



Preservation of Local Wisdom in the Craft of Mendong Mats Passed Down through Generations in Blayu Village, Wajak District, Malang Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the informal learning process involved in making mendong mats in Blayu Village, Wajak District, Malang Regency. It specifically examines how learning is imparted by sources of knowledge to learners as a reference for this research. This study uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic research type. Data for this research were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data collected reveal the informal learning process of mendong mat crafting conducted by information sources and learners passed down from generation to generation, as well as the stages of mendong mat making from start to finish. The results of the study indicate that the informal learning process is carried out by the people of Blayu Village from generation to generation. This is done to ensure that the local wisdom embodied in mendong mat crafting, which is a distinctive feature of Blayu Village, remains preserved. Additionally, according to mendong mat weavers, who are mostly housewives, this weaving activity is suitable for housewives because, despite engaging in weaving, they can still perform other household chores. Based on the research and discussions conducted, it can be concluded that the informal learning process of mendong mat crafting occurs through four stages: 1) Observation Stage, 2) Participation Stage in the making of mendong mats, 3) Trial Stage, and 4) Independent Crafting Stage. The informal learning of mendong mat crafting is passed down through generations in Blayu Village, representing a form of local wisdom preservation that will continue to be maintained and passed on to future generations. Based on the results of the research, the researcher suggests that mendong mat weavers continue to preserve local wisdom by providing informal learning not only to their descendants but also to other interested individuals. Future researchers are encouraged to use this study as a reference and explore broader and more interesting topics, as well as delve deeper into the local wisdom of mendong mat crafting.

Keywords: Parenting Competency, Early Childhood, and Taman Posyandu

1. Introduction

One of the villages that still preserves the craft of mendong mats in the Wajak District is Blayu Village in Malang Regency. Blayu Village is known for its dense population, with most residents working as farmers and mendong weavers. This village has been renowned for generations as a center for mendong mat weaving, with the craft being passed down from their ancestors.

The craft of mendong mats is a local wisdom that is still preserved by the people of Blayu Village as a daily livelihood. There are two types of crafts produced by the community of Blayu Village: mendong mat weaving and mendong tampar weaving. However, the majority of the population focuses on making mendong mats. According to the 2024 population census data, there are 54 female mendong mat weavers in Blayu

Village, while there are 11 female mendong tampar weavers and 14 male mendong mat weavers. The process of making mendong mats involves several stages: Sorting: The mendong is sorted first, Drying: After sorting, the mendong is dried for about 1-3 days until it is completely dry and ready for dyeing. Drying time is affected by weather; sunny conditions can speed up the process, Dyeing: During dyeing, the mendong is treated with bright colors like green, red, and purple, which make the mats distinctive. After dyeing, the mendong is dried again for another 1-3 days, depending on the weather, Weaving: Once these stages are completed, the mendong is ready to be woven using weaving tools.

The process of weaving mendong is particularly interesting for research. Mendong weaving is typically carried out by women, ranging from the young to the elderly. In a family, it is common for women to choose weaving as a traditional occupation, passed down through generations. This begins with the grandmother (neneh) who first learned to weave mendong and then teaches the second generation, typically the mother. The mother, in turn, teaches her children to weave mendong, enabling them to assist in earning a livelihood for the family.

The process of passing down the mendong weaving tradition through generations falls under informal education. According to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Chapter I, Article 1, Paragraph 13, informal education refers to family and community-based learning activities carried out independently (Darlis, 2017).

The informal learning process carried out by a mendong mat weaver, which will later be passed on to their children, involves involving them in the work. Initially, the weaver makes mendong mats daily while the child observes repeatedly. The weaver then invites the child to assist in various stages of mat production, from sorting quality mendong that meets the standards, to drying, dyeing, and weaving.

By involving the child in these activities, such as helping their mother (the weaver) every day, the child engages in informal learning. This hands-on experience allows the child to eventually create mendong mats independently. When the child reaches the point of being able to make mendong mats on their own, the informal learning process led by the mother (the weaver) can be considered successful, as the child has acquired the skills to craft mendong mats independently.

Based on the background presented, the researcher is highly interested in discussing and examining the process of making mendong mats due to the unique aspects of the preservation of this craft, which is passed down through generations in Blayu Village. This process involves teaching the next generation (the weaver's children) until they can independently create mendong mats and continue the craft from their mothers. Additionally, the researcher is also intrigued by understanding why the people of Blayu Village continue to choose to preserve the local wisdom of mendong mat weaving as their daily livelihood.

2. Method

The research employs a qualitative approach. According to Moleong (2012) as cited in (Lukman, 2021), qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by subjects, such as behaviors and actions. This study uses an ethnographic approach, as described by Iskandar (2008) and cited in (Sukadari et al., 2015). Ethnography is used to understand and describe cultures and perspectives, requiring a detailed account of individual

behaviors and interactions within the studied community, while adopting the behaviors and perspectives of the community being researched.

Data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis is conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity is ensured through triangulation techniques. Data triangulation combines various types of data and sources. In this study, both source triangulation and method/technique triangulation are employed.

3. Results and Discussion

Blayu Village is known as a region for mendong mat weaving, a skill passed down from ancestors to ensure the preservation of local wisdom. This preservation is achieved through informal learning. According to Minarti (2014) as cited in (Patimah et al., 2020) informal education is lifelong learning aimed at acquiring values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills from everyday life experiences. Similarly, the preservation of mendong mats in Blayu Village, Wajak District, relies on learning sources gained from daily life experiences.

Initially, mendong was woven by hand, but over time, the community adopted a weaving tool called a *gejlekan* to speed up the production of mendong mats. In Blayu Village, the tradition of making mendong mats has been passed down through generations. When a mendong mat weaver produces mats, they teach and pass on their skills to their children or the next generation.

In Blayu Village, particularly among the women who predominantly weave mendong mats, the choice of this occupation is driven by its suitability for housewives. Weaving can be done at home with flexible working hours, allowing them to manage household tasks and childcare simultaneously. Additionally, weaving mendong is a hereditary craft that needs to be preserved. This aligns with (Wulandari, 2019) view that preserving local wisdom and cultural practices can be achieved through the transfer of knowledge.

Before starting the production of mendong mats, weavers must prepare the necessary materials and tools. The materials include mendong plants, threads, and dyes, while the tools are scissors, a *sekoci*, and a *gejlekan* (weaving tool). The process of making mendong mats involves the following steps: 1) Preparation: Gather materials and tools such as mendong, thread, dye, scissors, a *sekoci*, and measuring tools, 2) Drying: Dry the mendong plants, 3) Thread Installation: Attach the thread to the weaving tool or *gejlekan*. 4) Dyeing: Cook the mendong in a pot to dye it. 5) Second 6) Drying: Dry the dyed mendong for 1-3 days, depending on the weather. 7) Washing: Rinse the dried mendong to soften it, making it easier to weave. 8) Weaving: Weave the mendong into mats. 9) Cutting: Cut the finished mat from the threads connected to the weaving tool Finishing: Trim the edges of the mat to ensure a neat appearance.

The following are the steps in weaving mendong mats: 1) Threading: Arrange the threads into the *gun* and *selang*, ensuring they match. The *gun* has two parts— front and back—that separate the threads into top and bottom sections for inserting the mendong. 2) Aligning Threads: Pull the threads, already placed in the weaving tool, towards the *gir* and align them. 3) Preparing Mendong: Place the prepared mendong into the *sekoci*, a bamboo tool used to insert the mendong into the weaving setup. 4) Weaving: Insert the mendong into the gaps between the threads using the *sekoci*, repeating this process. 5) Measuring and

Rolling: Once the mat reaches about 50 cm (or 1 ukur), roll it towards the gir. Measure the length of the mendong using a pre-provided cord. 6) Cutting: When the mat reaches 12 ukur, cut it to complete the weaving process.

In transferring knowledge, the source of learning must involve learners in the process of weaving mendong mats. The source of learning plays a crucial role in this process, providing education through repetitive demonstrations over an extended period. This involves practical instruction starting with simpler tasks such as drying mendong, helping with dyeing, arranging threads on the weaving tool, and progressing to the more complex weaving process. A source of learning can be considered successful when learners are able to independently create mendong mats.

In the process of learning to make mendong mats, learners inevitably face challenges and difficulties. One major difficulty arises during the thread connection stage on the weaving tool or *gejlekan*. This stage is the most complex compared to the others, as it requires precision and patience. Additionally, learners encounter issues when connecting the threads to the *gejlekan* or weaving tool. Another challenging stage is the dyeing process. This step is critical as it determines the final color of the mats. The complexity arises from the need to carefully manage the color mixture and ensure even dye absorption. Weavers must continuously stir the mendong in the pot to achieve a uniform color distribution. The dyeing process is also time-consuming, adding to the overall difficulty.

The informal learning involved in the preservation of mendong mat making in Blayu Village has been passed down from ancestors to the current generation. This practice represents a form of cultural preservation, ensuring that the local wisdom which characterizes Blayu Village remains intact. According to mantri, (2021) local wisdom within a community is an adaptation inherited from ancestors over long periods, influenced by the surrounding environment or living conditions.

The craft of mendong weaving will continue to be passed down to the children and grandchildren of the Blayu Village community, as it is a local wisdom that defines the village's identity. According to Quaritch W, as cited in (Dewi & Purnawati, 2013), local wisdom encompasses cultural elements derived from human life experiences. This aligns with the activities of the Blayu Village community, who are dedicated to preserving a form of local wisdom that originates from experience and skills passed down to successive generations.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion, it can be concluded that Blayu Village is a center for mendong mat production, where the majority of the community, especially housewives, work as weavers. The craft of making mendong mats is a hereditary skill passed down from ancestors and represents local wisdom preserved by the Blayu Village community. Generally, this skill is acquired from ancestors, with mothers teaching the art of mendong mat weaving through informal learning to the next generation (their children). This practice is maintained to preserve the local wisdom that contributes to the uniqueness of Blayu Village. Additionally, the choice of housewives to engage in mendong mat weaving is influenced by the fact that it is a traditional activity that can be performed at home, allowing them to manage household responsibilities while working.

The craft of making mendong mats in Blayu Village has been passed down through generations. The process is extensive, involving preparation, weaving, and finishing the completed mats. In the informal learning process, skilled weavers (mothers) act as sources of knowledge and instruction for learners (children). The role of the weaver includes being a source of learning, serving as a model, and providing guidance throughout the learning process.

Learning to make mendong mats does not require specific skills but rather a willingness to learn and patience. The informal learning stages are as follows: 1) Observation: Learners watch the weaver during the mat weaving process. 2) Participation: Learners assist the weaver with tasks, starting with simpler activities. 3) Practice: Learners, having observed and participated, attempt to create mendong mats on their own. 4) Independent Production: Learners are expected to make mendong mats independently without assistance.

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