

OPTIMIZING CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH LOCAL WISDOM IN ACEH: APPROACHES, OBSTACLES, AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract: This study examines the potential for enhancing character education in Aceh Province by integrating local wisdom, with the objective of gaining insight into the implementation process and the factors that may influence it. Qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and documentation, were employed to identify key strategies, which included community socialisation, fostering positive habits, integrating local wisdom into curricula, implementing policies, and allocating financial resources. The presence of *Taman Pendidikan Alquran* (TPQ), *taklim* assemblies, dedicated teachers, regulations pertaining to local wisdom, Islamic law, historical and cultural coherence, and robust institutional coordination serve as key supporting factors. However, a number of challenges have been identified which impede effective implementation, including the location of Aceh on the border, the influence of diverse tribal cultures, the impact of external cultures, population mobility, environmental factors, the impact of the pandemic, and the lack of standardised curricula and resources.

Keywords: Aceh, Character Education, Local Wisdom.

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Introduction

The progress of a country can be gauged by a number of different indicators, with education being one such area of focus. It can be posited that if a nation aspires to progress, the advancement of education is a fundamental priority. A multitude of educational institutions in Indonesia have established a plethora of formal and informal procedures, in addition to those established by the government and private sector. In Indonesia, the national education system encompasses all levels of education, from elementary school to university. The existence of this educational system will have a positive impact on all students, who will undoubtedly become stewards of the nation.

One of the government-run programmes supporting the national education programme is the establishment of a 12-year compulsory education, whereby the education commences at the primary level and culminates at the upper secondary level. Financial assistance is provided by the government for any individual attending a government-owned school. The culture of violence is becoming increasingly prevalent in Indonesia's educational institutions. This has had a detrimental impact on the social fabric and the quality of Indonesian culture. Therefore, it is imperative to immediately address this issue by fostering a culture of peace.¹

The population of Aceh Province is approximately 4.5 million, and the region is characterised by a rich heritage of local wisdom, which has been passed down from generation to generation. The Aceh Customary Council has identified a multitude of local wisdom traditions among the Acehnese people, which are observed in various domains of life, including economics and livelihood, worship and muamalah, culture, politics and government, education, environmental conservation, and social and community matters.²

The Aceh region is characterised by a rich tapestry of customs and cultures, collectively referred to as local wisdom. Among these traditions are kenduri maulid, peusijek, and others. These practices have been observed and upheld for generations, from the past until the present. However, in the context of rapid globalisation, there has

¹ Agustina Tri Wijayanti, "Penguatan Nilai Local Wisdom Melalui Penerapan Petruk," *Jipsindo (Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial Indonesia)* 6, no. 1 (March 30, 2019): 70–86, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jipsindo.v6i1.24333>.

² Prima Nucifera and Muhammad Taufik Hidayat, "Analisis Nilai-nilai Kearifan Lokal Aceh Melalui Literasi Media," *Jurnal Metamorfosa* 7, no. 2 (2019): 211–22.

been a decline in the perceived necessity of such traditions, due to the perceived shift in societal values. This assumption, however, is misguided. It is, therefore, pertinent to question whether society should continue to neglect these traditions in order to maintain and preserve the values of local wisdom within the community.³

The concept of local pearls of wisdom can be defined as the socio-cultural knowledge, norms, regulations, and skills that are typical of a particular region and that are transmitted from generation to generation.⁴ Furthermore, these traditions have been passed down for generations in order to meet the needs of living together. The government's educational programme represents one of the key initiatives in the shaping of character. Character education encompasses all actions undertaken by the teacher that can influence the learner's development, including the teacher's own conduct, the manner in which they present and deliver material, their capacity for tolerance, and a range of related factors.⁵ The responsibility for fostering a national character in students lies with all teachers, and this extends to the guidance and coaching they provide.

It can be argued that it is not an appropriate use of teaching time for teachers responsible for specific subjects to limit their focus to the development of character alone. Walgito identifies three principal methods of instilling character: (1) Conditioning or habituation. This approach entails gradually encouraging the desired behaviour through repeated exposure, until it becomes firmly established. (2) Understanding. This method emphasises the importance of comprehension, whereby the individual's initial understanding shapes their subsequent actions. (3) Modelling. In this case, the observed behaviour of a role model or mentor serves as a key influence on the individual's conduct.⁶

³ Darmawati Darmawati, "Makna Kearifan Lokal Adat Peusijek Masyarakat Aceh Kecamatan Sukamakmur Kabupaten Aceh Besar," *Serambi Konstruktivis* 1, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.32672/konstruktivis.v1i3.1774>.

⁴ Nurul Hidayati Amanah, "Implementasi Local Wisdom Education dalam Pendidikan Islam sebagai Solusi Penguatan Karakter Patriotisme Generasi Millennial," *Tadris : Jurnal Penelitian dan Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam* 14, no. 2 (December 30, 2020): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.51675/jt.v14i2.92>.

⁵ Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional.

⁶ Bimo Walgito, *Pengantar Psikologi Umum* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2010).

The reinforcement of character has become a key priority for President Jokowi and Vice President Jusuf Kalla. As set out in the *nawa cita*, the government has pledged to revolutionise the nation's character. The Ministry of Education and Culture is implementing a programme, Strengthening Character Education (PPK), which was launched in 2016 with the aim of bolstering the character of the nation's future leaders.

In accordance with the President's directive, The curriculum at the basic education level allocates a greater proportion of time to character education than to the teaching of knowledge. The proportion allocated to this area is 70% for elementary schools and 60% for junior high schools. Furthermore, in addition to cognitive development, PPK advocates for national education to prioritize the incorporation of ethical, spiritual, aesthetic, and kinesthetic elements.

These dimensions of education should be pursued in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The integration of extracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular learning processes in schools can be achieved through the development of a school culture in collaboration with communities beyond the educational environment. In strengthening character education nationally, there are at least five central character values derived from Pancasila, including religious values, nationalism, integrity, independence, and cooperation. Each of these values is interrelated and mutually reinforcing.⁷

The implementation of character education can be achieved through the utilisation of local wisdom, a concept that is prevalent in various regions of Indonesia. Local wisdom constitutes an integral aspect of a community's cultural identity, inextricably linked to its linguistic heritage. It is typically transmitted across generations through oral tradition. Local wisdom is manifest in folklore, language, and folk games. Sudirman Wagiran posited that local wisdom is synonymous with the following ten categories: (1) God, (2) Signs of nature, (3) the Agricultural Environment, (4) building a house, (5) Education, (6) Marriage and birth ceremonies, (7) food, (8) human life cycle and disposition, (9) Natural Disasters.⁸

⁷ Tim PPK Kemendikbud, *Modul Pelatihan Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Bagi Guru* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2016).

⁸ Wagiran Wagiran, "Pengembangan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Hamemayu Hayuning Bawana (Identifikasi Nilai-Nilai Karakter Berbasis Budaya)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* 3, no. 3 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpk.v0i3.1249>.

Rahyono posits that local wisdom constitutes a form of human intelligence that is specific to a particular ethnic group and is acquired through the collective experience of that society.⁹ As the experts have explained, local wisdom plays an important role in upholding the values of life in specific communities.

The phenomenon of adolescent character is strongly influenced by the era of globalisation that continues to enter Indonesia. The development of globalisation has entered the mindset of teenagers and thus affects their character. The influence of globalisation can be seen to have two positive and negative aspects. With this globalisation, teenagers in Indonesia have begun to keep up with the times in terms of technology.

To illustrate, a considerable number of our teenagers have acquired the requisite technological proficiency to enable them to compete at the international level with their counterparts in Indonesia. However, the advent of globalisation has also had a detrimental effect on the moral character of our younger generation. This is evidenced by the behavioural patterns observed in our adolescent population. The decline in character values is evident in the lack of manners, promiscuity, and social sensitivity displayed by individuals. These behaviours are increasingly aligned with those observed in Western societies. This is in stark contrast to the traditional values and norms of our nation, which uphold the importance of manners, discourage promiscuity, and emphasise social responsibility. However, this cultural identity is gradually eroding due to the influence of Western culture, which is being disseminated through globalisation.

The concept of character education in Indonesia has its roots in the teachings of Ki Hajar Dewantara. However, this was undermined by the influx of modern values that accompanied the rapid globalisation process. To date, character education remains a topic of discussion rather than being integrated into the formal education system. Despite the inclusion of subjects such as Pancasila, citizenship, and ethics in the Indonesian curriculum, there is still a lack of emphasis on character development. Mustadi asserts that children with poor character traits tend to exhibit lower levels of social and emotional maturity. This can negatively impact their learning process and social interactions, leading to a lack of self-

⁹ FX. Rahyono, *Kearifan Budaya Dalam Kata* (Jakarta: Wedatama, 2017).

control. Given the crucial role of character education, it is essential to commence this process at an early age.¹⁰

The inculcation of moral values through character education at the national level is of paramount importance, as it serves to foster the next generation of young Indonesians who will uphold the principles enshrined in Pancasila. This process is integral to the intellectual and cultural life of the Indonesian nation. The quality of character experienced by adolescents in this era of globalisation can be addressed through an approach that draws upon the wisdom of local traditions from their respective regions, which can serve as a reference point for navigating life in society. In certain areas of Indonesia, local learning methods are employed to facilitate the development of character education. To illustrate, the Aceh Province is replete with local wisdom, which is upheld with the values of Islamic culture.

Local wisdom is a view of life and science and various life strategies in the form of activities carried out by local communities to answer multiple problems in meeting their needs. Local cultural wisdom plays a role in the education of the nation's character. The following are some examples of local wisdom that develops in the life of the Indonesian Government. Aceh: *Udep tsare mate Syahid* (happy life, died received by Allah Swt), *Hukom ngon adat lagge zarat ngon sijeut* (between laws with custom like a substance with its properties).¹¹

The incorporation of contemporary culture into Acehese society has a deleterious effect on the cultural identity of Aceh. The dilution of the purity of Aceh's local culture, which has long been aligned with Islamic teachings, has long been the lived reality of the Acehese people. This will also have a positive impact on the development and advancement of the Acehese people.

It is inevitable that modern culture will result in a blending of existing cultures. For instance, the practice of wives sitting coffee with men who are not their husbands has become a common occurrence due to the demands of work. The negative consequences of the high divorce rate and infidelity in Aceh can be attributed to a shift in advanced culture where the level of self-filtering is not sufficiently

¹⁰ A. Mustadi, "Pendidikan Karakter Berwawasan Sosiokultural (Sociocultural Based Character Education) di Sekolah Dasar, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (DIY)," *Dinamika Pendidikan: Majalah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2011, 18 edition.

¹¹ Ulfah Fajarini, "Peranan Kearifan Lokal dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Socio-Didaktika: Social Science Education Journal* 1, no. 2 (December 28, 2014): 123–30.

robust to accept the new culture that develops at the expense of self-identity and the existing culture of the locale.¹²

Given the region's historical embrace of Islamic values, which are deeply rooted in the significance of local wisdom, Islamic values have been incorporated into the educational curriculum in the form of local scholarship. The Aceh Province has developed a curriculum based on the principles of character education, which has been designated the Aceh Islamic Curriculum. This curriculum is a nationally-mandated curriculum that incorporates Islamic values and local wisdom. Furthermore, the national curriculum is still implemented and fully meets the minimum standards by integrating Islamic values and local content. The objective is to reinforce the character education programme based on local wisdom.

This research employs a qualitative methodology. This research is a humanistic study, which enables the prospective interpretative human experience to be elucidated. A qualitative analysis reveals the distinctive characteristics of individuals, groups, communities, and organisations within the context of everyday life. This approach allows for a comprehensive, profound, and accountable understanding of these entities. This method allows researchers to conduct in-depth interviews. It is important to maintain focus and exercise caution when working with research subjects, as this will ensure the data obtained is as accurate and credible as possible. To supplement and reproduce the data and information obtained through in-depth interviews, researchers investigate further by conducting observations and documentation studies. In qualitative research, the role and theory are not as straightforward as in quantitative analysis because the model is inductive. This involves the following steps: (1) collecting information, (2) asking questions, (3) building categories, (4) looking for patterns, and (5) building a theory or comparing patterns with other theories.¹³

Aceh Tamiang, Subulussalam City, and Central Aceh Regency Profile

¹² Syibrani Mulasi, "Dampak Perkembangan Budaya Modern Terhadap Eksistensi Budaya Lokal di Aceh," *Bidayah: Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2020): 201–11, <https://doi.org/10.47498/bidayah.v11i02.419>.

¹³ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018).

Aceh Tamiang Regency is one of the districts located in Aceh, Indonesia. This regency is situated on the strategic eastern route of Sumatra. It is situated approximately 250 km from the city of Medan, which results in relatively cheaper access and prices of goods in this area than in other Aceh areas. Furthermore, this area was relatively safer during the game's heyday. When calls for strikes by GAM were imposed throughout Aceh, only this area, especially Kuala Simpang City, continued its economic activity.

Tamiang is a name that has its roots in the legend of "*Te-Miyang*" or "*Da-Miyang*" which means "not to get itchy or itchy immune" from "*bamboo miang*". This legend is related to the historical story about King Tamiang, also known as Pucook Suloh. As a neonate, he was discovered in a bamboo thicket (Tamiang's term is buloh) by a monarch who was subsequently bestowed with the epithet Tamiang Pehok. *Pucook Suloh* reached adulthood and was subsequently crowned King Tamiang with the title *Pucook Suloh Raja Te-Miyang*, which translates to "a king who is found in a thicket of rebounds but does not become itchy or immune to itching." Aceh Tamiang Regency constitutes a minor portion of East Aceh Regency and is the sole region within Aceh that is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Malays..

The Acehnese constitute the second-largest tribe in the district. Additionally, the Javanese, Javanese, and Batak tribes are also frequently encountered in this district. In the upstream area, the Gayo Tribe, Alas Tribe, and Karo Tribe are also present. The Aceh Tamiang Customary Assembly plays a pivotal role within the Aceh Regional Government system, acting as a vital conduit between the government and the Acehnese people. Its primary objectives are to facilitate the government's pursuit of smooth governance, the implementation of socio-cultural development initiatives, and the preservation of customary law, traditions, and community customs.

The relationship between the Aceh Tamiang Customary Assembly and the Institutional System of the Republic of Indonesia is that of an autonomous and independent auxiliary element, acting in partnership with the Aceh Tamiang Regency government. The aforementioned objectives are to maintain security, peace, harmony, and community order; to assist the government in the implementation of development; to develop and encourage community participation; to maintain the existence of traditional values that do not conflict

with Islamic law; to apply customary provisions; to resolve social problems of the community; to reconcile disputes arising in society; and to enforce customary law.

Subulussalam City is a municipal entity situated within the province of Aceh, Indonesia. The town was established in accordance with the provisions of Law Number 8 of 2007, which came into force on 2 January 2007, and constitutes a division of Aceh Singkil Regency. Subulussalam City is in close proximity to Pakpak Bharat Regency and Dairi Regency, located in the North Sumatra Province of Indonesia. The city boasts a plethora of natural tourist attractions, including the opportunity to partake in the consumption of durian fruit during the year-end season. The linguistic diversity of Subulussalam City is reflected in the presence of several regional languages, including Singkil, Batak, Aceh, Karo, and Javanese.

In terms of geographical boundaries, Subulussalam City is situated to the north of Southeast Aceh Regency and Dairi Regency (North Sumatra Province), to the east of Dairi Regency and Pakpak Bharat Regency (North Sumatra Province), to the south of Aceh Singkil Regency, and to the west of South Aceh Regency.

Central Aceh Regency constitutes one of the districts within the Aceh Province in Indonesia. The district's capital is Takengon, an exemplary small town situated in a portion of the Bukit Barisan mountain range that traverses the island of Sumatra. Central Aceh Regency is situated within the Gayo Highlands region. Other districts in this area include Bener Meriah Regency and Gayo Lues Regency. The three principal urban centres are Takengon, Blang Kejeren and Simpang Tiga Redelong. The route connecting these three cities traverses an area of outstanding natural beauty. Prior to the construction of roads, the Gayo region was isolated. Central Aceh Regency comprises 14 sub-districts and 295 villages. Following the proclamation of Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945, the region was designated a province, which subsequently became a regency.

The district of Central Aceh was established as an administrative unit on 14 April 1948, based on Law Number 10 of 1948. It was re-established as a district on 14 November 1956, through Law Number 7 (Emergency) of 1956. The region encompasses three *kawedanan*, namely Takengon, Gayo Lues, and Tanah Alas. The Central Aceh Regency boasts a plethora of higher

education institutions, including the Takengon Gajah Putih State Religious College, Takengon Gajah Putih University, Muhammadiyah College of Law (STIHMAD), Muhammadiyah College of Education, and Al-Wasliyah University. Some of the notable attractions in Central Aceh Regency include the Fresh Sea Lake, Pantan Gajah (a scenic attraction), Linge Isak Buru Park (a destination for hunting), Koro Loyang Cave, Pukes Pan, Datu Pan, Burni Klieten (a location for hiking), Gayo Waterpark (a facility designed for family entertainment), and Krueng Peusangan (rapids). Didong is one of the original arts originating from this highland area. It is performed by a group of people sitting cross-legged in a circle. One ch will recite verses in the Gayo language, while the other member plays a rhythmic accompaniment on the clapping of hands and a small pillow pat. The people of Central Aceh have an annual tradition during the proclamation celebration. Indonesia is a traditional horse race. The unique thing about this conventional horse spur is that.

The cohort of young jockeys is comprised of individuals between the ages of 10 and 16 years. Furthermore, jockeys do not utilise saddles, and horse racing is held twice yearly: in August, during the commemoration of the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence, and in February, to mark the anniversary of Takengon, which falls on 17 February annually. The majority of the population is comprised of individuals belonging to the Gayo tribe. Additionally, other tribes are present, including the Acehnese, Javanese, Minang, Batak, and Chinese. The vast majority of Central Acehnese (99%) adhere to the Islamic faith. The Gayo people are renowned for their staunch opposition to any form of colonialism. This region was historically a stronghold of resistance against Dutch colonial rule. The Gayo people are devout Muslims. Many Gayo people engage in buffalo rearing, and thus, it is said that if one encounters a significant number of buffalo in Aceh, it is likely that the person hails from Gayo.

Character Strengthening in the Perspective of Local Wisdom

The objective is to reinforce the character of the local population in Aceh Tamiang Regency, utilising the expertise of community leaders, religious extension workers and the *Pengbulu* at the religious affairs office. This entails a process of socialisation with the aforementioned leaders, initiated by the extension workers and

subsequently conveyed to the Penghulu via the religious affairs office in the sub-district.¹⁴

Moreover, an increase in teacher discipline enables teachers to engage in activities for their own benefit and that of their students. It is imperative that the teacher maintains discipline and continues to demonstrate positive conduct towards both himself and his students, in order to ensure optimal outcomes.¹⁵ The subsequent objective is to instill character through authentic learning and integrate it into everyday life. It is essential that measures to strengthen character education originate from the education unit, and this process has commenced with a limited face-to-face approach, following the instructions of the regent in December 2020.¹⁶

The formation of character is contingent upon the transmission of learned behaviours and habits by the individual's teachers. One illustrative example is that of scouting activities, wherein the concept of character is already in place; the character in question is that of leadership. Therefore, scouting education was advocated once more, given that scouting activities were curtailed during the ongoing pandemic. The development of character in relation to a healthy lifestyle is contingent upon learning. Otherwise, we are adamant about instilling healthy habits in children. This process of habituation commences with oneself, thereby reinforcing character. In the absence of an individual's own initiation, there is an absence of exemplars of discipleship; character is discipleship.¹⁷

In order to reinforce the character of the local population in Central Aceh Regency, it is recommended that the local wisdom be incorporated into the educational curriculum and that budgets be allocated for local wisdom education. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to apply local wisdom in the school environment, encourage all madrasah leaders, and implement policies that educate children based on local wisdom.¹⁸

¹⁴ Interview with FD, July 1st, 2021.

¹⁵ Interview with FH, July 1st, 2021.

¹⁶ I. Made Subrata and I. Gusti Ayu Rai, "Penerapan Penilaian Autentik dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa," *Emasains: Jurnal Edukasi Matematika dan Sains* 8, no. 2 (November 25, 2019): 196–204, <https://doi.org/10.59672/emasains.v8i2.515>.

¹⁷ Interview with SP, July 1st, 2021.

¹⁸ Emi Ramdani, "Model Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Kearifan Lokal sebagai Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter," *Jupius: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 10, no. 1 (June 29, 2018): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.24114/jupius.v10i1.8264>.

Each level, whether *Ibtidaiyah*, Sandwich, or *Aliyah*, is designated for such forums in order to ensure that the budget is not exceeded and that the rules and regulations pertaining to education are not violated. This approach is based on local wisdom. The incorporation of local knowledge into the educational curriculum, and the implementation of local learning in the school environment, such as the washing of parents' feet for final-year students in both *Tsanawiah* and *Aliyah*, provides an opportunity for students to engage with local traditions and customs. This engagement can be facilitated through the provision of appropriate materials, such as basins, water, and flowers. It is essential to encourage all madrasa leaders to adopt a policy of educating children based on local wisdom.¹⁹

The objective of this presentation is to introduce curriculum experts who will share their insights on the development of a local content curriculum that can be implemented in educational institutions. Subsequently, the Central Aceh Regency government has implemented a policy of utilising the Gayo language and traditional attire on Thursdays, and has designated this as a weekly observance. In Central Aceh Regency, the term "*adat megeri agama*" is used to describe a custom that is created with the intention of demarcating the boundaries between religious and secular practices, or to reinforce the observance of religious traditions. Additionally, the term "*edet mudarus – meukokom agama*" signifies a custom that is learned and religion-based, in accordance with the Qur'an and Hadith. With regard to the Gayo language, which is observed on Thursdays, the local government is obliged to utilize the Gayo language and traditional attire. This exemplifies the manifestation of local wisdom in the context of language and traditional dress.

Moreover, there is a need to disseminate local knowledge to educational institutions, encourage students to engage with their immediate environment, compile books on local understanding, and present curriculum experts to develop curricula based on local wisdom. Discussions are held with the education office, the traditional Gayo assembly, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to address the integration of local wisdom into the standard curriculum for teachers in schools. Character education in madrasah serves the function of selecting and sorting Indonesian and foreign cultures that are more civilised and respectable. The involvement of all

¹⁹ Interview with SB, June 17th, 2021.

stakeholders in the oversight, management, supervision, and evaluation of these processes is essential for the positive cultural transformation of madrasah.²⁰

The establishment of the education office is already imbued with the culture in question, and it is our intention to reinforce it with our local wisdom so that we can facilitate its growth and development. This may be achieved through the educational route, the traditional assembly route, or the cultural route. Local wisdom is typically associated with customs. The objective is to reinforce the distinctive character of the people of Subulussalam City in accordance with the principles of local wisdom. This objective will be achieved by implementing a local content curriculum and habituation, including the habituation to local customs regarding greetings, clean living, and the consumption of food and drink while seated.²¹

In Subulussalam City, the term “*male kampong*” denotes a requirement for all Muslims to possess a fundamental understanding of religious concepts, including *taharah*, *fardhu kifayah*, Qur’anic reading, the Pillars of Islam, and the Pillars of Faith. This understanding is expected to facilitate the role of *muazzin*, *imam*, and *khatib*. In this context, the term “*malem sigampong*” denotes the necessity for every Muslim to possess fundamental knowledge of religious concepts, including *taharah*, *fardhu kifayah*, Qur’anic reading, the pillars of Islam, and the pillars of faith. This encompasses the ability to serve as a *muazzin*, an *imam*, or a *khatib*.

Moreover, language serves as a unifying symbol for regions, thereby fostering a sense of community cohesion and identity. Language serves as a unifying symbol for the region, fostering a sense of belonging among individuals from outside the area who have already settled in Subulussalam City. This contributes to the cohesion and coherence of the community’s familiar character.²² Furthermore, the concept of graduating from elementary school is applied in order to ensure that students are able to read the Qur’an properly and correctly. The idea of graduating from elementary school and being able to read the Qur’an is implemented in the curriculum. In Class 1,

²⁰ Nur Khamalah, “Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter di Madrasah,” *Jurnal Kependidikan* 5, no. 2 (November 24, 2017): 200–215, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jk.v5i2.2109>.

²¹ Interview with JM, June 3rd, 2021.

²² Interview with JA, June 3rd, 2021.

students are required to complete iqra' 1, while in Class 6, they are expected to complete iqra' 6, and so on, according to the level.

It is recommended that, when the time for prayer has come, all members of the community should pray in mosques, with particular emphasis on the importance of this practice for middle and high school children. Additionally, the habituation of *dhuba* prayers is encouraged. Additionally, Subulussalam City has adopted the slogan “Kota Subulussalam Kota Santri”,²³ which translates to “Subulussalam City, City of Islamic Scholars.” Moreover, the concept of education is evolving, with educators shifting their focus from merely imparting knowledge to fostering character development. Now that the programme is being implemented, I reiterate the view expressed in the forum that the prevailing academic image of education must be challenged. Teachers must consider not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the importance of character education. While a student may achieve a high ranking, it is nevertheless important to recognise and appreciate positive attitudes.

The situation has now been reversed, with parents considering that one ranking is of paramount importance. The value of criminality is high during adolescence. Consequently, educational programmes designed to change attitudes towards crime are unlikely to succeed in isolation. One such programme is a pilot project at a local school. In addition to the regular curriculum, students engage in semi-religious learning and extracurricular activities led by teachers outside of class hours. Moving forward, Islamic programmes will be introduced at the elementary and junior high school levels, with the syllabus to be developed by the relevant authorities. The objective is to instill moral values through a comprehensive character education programme.²⁴

The interviews with nine respondents revealed that efforts were made to reinforce moral values in accordance with local traditions. This was achieved through social interaction with community leaders, religious extension workers and *Penghulu* (religious affairs office) to promote discipline among teachers. Teachers engage in activities that benefit both themselves and their students. Furthermore, they instill character through authentic learning, integrating it into their daily lives. This approach adds local wisdom to the education curriculum. Budgets are being allocated for the purpose of implementing local

²³ Interview with JA, June 3rd, 2021.

²⁴ Interview with JA, June 3rd, 2021.

wisdom education, local knowledge is being applied in the school environment, all Madrasah leaders are being encouraged, and policies are being created with the intention of educating children based on local wisdom and socialising learning in schools.

Students are encouraged to engage with their local environment, with educational materials on local wisdom being made available. Curriculum experts are also engaged to develop local wisdom curricula. In addition, the Gayo language and traditional attire are promoted on Thursdays. The next step is the implementation of a local content curriculum, which includes activities such as introducing greetings, fostering cleanliness, and teaching the etiquette of dining and drinking.

Subulussalam City also has the term *malem sigampong*, which requires that every Muslim possess a basic understanding of religious concepts such as *tabarab*, *fardhu kifayah*, reading the Qur'an, the pillars of Islam, and the pillars of faith. This understanding may lead to roles such as *muazzin*, *imam*, or *khatib*. Furthermore, language serves as a unifying force, transcending geographical boundaries and fostering a sense of collective identity. The concept of progressing from elementary to middle and high school, with the expectation of acquiring proficiency in Qur'anic recitation and the timely adoption of prayers, reinforces this unifying role of language.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors to Strengthen Character Education through Local Wisdom

The existing TPQ and active *taklim* assemblies serve as both a source of support and an inhibitor with regard to the strengthening of character in the context of local wisdom in Aceh Tamiang Regency. The geographical location of Aceh Tamiang Regency, which is adjacent to North Sumatra, represents a significant challenge to the character's relationship from the perspective of local wisdom. It is notable that a considerable number of TPQs remain active in the region, as do a multitude of active *taklim* assemblies. While there may be instances of influence from the wider North Sumatra region, it is evident that the local population has retained a significant degree of

autonomy and cultural identity. Indeed, observations suggest that the situation in Tamiang has improved considerably in recent times.²⁵

Moreover, the provision of supervision, motivation, and control are essential elements of effective support. The ongoing pandemic has created significant challenges for the Aceh Tamiang district in its efforts to foster positive character development. Our role is limited to providing oversight of the education department's activities, as we do not engage in the technical aspects of their work. We offer encouragement and guidance on potential issues that may arise and communicate concerns to the relevant authority.²⁶ However, the ongoing pandemic represents a significant obstacle to this process. Effective collaboration between parents, schools, and communities is essential to support students' character development in the context of the ongoing pandemic.²⁷

Other factors that may either facilitate or impede progress include those pertaining to family, the environment, and society, as well as the quality of relations with the Ministry of Religion and the extent of cooperation among all relevant parties. In addition, the following factors impede progress: border areas, mobile phones, gambling, and the lottery. Family and environmental factors are conducive to progress, and with positive relations with the MORA, elements of education from the Ministry of Education must collaborate. It is similarly incumbent upon the Church to collaborate in the enhancement of character. It is imperative that all components provide cooperation. In contrast to the aforementioned inhibiting factors, it is important to note that we are border dwellers. This implies that, at times, the border area is more advanced, while at other times it is more backward. External cultural factors, gambling, and the lottery exert a considerable influence.²⁸

In the context of local wisdom in Central Aceh Regency, the principal factors and obstacles to the reinforcement of character can be identified as follows:

1. Engaging in dialogue with officials about local wisdom related to personality. The population of Central Aceh is comprised

²⁵ Interview with SP, July 1st, 2021.

²⁶ Interview with SD, July 1st, 2021.

²⁷ Agus Setiawan, "Pendidikan Karakter pada Peserta Didik di Masa Pandemi Covid-19 Berbasis Keluarga," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education* 7, no. 1 (January 30, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.58258/jime.v7i1.1795>.

²⁸ Interview with SP, July 1st, 2021.

of individuals from a multitude of tribes, which presents a significant challenge in terms of fostering a unified identity. The supporting factors have frequently engaged in discourse with relevant officials, including those from the education office. At the present time, there is a *kamcap* that encompasses the city district, including the Aliyah level. There are also secondary schools, including MPD and MAA. We frequently convene to discuss matters pertaining to character education, with a particular focus on the value of local wisdom. In accordance with the established regulations, we have implemented a policy of wearing traditional local attire on Thursdays, which is applicable to all employees. At the student level, we do not differentiate between madrasas and schools, and we apply the same standards across all educational institutions in our central Aceh district.

It is evident that there are several challenges to be overcome, including the fact that the inhabitants of Central Aceh Regency are not exclusively of one tribal origin. This constitutes one of the obstacles. The following supporting factors are teachers and instruments. The absence of a standard curriculum represents a significant challenge to the process of character strengthening from a wisdom local perspective. The supporting factor is the teacher, then the instrument, in this case, the curriculum. This is a fundamental requirement. Teachers are trained to implement the local content curriculum. The absence of a standard curriculum at all levels, starting from kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high school, represents a significant obstacle.²⁹ The next factor that became a support was the implementation of the Gayo language and traditional Gayo dress in government and schools every Thursday.

Furthermore, the absence of a curriculum on local wisdom in the national service, coupled with the dearth of references, modules, and documents related to local learning, represents a significant obstacle to progress. Firstly, it is imperative that all institutions, including schools and governments, adopt a language and behavioural approach that is free from any form of discrimination. Regulation represents a significant barrier to the implementation of local wisdom in the context of education. By aligning this approach with the curriculum, we can develop educational materials tailored to the needs of schools. However, the National Education and Culture Office does

²⁹ Interview with EP, June 17th, 2021.

not currently have a dedicated unit for this initiative. Consequently, the application of local wisdom in schools remains limited. Additionally, there are still opportunities to integrate references, modules, and documents related to local wisdom into the school curriculum.³⁰

From the perspective of local wisdom, the supporting factors that contribute to the strengthening of character include Islamic law, special autonomy, and history. The supportive aspects of Islamic law, particularly those of independence, history, and the name of the Acehnese, are inextricably linked with Islam. Local wisdom and the community's character are well-established, resulting in a robust foundation. Nevertheless, in this context, it is analogous to the practice of women wearing the hijab, as it is firmly established within the cultural fabric. In addition to the qanun, there is also the matter of special autonomy, which is to be used for the implementation of Islamic sharia.³¹

The following forms of support are provided in the context of regional leaders and related agencies or institutions working together in a harmonious and coordinated manner. From the perspective of local wisdom in Subulussalam City, the advancement of character education is hindered by external cultural influences and population mobility. It is evident that external cultural influences, the influx of population, and the impact of our own cultural norms present an impediment. For example, the prevalence of karaoke culture and the popularity of keyboard cultural parties demonstrate the extent to which external cultural influences are pervasive.

The concepts of togetherness, harmonisation, synchronisation and coordination are fundamental to human existence. Without them, it is not possible to walk, and it is therefore unsurprising that we are sometimes entrusted with the responsibility of leading educational institutions. On occasion, we find ourselves in the room of the Dayah caddis due to our involvement in matters pertaining to education. Our discussions are limited to these three institutions and the Ministry of Religion. It is evident that the realisation of robust character education hinges on the establishment of a collaborative

³⁰ Djumali Djumali and Erlina Wijayanti, "Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Kurikulum 2013 di SMK Batik 1 Surakarta," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial* 28, no. 1 (June 7, 2018): 31–40, <https://doi.org/10.2317/jpis.v28i1.6770>.

³¹ Interview with JM, June 3rd, 2021.

framework involving all relevant parties.³² The financing aspect also merits consideration, as adequate financial support can facilitate the advancement of character education.³³

In a number of regions in Indonesia, there have been numerous instances of best practices based on local wisdom that have effectively contributed to the advancement of character education. To illustrate, one may cite the case of Pulo Traditional Village, Cangukang Village, and Ciakar Village, all of which are located in Leles District, Garut Regency, West Java Province. The community in question continues to adhere to the traditions that have been handed down from one generation to the next. This is due to the presence of customary regulations that prescribe sanctions for those who transgress them. The character traits that emerge as a result of the value internalisation process and can be promoted as the basis for forming the character of the Indonesian Nation are as follows: religious character, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, independence, democracy, friendliness/communication, peacefulness, environmental care, social care, and responsibility.³⁴

Conclusion

The process of strengthening character education in the perspective of local wisdom in Aceh Province is achieved through socialisation to the community related to local wisdom, the application of discipline, the establishment of positive habits, the provision of encouragement and motivation to each principal, the incorporation of local wisdom into the education curriculum, the formulation of policies for the implementation of local wisdom, the use of regional languages, the implementation of *malem sigampong* and the allocation of financial resources to support local wisdom.

The supporting factors include the existence of TPQs, the reality of *taklim* assemblies, teachers, and instruments, the fact of

³² Mohammad Kosim, "Urgensi Pendidikan Karakter," *Karsa: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Keislaman*, 2011, 84–92, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v19i1.78>.

³³ Jefril Rahmadoni, "Isu Global Manajemen Pembiayaan Pendidikan di SD Indonesian Creative School Pekanbaru," *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, Dan Supervisi Pendidikan)* 3, no. 2 (July 25, 2018): 161–69, <https://doi.org/10.31851/jmksp.v3i2.1855>.

³⁴ Muhammad Priyatna, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Lokal," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 10 (October 25, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v5i10.6>.

regulations on the application of local wisdom, Islamic law, special autonomy, history, togetherness, harmonisation, synchronisation, and coordination, as well as good relations between relevant agencies and institutions. The inhibiting factors are as follows: the geographical location in a border area; the presence of various tribes; the impact of external cultural influences; population mobility; the influence of family and the environment; the ongoing threat of the Coronavirus; and the absence of a standardised curriculum, references, modules and documents on local wisdom.

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