



Safeguarding Makassar Oral Literature Through Performance: An ESD-Based Cultural Literacy Approach

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Cultural Conservation; Cultural Literacy; Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); Intangible Cultural Heritage; Makassar Oral Literature	This study examines how Makassar oral literature performances contribute to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and how Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)-oriented cultural meanings are articulated within participatory learning contexts. Using a qualitative performance-ethnography design, the study was conducted at Universitas Negeri Makassar and selected cultural settings in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data were generated through participant observation of two oral-literature performances and semi-structured interviews with 22 participants, comprising 4 passinrilik/pakkelong performers, 2 cultural practitioners or ICH observers, 14 students or younger-generation audience members, and 2 education practitioners, supported by audiovisual and documentary analysis. Data were analyzed through performance-ethnographic interpretation, ESD-oriented thematic and discourse coding, and the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), with credibility strengthened through source and technique triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal three interrelated safeguarding mechanisms: performative conservation, intergenerational participation, and media recontextualization. Oral-literature performance sustains cultural memory and expressive traditions, facilitates intergenerational transmission and reinterpretation of cultural knowledge, and extends cultural circulation into digital and educational spaces. It also provides situated learning opportunities through which participants engage with cultural identity, social solidarity, ecological responsibility, and cultural continuity. Rather than demonstrating a measured increase in cultural literacy, the study shows that ESD-oriented performance creates conditions that support cultural-literacy learning and sustainability-oriented values. The study proposes a conceptual framework linking ICH safeguarding with the environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of ESD, with implications for OBE-oriented regional language and literature education and community-based cultural learning.
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INTRODUCTION

The currents of globalization, modernization, and the rapid penetration of digital technology have brought about significant cultural transformations in contemporary society, which, often unconsciously, have the potential to erode the existence of local traditions and the oral cultural heritage of the Indonesian archipelago. Makassar oral literature, such as Sinrilik, Kelong, Pau-pau, and Doangang, is not merely an ancient cultural artifact or a form of entertainment, but rather a living manifestation of collective memory, value systems, the life philosophy of Siri' na Pacce, and the ecological ethics of the people of South Sulawesi (Rahim et al., 2025; Rahmat & Hasanah, 2021; Said et al., 2020).

UNESCO (2003) recognizes oral traditions and expressions as a major domain of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), emphasizing safeguarding through transmission, community participation, and the continued practice of living heritage. In the Makassar context, concerns about the continuity of Sinrilik and related oral forms are associated with the declining visibility of specialist performers

and reduced opportunities for intergenerational transmission (Pratama & Kurniawan, 2022). At the same time, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) provides an educational framework for connecting cultural continuity with environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and sustainable livelihoods. This intersection is particularly relevant to Makassar oral literature because performance can bring language, cultural values, ecological knowledge, and community participation into a shared learning event rather than treating oral heritage as a static artistic commodity.

Previous work has established several important dimensions of Makassar oral-literature preservation. Text-centered and documentation-oriented approaches have contributed to recording cultural materials, while performance studies emphasize that oral literature remains meaningful through the interaction of performer, text, setting, and audience (Ramli & Rahmawati, 2023; Setyawan & Wijaya, 2021). Educational studies have also linked local cultural content with cultural literacy and character learning, whereas recent work has begun to explore digital revitalization and the use of Makassar oral literature in sustainability-oriented learning (Rahim et al., 2026). What remains insufficiently explained is how the performance event itself can operate simultaneously as an ICH safeguarding practice and as an ESD-oriented cultural-learning space. Specifically, the literature does not yet clearly account for how performance structure, intergenerational participation, media adaptation, and locally embedded ecological, social, and livelihood values interact within one analytical model. This unresolved relationship constitutes the specific gap addressed in the present study.

Accordingly, the present study distinguishes three questions that follow directly from this gap: (1) What performance structures and ESD-related cultural meanings are identifiable in selected Makassar oral-literature performances? (2) How do these performances function as situated practices of ICH safeguarding through performance, participation, and media adaptation? and (3) How can the patterns identified in the empirical data inform a proposed conceptual reconstruction of ESD-oriented cultural-literacy learning? This formulation builds on studies of Sinrilik as a marker of Makassar identity (Nurcahyo & Supriyadi, 2020), digital revitalization of oral traditions (Hidayat et al., 2022), and local-wisdom-based cultural learning (Utama & Lestari, 2023), but it does not assume in advance that cultural literacy has been increased. Instead, it examines the learning opportunities and interpretive processes made visible through performance.

To address these questions, the study uses performance ethnography as the principal qualitative design, supported by an ESD-oriented discourse analysis of performance narratives and field materials (Denzin, 2003). The methodological integration is described in detail in the Method section: performance ethnography is used to examine the event, performer-audience interaction, embodiment, and media use; ESD-oriented coding is used to identify environmental, social, and economic sustainability meanings; and the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014) organizes data condensation, display, comparison, and verification. This combined procedure allows the study to connect textual meaning with performance practice without treating the proposed ESD model as an already validated intervention.

METHOD

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative performance-ethnography design (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Denzin, 2003) to examine Makassar oral literature as a situated event involving performers, audiences, language, gesture, music, space, and supporting media. The study was conducted at Universitas Negeri Makassar and selected cultural settings in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. A purposive, criterion-based sampling strategy was used to recruit participants who had direct experience as performers, cultural practitioners, audience members or learners, or education practitioners. Participants were included based on their direct involvement in Makassar oral-literature performance, cultural safeguarding practices, participation in the observed performance or learning contexts, or professional engagement with regional language, literature, and cultural education. The design was selected to prioritize the lived and interactional dimensions of performance while retaining systematic attention to ESD-related environmental, social, cultural, and economic meanings.

The researcher served as the primary qualitative instrument and participated as an observer during the fieldwork (Madison, 2006). The observational corpus comprised two Makassar oral-literature performances conducted within educational and cultural settings at Universitas Negeri Makassar and selected locations in Gowa Regency. The performances were documented through field notes and, where permission was granted, audiovisual recording. The choice of UNM and Gowa was based on their relevance as contemporary educational and cultural performance spaces and as settings in which Makassar oral traditions continue to be practiced by cultural communities and specialist performers.

Instrument and Data Sources

The study drew on four linked participant groups involving 22 participants. First, 4 passinrilik/pakkelong performers provided perspectives on performance conventions, cultural meaning, transmission, and the continuity of oral traditions. Second, 2 cultural practitioners or ICH observers contributed contextual information on safeguarding, cultural continuity, and contemporary adaptation. Third, 14 students or younger-generation audience members provided accounts of participation, interpretation, intergenerational engagement, and learning experiences. Fourth, 2 education practitioners contributed perspectives on curriculum relevance, pedagogical use, and the integration of oral literature into educational contexts. In addition to interview and observational data, audiovisual recordings, transcribed oral narratives, relevant archival or cultural materials, and institutional or ICH-related documents were used to support contextual interpretation and triangulation.

Table 1. Data-source mapping for the three research questions

Data source	Sampling / material	Primary contribution to analysis
Passinrilik / pakkelong	4 participants; purposively selected based on direct experience in performing and transmitting Makassar oral literature	RQ1: performance structure and cultural meanings; RQ2: safeguarding practices; RQ3: performer-informed implications
Cultural practitioners / ICH observers	2 participants; purposively selected based on direct involvement in cultural practice, heritage observation, or safeguarding activities	RQ2: safeguarding, transmission, adaptation; RQ3: interpretation of proposed reconstruction
Students / younger-generation audience members	14 participants; selected based on participation in or direct exposure to the observed oral-literature performance and learning contexts	RQ2: participation and intergenerational learning; RQ3: cultural-literacy learning opportunities
Education practitioners	2 participants; selected based on professional experience relevant to regional language, literature, cultural education, or pedagogical practice	RQ3: curriculum relevance and educational implications
Performance and documentary corpus	2 observed performances, supported by audiovisual records, transcribed narratives, and relevant documentary materials	RQ1-RQ3: triangulation of performative, textual, media, and ESD-related evidence

Data Collection

Data collection used three coordinated techniques. First, participant observation: the researcher observed two Makassar oral-literature performances and documented performance sequence, use of traditional instruments where present, performer–audience interaction, language choice, gestures, media use, and the communication of cultural and sustainability-related meanings. Second, semi-structured interviews: interviews were conducted with 22 participants, comprising 4 passinrilik/pakkelong performers, 2 cultural practitioners or ICH observers, 14 students or younger-generation audience members, and 2 education practitioners. The interviews explored participants' experiences and interpretations of performance conventions, cultural transmission, safeguarding practices, intergenerational participation, learning processes, and the educational relevance of Makassar oral literature. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed

for analysis. Third, documentary and audiovisual analysis: the researcher examined audiovisual records of the performances, transcribed oral narratives, relevant archival or cultural materials, and ICH-related documents. These three forms of evidence were used comparatively to strengthen interpretation through source and technique triangulation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed four linked stages. First, interview transcripts, field notes, performance-text transcripts, audiovisual records, and documentary materials were organized and condensed using the interactive logic of Miles et al. (2014). Second, performance-ethnographic coding identified features of the performance event, including performance structure, embodiment, performer-audience interaction, intergenerational participation, cultural transmission, and media adaptation. Third, an ESD-oriented thematic and discourse matrix was applied to identify environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability meanings while allowing inductive subcodes to emerge from the data, including ecological ethics, *Siri' na Pacce*, cultural livelihoods, language transmission, and digital mediation. Fourth, codes were clustered into cross-source themes and compared across observational, interview, audiovisual, and documentary evidence as well as with the UNESCO ICH framework and relevant performance theory.

The analysis ultimately identified three recurring safeguarding mechanisms: performative conservation, intergenerational participation, and media recontextualization. Reflexive memos were maintained to distinguish descriptive field evidence from theoretical interpretation. The proposed ESD-oriented performance framework was developed only after the empirical themes had been compared with the ESD dimensions and was therefore treated as an interpretive conceptual reconstruction rather than a validated intervention model.

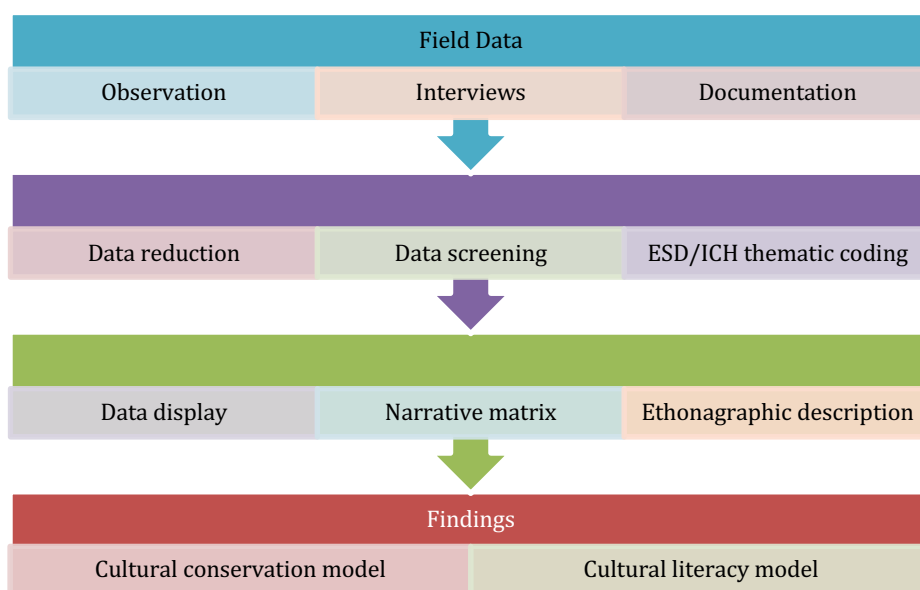


Figure 1. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and an explicit analytical audit trail. Source triangulation involved comparing accounts across the four participant groups: *passinrilik/pakkelong* performers, cultural practitioners or ICH observers, students or younger-generation audience members, and education practitioners. Technique triangulation involved comparing evidence obtained from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, performance-text transcripts, audiovisual records, and documentary materials. Member checking was conducted by returning summary interpretations and emerging theme descriptions to participants for confirmation of interpretive accuracy and contextual appropriateness. Any feedback obtained through this process was incorporated into the refinement of terminology, clarification of interpretations, and final formulation of the themes. The

audit trail retained field notes, interview transcripts, coding matrices, theme-development records, documentary materials, and reflexive memos so that the analytical progression from raw evidence to the final interpretations could be traced. Together, these procedures were used to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, particularly the identification of the three recurring safeguarding mechanisms: performative conservation, intergenerational participation, and media recontextualization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Makassar Oral Literature Performances as a Medium for Conserving Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Across the field materials, three recurring safeguarding mechanisms were identified: (1) performative conservation, (2) intergenerational participation, and (3) media recontextualization. These categories were generated by comparing observations, interviews, performance texts, and audiovisual/documentary materials rather than by treating performance as automatically effective. The coding matrix below provides an empirical audit trail linking the main themes to the types of evidence from which they were developed.

Table 2. Coding and theme matrix linking findings to empirical evidence

Theme / analytic category	Representative empirical indicator in the corpus	Evidence source to report
Performative conservation	Use of traditional instruments, high-register Makassar expressions, embodied narration, and culturally recognizable performance conventions	Field notes and audiovisual records from the two observed performances, supported by interview data from the 4 passinrilik/pakkelong performers
Intergenerational participation	Student/youth participation in preparation, performance, appreciation, or apprenticeship with experienced performers	Observation notes from the two performances and interview accounts from the 14 students or younger-generation audience members, triangulated with perspectives from the 4 performers
Media recontextualization	Hybrid staging, digital visual support, audiovisual documentation, and circulation through social-media platforms	Audiovisual documentation of the two performances, field notes on media use, and contextual accounts from performers and cultural practitioners/ICH observers
Ecological ESD meanings	Narrative references to forests, water, maritime ethics, stewardship, and criticism of destructive resource use	Performance-text transcripts, audiovisual records, and interview data from performers, students, and cultural practitioners concerning ecological meanings and local environmental ethics
Social ESD meanings	Reinterpretation of Siri' and Pacce in relation to solidarity, dignity, justice, tolerance, or contemporary social issues	Performance-text transcripts and interview accounts from the 4 performers, 14 students/younger-generation audience members, and 2 cultural practitioners/ICH observers
Economic and cultural sustainability	References to performer livelihoods, creative-economy participation, cultural tourism, and project-based learning opportunities	Interview data from the 4 performers, 2 cultural practitioners/ICH observers, and 2 education practitioners, supported by relevant documentary and institutional materials

Performative Conservation: Preserving the Authenticity of Traditional Expression

The first dimension is manifested through performative conservation, in which the structure of oral performance is maintained in its authenticity while simultaneously being revitalized in public spaces. In Sinrilik performances, the presence of the Kesok-kesok instrument (a traditional Makassar rebab) and the narrative delivery of the Passinrilik function as safeguards for the preservation of the linguistic idioms of Old Makassar (*Basa Mangkasarak High Variant*). The performer does not merely

recite the text but transmits core values such as *Siri' na Pacce* (self-respect and social empathy), as well as maritime and agricultural ethics, through the rhythm of delivery and gestures. The performance arena becomes a “living cultural laboratory” that preserves the collective memory of the community from linguistic extinction.

Intergenerational Transmission and Community Engagement

The second implementation focuses on community-based social transmission. Oral literature performances function as spaces for intergenerational encounters (intergenerational spaces). Through local cultural festivals, cultural studios, and performances in schools, Makassar oral traditions are extracted from exclusive ritual boundaries and brought into an inclusive public domain. Conservation takes place when younger generations do not merely position themselves as passive spectators but also become involved in cultural apprenticeship with master performers (*Passinrilik/Pakkelong*). This ensures the continuity of regeneration among authentic performers, which constitutes an essential requirement for ICH safeguarding in accordance with UNESCO standards.



Figure 2. Makassar Oral Literature Performance Model

Recontextualization of Narratives and Adaptation to Modern Media

The third dimension involves the recontextualization of messages and media adaptation. To remain relevant to the dynamics of modern society, Makassar oral literature performances adopt thematic scenarios that respond to contemporary crises. Traditional narratives that convey the harmony between humans and nature (*Pajjoppa ri Borong*) are adapted into hybrid performance formats, combining conventional oral narration with digital lighting visualizations and audiovisual documentation through social media platforms.

These observations suggest that media adaptation can function as a form of adaptive safeguarding when changes in presentation retain culturally recognized narrative and ethical

elements. The data do not demonstrate that digital adaptation is inherently effective; rather, they show examples of how performers and organizers recontextualized oral literature for contemporary audiences while attempting to maintain core cultural meanings. This pattern provides a basis for interpreting media adaptation as one component of a broader living-heritage strategy.

Reconstruction of the Makassar Oral Literature Performance Model for Strengthening Cultural Literacy Based on an ESD Orientation

On the basis of the inductive themes described above and the deductive ESD categories used during interpretation, this study proposes a conceptual reconstruction of Makassar oral-literature performance for ESD-oriented cultural learning. The reconstruction should not be read as an empirically validated instructional model. Rather, it is an interpretive synthesis that connects observed performance practices with three ESD dimensions: environmental awareness, social inclusion and justice, and economic/cultural sustainability.

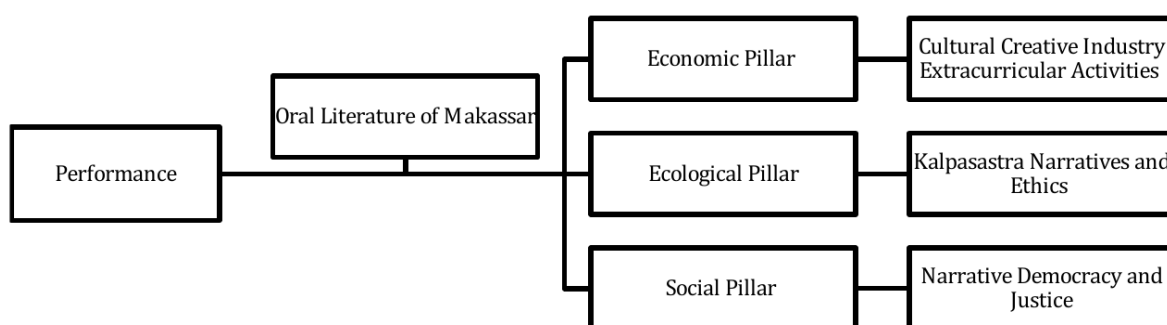


Figure 3. Reconstruction Model of Makassar Oral Literature Performance

Integration of the Ecological Pillar: Strengthening Eco-Literacy

Within the ecological dimension, the analyzed narratives and performance discussions included references to environmental ethics and local ecological knowledge, including relationships with forests, water, the sea, and resource stewardship. In the proposed reconstruction, these observed meanings are connected to eco-literacy as a pedagogical possibility rather than treated as evidence of a measured change in audience behavior. Where performers improvised references to marine destruction, deforestation, or resource use, the performance created an interpretive space in which audiences could relate inherited cultural knowledge to contemporary environmental concerns.

Integration of the Social Pillar: Inclusive Transformation and Value-Based Justice

Within the social dimension, the field materials showed efforts to make performance more dialogical and accessible through interactive storytelling, Indonesian-language introductions, and/or visual support. Values associated with *Pacce* and *Siri'* were interpreted in relation to empathy, dignity, social responsibility, and contemporary issues. These observations indicate an opportunity for inclusive value-based discussion, but they do not by themselves establish improved attitudes among audiences.

Integration of the Economic & Digital Pillar: Creative Sustainability

The economic and digital dimension emerged primarily as an implication of participant accounts and documentary/contextual evidence concerning performer sustainability, creative-economy participation, cultural tourism, and project-based digital learning. The proposed model therefore treats these elements as possible pathways for sustaining practice and widening educational access, not as outcomes already demonstrated by the present study. Any claim of economic impact would require separate evidence on income, participation, audience reach, or program sustainability.

Field Findings on Makassar Oral Literature Performances, Performance Theory, UNESCO ICH Framework, and ESD Paradigm

The empirical findings identify three recurring patterns—performative conservation, intergenerational participation, and media recontextualization—and a set of ESD-related meanings embedded in the performance corpus. The discussion that follows interprets these findings through performance theory, the UNESCO ICH framework, and ESD; theoretical interpretation is therefore distinguished from the descriptive evidence reported in the Results section. In convergence with performance-oriented scholarship, the findings show that the cultural significance of oral literature is tied to the event of performance rather than to text preservation alone. The present study adds to this literature by examining how safeguarding practices and sustainability-oriented cultural meanings can be considered together within a community/education setting, while avoiding claims of effectiveness that would require pre-post or other direct outcome measures.

Oral Literature Performance as Performative ICH Conservation

Performance-based ICH conservation of Makassar oral literature relies on the strength of performative conservation. Unlike passive conservation, which focuses on archiving manuscripts in museums or libraries, oral performance revitalizes the Basa Mangkasarak High Variant (high variety of the Makassar language) and ancient speech formulas through their dissemination in public spaces. This is consistent with Bauman's (2012) view that oral literature realizes its vitality when it is performed and responded to by audiences within the context of a performing event. The friction of the Kesok-kesok instrument played by a Passinrilik is not merely musical accompaniment, but rather a medium for evoking collective memory that preserves the authenticity of Makassar cultural idioms against the threat of language shift.

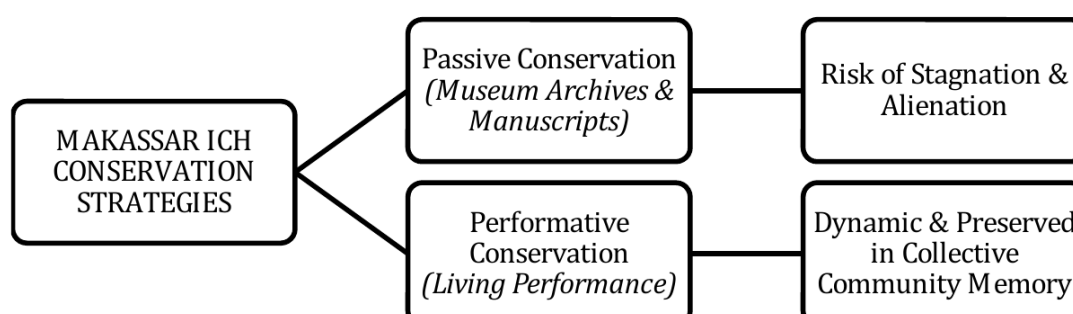


Figure 4. ICH Conservation Strategy

Setyawan and Wijaya (2021) argue that museum-oriented preservation can detach oral-literature values from their social contexts. In the Makassar setting, the present findings suggest that performance may provide younger audiences with direct exposure to regional-language forms and cultural values. When passinrilik deliver narrative formulas concerning justice, honesty (Lambusu'), and courage (Barani), these elements become available for interpretation within a live social event. This interpretation is consistent with Pratama and Kurniawan (2022), who emphasize community involvement as an important condition for the continuity of intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Intergenerational Transmission and Media Adaptation in the Digital Era

The greatest challenge in preserving oral traditions in Eastern Indonesia is the declining number of authentic regional-language practitioners (decline of practitioners). The findings of this study indicate that Makassar oral literature performances can bridge this intergenerational gap when positioned as inclusive public spaces. Through cultural studio performances, cultural festivals, and the integration of hybrid stages (physical and digital), younger generations are no longer positioned as passive spectators but as part of the cultural appreciation ecosystem, particularly in the preservation of regional languages (Rahim et al., 2025; Agus, 2021).

Hidayat et al. (2022) emphasize the potential of digital media to extend the reach of oral traditions. In the present study, audiovisual recording and hybrid staging were interpreted as examples of media recontextualization rather than as evidence that digitalization automatically preserves authenticity. This interpretation also aligns with Ramli and Rahmawati (2023), who highlight the importance of performers' adaptability to changing media environments. Taken together, these studies suggest that media flexibility may support continuity when adaptation remains accountable to culturally recognized narrative and ethical conventions.

Integration of the Three ESD Pillars in the Reconstruction of the Performance Model

The added contribution of this study is not evidence that an ESD-based performance model has already been proven effective; rather, it is the integration of empirically identified performance themes with an ESD interpretive framework. This contribution converges with studies emphasizing community participation in ICH safeguarding and with digital-revitalization research showing that media adaptation can expand access (Hidayat et al., 2022; Pratama & Kurniawan, 2022). It extends those studies by specifying how environmental ethics, social values such as *Siri' na Pacce*, and livelihood/digital considerations can be organized as educational dimensions within a single conceptual reconstruction. It also differs from museum-oriented conservation by foregrounding participation and performance as the locus of transmission (Setyawan & Wijaya, 2021). Because cultural-literacy and sustainability outcomes were not measured directly, the model should be understood as a theoretically informed proposal for future implementation and evaluation.

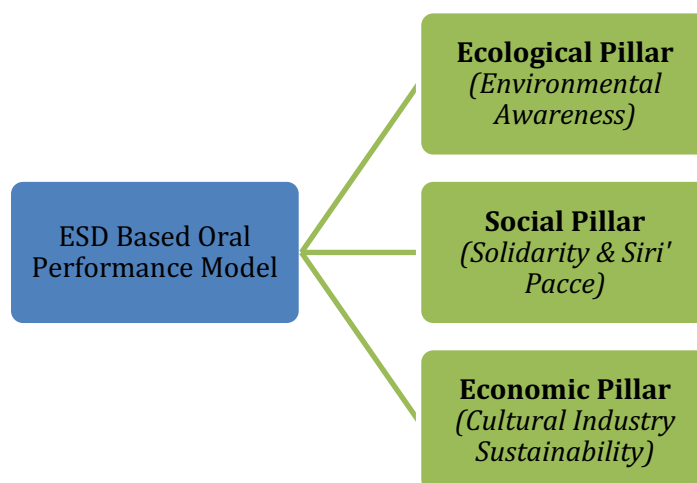


Figure 5. ESD-Based Oral Performance Model

Implications for ESD-Oriented Cultural Literacy and Future Learning

The findings have implications for regional-language and literature education because they show how performance can make cultural knowledge visible through participation, embodied practice, language use, and discussion of local values. Rather than suggesting that performance automatically strengthens cultural literacy, the study indicates that it can provide a context in which learners encounter and interpret cultural symbols, ecological ethics, social values, and questions of cultural continuity. Future curriculum implementation should therefore be evaluated with explicit learning indicators, learner evidence, and longitudinal or comparative designs to determine whether these opportunities translate into measurable cultural-literacy or sustainability outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that selected Makassar oral-literature performances can be interpreted as living ICH practices through three recurring mechanisms: performative conservation, intergenerational participation, and media recontextualization. Across the analyzed materials, performance also provided a context in which cultural identity, local values, language, ecological meanings, and questions of cultural sustainability were articulated. These findings support the

interpretation of oral-literature performance as a situated cultural-learning space; they do not, however, demonstrate a measured increase in cultural literacy or sustainability outcomes.

The evidence further suggests that safeguarding strategies should attend not only to documentation but also to the social conditions that allow performance, participation, and knowledge transmission to continue. In the observed settings, performance created opportunities for younger participants to encounter traditional language, narrative conventions, and cultural values in interaction with performers and other audience members. The extent to which such participation produces durable learning outcomes should be tested in subsequent educational research.

From an educational perspective, the study identifies several cultural-literacy learning opportunities: recognizing local symbols and language, interpreting Siri' na Pacce and other social values, discussing ecological ethics, and examining how oral traditions adapt to contemporary media. These opportunities informed the proposed ESD-oriented conceptual reconstruction. Because the model was derived interpretively from qualitative evidence, it should be treated as a framework for curriculum design and future evaluation rather than as a validated instructional intervention.

Accordingly, future work should evaluate the proposed framework through clearly defined cultural-literacy and ESD learning indicators, comparison across performance settings, and sustained collaboration among schools, universities, cultural communities, performers, and local stakeholders. Such research would make it possible to determine which aspects of performance-based learning contribute most effectively to cultural continuity, learner interpretation, community participation, and sustainability-oriented education.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) during manuscript preparation to assist with language editing and alignment with the VOKATEK template. The authors reviewed and edited the resulting content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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