pedagogy ensures that cultural heritage is not only preserved but also experienced dynamically and reflectively by each generation of learners.

### 3.4 Gending Sriwijaya Dance: Movements, Symbols, and Semiotic Analysis

The Gending Sriwijaya Dance is a traditional dance originating from South Sumatra. It embodies spirituality, ecological awareness, and cultural heritage. Movement is the central medium, supported by symbols and properties that convey deeper meanings, which can be interpreted through semiotic analysis, particularly using Saussure's theory of the signifier (physical form) and signified (mental concept).

**Table 1.** Floor Pattern and Staging

No.	Movement	Description	Philosophical Meaning / Educational Value
1.	Worship Movement	Hands cupped, tiptoe, bowing posture.	Symbolizes reverence for the Creator; promotes humility and respect for divine power.
2.	Core Movement	Includes hand gestures, sowing flower motion, leaning body, kneeling, backward hands.	Represents grace, honor, and respect in welcoming guests or divine beings.
3.	Log-Falling Movement	Inspired by laying wood; mimics a movement of placing something gently.	Symbolizes ecological awareness and gratitude for nature; encourages ecological responsibility.
4.	Requesting Movement	Hands joined in front of the chest.	Reflects human dependence on the divine; teaches the value of prayer, hope, and surrender.
5.	Counter Current	Movement implies moving against a stream.	Represents respect for educators and the importance of moral guidance in social and spiritual life.
6.	<i>Siguntang Mahameru</i>	Referencing holy mountain (Mahameru); gestures reflect religious reverence.	Highlights spirituality, reflection, and the cycle of life (birth, living, returning to the Creator).
7.	Closing/Ward Off	Raising hands, bowing, final worship.	Symbolizes cleansing, gratitude, and closure; educationally valuable for teaching ritual discipline and gratitude.

**Table 2.** Dance Movements & Philosophical Meanings

Pattern	Description	Pattern
Straight Pattern	Dancers enter with a straight-line formation.	Straight Pattern
V-Shape Formation	Dancers later form a V-shaped pattern, with the main dancer at the center, symbolizing harmony and balance.	V-Shape Formation
Dancer Composition	13 dancers: 9 female dancers (symbolizing Batanghari Sembilan), 1 singer, and 3 male dancers (umbrella bearer and two spear bearers).	Dancer Composition

Using Saussure's semiotic theory, each dance property can be analyzed as a sign, consisting of:

- a. Signifier: the physical object.
- b. Signified: the meaning or concept associated with it.

**Table 3.** Dance Properties, Symbols, and Semiotic Interpretation

No.	Property (Signifier)	Form & Origin	Signified (Meaning)
1.	<i>Meranti</i> Shawl	Songket cloth tied at waist	Cultural identity; symbolizes the grace and elegance of Palembang nobility.
2.	Lotus Chest Cover	Velvet chest cover with beads	Despite not being a flower, symbolically represents purity, devotion, and loyalty; vertical stem = divine connection, horizontal leaves = social connection.
3.	Potpourri ( <i>Rampai</i> )	Garland of various flowers on dancer's back	Beauty, femininity, and blessings; a cultural homage to fertility and fragrance in tradition.
4.	<i>Sanggul Malang Bun</i>	Hair bun with flowers and <i>beringin</i> leaves	Symbol of maturity, femininity, and elegance; often associated with nobility.
5.	Shoulder Ornament ( <i>Kekek</i> )	Gold bird-like shapes on shoulders	Represents freedom, nobility, and elevated spiritual values.
6.	Coconut Bunch	Decorative piece of flowers and leaves	Emphasizes love and cooperation; aligns with the communal spirit of South Sumatran society.
7.	Pending (Belt)	Brass belt with animal/plant carvings	Signifies strength, protection, and continuity; geometric and natural motifs symbolize balance between humans and nature.
8.	Buffalo Necklace	Tiered golden necklace	Each layer reflects social hierarchy, cultural pride, and ancestral legacy.
9.	<i>Tanggai</i> (Finger Props)	Curved metal nails placed on fingers	Represents women's beauty, refinement, and artistic skill; signifies delicate gestures in courtly manners.
10.	<i>Tepak</i> (Betel Box)	Wooden box with silver containers, containing betel, lime, etc.	A symbol of hospitality and friendship; used in traditional ceremonies to show respect and welcome to guests.

**Table 4.** Saussurean Semiotic Model: Applied to Dance Symbolism

Saussure's Concept	Application in Gending Sriwijaya
Signifier	Visual properties (e.g., meranti shawl, lotus chest cover), movements (e.g., worship, log-falling).
Signified	Deeper meanings (e.g., spirituality, ecology, hospitality, morality, femininity).
Langue (Cultural System)	The structured set of traditional values and meanings embedded in Palembang's courtly and religious customs.
Parole (Performance)	The actual staging and dancing of Gending Sriwijaya in ceremonies, tourist events, and educational contexts.
Synchronic	How the dance is understood in contemporary Palembang society.
Diachronic	The evolution of its meanings from sacred ritual dances to modern representations in tourism and heritage preservation.
Syntagmatic	Combination of properties and movements in a sequence (e.g., worship + log-falling + requesting = narrative ritual).
Paradigmatic	Contrast with other traditional dances (e.g., Gending Sriwijaya vs. Gambyong Dance), highlighting choice of symbols.

**Table 5.** Educational Values & Implications

Aspect	Educational Value
Spiritual Education	Teaches reverence, humility, and gratitude through worship and requesting movements.
Cultural Literacy	Enhances understanding of local heritage, symbols, and court traditions.
Ecological Awareness	Through log-falling movement, reinforces value of protecting nature and sustainable living.
Moral Instruction	Encourages values like respect for teachers, social harmony, and ethical living.
Gender and Social Roles	Highlights femininity, social status, and communal cooperation, teaching about roles and decorum in society.
Semiotic Literacy	Develops ability to interpret symbols, fostering critical thinking and visual-cultural interpretation skills.

## Discussion

### Cultural Significance of Gending Sriwijaya Dance

In today's era of globalization, cultural conservation plays a crucial role in preserving a nation's identity and character. One such cultural expression is the Gending Sriwijaya Dance, a traditional performance from South Sumatra that serves not only as heritage passed down through generations but also as a symbol of hospitality and pride for the Palembang community. Elly Rudy (2023) explains that this dance is typically performed during traditional ceremonies, especially the *sekapur sirih* welcoming ritual, complete with ceremonial tools such as betel leaves, trays, prindon cloths, umbrellas, and traditional costumes—all of which reinforce the cultural identity of Palembang.

Philosophically, the dance carries deep spiritual and ecological meanings. Gestures of worship express reverence for the Creator, while wood-placing movements reflect the community's ecological awareness and commitment to environmental sustainability (Interview with Nungcik Ali Faisol, 2024; Ecology Society of America, 2021). Thus, the dance is not merely a visual spectacle but an embodiment of values, traditions, and historical consciousness.

### Educational Value and Character Development

Beyond its cultural symbolism, Gending Sriwijaya functions as a medium for character education. As noted by Giro (in Verulitasari, 2020), cultural values serve as behavioral guidelines. When integrated into arts education, this dance supports the cultivation of virtues such as religious devotion, tolerance, discipline, creativity, and patriotism. These values are imparted not only through the content of the dance but also through the learning process itself.

In formal settings, Gending Sriwijaya has been incorporated into university curricula. At Universitas PGRI Palembang, for example, the dance is a mandatory subject in the Sendratasik (Art and Drama Education) program (Interview with Elly Rudy, 2023). Through such instruction, students develop physical abilities (*wiraga*), musical sensitivity (*wirama*), and emotional expression (*wirasa*), which are essential for holistic personal growth.

### Pedagogical Practice and Social Learning

From a pedagogical perspective, teaching Gending Sriwijaya aligns with progressive education philosophies. Conlan (2019) and Nagao (2023) emphasize that educators should act as facilitators who encourage exploration and creativity rather than authoritarian figures. Learning traditional dance in collaborative environments—such as art studios or university classrooms—promotes social interaction, teamwork, and self-confidence among students.

Dance instruction also fosters a learning environment that values adaptation and creativity. Through shared practice and peer interaction, learners cultivate not only technical skills but also empathy, cultural pride, and civic responsibility.

Every gesture in the Gending Sriwijaya Dance is rich with symbolic meaning. Worship movements express spiritual humility; pleading gestures reflect human dependence on divine grace during adversity; and the wood-placing motion serves as a symbolic message of environmental stewardship (Lubchenco, 2019; Dunlap, 2014). The choreography forms a “V” shape on the dance floor, symbolizing the Batanghari Sembilan River, a geographical and cultural icon in South Sumatra (Interview with Elly Rudy, 2023).

These layered meanings connect with Plato’s theory of mimesis, where art serves as a reflection of ideal values and moral principles (McCarthy, O’Flaherty, & Downey, 2019). As such, Gending Sriwijaya is not only an aesthetic tradition but also a moral-educational force.

The integration of Gending Sriwijaya Dance into arts education provides a powerful model for cultural preservation and character development. Through a blend of spiritual, social, ecological, and cultural values, this traditional art form contributes meaningfully to student identity formation and national cultural resilience.

Aligned with the philosophy of progressive education (Ardena & Fatimah, 2021; Muliadi et al., 2024), Gending Sriwijaya serves as a dynamic learning tool that fosters creativity and moral awareness while keeping local heritage alive in the classroom. Therefore, this dance should be positioned not only as a ceremonial tradition but also as a pedagogical asset essential for nurturing culturally rooted and socially responsible future generations.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The conservation of the Gending Sriwijaya Dance is crucial for preserving cultural heritage and fostering character education through arts learning. This traditional dance serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a medium for imparting important values such as discipline, creativity, tolerance, and patriotism, which are essential in shaping students' character. By integrating the dance into educational curricula, learners develop not only physical skills but also a deeper appreciation for their cultural identity and social ethics. The rich philosophical meanings embedded in the dance movements further enhance students' understanding of cultural symbolism and moral values.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the emotional and social impacts of Gending Sriwijaya Dance education on students' empathy, cooperation, and cultural pride. Comparative studies with other regional dances, such as Tari Saman from Aceh or Tari Piring from West Sumatra, may help highlight the unique educational contributions of each tradition and provide broader perspectives on character-building through traditional arts.

In terms of policy implications, schools and cultural institutions should consider integrating Gending Sriwijaya into local content curricula, supported by teacher training programs that focus on both dance technique and the transmission of cultural values. Community partnerships, particularly with local artists, cultural centers, and traditional dance groups, are essential to ensure authenticity, sustainability, and active student engagement. Policymakers are encouraged to support these initiatives through funding, curriculum guidelines, and public awareness campaigns to reinforce the role of traditional arts in 21st-century education.

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