

The Transformation of the *Cupak Gerantang* Folklore of Lombok into Child-Friendly Digital Comic Characters with Moral Values

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ABSTRACT

Cupak Gerantang is a traditional folktale from Lombok that tells the story of two young men, *Cupak* and *Gerantang*. The narrative emphasizes the importance of avoiding negative traits and practicing virtuous behavior, making it a potential medium for promoting character education from an early age. However, the folklore faces several limitations, including limited audience reach, lengthy performance duration, use of local language, and visualizations that are less suitable for children. To address these challenges, this study aimed to adapt the *Cupak Gerantang* folktale into child-friendly digital comic characters. The research employed a design-based approach by adapting the vehicle transfer model, which consists of four stages: (1) ekranization, transferring characters and moral values into narrative and visual designs; (2) shrinkage, simplifying story elements and adjusting visuals to suit children; (3) addition and variation, modifying the storyline, setting, characterization, and visual style to enhance appeal; and (4) limited trials with 15 elementary school students. The trial results showed that most students responded positively to the illustrations, color schemes, and plot, confirming that the moral values had been effectively conveyed, and they expressed interest in reading the complete digital comic version. These findings suggest that the development of digital comic adaptations of characters from local folklore has potential as an innovative educational medium to support character education and foster appreciation for local wisdom in the digital age.

KEYWORDS

Character Education
Child-Friendly Media
Cupak Gerantang
Digital Comics
Folklore Adaptation

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia possesses a rich diversity of cultures spread across its regions, as reflected in the abundance of intangible cultural heritage, which reached 1,941 objects by 2023 (Sambodo & Rizky, 2023). This number highlights the wealth of local wisdom and the uniqueness of each region (Niman, 2019). These diverse art forms serve multiple functions, not only as media of aesthetic expression but also as representations of values and moral messages (Ihsani dkk., 2023).

One example is the folklore of *Cupak Gerantang*, a traditional tale that recounts a past story about the effort to rescue a princess kidnapped by a giant (Rahmani dkk., 2021). The story revolves around two young men, portrayed as brothers, named *Cupak* and *Gerantang*. Each character embodies contrasting traits. *Cupak* is depicted as large-bodied, fearsome in appearance, and representing various negative human qualities. In contrast, *Gerantang* is described as handsome, knightly, and embodying noble human virtues (Huda, 2021).

The story of *Cupak Gerantang* conveys the lesson of avoiding negative traits and striving to always behave virtuously, as past actions inevitably affect the future (Taulabi & Mustofa, 2019). The moral values embedded in *Cupak Gerantang* align with the objectives of Indonesia's National

Education, particularly the development of character and the strengthening of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile), especially in the dimensions of noble character and independence (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). Within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum), these values can be integrated across various subjects, such as Indonesian language (folktales), Civic Education (*PPKn*), or the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (*Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* or *P5*). Moreover, they hold potential for interdisciplinary development according to instructional needs (Rizkika et al., 2023; Zain & Rahmatih, 2024; Yanti, 2024; Amrullah & Istiningih, 2025).

Furthermore, recent years have witnessed an increasing number of negative behaviors among young people (Gumilang, 2021), ranging from seemingly minor actions such as mocking, disturbing peers, skipping classes, and showing disrespect to teachers, to more serious misconducts such as bullying and even taking another person's life (Revalina dkk., 2023). This phenomenon reflects the degradation of moral values among the younger generation. In this context, the moral values embedded in the *Cupak Gerantang* story are highly relevant to be conveyed to students in schools as part of early character education aimed at nurturing a generation with noble character.

Therefore, the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore holds significant potential to be developed as teaching material or as an innovative and contextual learning medium. Its transformation into a digital format is not merely a process of translation but rather a pedagogical adaptation tailored to the needs of modern learning environments. To achieve this goal, the moral values in *Cupak Gerantang* need to be carefully packaged so that they can effectively reach younger audiences, particularly school students.

Although rich in moral values, the effectiveness of *Cupak Gerantang* folklore as a medium for character education is constrained by the limitations of its traditional modes of delivery. The research from (Rahmani dkk., 2021) revealed that this folklore is commonly presented through theatrical performances with restricted audience reach and lengthy durations, making it less relevant for younger generations in the digital era. A complete performance, from the opening scene to the climax, usually takes 5–6 hours, which easily leads to boredom, particularly among children. Moreover, the use of refined Sasak language (*bahasa Sasak alus*) makes the performance difficult to understand for all audiences, resulting in the story's intended messages being less effectively conveyed. In addition, the portrayal of Cupak as a frightening figure and the inclusion of violent scenes in traditional dramatizations are considered inappropriate for children without proper guidance.

One solution to address these limitations is through the renewal of media, a process referred to as *alih wahana* or transmediation (Prasetya dkk., 2023). *Alih wahana* refers to the activity or process of transforming, modifying, or transferring a form of art into another medium (Sungkowati, 2022). In this case, the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore, laden with moral values, is transmediated into a medium that can better engage younger audiences, remain relevant to contemporary contexts, and more effectively deliver its moral messages.

Based on these characteristics and needs, digital comics are chosen as the medium of transmediation. A digital comic is a medium consisting of text and images that convey a narrative or specific message, presented in a digital format accessible through electronic devices (Syahmi dkk., 2022) (Sonja Imanda dkk., 2024). Digital comics have wide reach and are highly suitable as a medium for disseminating information (Farhan Saefudin Wahid dkk., 2021).

Furthermore, unlike traditional theatrical performances that take 5–6 hours, digital comics can be consumed within minutes. In contrast to the use of refined Sasak language, which is difficult to understand for many audiences, digital comics can employ Indonesian language that is easily comprehensible, complemented with a glossary for local vocabulary. In addition, frightening character depictions can be redesigned into more child-friendly illustrations without losing the essence of their antagonistic traits.

Based on the literature review, studies on the moral values contained in the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore and research on the development of digital comics as educational media have been widely conducted, yet both areas have largely evolved separately (Zain & Rahmatih, 2024; Mawardi et al., 2021; Rahmadin et al., 2024; Tahir & Tahir, 2024). The main research gap lies in the absence of a comprehensive integration between the two: folklore studies tend to emphasize moral content

without offering effective media solutions, while digital comic studies generally rely on generic content without incorporating the richness of specific local wisdom. Although several other folktales, such as *Timun Mas*, *Malin Kundang*, *Putri Mandalika*, *Lahilote*, and traditions such as *Sekujang* from Pagar Seluma Barat Village Nindyana & Aryanto, 2022; Navisha, 2022; Pobela et al., 2025; Amelia & Purwaningsih, 2021; Mukti et al., 2024; Amrullah & Istiningsih, 2025) have been transmediated into digital formats, no digital comic development has yet been found that specifically adapts the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore. In fact, this folklore, which contains profound philosophical reflections on the dichotomy of good and evil within human nature, has not received adequate attention in the form of educational digital media. To bridge this gap, the present study proposes the transmediation of *Cupak Gerantang* into the development of digital comic characters.

The novelty of this study does not merely lie in the final product but in the pedagogical adaptation approach that transforms traditional values into formats aligned with the learning characteristics of Generation Z. This innovation also represents an interdisciplinary integration of cultural studies, visual communication design, and educational technology, making it highly potential for implementation within the framework of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* as innovative teaching material that supports the strengthening of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*. Thus, this study not only fills the gap in digital media for the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore but also offers a contextual and measurable solution to address moral degradation through the utilization of digital-based local wisdom specifically designed for 21st-century learning needs.

The effectiveness of digital comics as educational media has been demonstrated in various studies, such as their use as a campaign tool for drug prevention among adolescents in Salatiga City (Wicaksono dkk., 2022) and through the discovery learning method to reduce bullying cases in Gorontalo City (Suleman dkk., 2023). Other research has also shown that most communities, particularly elementary school students, exhibit a high interest in comic media (Murti dkk., 2020). In this context, the transmediation of *Cupak Gerantang* into the development of digital comic characters is not only intended to increase young people's awareness of cultural diversity in their environment but also serves as a preventive measure against cultural degradation caused by modernization and technological development (Aisyah Syamsuddin, 2021). Therefore, this study focuses on the development of educational, engaging, and child-friendly digital comic characters. The expected implication of this development is its potential as an alternative medium for character education that appeals to the younger generation, while simultaneously contributing to the preservation and popularization of local wisdom in the digital era.

METHOD

The transmediation process of the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into child-friendly digital comic characters was carried out using a design approach. This method adapts the transmediation model, which aims to produce a creative work in the form of a folklore-based digital comic. The design stages in the transmediation model include ecranisation, reduction, addition, and variation (Afdhal & Zahrah, 2023). In this study, the model was modified by incorporating a validation stage to obtain information regarding the feasibility of the resulting product. The design stages in this study are as follows:

1. Ecranisation

Ecranisation refers to the process of transferring an artwork into another form of art or from one medium to another (Kurli dkk., 2020). In this study, ecranisation was carried out by transforming the characters in the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into child-friendly digital comic characters. This process not only shifts the medium but also adjusts the visual style and narrative to align with learning needs and the psychological development of children.

2. Reduction

Reduction is the process of eliminating or trimming elements of an artwork that is being transmediated, with the intention of refining and setting aside aspects deemed unnecessary (Rotama dkk., 2024). In the context of this study, reduction was carried out by omitting certain parts of the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore, such as removing the frightening aspects of the character Cupak. This effort aimed to make the story more suitable for a child audience while preserving the moral values

embedded within it.

3. Addition and Variation

Addition and variation are stages carried out to enrich the transmediation results so that they better suit the needs of the audience (Widiyastantia, 2024). In this study, additions were made to the story elements, settings, and character visualizations to align with the context of children's learning. Variations in character visualization were realized through the use of more appealing colors and child-friendly character designs, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of the work while also facilitating the delivery of moral messages within the *Cupak Gerantang* story.

4. Limited Trial

The limited trial was conducted to determine the quality of the product as well as to obtain feedback from users. In this study, the limited trial focused on the assessment of the developed digital comic characters and the feasibility of the story synopsis. The trial involved 15 students from Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) 1 Jenggala, North Lombok Regency, who were selected as a small group to provide initial responses. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire as the instrument. The blueprint of the instrument can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Instrument Blueprint

Aspect	Indicator	Item Number
Character Design	Suitability with story characters, creativity/uniqueness, character expression	1–5
Visual Quality	Colors & graphic details, neatness/consistency, overall aesthetics	6–9
Synopsis Clarity	Clarity of plot, relevance of story content, moral message	10–13
Overall Response	Understanding & impression of moral message delivery	14–15

The instrument covers three main aspects, namely character design, visual quality, and the clarity of the synopsis in conveying the moral values embedded in the *Cupak Gerantang* story. The measurement employed a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where a score of 1 represents the option “strongly disagree,” while a score of 5 represents “strongly agree”.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The adaptation process of the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore was carried out systematically to develop child-friendly digital comic characters. Each stage was designed to ensure that the moral values of the story were preserved while being easily understood through engaging visual forms, thereby representing local cultural values creatively and supporting the achievement of character education in elementary schools. The following section outlines the stages of adapting the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into digital comics.

1. Ecranisation

In this study, the ecranisation process focuses on transforming the moral messages of the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into the visual narrative of a digital comic. The first stage is the concretization of the moral message, in which the folklore's moral values are elaborated into a coherent storyline that is easy for children to understand. The result is a comic synopsis that preserves the essence of the original story while presenting it in a simplified form, as follows:

“In a kingdom on the island of Lombok, there lived a beautiful and kind-hearted princess. One day, the princess was kidnapped by an evil giant. The giant hid her inside a dark and dangerous cave. Upon hearing the news, two brave friends named Cupak and Gerantang were determined to rescue the princess. Together, they set out to find the cave where the giant was hiding.

When they arrived at the cave, Cupak plotted to trick Gerantang into entering first and

facing the giant alone. But Gerantang was truly courageous. He went into the cave and fearlessly fought the giant. The battle was fierce, but Gerantang fought valiantly and finally defeated the giant. He then rescued the princess from the cave.

Afterward, Cupak appeared and lied, claiming that he was the one who had saved the princess. He even tried to kill Gerantang so that no one would discover the truth. Fortunately, the princess witnessed everything and immediately told her father, the king, about what had really happened.

The king was furious with Cupak for his betrayal and dishonesty. He rewarded Gerantang greatly as a token of gratitude for his bravery. Gerantang then married the princess, and they lived happily together. Meanwhile, Cupak was banished from the kingdom as a lesson never to commit evil again."

The second stage was character design, which the main characters (Cupak, Gerantang, the Princess, and the Giant) were illustrated with traits and visual representations that reinforce the delivery of moral values. Cupak is depicted as a humorous yet antagonistic figure who embodies negative traits such as greed and dishonesty, while Gerantang represents bravery and honesty.

2. Reduction

The reduction process was carried out to simplify the story and visuals so they would be more suitable for children. The frightening elements of Cupak and the Giant were removed and replaced with visuals that were more humorous and appealing, without eliminating their antagonistic essence. The storyline was also simplified by cutting out less relevant parts, such as detailed descriptions of the kidnapping by the giant at the beginning of the story, so that the focus remained on the core moral conflict.

3. Addition and Variation

The stage of addition and variation was applied to enhance both the appeal and the clarity of the message. The language was simplified to ensure it was easily understood by children, while the visualization was made more interactive by enriching character expressions, using bright colors, and simplifying clothing attributes to avoid sacred or overly dramatic impressions. The scenes were also developed to emphasize more clearly the contrast between *Cupak's* negative behavior and Gerantang's positive qualities.

The final outcome of all the adaptation stages in this study was the design of *Cupak Gerantang's* digital comic characters, ready to be tested with users, namely elementary school students. The character design process was carried out using Procreate and Corel Draw 2024. The characters that were developed are presented in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Cupak



Figure 1. Cupak's Character Design

Cupak was portrayed as a character with negative traits, such as being deceitful, lazy, greedy, and self-centered. He often took advantage of others without any willingness to work hard. At one point, Cupak even betrayed his own friend for personal gain. As a consequence of these bad behaviors, he eventually received a fitting punishment.

Gerantang



Figure 2. Gerantang's Character Design

Gerantang was depicted as a brave, honest, and hardworking character. He consistently helped others with sincerity and possessed the courage to face various dangers for the common good. Gerantang's character represented a loyal friend as well as a true heroic figure.

Raksasa



Figure 3. The Giant's Character Design

The Giant was depicted as a large creature with extraordinary strength. He kidnapped the princess and hid her inside a cave. In the story, the Giant served as the main enemy that Cupak and Gerantang had to confront.

Putri



Figure 3. The Princess's Character Design

The princess was depicted as a beautiful, kind-hearted, and courageous figure. She was kidnapped by the Giant but was eventually rescued by Gerantang. In addition, the princess demonstrated her bravery by telling her father the truth about what had actually happened.

4. Limited Trial

To obtain initial feedback on the digital comic adapted from the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore, a limited trial was conducted with 15 fifth-grade students from SDN 1 Jenggala, North Lombok Regency. The purpose of this trial was to assess the character designs as well as the extent to which the synopsis and visualizations conveyed the embedded moral values. The students were asked to read the synopsis of the digital comic, review the character designs, and then complete a

questionnaire regarding the presented product. The results of the limited trial indicated that:

- a. A total of 14 students (93%) stated that the characters in the comic were interesting and easy to recognize. They particularly appreciated the humorous visualization of Cupak as well as the handsome and valiant depiction of Gerantang. The use of bright colors and a light illustration style was also considered enjoyable.
- b. A total of 12 students (87%) understood the moral messages conveyed, namely the importance of being honest, avoiding selfishness, and having the courage to help others. This finding demonstrates that the simplification of the storyline did not reduce the effectiveness of conveying moral values.
- c. A total of 13 students (87%) expressed their desire to read the complete *Cupak Gerantang* story in the form of a digital comic rather than only the synopsis. They noted that learning values through visual media was more enjoyable compared to reading lengthy texts or watching long-duration traditional performances.
- d. From the open-ended responses, the majority of students mentioned Gerantang as their favorite character due to his good traits and appealing appearance. Conversely, Cupak was still recognized as a character with negative behavior, but remained likable because he was portrayed in a humorous and non-threatening way.

Overall, the results of the limited trial indicated that the transformation of the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into character and digital comic designs successfully enhanced both the appeal and the comprehension of moral values among elementary school students. This prototype medium was considered relevant to the characteristics of today's younger generation, who prefer visual, fast-paced, and interactive approaches. These findings further emphasize the importance of follow-up research to develop the *Cupak Gerantang* character designs into a complete digital comic that can be readily used as an instructional medium.

In terms of novelty, this study not only focused on adapting folklore into digital comic character designs but also highlighted innovation through the integration of local wisdom values that are relevant to character education (Nojeng et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022). *Cupak Gerantang* folklore was selected because of its strong relevance to the values of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, particularly noble character and cooperation (Indirayani et al., 2023; Nur'aeni et al., 2023). The transformation process was designed to strengthen the internalization of moral values through media suited to the digital generation's learning preferences. The comic character designs were developed with reference to Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Paivio's dual coding principle, which posits that the combination of text and visuals enhances both comprehension and retention of moral messages (Mahartini & Tristananda, 2025; Nasution et al., 2025). The contextual adaptations, such as the removal of frightening elements and the simplification of the storyline, also demonstrated sensitivity to the psychological needs of children without diminishing the integrity of the original story.

The novelty of this study is reinforced by the development of the *Cupak Gerantang* digital comic characters, which were designed through the integration of local wisdom values and character education. This design has the potential to serve as an innovative learning medium that can be flexibly adapted into various subjects and curriculum activities. Such integration is relevant for supporting value-based learning, language, and literacy, while also offering possibilities for cross-disciplinary applications according to the needs of educational institutions. Beyond merely delivering moral values in a contextual and engaging manner, the digital comic design also holds the potential to enhance digital literacy and revitalize local wisdom for younger generations who are increasingly disconnected from their cultural roots (Aini et al., 2025; Khoiron & Wulandari, 2024). The limited trial results further confirmed the effectiveness of this digital comic in improving students' understanding of moral values, while also indicating its potential as a preventive strategy to reduce symptoms of moral degradation and negative behaviors at school, such as bullying and dishonesty (Herliani et al., 2024; Utari et al., 2025; Alwina, 2025).

These findings also address the gap identified in previous studies. Although the adaptation of Indonesian folklore into digital comics has been widely explored, no research to date has specifically focused on developing digital comics based on the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore (Zain & Rahmatih,

2024;Mawardi et al., 2021;Rahmadin et al., 2024). Most earlier studies have tended to highlight more popular folktales such as *Timun Mas*, *Malin Kundang*, or *Putri Mandalika* (Nindyana & Aryanto, 2022;Navisha, 2022; Amrullah & Istiningsih, 2025) without addressing the potential of *Cupak Gerantang*, which is rich in moral values. Furthermore, previous research has generally emphasized the broader aspect of folktale transformation, thereby leaving room for studies that highlight the development of digital comic characters as a potential medium for character education and the preservation of local wisdom, while also laying the groundwork for empirical trials with students at the next stage.

CONCLUSION

The process of adapting the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into digital comic form was carried out through several stages: (1) ekranisasi, namely the transfer of characters and moral messages into child-friendly digital comic characters; (2) reduction, which involved simplifying story elements that were less suitable for children; (3) addition and variation, in the form of modifications to the storyline, setting, characterization, and visual design to make it more engaging; and (4) a limited trial involving 15 elementary school students as an initial stage of product evaluation, focusing on illustrations, color selection, storyline, and the alignment of moral messages with learning objectives. The results indicated that most students gave positive responses to the comic character design, suggesting that the developed characters and illustrations were appealing and communicative. Thus, this study confirms that the adaptation of the *Cupak Gerantang* folklore into digital comic media can visually represent moral values and has the potential to serve as an alternative learning resource to support character education in elementary schools.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations, as the trial only involved 15 students from a single school and the instrument used assessed only comprehension, without evaluating behavioral change. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop a more complete version of the digital comic, test its effectiveness through a pretest–posttest design, and explore the integration of this medium into innovative learning models such as project-based learning. Further development, this folklore-based digital comic has the potential to be more widely implemented as an innovative medium for strengthening character education rooted in local wisdom.

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