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# Local Wisdom and Character Education Across Schools, Families, and Communities in Blitar

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## Abstract

This multiple-case study examines how three public elementary schools in Blitar, Indonesia, incorporated local cultural practices into character education across classroom, family, and community settings. Twenty-seven purposively selected participants comprised three principals, six classroom teachers, three curriculum coordinators, three guidance and counseling teachers, six students, and six parents. Interviews, non-participant observations, and school documents collected from February to May 2025 were analyzed thematically and compared across cases and sources. Four interconnected practices were identified: using stories and Javanese language in lessons, engaging students in arts and traditional games, organizing visits to community sites, and coordinating activities with parents and cultural practitioners. Participants associated these practices with opportunities to discuss and enact cooperation, responsibility, respect, and cultural belonging. Observations and documents corroborated the existence of activities, but the study did not measure changes in character outcomes. The findings specify how cultural resources can be organized across educational settings while highlighting the need to examine whose contributions sustain such programs and how responsibilities are distributed among caregivers and educators.

**Keywords:** Local Wisdom; Character Education; Elementary School; Family-School-Community Partnership; Indonesia

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## INTRODUCTION

Character education in elementary schools concerns the practices through which children learn to interpret and act on values in social situations. Contemporary accounts emphasize participation, relationships, and institutional routines alongside explicit instruction [1], [2], [3]. In Indonesia, local wisdom provides culturally recognizable practices for discussing responsibility, cooperation, and respect. Studies in different provinces have described school-based uses of local knowledge, but their settings and mechanisms vary [4], [5], [6].

Recent research documents ethnopedagogical activities in early childhood settings, integration of local traditions into public Islamic elementary schools, and the use of local stories to support children's character learning [7], [8], [9]. Other work considers curriculum integration and inclusive provision for children with special educational needs [10], [11]. Taken together, these studies suggest that the educational significance of local culture depends on how teachers translate a practice into classroom interaction, participation, and reflection, rather than on the presence of cultural content alone.

Culturally relevant pedagogy links instruction with learners' social experiences, while recent Indonesian classroom research examines the use of local knowledge in culturally responsive teaching [12], [13]. Cultural practices may also support values outside school: work on Sundanese rituals and a longitudinal study of childhood cultural participation connect shared traditions with character or later prosocial behavior, although their contexts and designs differ from the present cases [14], [15]. Traditional games and arts give children opportunities to cooperate and negotiate rules; the evidence concerns learning opportunities and should not automatically be read as proof of enduring moral change [16], [17], [18].

Relationships between schools and caregivers matter because values introduced in lessons are encountered again in family and community life. Research on play-based family–school–community partnerships and Indigenous educational leadership identifies the value of reciprocal participation and locally grounded decisions [19], [20]. Family socialization has also been associated with children's awareness of giving and shared values; a separate Indonesian study describes how family education is shaped by socioeconomic and cultural circumstances [21], [22]. These studies warrant attention to who can participate, who carries the organizing work, and which families' practices count as educational resources.

In the three Blitar schools, preliminary stakeholder interviews identified uneven integration of local values into everyday instruction and limited opportunities for participation beyond the classroom. The study therefore asks: How did schools integrate local wisdom into character education through classroom practice, cultural participation, and collaboration with families and communities? Its contribution is a cross-case account of the activities and relationships that made this integration visible. Because the gender of adult participants and care responsibilities were not documented, the study cannot determine how educational work was distributed between women and men; that question remains important for interpreting school–family collaboration.

## METHODS

### *Research design and setting*

A qualitative multiple-case design examined three public elementary schools in Blitar, East Java, between February and May 2025. Schools A, B, and C were selected purposively for distinct urban, suburban, and community-oriented settings and existing local-culture programs. School A emphasized Javanese language and arts in lessons; School B organized extracurricular and school-wide cultural activities; School C emphasized links with parents and cultural practitioners. These descriptions identify the cases and are not a ranking of implementation quality.

### *Participants and sources*

Twenty-seven participants were purposively recruited after permission from the district education office and principals. Participants had at least one academic year of involvement in relevant activities. Each school contributed one principal, two classroom teachers, one curriculum coordinator, one guidance and counseling teacher, two students, and two parents. Students were in Grades 4–6. [Table 1](#) presents the participant distribution.

**Table 1.** Participants by school

| Participant Group                | Code    | School A | School B | School C | Total |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Principals                       | P1-P3   | 1        | 1        | 1        | 3     |
| Classroom teachers               | T1-T6   | 2        | 2        | 2        | 6     |
| Curriculum coordinators          | C1-C3   | 1        | 1        | 1        | 3     |
| Guidance and counseling teachers | G1-G3   | 1        | 1        | 1        | 3     |
| Students (Grades 4–6)            | S1-S6   | 2        | 2        | 2        | 6     |
| Parents                          | PA1-PA6 | 2        | 2        | 2        | 6     |
| Total                            | Total   | 9        | 9        | 9        | 27    |

[Table 2](#) presents student participant codes by school and grade.

**Table 2.** Student participants by school and grade

| School   | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Total students |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| School A | S1      | S2      | -       | 2              |
| School B | -       | S3      | S4      | 2              |
| School C | S5      | -       | S6      | 2              |
| Total    | 2       | 2       | 2       | 6              |

### *Data collection and analysis*

Individual semi-structured interviews in Indonesian lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with permission, and were transcribed verbatim. Questions addressed cultural activities, classroom strategies, perceived benefits, obstacles, and collaboration. Non-participant observations covered lessons and school cultural activities. Lesson plans, modules,

regulations, activity reports, meeting records, and photographs were examined as documentary evidence. The number and duration of observations and the number of documents reviewed were not documented in the available study record.

The analysis followed data condensation, display, and iterative conclusion verification. Interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were coded inductively; related codes were compared across the three schools and participant groups to develop themes. Published examples of thematic analysis stress a transparent link between codes, themes, and supporting extracts [23], [24]. Multiple sources and member checking with selected participants were used, together with reflective notes and team discussions. These procedures support credibility, but triangulation does not establish causal effects or eliminate all interpretive bias [25].

### *Ethical considerations*

Authorization was obtained from the Blitar District Education Office and participating principals. The study record identifies ethical approval no. 102/FIP/IV/2025 from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Islam Raden Rahmat. Adult participants provided informed consent; participation by minors required parental permission and student assent. Participation was voluntary, and pseudonyms were used for schools and interviewees.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Results*

Across interviews, observations, and documents, four connected practices were identified. The evidence shows how the schools organized and described these practices. Reports of improved character are participant perceptions; no before-and-after behavioral instrument was administered.

### *Cultural narratives and language in daily lessons*

Teachers used local stories, regional songs, Javanese expressions, and traditional games to open discussions about cooperation, courtesy, discipline, and responsibility. One teacher described “play-based activities, classroom assignments, storytelling, and other learning experiences” as ways to introduce those values (participant T2). Classroom observations recorded student discussion and collaborative tasks after storytelling. Lesson plans documented the selection of stories with moral dilemmas. These sources show how teachers used narratives to prompt discussion of values.

### *Arts, games, and visits as participatory learning*

Traditional dance, Javanese songs, cultural performances, and art workshops appeared in teacher accounts, observations, and school activity reports. During dance rehearsals, observers recorded students helping peers and following shared rules. Teachers also described visits to traditional markets, artisan workshops, historical sites, and cultural centers. T3 explained that visits gave students “authentic opportunities to experience local values firsthand.” Observation notes recorded questions to artisans and vendors and reflective assignments after visits. Table 3 summarizes the activities, associated values, and supporting evidence.

**Table 3.** Cultural activities, values identified, and supporting evidence

| Cultural learning activity              | Character values identified                                  | Evidence from observations and documents                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local cultural storytelling             | Cooperation, respect, responsibility                         | Teachers selected local stories containing moral dilemmas, followed by reflective classroom discussions recorded in lesson plans.                         |
| Local language integration              | Cultural identity, mutual respect, appreciation of diversity | Teachers consistently used Javanese vocabulary during classroom interactions and encouraged students to communicate respectfully using local expressions. |
| Visits to historical and cultural sites | Cultural awareness, responsibility, appreciation of heritage | Observation records documented teacher-guided discussions at historical sites followed by students' reflective presentations.                             |
| Collaboration with local communities    | Cooperation, empathy, civic responsibility                   | School activity reports documented collaborative projects involving artisans, traditional markets, and local cultural practitioners.                      |

#### *Teachers as facilitators of cultural participation*

Teachers connected cultural materials with lesson goals and organized student participation. T5 described teaching traditional songs, dances, and folktales while involving parents in learning activities. Lesson plans and annual programs corroborated planned use of local examples. T4 reported that proximity to arts and culture sites helped the school use the surrounding area as a learning setting. These accounts explain how access to local resources shaped implementation, although the study did not compare teacher workload or resource constraints systematically.

#### *Complementary roles of school, family, and community*

Participants described schools as providing structured lessons, families as introducing values through daily interaction, and communities as providing sites for direct participation. Annual plans, meeting minutes, and activity reports documented cultural events and visits involving parents and practitioners. P1 associated these partnerships with students' enthusiasm and described visits to markets and craft centers. [Table 4](#) summarizes the complementary contributions described across these settings.

**Table 4.** Contributions of family, school, and community

| Setting   | Primary Contribution                                                 | Character Values Associated                                                    | Examples from Blitar Local Culture                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family    | Introducing local cultural identity through daily family practices   | Respect, responsibility, discipline, empathy                                   | Using the polite Javanese speech register (krama) when speaking with elders, participating in family religious gatherings, and mutual assistance (gotong royong) activities. |
| School    | Integrating local wisdom into classroom learning and school programs | Cooperation, responsibility, democratic participation, appreciation of culture | Storytelling, traditional games, regional songs, classroom discussions, and cultural performances.                                                                           |
| Community | Providing authentic environments for experiential learning           | Honesty, cooperation, civic responsibility, environmental awareness            | Educational visits to traditional markets, cultural festivals, historical sites, artisan workshops, and community cultural centers.                                          |

## Discussion

### *Cultural knowledge and classroom practice*

Across the three cases, cultural content became part of character education through lesson planning, shared activities, and reflection. Studies of culturally sustaining pedagogy likewise emphasize that community knowledge must remain connected to the people who sustain it [26]. Research on multicultural character and culturally responsive teaching offers parallel examples of connecting local traditions to values education [27]. Here, the evidence is more precise about implementation than effectiveness: it traces what students did, what adults reported, and what schools recorded.

Stories and games created occasions to discuss rules and social obligations, while dance and music required coordination with peers. Studies of musical activities and children's prosocial behavior suggest plausible developmental pathways, but those studies used other designs and populations [28], [29]. Work on elementary-school traditional games similarly supports their pedagogical potential [30]. The present observations are consistent with these pathways and cannot independently establish changes in prosocial behavior. The difference between an opportunity to practice a value and a measured change in that value should remain explicit.

### *Community visits and structured reflection*

Community visits added an experiential dimension. Research on primary-school experiential learning emphasizes experience and reflection [31], while a study of prospective elementary-school teachers examines an instructional strategy for developing creative character [32]. These

studies address different aspects of learning and do not establish the effectiveness of the Blitar visits. In the present cases, post-visit assignments and teacher-guided conversations show how visits were incorporated into lessons.

### *Participation and equity in school partnerships*

The family–school–community pattern also raises a question of equity. Research in Yogyakarta has shown that parental participation is shaped by families’ material circumstances, and work on parent–community collaboration identifies the institutional coordination required to maintain shared programs [33], [34]. A rural partnership model similarly treats participation as a matter of voice and access [35]. Although the present cases involved six parents and several educational roles, the study did not document participants’ gender-specific responsibilities or time use. The distribution of caregiving and organizing responsibilities remains an open question.

### *Educator support and program sustainability*

The wider literature raises questions about the demands placed on educators and the sustainability of collective action. A study of women teachers’ digital stress points to the importance of educator wellbeing [36], while research on teacher readiness highlights professional support for new pedagogical demands [37]. Research on community participation in Indonesian value-based initiatives provides a wider context for collective action [38]. These studies address different populations and questions; they frame future inquiry into cultural education work without demonstrating welfare gains in the Blitar cases.

### *Developmental differences and future assessment*

Children’s values vary by developmental stage, and digital media can alter the environments in which young people socialize [39], [40]. This makes sustained, context-sensitive assessment preferable to broad claims that a local-culture program counters globalization. Future work could combine observation over time with student and caregiver accounts, document the resources needed to participate, and examine whether learning experiences differ by gender, disability, socioeconomic position, and school setting. Such a design could test the interpretive explanations proposed here while respecting the distinct practices of each locality.

## CONCLUSION

In three Blitar elementary schools, local wisdom entered character education through stories and language in lessons, participatory arts and games, visits to community sites, and coordination among schools, parents, and cultural practitioners. Interviews, observations, and documents support a description of these interconnected practices and of the values participants associated with them. The study contributes an account of how schools organized cultural learning across settings. It does not demonstrate a causal improvement in character or specify the gendered distribution of the work required to sustain these activities.

## LIMITATIONS

The purposive sample comprised three schools and 27 participants, limiting transferability to comparable settings. The study record does not specify observation frequency or duration, document sampling rules, or how contradictory evidence was examined. It also provides limited detail on how the research team reconciled interpretations during coding. Character outcomes were not measured longitudinally, so reported benefits cannot establish lasting behavioral change. Gender and caregiver workload were not recorded, restricting analysis of equity in school–family partnerships.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

T.N.C. Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, and writing – original draft. Y.E.Y Research instrument development, investigation, validation, and formal analysis. H.R. Conceptual framework development, supervision, and writing – review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the work.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

ChatGPT assisted with language editing, manuscript organization, and reference formatting. The authors retain responsibility for the accuracy of the content, verification of citations and study records, and approval of the final manuscript.

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