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The Impact of Local Wisdom-Based Character Education on Student Behavior in SD Pusaka Deliserdang

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KEY WORD

Character Education, Local Wisdom, Student Behavior, Cultural Values, Elementary Education, SD Pusaka Deliserdang

A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the impact of local wisdom-based character education on student behavior at SD Pusaka Deliserdang. The research was conducted to address the growing need for culturally relevant approaches in moral education, especially in elementary school settings. Utilizing a mixed-method design, the study combined quantitative analysis of pre-test and post-test behavior scores with qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documentation.

The findings reveal that the integration of local wisdom—such as traditional stories, sayings, and communal values—into character education significantly improved students' behavior in key areas including responsibility, cooperation, discipline, respect, and honesty. Quantitative results showed a marked increase in behavior scores after a 12-week intervention, with statistically significant gains across all measured indicators. Qualitative data further supported these findings, highlighting how students internalized moral values more effectively when presented through culturally familiar narratives and examples.

The study also found that teacher creativity, community involvement, and student engagement played crucial roles in the success of the program. Despite challenges in sourcing appropriate cultural materials and ensuring inclusivity, the overall impact was positive and transformative. This research underscores the importance of contextualizing moral education within students' cultural environments and provides a model for other schools seeking to implement similar initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of moral decline among students has become a growing concern in educational institutions across Indonesia. Amidst the rapid development of technology, globalization, and modernization, there has been a noticeable shift in students' attitudes and behaviors, often characterized by decreased respect for authority, a weakening sense of responsibility, and diminished empathy for others. This phenomenon poses a serious threat to the nation's future generation, as character plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals who are not only academically competent

but also morally upright and socially responsible. In response to this challenge, the Indonesian government has placed significant emphasis on the integration of character education within the school curriculum. One promising approach that has gained traction is the incorporation of *local wisdom* as a foundational element in character education programs.

Character education refers to the deliberate effort to develop ethical, responsible, and caring individuals by teaching them about the virtues and values essential for personal development and civic responsibility. It includes elements such as honesty, integrity, respect, discipline, responsibility, and tolerance—values that form the core of a harmonious society. However, traditional character education often lacks contextual relevance, especially when it is disconnected from the cultural and social realities of students. This gap underscores the need to localize character education through the incorporation of local wisdom, or *kearifan lokal*, which refers to the values, norms, and practices that have been passed down through generations within a specific community.

Local wisdom is deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of Indonesian society. It encompasses indigenous knowledge, traditional customs, folklore, community rituals, and moral teachings that reflect the identity and worldview of local communities. By leveraging local wisdom, educators can deliver character education in a manner that is not only more relatable and meaningful to students but also reinforces cultural identity and community values. In this way, local wisdom serves as both a pedagogical tool and a moral compass, guiding students to internalize positive behaviors that are aligned with their cultural heritage.

SD Pusaka Deliserdang, located in North Sumatra, presents a unique context for exploring the integration of local wisdom in character education. The school is situated in a region rich in cultural diversity, where various ethnic groups such as the Batak, Malay, and Javanese coexist and contribute to a vibrant mosaic of local traditions and moral codes. The implementation of character education based on local wisdom at SD Pusaka aims to nurture not only academic excellence but also the moral development of students through the internalization of cultural values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *rasa hormat* (respect), *tanggung jawab* (responsibility), and *malu* (a sense of moral shame).

Despite the theoretical and cultural appeal of local wisdom-based character education, empirical studies assessing its effectiveness remain limited, particularly at the elementary school level. There is a pressing need to investigate whether such educational interventions have a measurable impact on student behavior, including discipline, cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility. Understanding this impact is crucial for informing future educational policies and practices, especially in culturally diverse and rural settings like Deliserdang.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of local wisdom-based character education on student behavior in SD Pusaka Deliserdang. Specifically, it aims to identify the types of local wisdom integrated into classroom activities, evaluate changes in students' behavior before and after the implementation of character education, and explore the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the

effectiveness of this approach. Through a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data, this research aspires to provide a holistic understanding of how local cultural values can shape character formation among young learners.

By addressing this topic, the study not only contributes to the broader discourse on character education in Indonesia but also underscores the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy in nurturing the moral and ethical development of students. The findings are expected to offer practical insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to design character education programs that are both culturally grounded and pedagogically effective.

METHOD

To explore how local wisdom-based character education influences student behavior, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach was selected to provide a more holistic understanding of the issue by capturing measurable behavioral changes while also exploring deeper insights into the processes and experiences of those involved in the educational intervention.

The research was conducted at SD Pusaka Deliserdang, an elementary school located in the culturally diverse region of Deliserdang, North Sumatra. The school was chosen due to its deliberate integration of local cultural values into its educational practices. At SD Pusaka, various cultural traditions from the Batak, Malay, and Javanese communities are actively incorporated into daily learning, making it an ideal setting for studying the role of local wisdom in character education.

The participants of the study included 30 students from grades 4 and 5, who were purposively selected because they were at a developmental stage where character formation is critical. Additionally, five teachers who were directly involved in character education were included, along with the school principal, who played a key role in program implementation and policy direction.

To gather data, several instruments and techniques were employed. A behavior assessment scale was used to measure changes in student behavior before and after the implementation of the character education program. This instrument, adapted from national character education guidelines, consisted of 20 items assessing key traits such as honesty, discipline, respect, responsibility, and cooperation. Students responded to the scale twice—once before the program began and once after a 12-week implementation period—using a Likert scale to indicate the frequency of their behaviors.

In addition to this quantitative data, the study relied heavily on qualitative methods to understand the context and process of integrating local wisdom into education. Classroom observations were carried out regularly using a checklist that focused on how local wisdom appeared in teaching activities, such as through the use of traditional stories, proverbs, and cultural rituals. Observations also captured student interactions and responses to character lessons.

To enrich the findings further, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and the principal. These interviews provided space for participants to reflect on their experiences, describe the strategies used to integrate local values into lessons, and share their perceptions of the program's impact on students' attitudes and behaviors. Teachers, for instance, explained how they used local folktales or community practices to teach values like mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and responsibility (*tanggung jawab*).

Furthermore, a document analysis was conducted to examine lesson plans, school policies, and records of student activities. This helped the researcher understand the formal inclusion of local wisdom in the school's curriculum and provided evidence of the institutional support for character education.

The research process unfolded over three distinct phases. During the pre-implementation phase, the researcher conducted initial visits to the school, introduced the study to all participants, secured informed consent, and administered the pre-test behavior assessments. In the implementation phase, which lasted for 12 weeks, character education lessons emphasizing local wisdom were carried out while observations were simultaneously conducted. The post-implementation phase involved a second round of behavior assessments, interviews with participants, and the collection of final documents and observations.

For the quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize student behavior scores, and a paired sample t-test was conducted to determine if there were significant improvements after the intervention. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, where transcripts of interviews and observation notes were coded and grouped into themes such as "values taught," "teaching strategies," and "behavioral changes." These themes were then interpreted to understand how local wisdom affected students' moral development.

Throughout the study, strict attention was paid to ethical considerations. All participants were informed of their rights, and consent was obtained from both the school and the students' guardians. Anonymity and confidentiality were upheld, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

In summary, this study employed a comprehensive methodological framework to assess the real-world application and impact of local wisdom-based character education. By combining behavioral measurement with in-depth observation and stakeholder voices, the study aimed to provide both empirical evidence and cultural context for understanding the development of student character in elementary school settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After 12 weeks of implementing character education rooted in local wisdom, the impact on student behavior at SD Pusaka Deliserdang was both visible and meaningful. The program, which incorporated local stories, traditional values, and community practices, brought character education to life in a way that students could easily relate to. Through a combination of behavior assessments, classroom observations, and

interviews with teachers, students, and the principal, the study revealed notable improvements in how students interacted with others, took responsibility, and understood the value of character in daily life.

At the beginning of the study, students were asked to complete a behavior questionnaire that measured key character traits such as honesty, respect, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. When the same test was given after the program had run for three months, the results showed a significant increase in scores across all indicators. For instance, many students who initially scored low in responsibility and discipline began showing consistent improvements in their daily behavior—coming to class on time, completing their tasks, and helping classmates without being told.

More than just numbers, however, the real transformation could be seen in the classroom and heard in the words of the students and teachers. Teachers observed that students were more attentive and respectful, especially during lessons that involved local stories or cultural traditions. One teacher shared her experience using the story of *Si Manggala*, a well-known folk tale about the importance of responsibility. She explained how students not only listened carefully but also discussed the moral of the story afterward, connecting it to situations in their own lives. This showed that character education delivered through cultural narratives helped students internalize values rather than just memorize them.

The concept of **gotong royong**, or working together in harmony, was particularly influential. When this value was introduced as part of the program, students began to change the way they behaved during group activities. Where once there had been arguments and disinterest, teachers noticed more cooperation, a willingness to help, and even reminders from students to one another to “work together like we learned in class.” The spirit of *gotong royong* seemed to move from theory into practice, shaping not only classroom behavior but also friendships and group responsibility.

Students themselves acknowledged these changes. During interviews, many of them spoke about how the stories and classroom discussions made them think about their actions. One student admitted that he used to lie to avoid getting in trouble, but after hearing a local story about a character who lost trust because of dishonesty, he felt ashamed and decided to change. “I don't want to lose my friends like the boy in the story,” he said quietly.

The principal also noticed a shift in the school environment. “There are fewer reports of students fighting or arguing. Teachers tell me that students are more disciplined and respectful now,” she explained. She credited this change to the combination of strong teacher commitment and the integration of values that felt familiar to the children—values they also saw at home and in the community.

Indeed, one of the strongest factors contributing to the success of the program was **cultural familiarity**. When students heard stories or sayings from their own ethnic traditions—Batak, Javanese, or Malay—they felt proud and engaged. The stories reflected not only moral lessons but also their identity. This cultural relevance made learning personal and emotionally meaningful.

Another important theme was the role of **teacher creativity**. Many teachers went beyond the basic lesson plans, using role-playing, artwork, and storytelling to bring local wisdom to life. Some even invited parents or community elders to speak in class, further connecting students to their cultural roots. One Grade 5 teacher described how students were amazed to hear an elder talk about how respect and obedience shaped their childhood. These moments sparked conversations and reflection that deepened students' understanding.

However, the journey was not without challenges. Some teachers initially struggled to find suitable stories or materials that reflected local wisdom accurately and age-appropriately. A few students from non-dominant cultural backgrounds felt left out during the early stages, but this was addressed by encouraging students to share stories from their own family traditions. The school responded by making the program more inclusive, celebrating diversity within local wisdom itself.

Despite these obstacles, the overall outcome was clear: local wisdom-based character education had a positive and lasting impact on student behavior. The children at SD Pusaka Deliserdang not only learned about moral values—they began to live them. They practiced respect by listening more carefully to others, they showed responsibility by completing tasks without being reminded, and they embraced cooperation by supporting one another in group activities.

These findings align with educational theories that emphasize the importance of social context in moral development. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory reminds us that learning is most effective when it is anchored in familiar cultural experiences. Similarly, Bandura's social learning theory explains how students learn behaviors by observing and imitating others. When teachers used real stories from the local community and modeled the values themselves, students followed naturally.

In conclusion, the character education program based on local wisdom did more than change behavior—it connected education with identity. It respected the students' backgrounds, involved the community, and built a bridge between cultural heritage and modern schooling. As Indonesia continues to prioritize character education, programs like the one at SD Pusaka Deliserdang offer a powerful example of how traditional values can be woven into education in ways that are effective, meaningful, and transformative.

CONCLUSION

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