



A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON CULTURAL IDENTITY AND LOCAL WISDOM IN INDONESIAN LITERARY CRITICISM AND LANGUAGE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This research presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on cultural identity and local wisdom within Indonesian literary criticism, examining 35 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2020. The analysis reveals that discussions on cultural identity dominate contemporary literary discourse, primarily addressing how Indonesian writers construct selfhood, ethnicity, and national belonging through language, narrative, and symbolism. Concurrently, local wisdom has emerged as a critical framework for interpreting literature as a repository of indigenous ethics, communal philosophy, and linguistic expression. However, few studies synthesize these two perspectives into an integrated analytical approach, leading to fragmented interpretations. The findings indicate that while regional literary studies especially from non-Javanese contexts are expanding, methodological and theoretical dependence on Western paradigms remains prevalent. To advance the discipline, the study emphasizes the necessity of developing culturally rooted literary theories and language-based analytical models that merge cultural identity with local wisdom. Such approaches would enable more inclusive, contextually meaningful interpretations and strengthen the position of Indonesian literary criticism in global scholarship.

Keywords: *Cultural identity, local wisdom, Indonesian literary criticism, language and culture, indigenous literary theory*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, cultural identity has become a central focus of inquiry across the humanities and social sciences, particularly in multicultural and postcolonial contexts. The concept denotes a collective sense of belonging shaped by shared histories, languages, values, and traditions (Hall et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2025). Within literature, cultural identity serves as a critical lens for authors to articulate communal experiences, social struggles, and historical consciousness, especially in relation to colonial legacies, national formation, and globalization. Literary works function as repositories of cultural memory and meaning,

contributing to the preservation and reconstruction of identities. Closely tied to this is the notion of local wisdom, which encompasses the cumulative knowledge, beliefs, and practices cultivated through generations of interaction within specific cultural and ecological settings. In Indonesia, *kearifan lokal* includes traditional epistemologies, oral heritage, and indigenous philosophies that shape everyday life and artistic expression (Wulandari et al., 2024; Alfian, 2023; Saputro et al., 2021). As such, local wisdom operates both as a socio-cultural foundation and a moral compass embedded in art, rituals, language, and literature.

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Indonesian literary criticism provides a dynamic platform for examining how cultural identity and local wisdom are represented, contested, and reinterpreted. From classical compositions like *Serat Centhini* to the modern works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Leila S. Chudori, Indonesian literature reflects diverse cultural trajectories shaped by ethnicity, spirituality, and regional traditions (Salam, 2020; Jaya et al., 2025). Yet, the critical landscape has long been influenced by Western theoretical paradigms, which often obscure indigenous perspectives and epistemologies that are intrinsic to Indonesian texts (Damono, 2002; Girsang et al., 2023). This tension underscores the need to re-evaluate the theoretical foundations of local literary criticism

In recent years, scholars such as Achmad Munjid (2019) have emphasized the importance of developing culturally grounded frameworks that resonate with Indonesia's pluralistic realities. Such approaches highlight the philosophical depth of local wisdom systems including principles of communal harmony, spirituality, and environmental balance as interpretive tools for literary analysis. Concepts like the Javanese *nrimo* (acceptance) and the Minangkabau philosophy of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (custom based on religion) illustrate the richness of local philosophical traditions that could inform more contextually relevant readings.

However, comprehensive studies systematically mapping the intersections of cultural identity and local wisdom in Indonesian literary criticism remain scarce. Much of the existing scholarship is fragmented, focusing narrowly on individual authors, genres, or regions without synthesizing overarching patterns or theoretical alignments. Additionally, methodological inconsistencies make it difficult to discern broader academic trajectories. Conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) addresses this gap

by providing a structured synthesis of existing studies and highlighting emergent trends, theoretical orientations, and research lacunae.

The present study thus aims to systematically review how cultural identity and local wisdom have been conceptualized within Indonesian literary criticism over the past two decades. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) identify recurring themes and theoretical approaches, (2) examine regional and cultural diversity in literary interpretation, (3) expose underexplored dimensions, and (4) propose future research directions. In doing so, this review contributes to the decolonization and indigenization of literary theory in Indonesia, reinforcing the relevance of local epistemologies within global academic discourse. Ultimately, this research not only enriches literary scholarship but also supports the broader movement toward cultural sustainability and intellectual sovereignty, ensuring that literary analysis remains attuned to the lived realities and wisdom traditions of the Indonesian people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Cultural Identity in Indonesian Literary Studies*

Cultural identity has been explored in Indonesian literary studies primarily as a medium through which authors negotiate heritage, language, and socio-political belonging. Salam (2020) notes that literature functions as both a product and producer of cultural consciousness, particularly in postcolonial contexts where identity is under constant negotiation (Siahaan et al., 2024; Corry et al., 2025). In Indonesian literature, questions of ethnicity, religion, and regional affiliation are often woven into personal narratives, providing insight into the complexities of being Indonesian in a pluralistic society. As writers explore their roots, tensions often emerge

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between traditional values and the demands of modern life (Ceballos et al., 2020).

The concept of identity has also evolved in response to urbanization and globalization. Literary texts from urban authors frequently present hybrid identities shaped by interethnic marriage, migration, and digital culture (Ajani et al., 2024; Jaya et al., 2025a; Mahesti et al., 2025). These portrayals suggest that cultural identity in literature is increasingly fluid and intersectional. However, studies have pointed out that literary criticism in Indonesia has not always developed analytical tools sensitive enough to address such complexities, often relying on outdated or essentialist notions of identity (Buell, 2019).

2.2 Local Wisdom as Cultural and Literary Discourse

Local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) has emerged as a central element in Indonesia's contemporary cultural and literary discourse, serving as a counterbalance to global cultural homogenization. In literary studies, it is conceptualized as community-rooted knowledge derived from indigenous belief systems, moral philosophies, and ecological traditions (Kroeber, 2018; Purba et al., 2024). Many works that draw upon folklore, oral narratives, and customary practices encode this wisdom through linguistic expression, symbolism, and character behavior. Kurniawan et al. (2024) highlights its pedagogical function, particularly in children's literature, where traditional stories impart values such as *tanggung jawab* (responsibility), *rukun* (harmony), and *adat* (customary norms).

However, Handayani (2020) and other scholars warn that literary interpretations of local wisdom often oscillate between preservation and romanticization, lacking critical engagement. Much of the existing research remains descriptive, focusing on textual representation rather than exploring how local wisdom functions as an epistemological framework that informs literary language, meaning-making, and identity construction.

2.3 Theoretical and Methodological Approaches in Literary Criticism

Indonesian literary criticism has traditionally borrowed heavily from Euro-American theoretical paradigms, including structuralism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis. While these approaches have contributed to analytical rigor, they often fail to account for Indonesia's unique cultural and philosophical contexts (Buell, 2019; Shalini & Aruna, 2022). More recently, there has been a push for "cultural criticism" that foregrounds indigenous thought systems and values. However, this movement is still developing, and its methodologies vary widely across institutions and scholars (Utami, 2021). For example, some critics apply ethnoliterary approaches, which combine literary analysis with ethnographic observation, to study texts rooted in regional traditions. Others adopt semiotic-pragmatic models that seek to interpret symbols and social functions of language in local settings (Nugroho, 2018). Yet, despite these efforts, there is still limited consensus on what constitutes a distinctly Indonesian literary criticism, and even fewer frameworks exist for integrating cultural identity and

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local wisdom into coherent analytical models.

2.4 Identified Gaps and Research Justification

Although cultural identity and local wisdom have been widely discussed in individual studies, the literature remains fragmented. Most analyses are case-based, focusing on single texts, authors, or regions without drawing broader connections across time or genre. Moreover, there is a lack of synthesis in how scholars define, interpret, and apply these concepts critically (Handayani, 2020). Few studies employ systematic methods for mapping existing research trends or assessing theoretical coherence within the field.

- a. This gap highlights the importance of conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to evaluate the scholarly landscape of Indonesian literary criticism related to cultural identity and local wisdom. Unlike traditional literature reviews, an SLR applies a rigorous, replicable methodology to identify patterns, assess methodological quality, and highlight knowledge gaps (Solikhah, 2023; Setiawan et al., 2024). Applying this approach in literary studies is relatively novel in Indonesia and represents an important methodological innovation.

3. METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to investigate how cultural identity and local wisdom have been addressed within Indonesian literary criticism between 2015 and 2020. The SLR methodology was selected for its capacity to ensure a

rigorous, transparent, and replicable process of identifying, assessing, and synthesizing scholarly works. In contrast to narrative reviews, an SLR minimizes potential bias through clearly defined inclusion criteria and systematic evaluation procedures, thereby offering a more comprehensive and credible synthesis of existing research (Di Vaio et al., 2021).

The review was guided by three principal research questions:

- (1) How are cultural identity and local wisdom conceptualized in Indonesian literary criticism published from 2015 to 2020?
- (2) What theoretical and methodological frameworks underpin these analyses?
- (3) What trends, gaps, and patterns emerge across the corpus of studies?

These questions structured both the data collection and analytical stages, ensuring coherence and relevance to the overarching research objectives.

The data collection process involved an extensive search across multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda Ristekdikti, DOAJ, SINTA, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest. Searches were conducted using bilingual keyword combinations in Indonesian and English such as “*kritik sastra Indonesia*,” “*identitas budaya*,” “*kearifan lokal*,” “cultural identity in Indonesian literature,” and “local wisdom and literary criticism” combined with Boolean operators (AND, OR) for precision. Results were filtered to include only works published between January 2015 and December 2020.

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Articles were included if they met the following criteria: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles or conference papers published within the designated timeframe; (2) focused on Indonesian literary texts addressing cultural identity, local wisdom, or both; and (3) available in full-text form in either Indonesia or English Language. Studies focusing on language pedagogy, curriculum development, or non-Indonesian literature, as well as grey literature, book reviews, and non-peer-reviewed essays, were excluded to maintain academic rigor (Sugiyono, 2021).

The initial database search produced 156 documents. Screening of titles and abstracts reduced this number to 78, and subsequent full-text evaluation based on content quality, thematic relevance, and scholarly validity resulted in 35 articles selected for in-depth analysis. The article selection adhered to the PRISMA framework (MacFarlane et al., 2022; Yu, 2023), adapted to the humanities to ensure transparency and consistency throughout the process.

Data extraction was organized using a qualitative matrix, cataloging details such as publication year, author(s), journal, literary genre (poetry, short story, novel), regional or cultural context (e.g., Javanese, Minangkabau, Dayak), and analytical orientation (cultural identity, local wisdom, or both). Each article was also coded based on the theoretical perspective employed ranging from postcolonial and ethnliterary

frameworks to indigenous philosophical paradigms to facilitate thematic synthesis.

The analysis adopted qualitative content analysis, emphasizing inductive categorization and thematic clustering (Neuman, 2019; Tisdell et al., 2025). Through iterative coding of the full-text corpus, recurring ideas and analytical tendencies were identified and consolidated into broader thematic categories. These themes informed the interpretive synthesis presented in the results section, mapping the evolution, patterns, and orientations of Indonesian literary criticism related to cultural identity and local wisdom. The final interpretation contextualized these themes within their theoretical foundations and regional representations, ensuring analytical depth and cultural relevance.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) by analyzing 35 selected peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2020. Through qualitative coding and content analysis, the studies were categorized into three main thematic clusters: (1) literary representations of cultural identity, (2) local wisdom as thematic and interpretive tools, and (3) integrative approaches that explore the interplay between both concepts. The distribution of these themes, as well as their methodological and regional focus, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Themes in Reviewed Studies (2015–2020)

Theme Category	Number of Articles	% of Total (n=35)	Sample Focus	Regional
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Theme Category	Number of Articles	% of Total (n=35)	Sample Regional Focus
Cultural Identity	16	45.7%	Java, Papua, Aceh
Local Wisdom	11	31.4%	Minangkabau, Bali, Bugis
Combined Identity & Local Wisdom	8	22.9%	Kalimantan, Lombok, Sumatra

Note: The regional focus refers to either the origin of the literary text or the cultural tradition being analyzed.

4.1 Thematic Trends in Reviewed Literature

The analysis revealed that a majority of the reviewed articles (16 out of 35) focused predominantly on issues of cultural identity, particularly in relation to ethnic, regional, and religious affiliations expressed through literary works. Studies in this category commonly analyzed how authors constructed or negotiated identity through the lens of postcolonialism, regionalism, and identity politics. For instance, research on Javanese, Batak, and Papuan authors highlighted contrasting expressions of selfhood and cultural resistance (Nuridin, 2019).

In comparison, local wisdom emerged as a central concern in 11 studies. These articles explored how traditional values such as *gotong royong* (communal cooperation), *adat* (customary law), ecological ethics, and ancestral teachings were embedded in the narrative structure, symbolism, or character development of various literary forms. Several studies emphasized local oral traditions as important sources for understanding how indigenous knowledge is preserved and transformed in modern literary texts (Hartati, 2018).

A third group of studies (8 articles) combined both cultural identity and local wisdom as analytical frameworks. These integrative studies generally offered deeper insight by showing how identity construction in Indonesian literature is often inseparable from the internalization of local values and philosophical worldviews. For example, analyses of short stories from Sumatra and Kalimantan revealed that regional identities were often narrated through the revival or reinterpretation of local wisdom traditions (Rahmawati, 2020).

4.2 Analysis of Thematic and Regional Focus

From a regional perspective, the dominance of Java-based literature in studies related to cultural identity was notable. This reflects the historical centrality of Java in Indonesian literary production and criticism. However, the growing interest in non-Javanese literature, particularly works from Eastern Indonesia and Sumatra, indicates a decentralization of critical attention in recent years. Several articles discussed the importance of literary voices from regions previously underrepresented in national literary discourse, reinforcing the pluralistic nature of Indonesian identity.

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Interestingly, studies focusing on local wisdom were more regionally diverse. For instance, Bugis maritime philosophy, Balinese cosmology, and Minangkabau matrilineal traditions were frequently highlighted as sources of indigenous knowledge embedded in literature. These studies suggest that local wisdom serves not only as cultural content but also as a lens through which readers can interpret worldviews, ethical systems, and collective memory (Handayani, 2020).

The articles that integrated both themes presented the most holistic perspectives. These studies revealed that cultural identity is rarely constructed in isolation but often emerges through interaction with local epistemologies. For example, one study analyzing Sasak poetry from Lombok showed how local ecological wisdom is deeply connected to the formation of spiritual and communal identity (Herlina, 2019). Such integrative analyses remain limited in number, yet they provide promising models for future culturally grounded literary criticism.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) reveal significant insights into the dynamics of Indonesian literary criticism concerning cultural identity and local wisdom. The predominance of research focusing on cultural identity underscores a sustained preoccupation among Indonesian scholars with issues of selfhood, ethnicity, and national consciousness. As shown in the results, much of this discourse examines how authors negotiate their cultural positioning within Indonesia's pluralistic society an intersection shaped by regional histories, ethnic affiliations, and enduring

postcolonial legacies (Kara, 2021; Ambrose & Lourdasamy, 2022; Munjid, 2019). This aligns with earlier observations that Indonesian literature has long served as a cultural forum for articulating evolving identities in the post-authoritarian and post-Reformasi context (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020).

However, a key finding of this review is the thematic separation between studies on cultural identity and those on local wisdom. Research rarely integrates these two dimensions into a coherent analytical framework, often reflecting disciplinary inertia or overreliance on Western theoretical models that are insufficiently contextualized for Indonesian realities (Utami, 2021). Consequently, much of the criticism remains text-centered and descriptive, rather than interpretively rich or culturally grounded. This gap highlights the necessity of developing indigenous literary theories or *kritik sastra berbasis kearifan lokal* (criticism based on local wisdom) that draw upon Indonesia's own philosophical and epistemological heritage (Handayani, 2020).

The scarcity of integrative research combining cultural identity and local wisdom represents a conceptual limitation in the field. Yet, several works reveal that local wisdom is not merely ornamental, but rather functions as an epistemic foundation through which identity is expressed and contested. For instance, in Sasak and Bugis literature, the interplay between oral tradition, ecological ethics, and spiritual values demonstrates how local wisdom informs both individual and communal identity (Rahmawati et al., 2025). As Corry et al. (2025) argue, neglecting local wisdom in cultural discourse can result in the

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dysfunction of traditional values in modern development a notion equally applicable to literary analysis. Future scholarship should thus treat local wisdom not only as narrative content but as a methodological paradigm, promoting culturally situated literary interpretation (Utami, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Another major trend identified is the gradual decentralization of literary focus. Whereas earlier criticism predominantly centered on Javanese works, contemporary studies increasingly engage literature from Eastern Indonesia, Sumatra, and other regions reflecting a growing recognition of Indonesia's cultural plurality (Handayani, 2020). This decentralization marks a shift toward a more inclusive national canon, though it also necessitates the development of region-specific critical vocabularies capable of capturing the nuances embedded in localized worldviews. As Purba et al. (2024) and Siahaan et al. (2024) show, linguistic and cultural systems vary substantially across regions, demanding context-sensitive analytical frameworks.

Methodologically, this SLR identifies a recurring issue of insufficient analytical rigor. Many studies provide insightful observations yet lack systematic methodological grounding, theoretical coherence, or comparative scope. As Miles and Huberman (2019) emphasize, the value of qualitative synthesis lies in transparency, depth, and reproducibility criteria still underdeveloped in much Indonesian literary criticism. The systematic approach employed in this review, following PRISMA guidelines (Brown, 2019), demonstrates how structured synthesis can enhance both

methodological robustness and conceptual clarity in the humanities.

Building on these findings, this SLR contributes in two key ways. First, it maps the existing landscape of research on cultural identity and local wisdom in Indonesian literature. Second, it proposes a new direction toward an integrative, regionally nuanced, and epistemologically grounded mode of criticism. Such an approach calls for engagement with local philosophies and oral traditions not merely as topics of inquiry but as critical instruments (Munjid, 2019; Utami, 2021). Embedding indigenous frameworks into analysis would position Indonesian literary criticism as an autonomous intellectual tradition rooted in the archipelago's cultural soil rather than as a derivative branch of global literary theory.

Finally, the review underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. The convergence of literary studies with anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy opens new avenues for more holistic textual interpretation (Rahmawati et al., 2025). Collaborative work between literary scholars and local cultural practitioners such as storytellers, ritual experts, or traditional leaders can yield interpretations that are both ethically grounded and culturally resonant. In doing so, Indonesian literary criticism may evolve into a discipline that not only interprets literature but also participates in sustaining the nation's living cultural wisdom..

5. CONCLUSION

This study presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of scholarly

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works published between 2015 and 2020 that explore cultural identity and local wisdom within Indonesian literary criticism. Analysis of 35 peer-reviewed articles reveals that cultural identity continues to dominate critical discourse, while local wisdom increasingly emerges as a framework for interpreting literature's ethical, communal, and indigenous dimensions. Despite this progress, limited integration between these two perspectives indicates a conceptual gap within existing analyses. The findings suggest encouraging developments, such as the expanding focus on non-Javanese literatures and the rise of culturally grounded interpretations. Nevertheless, the field remains constrained by descriptive tendencies, methodological inconsistencies, and insufficient theoretical innovation. These limitations underscore the need for constructing analytical models that synthesize cultural identity and local wisdom within Indonesia's own epistemological context. Future research should advance context-responsive literary theories rooted in local philosophies, oral traditions, and indigenous worldviews. By embracing pluralism and interdisciplinary approaches, Indonesian literary criticism can transcend dependence on imported frameworks and evolve into a self-sustaining intellectual tradition that reflects the nation's diverse cultural landscape and philosophical depth.

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