



Implementation of Student Character Education in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of character education in public elementary schools and to develop a model for character strengthening based on local culture. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving teachers, school principals, and parents. The results indicate that character education in elementary schools has not been systematically integrated into the curriculum and learning activities. Teachers have not fully assumed the role of value facilitators, and parental involvement remains limited. The rich local culture of Buton, which embodies moral values such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and *gotong royong*, has not been explicitly utilized as a resource for character learning. This study proposes a model of character education based on local culture, comprising five main components: an integrated curriculum, teacher role modeling, contextual learning, school-parent partnerships, and character evaluation based on local values. These findings are expected to provide a practical contribution to the development of contextual, sustainable character education that is deeply rooted in regional cultural identity.

Keywords: Character Education, Local Culture, Elementary School, Contextual Model

1. Introduction

Character education is a fundamental foundation for shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also possesses integrity, empathy, and social responsibility. Amid the forces of globalization and digitalization, the challenges to developing children's character have become increasingly complex. Phenomena such as bullying, intolerance, and low social ethics among elementary school students indicate that character education has not yet been fully internalized in learning practices. At Public Elementary School 24 Buton, which exists within a rich local cultural context but also faces limited resources, the implementation of character education is crucial. The school has significant potential to integrate Buton cultural values such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong* into character learning (Yusnan, 2025). However, this potential has not yet been systematically and measurably utilized. In the

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implementation of character education at Public Elementary School 24 Buton, there is a significant gap between the ideal conditions expected theoretically and normatively and the reality on the ground. Ideally, character education should be integrated across all subjects and school activities so that values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance are consistently instilled throughout the learning process. In reality, however, at SDN 24 Buton, such integration remains incidental and unstructured, preventing character education from becoming a cohesive part of the curriculum and daily student activities.

The role of teachers as character models also shows a notable gap. Ideally, teachers function as exemplars of character values and facilitators of students' moral development. However, at SDN 24 Buton, teachers have not fully assumed this role due to limited training and professional support, making them unable to consistently model character for students. Moreover, collaboration between the school and parents, which should work synergistically to support children's character education, remains minimal. Communication between the two parties is not intensive, resulting in a misalignment between the values taught at school and those practiced at home. Another aspect that highlights the existing gap is the utilization of local culture as a resource for character learning. Ideally, local values such as *gotong royong*, respect for parents, and the local wisdom of Buton could serve as contextual teaching materials that strengthen students' identity. However, in practice, local culture has not been explicitly integrated into learning. The integration of local culture not only enriches character education content but also reinforces students' attachment to their community's noble values. These gaps indicate the need for a more systematic, contextual, and participatory approach in designing character education that is relevant to the social and cultural conditions at SDN 24 Buton.

Character education, as an integral component of the national education system, plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral and social development. According to the framework proposed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendiknas, 2011), character education is not limited to cognitive development but also encompasses essential values such as religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, and responsibility. These values are expected to be internalized by students through continuous and meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, character education must be systematically integrated into all aspects of schooling to ensure that students develop not only academically but also ethically and socially. To achieve its objectives effectively, character education requires a holistic and contextual approach. This means that the implementation should not be confined to formal classroom instruction but must extend to students' daily interactions and real-life experiences both within and beyond the school environment. Schools are expected to create a supportive atmosphere where positive values are consistently modeled and reinforced through various activities, including collaborative learning, extracurricular programs, and school culture. In this way, students are provided with authentic opportunities to practice and internalize character values in meaningful contexts.

The role of teachers is central to the successful implementation of character education. As emphasized by Suprayekti (2004), teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also act as role models, mentors, and facilitators of moral development. Through their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with students, teachers significantly influence the formation of students' character. Effective teachers consciously integrate character values into their teaching

practices, encourage reflective thinking, and guide students in making ethical decisions. This highlights the importance of teacher professionalism and commitment in fostering a positive and value-based learning environment. Furthermore, the success of character education depends on the collaboration between schools, families, and the wider community. Support from all stakeholders ensures that the values taught at school are consistently reinforced in different environments. When parents, teachers, and community members share a common understanding and commitment to character development, students are more likely to internalize these values and demonstrate them in their daily lives. Thus, character education becomes a shared responsibility that contributes to the holistic development of individuals and the creation of a morally grounded society.

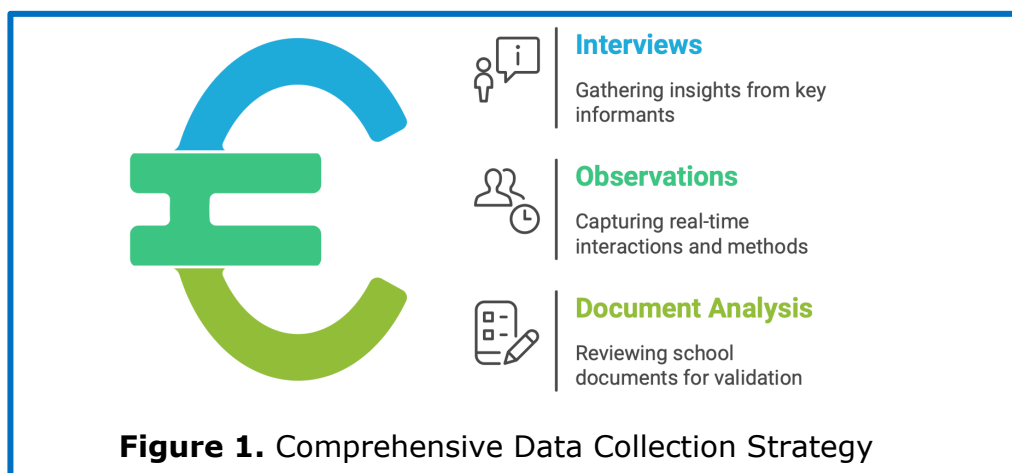
Character education in Indonesia has received strong support from various theories and research findings that emphasize the importance of a holistic and contextual approach. The Character Education Theory formulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendiknas, 2011) states that character education should encompass religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, and responsibility. Effective implementation requires more than just delivering content; it must address all aspects of students' lives, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Suprayekti (2004) reinforces this view by emphasizing that teachers are the primary agents in the success of character education. Teachers not only act as instructors but also as mentors and shapers of social values, supported by the broader school and community environment. Research by Ambarsari et al. (2022) indicates that the success of character education in elementary schools largely depends on academic integrity, reinforcement of moral and spiritual values, and effective management of teachers and students. This study also highlights the strategic role of technology in character learning, which should be guided through the development of an adaptive curriculum. Meanwhile, the study by Febriantina et al. (2022) reveals that character education can be effectively implemented through contextual learning, social activities, and problem-based approaches. These methods encourage students to think critically, develop empathy, and make ethical decisions in daily life. These findings provide a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for developing a character education model that is relevant to the local context, such as the one being designed for SDN 24 Buton.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, focusing on Public Elementary School 24 Buton as the research site. The school was selected purposively due to its local cultural characteristics, which are relevant to the focus on character education. The interview guidelines were designed to comprehensively explore the implementation of character education at SDN 24 Buton. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with several key focuses: informants' understanding of character education concepts, strategies used in teaching, the involvement of local culture in the educational process, and the challenges and supports encountered during implementation. The questions were structured to capture diverse perspectives from teachers, the school principal, and parents, in order to obtain a complete and contextual picture.

Informants were asked to provide detailed descriptions of the actual practices they implement or observe in the daily context of teaching and

learning, particularly in relation to character education. They were encouraged to elaborate on various aspects of their professional and social engagement, including the specific teaching methods they employ in the classroom, the ways in which they model and exemplify desired character traits, and the range of school activities designed to support the holistic development of students’ moral and social values. In addition to classroom practices, informants were prompted to reflect on interactions that occur between the school and students’ families, including communication patterns, collaborative efforts, and parental involvement in reinforcing character education at home. Moreover, the interviews were structured to explore the integration of Buton cultural values, such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and *gotong royong*, into the educational process. Participants were asked to discuss the potential of these cultural values to support the formation of students’ character, how they have been incorporated into lessons or school activities, and any challenges or limitations encountered in doing so.



Data for this study were collected through multiple methods to ensure depth and triangulation. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including teachers, the school principal, and parents. The interview questions were designed to explore their understanding of character education, teaching strategies, integration of local culture, and the challenges and supports encountered in practice. Observations were conducted in classrooms and school activities to capture real-time interactions, teaching methods, and student responses. Additionally, relevant school documents, such as curriculum plans, lesson plans, and activity records, were collected to supplement and validate the information from interviews and observations. The combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis allowed the researchers to obtain a comprehensive and contextual understanding of character education implementation at SDN 24 Buton. The purposive selection of participants and activities ensured that the data reflected diverse perspectives and accurately represented the local cultural context. This multi-method approach provided a strong foundation for analyzing the integration of Buton cultural values into the character education process and identifying areas for improvement.

The data collected in this study were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and field notes and documents were organized systematically to allow for thorough examination. Data were coded inductively, with initial codes reflecting key

themes related to character education implementation, teacher role modeling, parental involvement, and the utilization of local cultural values. These codes were then grouped into categories that captured patterns and relationships within the data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was applied across multiple data sources and methods. Observational data and document reviews were used to corroborate and clarify information obtained from interviews. Throughout the analysis process, the researchers maintained a reflective and iterative approach, constantly comparing emerging findings with the theoretical framework of character education and local cultural values. This systematic analysis allowed the researchers to develop a nuanced understanding of both the successes and gaps in implementing culturally-based character education at SDN 24 Buton.

3. Findings and Discussion

The expected outcomes of this study are the development of a detailed and factual depiction of the implementation of character education at Public Elementary School 24 Buton, as revealed through observations, interviews, and document analysis. Through descriptive data analysis, the study aims to identify existing character education practices, including forms of teacher role modeling, the integration of values within the curriculum, and the dynamics of communication and collaboration between the school and parents. In addition, the results of interviews and observations are expected to uncover the main challenges faced by the school, such as limited teacher training, the suboptimal utilization of local cultural resources, and insufficient synergy among stakeholders. More specifically, the study aims to develop a conceptual model of character education that is grounded in local culture and relevant to the social and cultural context of Buton. This model is expected to include strategies for contextualized learning, engagement with traditional leaders or cultural figures, and character evaluation indicators aligned with local values such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*. The final outcomes of this research are anticipated to provide both academic contributions to the development of contextual character education theory and practical recommendations for teachers, school principals, and policymakers in designing more meaningful, sustainable, and culturally rooted character education programs. By bridging theoretical insights with the realities of local practice, the study seeks to support the creation of character education that not only strengthens moral and social development among students but also fosters a deeper connection to the region's cultural heritage.

3.1 Findings

The findings of this study reveal several important insights regarding the implementation of character education at SDN 24 Buton. First, while various practices such as teacher role modeling, classroom activities, and school programs have been applied to promote character development, the integration of character values into the curriculum is still incidental and lacks systematic structure across subjects and learning processes. Second, local cultural values of Buton, including *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*, hold significant potential to enrich character education; however, these values are not yet fully or explicitly incorporated into teaching practices, limiting their impact on students' moral development and cultural identity. Third, several challenges hinder effective implementation, including limited professional

training for teachers, minimal collaboration between school and parents, and insufficient engagement of community and cultural figures. These findings indicate a clear need for a more holistic, contextual, and participatory approach that not only strengthens moral and social development among students but also integrates local cultural values as a central component of character education, creating a learning environment that is meaningful, sustainable, and culturally rooted.

Integration of Character Values in School Practices

The study found that character education at SDN 24 Buton has been implemented in multiple forms, reflecting a strong awareness among teachers and school administrators of the importance of moral and social development. One of the primary strategies observed was teacher role modeling, where educators consciously demonstrated values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation in their interactions with students. This approach allows students to observe and internalize moral behaviors directly, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge of values and their practical application. Teachers also encouraged positive behaviors through reinforcement and feedback, which created a classroom environment conducive to the gradual cultivation of character traits. In addition to role modeling, various classroom activities were organized to promote character development. These activities included group work, collaborative problem-solving, storytelling, and project-based learning, which provided students with opportunities to practice social skills, ethical decision-making, and mutual respect. Extracurricular programs, such as school ceremonies, community service projects, and cultural events, also served as platforms for students to apply character values in real-life contexts. Such activities not only reinforced academic learning but also allowed for the experiential development of social and moral competencies, demonstrating that character education extended beyond formal lessons into broader school life.

Despite these efforts, the study revealed that the integration of character values into the formal curriculum remains incidental. While some subjects occasionally include discussions of honesty, responsibility, or cooperation, these themes are not systematically embedded across all learning areas. The absence of a structured framework means that the reinforcement of character values can be inconsistent, relying heavily on individual teacher initiative rather than a coordinated school-wide plan. Consequently, students' exposure to character education varies depending on the teacher, subject, or specific classroom context, which may limit the overall effectiveness and sustainability of value formation. Furthermore, the lack of systematic integration also affects the alignment between instructional content, school activities, and assessment. Character education is often treated as a supplementary component rather than an essential dimension of the curriculum, making it difficult to monitor progress or evaluate students' development comprehensively. This gap underscores the need for a more coherent and strategic approach that ensures character values are explicitly included in lesson plans, teaching materials, and assessment tools. By doing so, SDN 24 Buton could create a consistent and structured framework for character education that permeates all aspects of the curriculum, ensuring that moral and social development becomes an integral and enduring part of students' educational experiences.

Tabel 1. Implementation of character education

No	Interview Question	Teacher's Response
1	How do you understand the concept of character education in your classroom?	"I see character education as teaching students not only academic knowledge but also values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect. It is about shaping their behavior and attitudes in everyday interactions."
2	What strategies do you use to integrate character values into your lessons?	"I try to use role modeling, group activities, and storytelling to convey values. For example, in group work, I encourage cooperation and mutual respect, and I give examples of ethical decision-making through stories or real-life cases."
3	How do you involve local cultural values, such as <i>kabanti</i> and <i>gotong royong</i> , in teaching character?	"I sometimes include local traditions in class discussions and activities, like explaining the importance of helping others or respecting elders. However, it is not done systematically across all subjects yet."
4	What challenges do you face in implementing character education?	"One challenge is the limited time and resources. Sometimes it is difficult to cover all subjects while also consistently reinforcing character values. Another challenge is coordinating with parents to ensure values are supported at home."
5	How do you assess or evaluate students' character development?	"I observe students' behavior during classroom activities, school programs, and interactions with peers. I give feedback individually, but there is no formal or structured assessment system yet for character development."

The interview responses presented in the table illustrate the teachers' understanding and practical implementation of character education at SDN 24 Buton. Teachers generally perceive character education as an integral part of the learning process, aiming not only to impart academic knowledge but also to instill values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect. Various strategies are employed to integrate these values into classroom instruction, including role modeling, group activities, storytelling, and project-based learning. These approaches allow students to experience moral and social values in a practical context, reinforcing the connection between theoretical concepts and everyday behavior. Additionally, teachers reported incorporating elements of local culture, such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*, into classroom discussions and activities, although such integration remains sporadic and not yet systematic across all subjects. The responses also highlight the challenges and limitations faced by teachers in implementing character education effectively. Key challenges include limited time and teaching resources, inconsistent collaboration with parents, and the absence of a structured evaluation system for students' moral and social development. Teachers often rely on observation and informal feedback to assess character growth, which may not provide a comprehensive or standardized measure of students' progress. Despite these challenges, the interviews reveal teachers' strong commitment to fostering character development and their recognition of the potential of culturally grounded education. These insights emphasize the

need for a more systematic, contextually relevant, and participatory framework that integrates local cultural values into all aspects of school life, ensuring that character education becomes a consistent and sustainable component of students' learning experiences.

Utilization of Local Cultural Values

Local cultural values of Buton, such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*, embody a rich foundation of ethical and social principles that have long guided community life. These values are not merely traditional concepts but are deeply embedded in daily practices and social interactions within the community. As a form of local wisdom, they function as moral guidelines that shape individuals' attitudes and behaviors, ensuring harmony and cohesion in society. In the context of education, these cultural values provide meaningful resources for developing students' character in ways that are both relevant and contextually grounded. The value of *kabanti* emphasizes integrity and honesty, encouraging individuals to act truthfully and uphold moral responsibility in all aspects of life. This principle fosters trust and accountability, which are essential components of positive social interaction. When integrated into educational settings, *kabanti* can help students develop a strong sense of ethical awareness, guiding them to make responsible decisions and maintain consistency between words and actions. Thus, it contributes significantly to the formation of students' moral character.

Kaghati highlights the importance of empathy, compassion, and care for others. This value nurtures interpersonal sensitivity and encourages individuals to understand and respect the feelings and needs of others. In the learning environment, the application of *kaghati* can promote inclusive and supportive interactions among students, reducing conflicts and enhancing cooperation. By cultivating empathy, students are better equipped to build positive relationships and contribute to a harmonious social environment. In addition, the spirit of *gotong royong* reflects cooperation, mutual assistance, and collective effort, which are fundamental in strengthening social bonds within the community. This value teaches the importance of working together toward common goals and prioritizing collective well-being over individual interests. When incorporated into educational practices, such as group activities and collaborative learning, *gotong royong* can enhance students' teamwork skills and sense of responsibility toward others. Overall, these Buton cultural values are closely aligned with the objectives of character education, offering a culturally rooted framework to support students' moral, social, and emotional development.

The research revealed that although teachers and school administrators recognize the importance of these cultural values, they are not yet systematically or explicitly integrated into teaching and learning activities. Classroom instruction tends to focus predominantly on academic content, while character education is often addressed informally or incidentally. As a result, the potential for these local cultural principles to reinforce students' moral reasoning, social behavior, and ethical decision-making remains largely untapped. This gap indicates that students may miss opportunities to connect their personal development with the cultural heritage and collective wisdom of their community. Furthermore, the lack of explicit integration of local values affects both curriculum design and classroom practice. Teachers may occasionally reference *kabanti* or *gotong royong* during discussions or activities, but there is

no structured framework to ensure that these values are consistently reinforced across subjects or school programs. Without intentional planning, students' exposure to these cultural principles is inconsistent and dependent on individual teacher initiative, which may lead to uneven understanding and internalization of these important social and moral values. This limitation highlights the need for curriculum strategies that explicitly incorporate local culture as an integral component of character education.

Integrating Buton cultural values into the school curriculum not only strengthens character education but also fosters students' cultural identity and sense of belonging. By systematically embedding values such as honesty, empathy, and mutual cooperation into lesson plans, classroom activities, and school-wide programs, educators can provide students with repeated, meaningful opportunities to practice these principles in diverse contexts. Such integration would create a learning environment that is both morally and culturally enriching, bridging the gap between formal education and the lived cultural experience of the community. Ultimately, leveraging local cultural values in character education can contribute to the formation of well-rounded students who are ethically aware, socially responsible, and deeply connected to their cultural heritage.

Tabel 2. Utilization of Local Cultural Values

No	Interview Question	Teacher's Response
1	How do you understand the concept of character education in your classroom?	"Character education is not just about teaching academic knowledge. It involves guiding students to develop values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect in their daily interactions both inside and outside the classroom."
2	What strategies do you use to integrate character values into your teaching?	"I apply role modeling, group discussions, storytelling, and project-based activities. For instance, in group work, I encourage students to cooperate, share responsibilities, and resolve conflicts respectfully."
3	How do you incorporate local cultural values such as <i>kabanti</i> , <i>kaghati</i> , and <i>gotong royong</i> in your teaching?	"I occasionally include local traditions in classroom discussions and activities. For example, I explain <i>gotong royong</i> through collaborative classroom projects, but it is not yet consistently applied across all subjects."
4	What challenges do you face in implementing character education?	"Challenges include limited time in the schedule, lack of structured training on character education, and inconsistent collaboration with parents, which sometimes makes it difficult to reinforce values at home."
5	How do you evaluate or assess students' character development?	"I mostly observe students' behavior during lessons and school activities, giving feedback individually. There is no formal or standardized assessment system for character development yet, which makes evaluation less consistent."

The interview responses presented in the table provide insight into the teachers' perspectives and practices regarding character education at SDN 24 Buton. Teachers generally understand character education as an integral part of

the learning process that goes beyond academic instruction to include the cultivation of values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect. They employ a variety of strategies to embed these values into classroom instruction, including role modeling, group discussions, storytelling, and project-based learning. These approaches allow students to observe, practice, and internalize moral and social behaviors in real-life contexts. Teachers also reported occasional incorporation of local cultural values, such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*, into teaching and activities, although this integration is not yet consistent across all subjects. The findings reveal that, although character education is widely recognized as important, its implementation still faces several significant challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the limited instructional time available within the school schedule. Teachers are often required to prioritize academic content, which reduces opportunities to explicitly integrate character-building activities into daily lessons. As a result, character education is frequently delivered implicitly rather than through structured and intentional programs.

Another major challenge is the lack of structured and continuous teacher training related to character education. Many teachers have not received adequate professional development on how to design, implement, and evaluate character-based learning effectively. This limitation affects their ability to apply diverse and innovative strategies that can meaningfully engage students in moral and social learning. Consequently, the implementation of character education tends to rely heavily on individual teacher initiative rather than a well-supported institutional framework. In addition, insufficient collaboration between schools and parents presents a critical barrier. Character education requires consistency between what students learn at school and what they experience at home. However, communication and cooperation between teachers and parents are often not optimal, leading to inconsistencies in value reinforcement. Without strong parental involvement, efforts made by schools to instill positive character traits may not be fully sustained in students' daily lives.

The assessment of students' character development also remains a challenge. Teachers predominantly rely on observation and informal feedback to evaluate students' attitudes and behaviors. While these methods provide valuable insights, they are often subjective and lack standardization. The absence of formal evaluation tools or clear assessment guidelines makes it difficult to measure progress systematically and to ensure fairness and consistency in evaluation practices. Despite these constraints, the findings highlight teachers' strong commitment to fostering character development among students. Teachers continue to integrate moral values into their teaching practices, serve as role models, and create opportunities for students to practice positive behaviors. Their dedication demonstrates an awareness of the importance of character education in shaping well-rounded individuals, even in the face of structural and institutional limitations. Furthermore, the interviews indicate that teachers recognize the potential of culturally grounded education as an effective approach to character development. By incorporating local cultural values into the learning process, teachers believe that students can better relate to and internalize moral principles. This approach not only strengthens students' cultural identity but also makes character education more meaningful and relevant to their daily experiences.

These findings suggest the need for a more systematic and well-designed framework for character education. Such a framework should include clear guidelines, structured training programs for teachers, and the development of standardized assessment tools. By providing adequate support and resources, schools can enhance the effectiveness and consistency of character education practices across different contexts. Finally, there is a strong need for a contextual and participatory approach that actively involves all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the wider community. Integrating local cultural values into the educational process can serve as a powerful foundation for this approach. When character education is implemented collaboratively and consistently across the school environment and beyond, it can more effectively support students' moral, social, and emotional development.

Challenges and Stakeholder Involvement

The study identified that one of the primary challenges in implementing character education at SDN 24 Buton is the limited training and professional development available to teachers. While teachers understand the importance of character education, many reported that they have not received sufficient guidance or formal training on effective methods for integrating values into the curriculum and classroom activities. This limitation affects their confidence and consistency in delivering character education, resulting in varied implementation across different classrooms. Teachers often rely on personal experience or informal strategies, which may not systematically address all aspects of moral, social, and emotional development for students. Another significant challenge is the insufficient collaboration between the school and parents in supporting character education. Although teachers recognize that parental involvement is essential for reinforcing values outside the classroom, communication and partnership between home and school are often limited. Parents may be unaware of the specific character values emphasized in school or lack strategies to support these values at home. This gap reduces the overall effectiveness of character education, as students receive inconsistent messages about moral and social behavior, and the reinforcement of values is not continuous across school and family environments.

The study also found that engagement with community members and cultural figures is minimal, which limits the potential for culturally grounded character education. Local leaders, traditional elders, and community organizations could play a vital role in teaching students about the cultural and moral heritage of Buton, providing concrete examples of values such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and *gotong royong*. However, these resources are underutilized, and opportunities for students to experience character education within the broader cultural context of their community remain limited. This lack of integration diminishes the cultural relevance and depth of the character education program. These gaps collectively indicate the need for a more systematic, contextual, and participatory approach to character education at SDN 24 Buton. A structured framework that provides professional training for teachers, strengthens partnerships with parents, and actively involves community and cultural figures could enhance the consistency and effectiveness of character development initiatives. By aligning character education with the social and cultural realities of the students, schools can ensure that values are reinforced both in the classroom and the community, creating a holistic and

sustainable environment for moral and social growth. Such an approach would not only improve the implementation of character education but also foster students' sense of identity, cultural awareness, and social responsibility.

Tabel 3. Challenges and Stakeholder Involvement

No	Interview Question	Teacher's Response
1	How do you perceive the role of character education in your classroom?	"Character education is central to my teaching. I aim to guide students to be responsible, honest, empathetic, and respectful, not only academically but also in their daily behavior and interactions."
2	What methods do you use to integrate character values into lessons?	"I use role modeling, group activities, storytelling, and problem-solving tasks. For instance, in group assignments, students practice cooperation and conflict resolution, which strengthens moral and social skills."
3	How do you incorporate Buton cultural values, such as <i>kabanti</i> , <i>kaghati</i> , and <i>gotong royong</i> , into learning activities?	"I include cultural stories and examples during lessons and activities, such as explaining <i>gotong royong</i> through collaborative classroom projects. However, this is done occasionally and not yet consistently across all subjects."
4	What challenges do you face in teaching character education?	"Challenges include limited training, insufficient time within the curriculum, and lack of active involvement from parents and the community, which sometimes makes it difficult to reinforce values consistently."
5	How do you assess students' character development?	"I mainly observe students' behavior in class and during school programs and provide individual feedback. There is no formal or structured assessment system yet, so evaluations are informal and subjective."

The interview responses in the table provide a comprehensive view of how teachers at SDN 24 Buton understand and implement character education in their daily teaching practices. Teachers generally perceive character education as an essential component of schooling that goes beyond academic instruction, focusing on the development of values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect. To integrate these values into learning, teachers employ various strategies including role modeling, collaborative group activities, storytelling, and problem-solving exercises. These methods allow students to practice moral and social behaviors in meaningful contexts, reinforcing the connection between theoretical concepts and real-life application. Teachers also attempt to incorporate local cultural values, such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*, although this integration is often inconsistent and depends largely on individual teacher initiative. The responses also highlight several challenges faced by teachers in effectively implementing character education. Limited professional training, insufficient collaboration with parents, and minimal engagement of community or cultural figures were identified as major obstacles. These gaps affect both the consistency and the impact of character education, as reinforcement of values may not extend beyond the classroom.

Teachers predominantly rely on observation and informal feedback to assess students' character development. This approach allows educators to

capture authentic behaviors as they occur naturally in classroom interactions and school activities. Through daily observation, teachers can identify patterns in students' attitudes, such as cooperation, honesty, and responsibility. However, while this method provides valuable qualitative insights, it often lacks clear criteria and measurable indicators, making the assessment process subjective and less consistent. The absence of a standardized evaluation system further complicates the assessment of character education outcomes. Without formal instruments or structured guidelines, teachers may interpret students' behaviors differently, leading to variations in judgment and reporting. This limitation not only affects the reliability of assessment results but also makes it difficult to track students' progress over time in a systematic manner. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of character education programs becomes challenging to evaluate comprehensively.

Despite these challenges, the findings highlight a strong commitment among teachers to fostering students' moral and social development. Teachers consistently strive to integrate character values into their teaching practices, whether through modeling positive behavior, guiding student interactions, or embedding moral lessons within academic content. Their dedication reflects a deep understanding that education extends beyond cognitive achievement and must also nurture ethical and social competencies. Moreover, the interviews reveal teachers' awareness of the potential benefits of culturally grounded education. By incorporating local cultural values into the learning process, teachers believe that character education can become more meaningful and relevant to students' lived experiences. Cultural values serve as familiar references that help students internalize moral principles more effectively, while also strengthening their sense of identity and belonging within their community.

These insights underscore the need for a more structured approach to character education. Developing clear frameworks, standardized assessment tools, and practical guidelines can support teachers in implementing and evaluating character-based learning more effectively. Structured systems would not only enhance consistency but also provide a basis for continuous improvement in teaching practices and student outcomes. Finally, a contextually relevant and participatory approach is essential to ensure the success of character education. This approach should actively involve teachers, students, parents, and the wider community in a collaborative effort to reinforce shared values. By fully integrating local culture and ensuring consistent reinforcement of moral principles across different environments, character education can more effectively contribute to students' holistic development, encompassing moral, social, and emotional dimensions.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of character education at SDN 24 Buton remains suboptimal and tends to be incidental rather than systematically integrated. This observation aligns with the theory proposed by Kemendiknas (2011), which emphasizes the necessity of a holistic and contextual approach to character education. The lack of integration of character values into the curriculum and learning materials at SDN 24 Buton suggests that character education has not yet been designed as a structured component of the teaching and learning process. This situation highlights the urgent need for curriculum revision and the strengthening of teachers' roles as facilitators of

moral and social values. The role of teachers as exemplars of character has also not been fully realized. Teachers have not received specialized training in character education, particularly that which is grounded in local culture. According to Suprayekti (2004), teachers are central actors in shaping students' character; they are not only educators but also guides and mentors in instilling social and moral values. The absence of targeted professional development makes it difficult for teachers to design lessons that effectively internalize values in a deep and meaningful way. This underscores the importance of providing training programs that focus on contextualized strategies for character education, enabling teachers to serve as consistent role models and facilitators of moral development.

Another significant finding is the gap between the values taught at school and those practiced at home. Limited communication and collaboration between the school and parents lead to inconsistencies in moral guidance, causing students to receive conflicting messages regarding ethical and social behavior. Ambarsari et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of school-family partnerships in shaping children's character. Therefore, establishing forums for value-based communication and actively involving parents in school activities are strategies that need to be developed to ensure alignment and continuity of moral education. Furthermore, the potential of Buton local culture as a source of character education remains underutilized. Values such as cooperation (*gotong royong*), respect for elders, and social politeness embedded in *kabanti* and *kaghati* traditions possess strong pedagogical potential. However, there has been no systematic effort to integrate these values into classroom teaching and learning activities. Febriantina et al. (2022) suggest that contextualized character education grounded in local culture is more effective in shaping students' understanding and attitudes. These findings highlight the opportunity to develop a culturally based character education model that leverages local traditions to promote moral, social, and cultural development among students.

School activities such as art competitions, environmental cleanliness programs, and celebrations of national or cultural holidays hold significant potential as media for character education. However, because these activities are often conducted without explicit objectives related to character development, the values embedded within them are not optimally internalized by students. This observation underscores the need for intentionally designed school programs that are value-based and structured to actively cultivate students' moral, social, and civic competencies. By aligning extracurricular and co-curricular activities with specific character goals, schools can create meaningful opportunities for students to practice and embody ethical principles in authentic contexts. Reflective and experiential learning has been shown to be particularly effective in fostering students' understanding of character values. When students engage in discussions about moral lessons within traditional stories or write reflections on their social experiences, they develop a deeper comprehension of values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy. This approach reinforces the idea that character education cannot be limited to theoretical instruction alone; rather, it must be experienced, reflected upon, and internalized. Through active participation and critical reflection, students are able to connect abstract moral concepts to their own lived experiences, thereby strengthening both understanding and application of ethical behavior.

The conceptual model of character education developed in this study encompasses five key components: an integrated curriculum, teacher role modeling, contextualized learning activities, school-parent partnerships, and culturally grounded character assessment. This model is designed to address the gap between the ideal and the real implementation of character education, providing a structured framework that aligns with the social and cultural context of Buton. Each component contributes to creating a holistic educational environment where character formation is systematically reinforced and culturally relevant, ensuring that students not only learn values but also live them in daily interactions at school and in the community. Proposed implementation strategies include culture-based teacher training, development of local character education modules, engagement of traditional leaders, and establishment of value-focused communication forums between school and parents. These strategies are intended to strengthen students' cultural identity while cultivating resilient and adaptable character traits that can respond to contemporary challenges. Academically, this research enriches the study of character education by demonstrating the effectiveness of a contextual, culturally grounded approach. Practically, it provides concrete recommendations for schools and policymakers to design meaningful and sustainable character education programs. By integrating local cultural values into the education system, schools not only develop students with strong character but also nurture agents of cultural preservation and contributors to a civilized, morally conscious society.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that the implementation of character education at SDN 24 Buton has been carried out in various forms, including teacher role modeling, classroom activities, and school programs. However, the integration of character values into the curriculum and learning materials remains incidental and lacks systematic planning. This situation highlights the need for a more structured and coherent approach, ensuring that character education is embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning rather than being treated as a supplementary component. Strengthening the role of teachers as facilitators and exemplars of moral and social values is crucial for creating a consistent and effective character education framework. Another important conclusion is that the potential of local cultural values, such as *kabanti*, *kaghati*, and the spirit of *gotong royong*, has not been fully leveraged to support character development. While teachers recognize the importance of these values, their integration into teaching and learning remains sporadic and informal. Reflective and experiential learning, coupled with the deliberate incorporation of cultural principles, has been shown to enhance students' understanding and internalization of ethical and social values. Therefore, embedding local culture systematically within the curriculum and school activities is essential to foster both moral development and cultural identity among students. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for a holistic, contextual, and participatory approach to character education that actively involves teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. Strategies such as culture-based teacher training, development of local character modules, engagement of traditional leaders, and structured school-parent communication are vital to strengthen the implementation of character education. By adopting these measures, SDN 24 Buton can develop students who are not only academically competent but also morally responsible, socially aware, culturally

grounded, and capable of adapting to contemporary challenges, ultimately contributing to the creation of a sustainable and value-driven educational environment.

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