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Carok as Self-Esteem: Korsa in the Philosophy and Ethics of Nusantara Culture

Harry Yulianto[1]
Name Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi YPUP, Indonesia
email: harryyulianto.stieypup@email.com[1]

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Abstract

Carok is examined as a manifestation of self-esteem in Madurese society through the lens of Nusantara cultural philosophy and ethics, with particular focus on the value of korsa (courage). A qualitative descriptive design based on literature study was employed by analyzing scholarly texts on Madurese tradition, cultural philosophy, and Nusantara ethical systems. Hermeneutic interpretation indicates that korsa is not merely physical bravery but a structured moral force that integrates self-esteem (ajhâr) and shame (lebbher) within a relational ethical system. Within this framework, korsa operates as an ethical response activated when honor is threatened and conventional mechanisms of restoration are no longer effective. Carok emerges as the most extreme expression of korsa when restorative pathways fail to reestablish social dignity, showing that violence is culturally constructed as a last moral resort rather than irrational action. The findings demonstrate that the logic of carok is coherent within Madurese ethical reasoning, while contrasting sharply with state legal ethics that prioritize universal non-violence principles. Therefore, conflict prevention policies need to transform korsa into constructive forms of expression without erasing its cultural and philosophical foundations.

Keywords: *Carok, Cultural Philosophy, Korsa, Madurese Society, Nusantara Ethics.*

INTRODUCTION

Madurese society is situated within a broader global academic shift that increasingly interrogates the relationship between honor-based cultural systems, violence, and moral reasoning in non-Western epistemologies, particularly in the context of decolonial and cultural-philosophical studies that seek to reposition indigenous ethical systems as legitimate frameworks of knowledge production (Yulianto, 2023). Contemporary scholarship in social humanities has emphasized that cultural practices traditionally categorized as violence must also be understood through their embedded symbolic, religious, and moral logics, especially when such practices are sustained by collective value systems that structure social identity and ethical responsibility (Latief, 2018). Within this global discourse, Nusantara cultural philosophy has gained scholarly relevance as an alternative interpretive paradigm that resists reductionist legalistic readings of indigenous practices by foregrounding localized moral ontologies and lived ethical reasoning (Shobiroh et al., 2023). Carok, as a culturally situated phenomenon in Madura, therefore becomes a critical site for examining how honor, self-esteem, and moral courage are constructed within a society where dignity is collectively and territorially defined (Latief, 2015). This positioning situates the present study within an interdisciplinary landscape that integrates philosophy, anthropology, and educational ethics to understand culturally grounded moral action.

Existing studies on carok have predominantly framed the phenomenon through legal, anthropological, and criminological perspectives that emphasize its function as a culturally regulated mechanism of social equilibrium and masculine honor preservation (Aryanda & Masyhar, 2026). Ethnographic accounts demonstrate that carok is not merely an act of individual aggression but a socially intelligible response to violations of dignity, deeply embedded in symbolic systems of shame and honor that regulate interpersonal relations in Madurese communities (Albaburrahim et al., 2025). Legal-sociological analyses further highlight the tension between customary norms and national legal systems, revealing how carok persists as a parallel normative order despite criminal prohibition (Hairurrahman, 2025). Criminological interpretations also position carok within broader discussions of cultural violence and social control, where honor functions as both a stabilizing and destabilizing force

in community life (Zaman & Taun, 2023). These studies collectively provide a substantial empirical foundation, yet they remain analytically concentrated on structural explanation rather than on the philosophical grammar that sustains the moral legitimacy of korsa as an ethical principle.

Despite the richness of existing empirical literature, a significant conceptual limitation persists in the insufficient theorization of korsa as a philosophical category rather than a behavioral attribute, resulting in a partial understanding of its ethical depth within Madurese moral ontology. Prior research tends to treat korsa as synonymous with courage or bravery, thereby neglecting its embeddedness in a wider moral system that includes self-esteem (ajhâr), shame, and social responsibility as interdependent ethical constructs (Latief, 2015). Phenomenological studies on social deviance and emotional distress in Madurese contexts reveal complex moral-psychological experiences such as humiliation, isolation, and existential despair, yet these remain analytically detached from the philosophical interpretation of moral agency (Camelia & Moertijoso, 2022). Even studies that address cultural symbolism in Madurese literature primarily focus on representational aspects of honor without systematically interrogating its ethical foundations (Albaburrahim et al., 2025). This fragmentation indicates a clear conceptual gap between empirical descriptions of carok and the absence of a coherent philosophical framework that explains korsa as a normative ethical system within Nusantara thought.

The urgency of this issue becomes more evident when considering that carok continues to emerge sporadically in contemporary Madurese society, often triggered by humiliation, marital disputes, or land conflicts, despite intensified legal enforcement and modernization processes (Ramadhoni et al., 2026). Historical and cultural analyses suggest that carok persists not merely as residual tradition but as an adaptive moral response grounded in deeply internalized cultural values that continue to structure social intelligibility (Shobiroh et al., 2023). The persistence of such practices reveals a structural disjunction between formal legal rationality and indigenous moral reasoning, where state law fails to fully account for the ethical legitimacy attributed to honor-based actions within local epistemologies (Zaman & Taun, 2023). Furthermore, the absence of transformative frameworks capable of translating korsa into non-violent ethical expressions indicates a practical urgency in rethinking how cultural values are engaged in education and conflict resolution (Yulianto, 2025). This situation underscores the necessity of moving beyond descriptive analysis toward philosophical reconstruction of indigenous moral systems.

Within this intellectual context, the present study positions itself by reframing carok not merely as a criminological or sociological phenomenon but as an ethical expression of honor rooted in the philosophical concept of korsa within Nusantara cultural thought. While previous studies have examined carok from legal, anthropological, and psychosocial perspectives, they have not sufficiently explored its ontological and axiological dimensions as part of a coherent ethical system (Latief, 2018). By engaging with Nusantara philosophical discourse, this research situates Madurese moral reasoning within a broader comparative framework that acknowledges the diversity of ethical systems across Indonesian cultural traditions (Yulianto, 2023). This positioning enables a reinterpretation of carok as a morally intelligible act within its cultural logic, rather than a deviation from universal norms. Consequently, the study contributes to bridging disciplinary boundaries between philosophy, anthropology, and education in understanding culturally embedded moral agency.

This research aims to explore the philosophical meaning of korsa as an ethical foundation of carok, to analyze its relationship with self-esteem (ajhâr) and shame (lebbher) in Madurese moral consciousness, and to reconstruct its position within the broader Nusantara ethical system through comparative philosophical inquiry. The study contributes theoretically by redefining korsa as moral courage embedded in honor-based ontology, thereby expanding the conceptual boundaries of Nusantara ethics beyond existing regional formulations. Methodologically, it introduces a hermeneutic-philosophical approach grounded in qualitative and library-based interpretive traditions to analyze cultural texts and moral meanings in indigenous society (Zed, 2014; Kaelan, 2010). In the field of social humanities and education, the research offers implications for character education and conflict transformation by reinterpreting local values as ethical resources for non-violent moral development and culturally grounded pedagogical frameworks.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a cultural-philosophical research design, situated within interpretive traditions of social humanities and education that emphasize meaning construction through textual interpretation rather than empirical measurement of social phenomena

(Moleong, 2017). Based on the nature of the research problem, this study is categorized as a non-empirical library research, since its primary aim is to philosophically interpret *korsa* as an ethical construct embedded in Madurese cultural thought rather than to collect field-based data (Zed, 2014). The data sources consist of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, ethnographic studies, and documented cultural texts discussing *carok*, *korsa*, *ajhâr*, *lebbher*, and broader Nusantara ethical traditions. Source selection follows purposive criteria, namely: relevance to Madurese honor culture, explicit or implicit discussion of *korsa* or moral courage, comparative frameworks involving Nusantara ethics such as Bugis *siri'* and Javanese *satriya*, and methodological contributions to qualitative philosophical inquiry. The selected corpus spans publications from 1987 to 2026 to ensure historical continuity and conceptual depth in interpreting honor-based moral systems (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The analytical framework is based on philosophical hermeneutics and qualitative content analysis, focusing on interpretation of meaning embedded in cultural texts rather than surface-level description (Kaelan, 2010). The analysis proceeds through three stages: (1) data reduction and textual immersion, involving repeated reading and extraction of relevant philosophical statements; (2) categorization and thematic interpretation, in which meanings are structured into ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of *korsa*; and (3) comparative philosophical synthesis, which contrasts *korsa* with Nusantara ethical concepts such as *siri'* and *satriya*. To enhance transparency and analytical rigor, the study applies trustworthiness criteria including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability through systematic documentation of data selection and interpretation procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The coding and thematic structuring of data are summarized in the table below to provide a clearer representation of the interpretive framework.

Table 1. Hermeneutic Coding and Thematic Structure of Korsa Interpretation

No	Code	Source	Hermeneutic Category	Philosophical Meaning
1	Carok as cultural institution of honor balance	Latief (2015)	Ontological	Carok reflects structural embodiment of Madurese honor system
2	Korsa as cultural legitimization of courage	Wiyono (2011)	Ontological	Korsa constitutes intrinsic moral courage tied to identity
3	Ajhâr–lebbher–korsa value system	Latief (2018)	Ontological	Integrated moral system of dignity, shame, and courage
4	Shame escalation (tandha mateh)	Rahmawati (2019)	Axiological	Moral threshold triggering ethical transformation toward action
5	Social sanction (cap kole)	Wiyono (2011)	Epistemological	Social construction of moral pressure shaping behavior
6	Role of kiai in legitimization	Zainuddin (2018)	Epistemological	Religious authority mediates moral justification of action
7	Adultery as trigger of carok	Hidayat (2020)	Axiological	External violation activating honor-defense mechanism
8	Land dispute as shame trigger	Ariyanto & Susanti (2022)	Axiological	Material conflict transformed into moral offense
9	Bugis siri' comparison	Pelras (1996); Hamonic (1987)	Comparative	Parallel honor-defense ethics in Nusantara tradition
10	Javanese satriya ethics	Magnis-Suseno (1988)	Comparative	Contrasting model of restrained moral courage

The table above functions as a conceptual map that organizes raw textual interpretations into structured hermeneutic categories, allowing philosophical reconstruction of *korsa* as an ethical system rather than a behavioral trait.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hermeneutic analysis of Madurese cultural texts indicates that the value of *korsa* embodies a profound and multidimensional philosophical structure that operates beyond the level of behavioral courage. From an ontological perspective, *korsa*, as articulated in Wiyono (2011) and Latief (2015), cannot be reduced to physical aggressiveness, but rather constitutes an intrinsic moral force embedded within personal identity and social existence. The Madurese proverb "Korsa ta' kenneng edhineng" (courage cannot be borrowed), as cited in Wiyono (2011), reinforces the notion that *korsa* is an inalienable ethical disposition that cannot be transferred or substituted across individuals. This ontological configuration implies that moral agency in Madurese society is fundamentally grounded in the imperative of self-actualized courage when *ajhâr* (self-esteem) is perceived to be threatened.

Strengthening this ontological foundation, Latief (2018) conceptualizes *korsa* as one of the constitutive pillars of Madurese moral personality, alongside *ajhâr* (self-esteem), *lebbher* (shame), *tondha* (moral awareness), and *kosar* (patience). Within this integrated ethical system, *korsa* functions as an activating moral force that emerges when *ajhâr* is wounded and *lebbher* reaches an intolerable threshold. Rather than operating as an isolated trait, *korsa* is structurally embedded within a holistic moral configuration that regulates identity, emotion, and ethical responsiveness in a unified cultural logic.

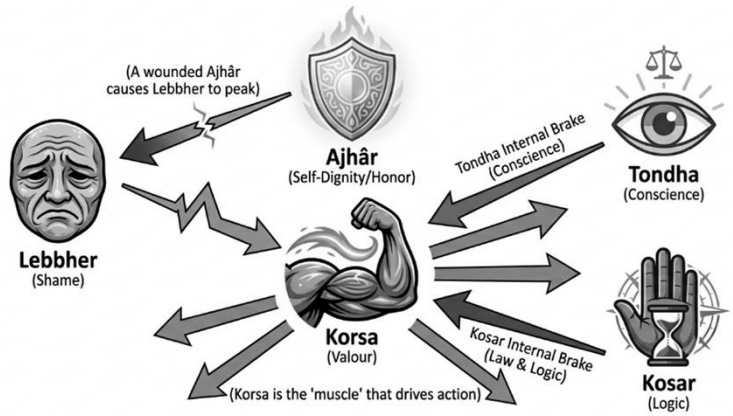

Figure 1. Five‑Pillars of Madurese Personality

From an axiological standpoint, *korsa* is ultimately oriented toward a value system in which the preservation of honor outweighs biological survival. The proverb "Lebber bhâghus petteng, lebbher potè tolang" (better to die than live in shame), cited in Latief (2015) and Rahmawati (2019), illustrates a hierarchical moral order in which *ajhâr* is positioned above life itself. Within this framework, the actualization of *korsa* through *carok* is not interpreted as irrational violence, but as a culturally intelligible ethical decision in which the restoration of dignity constitutes a higher moral obligation than physical existence.

Epistemologically, the activation of *korsa* is not an individual cognitive process alone but a socially and spiritually mediated construction of moral certainty. Rahmawati (2019) demonstrates that *ngelingang malo* (persistent recollection of shame) functions as an internal mechanism that intensifies moral pressure through emotional isolation, thereby preparing the subject for decisive action. In addition, recurring dreams of death are interpreted within the local belief system as spiritual confirmations that reinforce moral resolution. Zainuddin (2018) further highlights the role of kiai-mediated legitimacy through traditional consultation processes, indicating that the threshold for activating *korsa* is collectively validated rather than individually determined. Consequently, knowledge of *korsa* emerges as a multilayered synthesis of social sanction, psychological internalization, and spiritual affirmation.

Comparatively, *korsa* shares structural affinities with the Bugis concept of *siri'* as described by Pelras (1996), particularly in its demand that individuals risk their lives to restore compromised honor. However, it diverges significantly from the Javanese ethical concept of *satriya*, which Magnis-Suseno (1988) characterizes as emphasizing restraint, wisdom, and controlled moral response to humiliation. While *siri'* and *korsa* converge in their intensity of honor defense, *korsa* is distinguished by its more immediate and affect-driven responsiveness to public humiliation, whereas *satriya* ethics prioritizes deliberation and social harmony as mediating moral principles.

Korsa, *ajhâr* (self-esteem), and *lebbher* (shame) constitute an interrelated ethical system in which each element operates within a structured moral hierarchy embedded in Madurese cultural thought. Wiyono (2011) conceptualizes *ajhâr* as the highest value, *lebbher* as a social and moral signal of transgression, and *korsa* as the corrective and restorative response that rebalances damaged honor. Zainuddin (2018) and Rahmawati (2019) further elaborate a graded escalation of shame, beginning from *lebbher* (ordinary shame), progressing to *nyandhak* (intensified shame), and culminating in *tandha mateh* (fatal shame), which represents the threshold at which social existence is perceived as symbolically terminated. At this critical stage, *ajhâr* is considered irreparably compromised, thereby necessitating the activation of *korsa* as a culturally sanctioned mechanism of restoration. This cyclical configuration—*ajhâr* → threat → *lebbher* → *tandha mateh* → activation of *korsa* → restoration of *ajhâr*—demonstrates a recursive moral logic in which honor is continuously negotiated and reinstated through culturally recognized responses. Within this framework, *carok* represents the extreme manifestation of *korsa*, which is only legitimized after the failure of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms such as traditional mediation (*tellesan*) (Zainuddin, 2018).

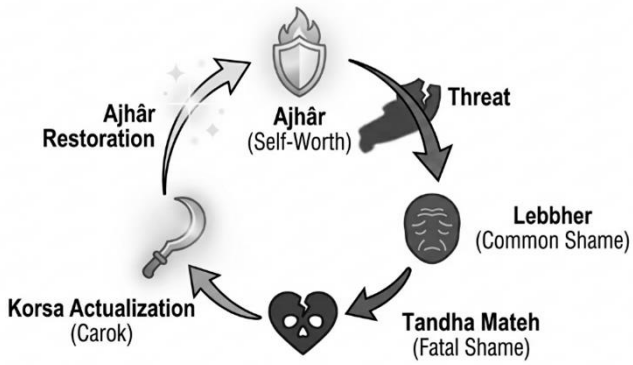

Figure 2. Three‑Polar Ethical Cycle

Philosophical Meaning of *Korsa* in Madurese Cultural Texts

Korsa occupies a central position in Madurese moral philosophy as an ontological expression of embodied courage that is inseparable from identity construction, particularly within masculine subject formation in local cultural consciousness. Wiyono (2011) emphasizes that *korsa* cannot be reduced to situational bravery or emotional impulsivity, but must be understood as an intrinsic ethical disposition that is activated when *ajhâr* (self-esteem) is socially or symbolically threatened. The widely cited proverb "Korsa ta' kenneng edhineng" (courage cannot be borrowed) reinforces this ontological claim by positioning *korsa* as an inalienable moral capacity that must be personally enacted rather than socially delegated. Within this framework, moral agency is not merely individual autonomy in the modern liberal sense, but a culturally embedded obligation to respond to dishonor through self-actualized ethical force.

From a structural perspective, *korsa* is not an isolated moral attribute but part of an interdependent value constellation that shapes Madurese ethical subjectivity. Latief (2018) conceptualizes *korsa* as one of five foundational pillars of Madurese personality, alongside *ajhâr* (self-esteem), *lebbher* (shame), *tondha* (moral awareness of consequence), and *kosar* (patience), forming a dynamic moral ecosystem rather than a hierarchical moral list. Within this configuration, *korsa* functions as an activating mechanism that becomes operative when *ajhâr* is violated and *lebbher* reaches an intolerable threshold of social pressure. The interaction among these values suggests that Madurese moral reasoning operates

through relational tension rather than linear rational deliberation, where ethical action emerges from the dynamic escalation of social-emotional states.

Epistemologically, *korsa* is internalized through socially mediated processes that blend emotional conditioning, collective judgment, and cultural pedagogy. Rahmawati (2019) identifies *ngelingang malo* a repetitive cognitive-emotional recollection of shame in isolation as a critical mechanism through which individuals internalize the necessity of responding to humiliation. This process resembles psychological rumination, yet in the Madurese context it functions not as pathology but as moral intensification that prepares the subject for decisive ethical action. Knowledge of *korsa* is therefore not acquired through abstract learning but through lived experience of shame, social labeling, and embodied moral pressure.

Zainuddin (2018) further extends this epistemological structure by demonstrating that moral legitimacy regarding the activation of *korsa* is often collectively negotiated through traditional mediation and consultation with *kiai* as moral authorities. In this sense, the determination of whether shame has reached *tandha mateh* (fatal shame) is not an individual psychological conclusion but an intersubjective validation embedded within communal ethical reasoning. The epistemology of *korsa* thus operates at the intersection of personal affectivity, communal validation, and spiritual authority, producing a hybrid form of moral knowledge that resists reduction to purely rational or juridical categories.

Axiologically, *korsa* reflects a value hierarchy in which honor is positioned above biological life, creating a moral framework where self-sacrifice becomes culturally intelligible rather than ethically deviant. The proverb "Lebber bhâghus petteng, lebbher potè tolang" (better to die than live in shame), cited in Latief (2015), articulates a radical valuation of dignity that surpasses the normative constraints of universalist ethical frameworks centered on the sanctity of life. Within this system, the preservation of *ajhâr* is not simply a personal preference but a moral necessity that defines social existence itself. Consequently, the activation of *korsa* represents a culturally rationalized response to existential degradation rather than an impulsive act of violence.

Korsa also contains a spiritual dimension that integrates metaphysical belief systems into ethical decision-making processes. Rahmawati (2019) reveals that dreams of death or symbolic violence are often interpreted as ancestral or spiritual signals that reinforce an individual's resolve to actualize *korsa*. Such experiences are not dismissed as subjective imagination but are treated as meaningful communications that confirm moral legitimacy within a transcendent framework. This integration of spiritual interpretation with social ethics indicates that *korsa* operates simultaneously as moral philosophy, social norm, and spiritual epistemology, making it a multidimensional construct that cannot be fully understood through secular analytical categories alone.

Carok as a Manifestation of Self-Esteem Through the Value of *Korsa*

Carok emerges within Madurese cultural logic as an extreme but structured manifestation of *korsa*, particularly when the moral threshold of *lebbher* (shame) escalates beyond socially tolerable limits and transforms into existential humiliation. Wiyono (2011) positions *carok* not as arbitrary violence but as a culturally intelligible response mechanism activated when *ajhâr* (self-esteem) is perceived to have been irreversibly violated. In this sense, *lebbher* initially functions as a normative regulatory emotion that maintains social order, yet when intensified through public humiliation, adultery, or unresolved conflict, it shifts from a stabilizing mechanism into a destabilizing force that demands restoration. The transformation from shame to action thus reflects a culturally embedded moral escalation rather than spontaneous aggression.

The transition from symbolic humiliation to physical confrontation is mediated through a structured sequence of social and cultural processes. Zainuddin (2018) identifies that Madurese society possesses customary conflict resolution mechanisms such as *tellesan* (customary compensation) and *nganjher* (witnessed reconciliation) that function as the first moral checkpoint before *korsa* is activated. These mechanisms indicate that *carok* is not the first option within the ethical system but rather the final stage in a layered dispute resolution hierarchy. However, when these mechanisms fail due to denial of guilt, perceived injustice in compensation, or breakdown of social trust, *lebbher* intensifies into *nyandhak* (deep shame) and subsequently reaches *tandha mateh* (fatal shame), which signifies symbolic social death.

Rahmawati (2019) provides a phenomenological account of this escalation through the concept of *mateh rassa* (feeling of death), describing how individuals experience profound psychological disintegration marked by social withdrawal, emotional paralysis, and the perception of living without dignity. In this condition, the subject no longer interprets life through material or biological survival but through the absence of honor recognition within the community. The internalization of shame becomes so intense that death itself is reframed as a morally preferable outcome compared to enduring social degradation. This inversion of value perception illustrates how *korsa* becomes the only conceivable mechanism for restoring existential coherence.

Within this moral structure, *carok* is also regulated by specific normative boundaries that distinguish it from unstructured violence or criminal aggression. Latief (2015) explains that legitimate *carok* is traditionally expected to follow certain cultural rules, including one-on-one confrontation, the use of traditional weapons such as the *celurit*, and the exclusion of non-involved parties. These constraints indicate that even within extreme expressions of *korsa*, there remains an ethical framework that seeks to preserve a form of moral symmetry and procedural legitimacy. Violations of these norms, such as ambush attacks or collective assault, are not recognized as culturally valid *carok*, but rather as deviations from the moral code.

The post-conflict social reintegration of *carok* perpetrators further demonstrates that *korsa* operates within a restorative rather than purely punitive cultural logic. Wiyono (2011) notes that individuals who successfully survive *carok* are often socially reclassified from dishonored subjects into figures of restored masculinity and courage, particularly within their immediate kinship networks. However, Latief (2015) also emphasizes that this recognition is increasingly contested in contemporary contexts influenced by formal education, religious reinterpretation, and state legal frameworks, which redefine *carok* as criminal violence rather than moral restoration. This tension reveals an ongoing ethical disjunction between customary legitimacy and modern juridical rationality.

Carok as an expression of *korsa* reflects a culturally specific moral economy in which honor restoration, social recognition, and existential dignity are deeply intertwined. Rather than functioning as irrational violence, it operates as a structured response to perceived moral collapse within a relational society where identity is sustained through communal acknowledgment. The persistence of *carok* in certain contexts, despite legal prohibition, indicates that the underlying ethical logic of *korsa* continues to hold symbolic authority, even as it is increasingly challenged by modern institutional norms.

Reconstruction of the Nusantara Ethical System Behind Carok

Carok, when situated within the broader Nusantara ethical constellation, cannot be interpreted as an isolated cultural anomaly but rather as a localized expression of a relational moral system in which honor, shame, and courage operate as interdependent ethical regulators of social life. Latief (2018) conceptualizes Madurese moral structure through five interlocking pillars ajhâr (self-esteem), lebbher (shame), korsa (courage), tondha (consequence-awareness), and kosar (patience) which collectively form a dynamic ethical equilibrium in which moral action emerges from the tension between restraint and obligation. Within this configuration, korsa functions as an activating principle that becomes operational only when ajhâr is perceived to be socially ruptured and lebbher reaches an intolerable threshold, while tondha and kosar serve as stabilizing mechanisms that ideally delay or redirect violent resolution. However, the empirical narratives of escalation documented in ethnographic and psychosocial studies indicate that under conditions of extreme humiliation, the balancing function of restraint is often overridden by collective expectations of honor restoration, producing a culturally intelligible pathway toward carok.

Comparative analysis with other Nusantara ethical systems further reveals that korsa shares structural homologues with Bugis siri', as described by Pelras (1996) and Hamonic (1987), where honor (siri') operates as a moral absolute that legitimizes life-risking action in response to dignity violation. In both systems, moral worth is not individually contained but relationally validated through communal recognition, suggesting that ethical subjectivity in Nusantara cultures is fundamentally interdependent rather than autonomous. Nevertheless, korsa differs in its temporal immediacy and affective intensity, as it is more directly triggered by public humiliation and social exposure, whereas siri' may unfold through longer strategic cycles of retaliation, negotiation, or alliance-building. This distinction reflects divergent socio-ecological formations in which Madurese moral immediacy is shaped by tighter

reputational economies, while Bugis ethical expression accommodates broader temporal and political mediation.

In contrast, Javanese satriya ethics, as articulated by Magnis-Suseno (1988), introduces a markedly different moral orientation in which courage is subordinated to wisdom (wicaksana), self-restraint, and the preservation of social harmony (rukun). Within this framework, moral excellence is defined not by immediate retaliatory action but by the capacity to absorb humiliation without disrupting social equilibrium, thereby repositioning courage as internal discipline rather than external confrontation. The divergence between satriya and korsa underscores the plurality of ethical rationalities within Nusantara traditions, where courage is not a universal category but a culturally situated response to different historical experiences of power, hierarchy, and social cohesion. Consequently, what appears as moral urgency in Madurese korsa may be interpreted as moral excess within Javanese ethical reasoning, revealing the contingent nature of violence, restraint, and dignity across cultural systems.

Despite these differences, a shared structural principle across Nusantara ethics is the centrality of communal recognition as the foundation of moral existence, wherein self-esteem cannot be privately sustained without collective validation. In Madurese culture, ajhâr exists only insofar as it is acknowledged by others, while in Bugis ethics siri' similarly depends on public recognition of honor status, and in Javanese culture even isin (shame) operates as a socially mediated regulatory mechanism (Magnis-Suseno, 1988; Pelras, 1996). This convergence indicates that Nusantara moral systems are fundamentally relational, embedding ethical agency within networks of social visibility rather than individual autonomy. Within such a framework, conflict is not merely interpersonal but ontologically social, meaning that its resolution requires restoration of collective moral order rather than individual reconciliation alone.

The analysis further demonstrates that carok emerges at the intersection of failed restorative mechanisms and intensified honor economies, where traditional mediation systems such as tellesan and reconciliation practices lose their efficacy in re-establishing ajhâr. Zainuddin (2018) highlights that these customary mechanisms function as preventive moral infrastructures designed to absorb and neutralize shame before it escalates into fatal stages; however, when such mechanisms are perceived as inadequate or dishonored, they inadvertently intensify the moral legitimacy of retaliation. This failure of mediation generates a moral vacuum in which korsa becomes the only culturally available mechanism for restoring equilibrium, thereby transforming violence into a socially intelligible though legally contested form of ethical resolution.

Finally, the persistence of dual normative orders between customary ethics and state legal systems produces structural tension that reinforces the cyclical nature of carok within certain social contexts. While statutory law criminalizes acts of violence such as carok, customary frameworks continue to interpret such acts through the moral grammar of honor restoration, resulting in selective community compliance and limited legal reporting (Wiyono, 2011). This epistemic and normative fragmentation reveals that carok is sustained not merely by individual disposition but by competing systems of legitimacy that assign different moral meanings to the same act. Understanding this tension allows for a more nuanced reconstruction of Nusantara ethics as a plural moral landscape in which law, custom, and cultural philosophy intersect, compete, and co-produce moral subjectivities.

Implications for Conflict Resolution Based on Local Values

The reconstruction of korsa within the Nusantara ethical system suggests that conflict in Madurese society is not merely a breakdown of interpersonal relations but a rupture in the socially shared structure of honor (ajhâr) that requires culturally intelligible mechanisms of restoration rather than purely punitive intervention. Latief (2018) emphasizes that because korsa is embedded in identity formation, any attempt to suppress it through coercive legal instruments alone risks being interpreted as further humiliation, thereby unintentionally reinforcing the very conditions that precipitate escalation. Within this framework, conflict resolution must be understood as a process of rebalancing moral recognition rather than simply adjudicating wrongdoing, since the primary ethical injury is experienced as the loss of publicly acknowledged dignity rather than material harm alone.

Traditional mediation practices such as tellesan, as highlighted by Zainuddin (2018), function as culturally grounded restorative mechanisms that aim to reconstitute ajhâr through negotiated acknowledgment, symbolic restitution, and communal validation. These mechanisms demonstrate that

Madurese society already possesses indigenous forms of restorative justice that prioritize reconciliation and social reintegration over exclusionary punishment. However, their effectiveness depends on the sincerity of engagement and the perceived adequacy of restitution, since incomplete or symbolic failure in restoring honor can be reinterpreted as continued disrespect, thereby escalating lebbher into higher stages of moral crisis. In this sense, mediation is not merely procedural but deeply affective, requiring emotional legitimacy alongside formal agreement.

The transformation of korsa into non-violent forms of expression constitutes a critical axis for sustainable conflict prevention strategies that remain culturally resonant while reducing the risk of physical violence. Latief (2018) notes an observable shift among younger generations toward channeling courage into educational achievement, economic competition, and social recognition in non-violent arenas, indicating the emergence of alternative spaces for honor production. This shift suggests that korsa is not structurally fixed to violence but is instead a culturally flexible moral energy that can be redirected when alternative prestige systems are socially validated. Educational and community-based programs that reframe courage as discipline, perseverance, and ethical achievement may therefore function as culturally compatible interventions that preserve identity while reducing destructive outcomes.

Character education grounded in Nusantara ethical values offers another strategic pathway for long-term transformation by redefining courage not as retaliation but as moral restraint and emotional regulation in the face of humiliation. In alignment with Latief (2015; 2018), such educational approaches must not deny the importance of ajhâr but instead reinterpret its preservation through non-violent ethical practices, thereby maintaining cultural continuity while reshaping behavioral expression. Within this pedagogical framework, kiai, teachers, and community leaders play a decisive role as moral translators who can reinterpret traditional concepts of honor in ways that align with both religious teachings and contemporary legal norms. This interpretive mediation is essential to ensuring that cultural transformation does not become cultural erasure.

At the institutional level, effective conflict prevention requires collaborative governance involving state authorities, religious leaders, and customary institutions to bridge the gap between formal legal systems and local ethical frameworks. Zainuddin (2018) argues that standardized yet culturally sensitive mediation protocols are necessary to ensure that restorative mechanisms such as tellesan are consistently applied and socially recognized as legitimate alternatives to retaliation. Law enforcement agencies, in turn, must develop cultural competence to engage with honor-based conflict systems without dismissing their underlying moral logic, thereby reducing resistance and improving trust between communities and the state. This integrative approach reframes conflict resolution not as the elimination of korsa, but as its ethical redirection toward socially constructive forms of recognition and dignity restoration.

The implications of this study indicate that sustainable peace in contexts shaped by honor ethics requires not the suppression of cultural values but their ethical reinterpretation within plural normative frameworks that respect local moral ontologies while safeguarding human life. By acknowledging korsa as a legitimate cultural expression of moral courage, while simultaneously expanding the repertoire of non-violent honor restoration mechanisms, it becomes possible to disrupt the cyclical logic of carok without destabilizing cultural identity. This balance between cultural continuity and ethical transformation constitutes the central challenge for both policy design and educational intervention in Madurese society.

CONCLUSION

Korsa in Madurese culture represents an integrated ethical structure in which courage, self-esteem (ajhâr), and social responsibility are inseparably bound within a relational moral system that differs fundamentally from individualistic ethical models. Unlike Western conceptions of courage that prioritize autonomous moral agency, korsa only becomes meaningful within the dynamic interaction between ajhâr as the highest value to be defended and lebbher as a socially regulated mechanism of shame. Wiyono (2011) and Latief (2015) emphasize that korsa is ethically activated only when ajhâr is violated and shame reaches the threshold of tandha mateh, indicating that moral action follows a culturally structured escalation rather than spontaneous emotional reaction. Within this framework, courage is not simply an individual trait but a socially validated moral obligation embedded in communal expectations and identity preservation.

Carok, in this context, emerges as the most extreme manifestation of korsa when all culturally recognized mechanisms of restoring honor fail to resolve social and moral rupture. Zainuddin (2018) explains that Madurese society actually maintains restorative institutions such as nganjher and tellesan, which function as mediating systems to restore ajhâr through negotiation and compensation before violence becomes conceivable. However, when these mechanisms collapse or are perceived as insufficient, shame escalates into tandha mateh, a condition in which social dignity is experienced as irretrievably lost. Rahmawati (2019) reinforces that under such conditions, the actualization of korsa through carok is culturally interpreted not as irrational violence but as the final moral pathway to restore honor, reflecting a structured ethical logic rather than chaotic aggression.

The ethical foundation of korsa reveals a broader tension between Nusantara moral systems and state-centered legal frameworks, particularly in the differing valuation of collective honor (ajhâr) and individual life. While formal law prioritizes universal principles such as the right to life and the prohibition of violence, Madurese ethical reasoning situates honor as a higher existential value that governs moral decision-making within communal life. Comparable relational moral structures are also found in Bugis siri' (Pelras, 1996; Hamonic, 1987) and Javanese satriya ethics (Magnis-Suseno, 1988), demonstrating that Nusantara ethics are fundamentally contextual and socially embedded. Recognizing this plural moral landscape is essential for designing conflict prevention strategies that do not deny korsa, but instead transform its ethical energy into non-violent forms through strengthened mediation practices and culturally grounded moral reinterpretation.

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