



Exploring the Role of North Sulawesi's Local Culture in Shaping National Identity and Character Education Among Students

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-06-10 Revised: 2025-07-20 Published: 2025-08-08 Keywords: <i>Local Culture; Character Education; National Identity; Students; North Sulawesi.</i>	Using the literature review method, this study investigated how the culture of North Sulawesi functioned as a source of national identity and a foundation for character education in students. According to research conducted on a number of indexed scholarly journals and articles, local values such as mapalus, karai, gratitude, and multiculturalism shaped students' character to be national-minded, tolerant, and moral. Emphasis was placed on efforts to integrate local culture into the secondary school curriculum as a way to enhance the identity and morals of the younger generation. In this regard, previous research results showed that local culture not only represented symbolism; when used as a pedagogical tool, it also helped to cultivate character. The findings indicated that local culture was not just a symbol of identity but also an effective pedagogical instrument in shaping national character.
Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-06-10 Direvisi: 2025-07-20 Dipublikasi: 2025-08-08 Kata kunci: <i>Budaya Lokal; Pendidikan Karakter; Jenjang Kebangsaan; Peserta Didik; Sulawesi Utara.</i>	Dengan menggunakan metode kajian pustaka, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana budaya Sulawesi Utara berfungsi sebagai sumber jati diri bangsa dan landasan pendidikan karakter bagi peserta didik. Berdasarkan penelitian yang dilakukan terhadap sejumlah jurnal dan artikel ilmiah terindeks, nilai-nilai lokal seperti mapalus, karai, rasa syukur, dan multikulturalisme membentuk karakter peserta didik agar berwawasan kebangsaan, toleran, dan bermoral. Penekanan diberikan pada upaya mengintegrasikan budaya lokal ke dalam kurikulum sekolah menengah sebagai salah satu upaya peningkatan jati diri dan moral generasi muda. Dalam hal ini, hasil penelitian terdahulu menunjukkan bahwa budaya lokal tidak hanya merepresentasikan simbolisme; ketika digunakan sebagai alat pedagogis, budaya lokal juga berperan dalam pembentukan karakter. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa budaya lokal bukan sekadar simbol identitas, melainkan instrumen pedagogis yang efektif dalam membentuk karakter bangsa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a vast cultural diversity. The values of customs and traditions are deeply rooted in the local cultural wealth, which characterizes each region. North Sulawesi, as a multi-ethnic province, can represent this cultural richness, significantly contributing to the formation of identity and character among the younger generation, especially students. The culture of North Sulawesi includes customs, regional languages, performing arts, and noble local wisdom values such as tolerance, mutual cooperation, and respect for elders and leaders. These values have been passed down through generations and have proven to be a social adhesive for communities living in diversity (Pangalila et al., 2022). In an era of globalization, which increasingly challenges local identity, strengthening local culture in shaping the character of students is crucial, fostering nationalism and upholding high ethical values.

Character education in higher education environments should be viewed as a systematic effort that not only develops students academically but also shapes their morals, ethics, and integrity. The local wisdom values embedded in the cultural background of the people of North Sulawesi are crucial because they possess strong symbolic and affective power (Djafar, 2022). Through these cultures, which are integrated into the educational curriculum, students are provided with the opportunity to understand and internalize the noble values of this nation. Previous research has highlighted that the local wisdom of North Sulawesi—such as the traditional expressions of gratitude from the Minahasa community—fosters religiosity, gratitude, and togetherness, which aligns well with modern character education (Zelika & Koagouw, 2017). Even in a multicultural society, the local language wisdom of North Sulawesi serves as a means of cross-cultural

communication that strengthens identity and social solidarity (Ardianto & Hadirman, 2023).

Furthermore, culture is also an important instrument in addressing the identity crisis among the younger generation. When students are equipped with a deep understanding of their local culture, they will develop a sense of pride as part of the Indonesian nation and be able to resist the negative influence of foreign cultures that contradict national values (Umar, 2017). Therefore, this literature study aims to examine in-depth the role of the culture of North Sulawesi's society as a source of national identity and a foundation for character education in students.

Here is a summary of similar studies that explain the results of previous research, as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Similar Studies

Researcher	Year	Title of Study	Research Findings
Ardianto & Hadirman	2023	<i>Bahasa dan Multikultural: Potret Kearifan Bahasa Lokal (Language and Multiculturalism: A Portrait of Local Language Wisdom)</i>	The local language in North Sulawesi plays an important role in multicultural character education. Inter-ethnic communication strengthens tolerance and collective identity among students.
		<i>Wujud Inovasi Penguatan Identitas Nasional Pendidikan Multikultural Berbasis Kearifan Lokal (The Manifestation of Innovation in Strengthening National Identity in Multicultural Education Based on Local Wisdom)</i>	Local cultural wisdom can internalize multicultural values and strengthen national identity among cultural studies students.
Pangalila, Sumilat & Sobon	2022	<i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Berbasis Nilai Budaya Lokal (Local Wisdom) Masyarakat Sulawesi Utara (Citizenship Education Based on the Local Wisdom of North Sulawesi Society)</i>	Citizenship education based on local culture is effective in shaping students' characters to be tolerant, democratic, and nationalistic.
Umar, M.	2017	<i>Internalisasi Nilai Kedamaian Melalui Pendidikan Kedamaian Sebagai Penguatan Pembangunan Karakter pada Masyarakat Heterogen (Internalizing Peace Values through Peace Education as a Strengthening Tool for</i>	The peace values within North Sulawesi's local culture can be integrated into character education to form a peace-loving and strongly-identified

Zelika & Koagouw	2017	<i>Character Development in a Heterogeneous Society)</i> <i>Persepsi Tentang Perayaan Pengucapan Syukur Minahasa: Studi Komunikasi Antarbudaya pada Mahasiswa Luar Sulawesi Utara di FISPOL UNSRAT (Perceptions of the Minahasa Thanksgiving Celebration: A Cross-Cultural Communication Study among Students from Outside North Sulawesi at FISPOL UNSRAT)</i>	generation. The Minahasa thanksgiving tradition creates an inclusive space for students from outside the region, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and respect for local culture.
		<i>Internalisasi Budaya Siri Na Pacce dalam Membangun Karakter Mahasiswa di Perguruan Tinggi (Internalizing the Siri' Na Pacce Culture in Building Character in College Students)</i>	Local culture as a strategy in strengthening character education for students; the values of Siri' Na Pacce are relevant in shaping moral values and social responsibility.
Hidayah & Retnasari	2019	<i>Tinjauan Identitas Nasional dan Identitas Kesukuan pada Mahasiswa PGSD UAD Yogyakarta (Review of National and Ethnic Identity among PGSD Students at UAD Yogyakarta)</i>	Students from outside Java face identity challenges, but the values of their local culture help strengthen nationalism when developed through character education.
Tangkudung, J.P.M. & Wuka, I	2023	<i>Fenomena Kebudayaan Suku Dani dalam Tradisi Bakar Batu Kalangan Mahasiswa Papua di Manado Sulawesi Utara (Cultural Phenomenon of the Dani Tribe in the Stone Burning Tradition Among Papuan Students in Manado, North Sulawesi)</i>	The tradition of other ethnic groups in Manado is positively accepted by the local community and students, reflecting high cultural tolerance values relevant to inclusive character education.

II. METHOD

Informasikan This study uses a literature review method as the primary approach. A literature review is a qualitative research method that involves collecting, evaluating, and analyzing various relevant literature sources systematically and critically (Snyder, 2019). In this context, the review is focused on studies related to the culture of North Sulawesi's society, national identity, and character education for students.

This study uses a literature review method as the primary approach. The literature sources

used are derived from journal articles indexed in reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The selection process involved using keywords such as "North Sulawesi culture," "local wisdom and character education," "national identity," and "student character." Articles published between 2017 and 2024, written in either Indonesian or English, and highly relevant to the theme of local culture as the foundation of character education, were included. Articles with a context outside of Indonesia or those that do not explicitly discuss character or cultural identity were excluded.

The data collected is analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves grouping information based on key themes, including Minahasa cultural values, multiculturalism in North Sulawesi, the internalization of character values, and the role of local language in national identity. The synthesis process connects these texts to form a coherent theoretical understanding. The validity of the sources is maintained by ensuring that the articles are from accredited scholarly journals and have undergone the peer-review process, avoiding opinion-based content or those lacking a strong methodological foundation.

This method was chosen because a literature review allows for a comprehensive understanding of previous studies and helps identify relevant research gaps (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). As a result, this research is not only descriptive but also reflective and critical of the existing academic discourse.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. North Sulawesi' Cultures as a Pillar of National Identity

The local culture in North Sulawesi, which includes the Minahasa, Bolaang Mongondow, Sangihe, Talaud, and Gorontalo ethnic groups, has a strong value system in shaping the collective identity of society. Values such as mapalus (cooperative teamwork), karai (bravery), and siri' (dignity) are concrete examples of how local culture is deeply rooted in the social and spiritual lives of the community. These values are not only ancestral legacies but also serve as ideological instruments in forming the personality of the pluralistic and sovereign Indonesian nation (Pangalila, Sumilat, & Sobon, 2022).

According to Zelika and Koagouw (2017), traditions such as the thanksgiving ceremony in Minahasa are not only ceremonial practices but also forms of strengthening cultural identity that teach religious values, respect for

ancestors, and intergenerational togetherness. Such values strengthen social bonds and foster a sense of pride in the nation's culture, particularly among the younger generation.

2. Internalization of Cultural Values in Student Character Education

Character education for students cannot solely be shaped through academic theory and lectures but also through the internalization of local cultural values translated into contextual learning activities (Hidayah, & Retnasari, 2023). In this context, the culture of North Sulawesi serves as a source of living curriculum, teaching ethical values, morality, and social responsibility. Umar (2017) explains that the value of peace within heterogeneous societies like North Sulawesi needs to be internalized in character education at universities. Local culture supports peace education as it teaches tolerance, emotional control, and peaceful intercultural dialogue, which is highly relevant amid increasing intolerance among the younger generation. Research by Ardianto and Hadirman (2023) also shows that the multi-ethnic and multilingual communities living harmoniously in North Sulawesi have created effective intercultural communication practices. Students who directly experience intercultural interactions tend to have more open, inclusive attitudes and are able to bridge differences positively.

Table 2. Local Cultural Values and Their Relevance to Student Character Education.

Local Cultural Values	Cultural Meaning	Relevance to Character Education
Mapalus	Mutual cooperation and social solidarity	Fosters social awareness and teamwork within the campus
Karai	Bravery and determination	Cultivates courage, responsibility, and moral integrity
Pengucapan Syukur	Gratitude and togetherness	Teaches gratitude, spirituality, and empathy
Siri'	Dignity and honor	Encourages ethics, responsibility, and discipline
Multiculturalism	Tolerance between tribes and ethnic groups	Shapes inclusive attitudes and respect for diversity

Source: (Pangalila et al., 2022; Ardianto & Hadirman, 2023; Umar, 2017)

Table 2 presents the local cultural values of North Sulawesi that are relevant to character

education for students. The value of *Mapalus*, symbolizing mutual cooperation and social solidarity, is crucial for fostering social awareness and teamwork among students (Bates, & Anderson-Butcher, 2023). *Karai*, representing bravery and determination, helps develop responsibility and moral integrity in students. Gratitude, emphasizing thankfulness and togetherness, plays a key role in cultivating empathy and spirituality. *Siri'*, which stresses dignity and honor, encourages ethics, responsibility, and discipline in daily life (Shields, & Funk, 2023). Multiculturalism, which represents tolerance among diverse tribes and ethnicities, shapes inclusive attitudes and respect for differences in a multicultural campus environment. Therefore, the values from North Sulawesi can be used as a foundation to form student character by integrating them into character education. By incorporating values such as mutual cooperation, bravery, gratitude, dignity, and tolerance, character education in higher education can be more contextual and meaningful, while preserving and promoting local culture. By incorporating these values into character education, students can develop strong character traits and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse campus environment.

3. Transformation of Local Culture into the Higher Education Curriculum

One of the major challenges in higher education today is how to integrate local cultural values into the curriculum system and learning activities. According to Djafar (2022), multicultural education programs based on local wisdom have proven effective in strengthening nationalism and preventing an identity crisis among students. By involving students in cultural activities such as local art performances, cross-cultural discussions, and field trips to cultural sites, the learning process becomes more meaningful and grounded.

In this regard, modules such as the *Nusantara Module* developed under the *Kampus Merdeka* program also serve as an appropriate medium to bring students closer to their local context. Indriati and Nurasiah (2022) showed that students who participated in the module demonstrated increased social empathy, a spirit of cooperation, and a greater appreciation for the cultural diversity of the nation.

The transformation of local culture into the higher education curriculum is a strategic process that integrates local values, traditions, and cultural practices into the learning process. This integration not only strengthens national identity but also shapes students' character and self-identity, while promoting unity and national solidarity (Handoko, Sartono, & Retnawati, 2023). A holistic approach is used to combine local wisdom into learning materials, teaching methods, and evaluation, while considering the social and cultural context of students.

Higher education plays a crucial role in the transformation of culture by adopting a transformative epistemological paradigm capable of addressing the challenges of globalization. An inclusive and affirmative curriculum based on local culture can sustain these values while also equipping students with a global perspective. Strategies for implementation include the development of learning materials based on local wisdom, the involvement of indigenous communities and cultural practices in curriculum design, training for lecturers and educational staff to understand the local cultural context, the use of local language and context in delivering knowledge and technology, and the development of policies that support culturally-based education.

The positive impact of this transformation is the enhancement of student learning motivation, strengthening of local values, formation of ethical and religious character, and the reinforcement of social identity and community engagement (Megawati, & Prahmana, 2024). Examples of implementation include Aceh, Riau, and Lombok, where local cultural values have been integrated into school culture and religious education, positively impacting students' character and identity. Based on this, integrating local culture into the higher education curriculum is a strategic process that preserves local culture while strengthening students' character and identity as part of a diverse and culturally sovereign nation.

4. Local Culture as a Response to the Challenges of Globalization

Globalization is often seen as a threat to the existence of local cultures. However, within an adaptive framework, local culture can serve as a filter and purifying tool that protects the

morals of the younger generation from the infiltration of foreign cultures that do not align with local values. Hidayah and Retnasari (2019) demonstrate that students from regions outside Java who are deeply connected to their local culture show a more stable sense of nationalism compared to those who are disconnected from their cultural roots. Local culture plays a crucial role in preserving national identity and character in the era of globalization. However, local culture faces challenges such as the fading of local identity due to the dominance of global cultural products like music, films, and fashion, shifting values and traditions caused by digital media, foreign cultural dominance, and the lack of interest from the younger generation.

To address these challenges, local culture can be revitalized and recontextualized by blending traditional values with innovation and modern technology. Cultural education, both formal and informal, is essential to building awareness and pride among the younger generation regarding their cultural heritage. Social media and digital platforms can be leveraged to promote and revive local culture, reaching a wider audience, particularly the digital generation. Cultural festivals, workshops, and organized events can also foster a love for local culture. Government support through regulations, funding, and policies for cultural preservation is vital, as local communities and cultural organizations play an active role in preserving and developing traditional culture.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

The local culture of the people of North Sulawesi has proven to possess noble values that can serve as a foundation in shaping national identity and strengthening character education among students. Values such as *mapalus*, *karai*, gratitude, and multiculturalism not only strengthen social solidarity but also foster responsible, tolerant, and ethical personalities. The integration of local culture into higher education is strategically significant in addressing the challenges of character and identity crises among the younger generation in the era of globalization. Previous studies have shown that when local cultural values are internalized into the learning system and campus life, students show improvements in

moral, ethical, and nationalistic aspects. Thus, local culture is not only a heritage that needs to be preserved, but also a strategic asset for the nation in shaping human resources with strong character and a national identity.

B. Suggestion

Pembahasan terkait penelitian ini masih sangat terbatas dan membutuhkan banyak masukan, saran untuk penulis selanjutnya adalah mengkaji lebih dalam dan secara komprehensif tentang

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