Open access: https://journal.icpa-banyuwangi.ac.id/index.php/skyhawk

SKYHAWK: Jurnal Aviasi Indonesia
Volume. 7, Number. 1, 2027, pp. 856-876

P-ISSN: 2745-6102
E-ISSN: 2776-3854

Exploring Sasak Local Wisdom as a Foundation for Character Education

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: August 07, 2026
Revised: September 01, 2026
Accepted: October 21, 2026

Keywords
Character education, Cultural values, Sasak local wisdom

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Sasak local wisdom as a foundation for character education in East Lombok, Indonesia. Using an instrumental case study, data were collected from 24 participants, including religious leaders, customary leaders, school principals, teachers, academics, community figures, and local residents. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were used, while data were analysed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings show that Sasak character values originate from oral traditions, written and narrative traditions, customary ceremonies, religious observances, and formal education. These values are organised into three relational domains: relationships with oneself, relationships with others, and relationships with God. Core values include honesty, hard work, moderation, social concern, equality, friendliness, responsibility, religiosity, respect, and tolerance. The study concludes that Sasak local wisdom functions as a living cultural ecosystem linking family, community, religion, customary institutions, and schools in character formation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become an increasingly important educational concern amid rapid social, technological, and cultural transformations. Schools are expected not only to develop students' academic competencies but also to cultivate the moral dispositions, social responsibilities, and practical virtues required for living in plural societies. Character education therefore extends beyond the transmission of abstract moral knowledge; it involves the formation of habits, emotions,

judgments, relationships, and actions through which learners understand and practise what is considered good within their communities (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Berkowitz & Hoppe, 2009; Nucci et al., 2014). Research indicates that effective character education is generally embedded across curriculum, school culture, teacher modelling, peer interaction, family participation, and community engagement rather than delivered as an isolated subject or occasional moral instruction (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Kristjánsson, 2020; Lamb et al., 2022). Accordingly, character formation must be understood as a contextual and relational educational process in which students encounter values through meaningful experiences and culturally recognisable practices.

The cultural grounding of character education is particularly important in ethnically and culturally diverse societies. Culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogies argue that education becomes more meaningful when students' cultural identities, community experiences, languages, and knowledge systems are treated as legitimate educational resources (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). From this perspective, local culture is not merely supplementary content inserted into a standardised curriculum. It constitutes a social and epistemological foundation through which learners interpret morality, identity, responsibility, and relationships with other people and the natural and spiritual worlds. Culture-based education may consequently strengthen cultural identity, learner participation, intergenerational continuity, and the contextual relevance of schooling (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007; Singh, 2014). A dialogue between formal education and local knowledge can also challenge the assumption that academically codified knowledge is the only legitimate source of learning, while enabling community experience and orally transmitted knowledge to contribute to educational practice (Dei, 2008; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021).

In Indonesia, this issue is especially significant because educational institutions operate within communities possessing diverse languages, traditions, religious practices, customary institutions, and moral philosophies. Local wisdom, commonly referred to as *kearifan lokal*, encompasses accumulated values, interpretations, practices, and forms of knowledge developed through communities' long-term engagement with their social and ecological environments. Previous Indonesian studies suggest that local wisdom can support the cultivation of honesty, responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, environmental awareness, respect, religiosity, and social solidarity (Agung et al., 2024; Hidayati et al., 2020; Suarmika et al., 2022). Studies have also demonstrated that culturally grounded learning can be incorporated into literature, dance, inclusive education, disaster education, language learning, and early childhood education (Anggraini & Kusniarti, 2017; Rosala & Budiman, 2020; Syamsi & Tahar, 2021). More recently, ethnopedagogical research has shown that integrating local values into learning can improve children's cultural awareness, strengthen character development, and increase community ownership of educational processes (Sakti et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the integration of local wisdom into character education remains contested. One position regards character education as a means of teaching relatively universal virtues such as honesty, courage, justice, compassion, respect, and responsibility. From this standpoint, schools require coherent moral frameworks that can be applied across cultural and social differences. Another position maintains that values cannot be separated from the cultural narratives, relationships, histories, and practices through which they acquire meaning. A value such as respect, for example, may be expressed differently through language, kinship relations, religious authority, customary ceremonies, or community obligations. Excessive standardisation may therefore reduce

character education to lists of desirable traits that are disconnected from students' lived realities. Conversely, an uncritical celebration of every inherited practice as "local wisdom" may romanticise culture, overlook internal differences and power relations, and treat living traditions as fixed artefacts rather than evolving systems of knowledge.

This debate is particularly relevant in Indonesian scholarship, where the term local wisdom is often used normatively and is sometimes treated as interchangeable with Indigenous knowledge. Mahaswa and Syaja (2025) caution that local wisdom is not a singular or conceptually stable category; it is shaped by historical, political, epistemological, and methodological conditions. They argue that Indonesian research frequently celebrates local wisdom for its presumed moral value and contribution to national identity without sufficiently examining its internal logic, social transmission, or contested meanings. Such instrumental treatment can reduce local wisdom to cultural symbols or ready-made solutions for educational problems. Therefore, studies of local wisdom-based character education must move beyond identifying positive values. They should investigate where these values originate, how they are communicated, how community members interpret them, and how they can be pedagogically translated without detaching them from their cultural contexts.

Empirical research in Indonesia has begun to address the relationship between local wisdom and character education. Hidayati et al. (2020), for instance, identified integration, habituation, modelling, and value internalisation as strategies for local wisdom-based character education in higher education. Suhartini et al. (2019) examined the social construction of student behaviour through a Sundanese local government programme, while Harun et al. (2020) investigated the dimensions of multicultural and locally grounded character education in early childhood settings. Syamsi and Tahar (2021) demonstrated the potential of local wisdom in inclusive elementary schools, and Asror et al. (2024) conceptualised Gusjigang as a locally grounded framework for strengthening character in the digital era. These studies establish the educational relevance of local traditions, but they are predominantly located in Java or address particular programmes, educational levels, or instructional products.

Research specifically addressing Sasak local wisdom remains comparatively limited. Tohri et al. (2022) established the urgency of integrating Sasak values into elementary school character education in East Lombok and noted the absence of a methodologically adequate and contextually appropriate model. However, existing work has not sufficiently provided an integrated account of Sasak local wisdom as a broad foundation for character education. In particular, limited attention has been paid to the interconnected roles of oral traditions, folklore, customary ceremonies, religious observances, teachers, families, customary leaders, and community practices in producing and transmitting character values. Existing research also tends to focus on the application of local wisdom in schools before comprehensively examining the cultural sources and meanings from which educational values are derived.

The Sasak community offers a significant context for addressing this gap. Its local wisdom is transmitted through oral forms such as *lelakaq*, *paribase*, *sesenggak*, and *waran*; through stories and written traditions; and through customary and religious ceremonies associated with marriage, pregnancy, birth, death, Islamic celebrations, and communal thanksgiving. These cultural forms contain values concerning the self, relationships with others, and relationships with God. They include *lomboq* or honesty, *pacu* or hard work, *paut* or moderation, *solah* or benevolence, *rema* or social concern, *onyaq* or carefulness, *kupu'* or equality, *gerasaq* or friendliness, as well as religiosity,

responsibility, tolerance, solidarity, and respect. The data further indicate that these values are introduced in formal education through curriculum integration, extracurricular activities, teacher modelling, school regulation, religious activities, and cooperation with parents.

Against this background, the present study aims to explore Sasak local wisdom as a foundation for character education. More specifically, it investigates the cultural sources through which Sasak character values are produced and transmitted, identifies the principal character values contained in oral traditions, stories, customary ceremonies, and religious practices, and examines how these values are translated into formal educational strategies. By connecting community-based knowledge with school practices, this study seeks to extend character education scholarship beyond universalistic value lists and programme-based implementation. It offers an empirically grounded account of character formation as a culturally situated process involving oral knowledge, communal rituals, religious meanings, teacher example, institutional practice, and intergenerational participation.

2. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using an instrumental case study design to explore how Sasak local wisdom functions as a cultural foundation for character education. This design was appropriate because Mengkuru Village was not examined solely for its uniqueness, but as a case through which a broader issue—character formation as a culturally situated process—could be understood. Stake (1995) distinguishes instrumental from intrinsic case study by emphasising that the former uses a bounded case to illuminate a wider phenomenon or extend understanding beyond the immediate setting. Mengkuru Village therefore provided a context in which oral traditions, customary practices, religious observances, family and community relationships, and formal educational activities could be examined as interconnected mechanisms of character formation. The study was informed by a constructivist paradigm, recognising that meanings are multiple, contextual, and socially constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher positionality and reflexivity were considered because qualitative interpretation is influenced by the researcher's social, cultural, linguistic, and institutional position (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2002). The researchers were academically situated within East Lombok through their affiliation with Universitas Hamzanwadi and were familiar with the local cultural and educational environment. This proximity facilitated access and contextual understanding, but it could also create taken-for-granted assumptions or privilege familiar interpretations. To reduce this risk, participants were encouraged to explain culturally specific Sasak terms and practices in their own words, while open-ended questions and follow-up probes were used during interviews. Reflective field notes and analytical memos were maintained, and interpretations were checked against interview transcripts, observations, and documentary evidence. Peer discussion, comparison across participant groups, consideration of deviant or contradictory accounts, and an audit trail were also used to strengthen reflexivity and analytical credibility. These procedures enabled the researchers to treat familiarity with the context as both an interpretive resource and a potential source of bias requiring continuous critical reflection.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of individuals and social actors involved in the preservation, interpretation, transmission, and educational application of Sasak local wisdom in Mengkuru Village and several surrounding communities in East Lombok. In qualitative research, the population is not treated as a statistical group from which a representative sample must be drawn. Instead, it represents the broader social setting and range of actors capable of providing rich and relevant information about the phenomenon being examined. Consequently, the study prioritised informational relevance, cultural knowledge, and direct experience rather than numerical representativeness.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. This technique enabled the researchers to identify individuals whose roles, knowledge, and experiences were directly related to Sasak local wisdom and character education. Purposive sampling is particularly appropriate for case study research because participants are selected according to their capacity to provide detailed, contextually grounded, and information-rich accounts (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria required participants to have direct involvement in character education or Sasak cultural practices, possess substantial knowledge of local values and traditions, represent a relevant community or institutional group, and participate voluntarily by providing informed consent.

The final sample consisted of 24 participants representing diverse social and educational backgrounds. They included one senior religious leader, school and madrasah principals, teachers from Islamic educational institutions, customary leaders, community leaders, academics, researchers, a radio broadcaster, and local residents. Participants ranged in age from approximately 42 to 98 years, although age information was unavailable for several individuals. Their institutional and community affiliations included Daarul Furqon Islamic Boarding School, Nahdlatul Wathan educational institutions, elementary schools, customary organisations, and village communities in Mengkuru and neighbouring areas.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant Code	Age	Position/Role	Affiliation
AAI	98	Religious Leader / Central Figure	Daarul Furqon Islamic Boarding School, Mengkuru
Dr	48	Head of Madrasah	MI Nahdlatul Wathan Mengkuru
Az	—	School Principal	SDN 1 Sakra
Ja	—	School Principal	SDN 2 Sakra
LS	45	Teacher	Daarul Furqon Islamic Boarding School
Ma	52	Teacher	Daarul Furqon Islamic Boarding School
Mu	50	Teacher	Daarul Furqon Islamic Boarding School
MY	45	Teacher	Daarul Furqon Islamic Boarding School
LN	62	Customary Leader	Sangupati, Mengkuru Village
LS	55	Customary Leader	Sangke Langit, Gunung Rajak Village
Mh	55	Customary Leader / Radio Broadcaster	Tanjong Teros, Kelayu Labuan Haji
AS	60	Community Leader	Gubuk Boroq, Dalem Lauq
Ha	48	Academic / Researcher	Kalijage
LNY	—	Academic	Mengkuru Village

Participant Code	Age	Position/Role	Affiliation
Mas	42	Community Leader	Songak Village, Sakra
AT	55	Community Leader	Mamben Wanasaba
Sa	56	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
An	70	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
LAF	45	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
MS	47	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
An	43	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
LU	50	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
Aw	49	Community Member	Mengkuru Village
Mu	55	Community Member	Mengkuru Village

The inclusion of participants from different social and institutional categories was intended to generate multiple perspectives on the cultural production, transmission, and educational implementation of Sasak character values. Religious leaders contributed knowledge about the relationship between Sasak values and Islamic teachings, customary leaders explained oral traditions, ceremonies, proverbs, stories, and cultural norms, while principals and teachers described how these values were translated into curricula, extracurricular activities, discipline, modelling, and religious programmes. Academics and community members provided historical, conceptual, and everyday perspectives on how such values were maintained and practised. Sampling continued until recurring patterns and sufficient depth were reached concerning the sources, meanings, and institutional transmission of Sasak character values. However, the sample was deliberately centred on adult cultural and educational actors and did not include students as direct participants. This represents an important boundary of the study. From a constructivist perspective, learners are not passive recipients of values but actively interpret, negotiate, and sometimes reshape the meanings transmitted to them. Accordingly, the findings primarily explain how character values are understood, communicated, and institutionalised by adult actors, rather than how students themselves receive, reinterpret, accept, or resist those values. Future research should therefore incorporate students' voices to examine character formation as a more fully co-constructed process.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The use of multiple techniques enabled methodological triangulation and allowed information obtained from one source to be compared with evidence from other sources. Data collection and preliminary analysis were conducted iteratively so that emerging insights could inform subsequent observations and interviews.

Participant observation was conducted in community and educational settings to examine how character values were expressed through interactions, ceremonies, teaching practices, religious activities, and everyday behaviour. The observations focused on the social and cultural environment of Mengkuru Village, interactions involving religious and customary leaders, school activities, the continued use of local traditions, and community adherence to Sasak values. Both structured and unstructured observations were employed. Structured observations followed predetermined areas of interest, whereas unstructured observations enabled the researcher to document unexpected

events and culturally significant practices. Descriptive and reflective field notes were produced, supplemented where appropriate by photographs and video documentation.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews constituted the primary data collection technique. Interviews were chosen because they allowed participants to explain their experiences, interpretations, memories, beliefs, and evaluations in their own words (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Seidman, 2013). The interview guide addressed participants' understanding of character education, the cultural sources of Sasak values, the meanings contained in oral traditions and ceremonies, the transmission of values across generations, and their incorporation into formal education. Participants were also asked about enabling conditions, implementation challenges, and the future preservation of Sasak local wisdom.

Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 120 minutes and was conducted at a location considered comfortable and appropriate by the participant. With informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted flexibly, allowing the researcher to use follow-up questions and probes to clarify meanings and investigate emerging issues. Where culturally specific Sasak terms were used, participants were asked to explain their meanings and contextual applications.

Document analysis complemented observations and interviews. The reviewed materials included regional policies, books on Sasak culture, journal articles, conference papers, academic theses and dissertations, institutional records, historical accounts, biographies of influential figures, and documents from schools, Islamic boarding schools, and Nahdlatul Wathan organisations. In total, the documentary corpus comprised seven books, 58 journal articles and conference papers, and four theses or dissertations. These documents provided historical, institutional, and conceptual context and were used to confirm, elaborate, or question evidence generated through interviews and observations. Together, the three techniques produced a comprehensive dataset concerning Sasak local wisdom and its role as a cultural foundation for character education.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analysed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). This model consists of three interrelated analytical activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These activities were conducted simultaneously and iteratively during and after data collection. Accordingly, data analysis was not treated as a separate stage following fieldwork but as a continuous process that informed subsequent interviews, observations, document examination, and interpretation.

Data Condensation

Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data generated from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary sources. The process began by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts and field notes to obtain an overall understanding of participants' perspectives on Sasak local wisdom, character values, cultural transmission, and educational practices. Data that were directly relevant to the research focus were retained, while unrelated or repetitive information was set aside without removing potentially important contextual meanings. The coding process was conducted inductively and systematically. It began with descriptive coding, in which labels were assigned to segments of data that represented participants' statements, observed practices, cultural expressions, and educational activities. Examples of initial codes included honesty, hard work, simplicity, social concern, respect for religious

leaders, tolerance, oral transmission, teacher modelling, communal solidarity, religious habituation, and parent involvement.

The analysis then progressed to interpretive coding, in which descriptive codes were examined to identify their broader meanings within the Sasak cultural context. For example, statements concerning consistency between words and actions were interpreted as expressions of *lomboq*, while accounts of diligence, perseverance, and enthusiasm were grouped under *pacu*. Similarly, accounts of helping neighbours, supporting bereaved families, and participating in communal ceremonies were interpreted as manifestations of *rema* and social solidarity.

Pattern coding was subsequently used to group related codes into broader analytical categories and themes (Saldaña, 2021). Codes related to *lelakaq*, *paribase*, *sesenggak*, and *waran* were grouped under oral traditions as mechanisms for transmitting character values. Codes related to marriage, pregnancy, birth, and death rituals were categorised as customary ceremonies, while codes associated with Eid, *Maulidan*, Nuzulul Qur'an, Isra' Mi'raj, and *rowah* were grouped as religious observances. School-related codes were organised into curriculum integration, extracurricular activities, teacher modelling, school discipline, religious programmes, and parent–school collaboration.

Analytical memos were written throughout the condensation process to document emerging interpretations, relationships among categories, and reflections on culturally specific concepts. The original Sasak terms were retained wherever necessary because several concepts could not be fully represented through direct English translation. Contextual explanations were therefore added to preserve their cultural meanings.

Data Display

The condensed data were then organised into systematic displays that facilitated comparison, interpretation, and the identification of relationships among the findings. Data display involved arranging information in forms that made the emerging patterns more visible and analytically manageable (Miles et al., 2020).

Several forms of data display were used in this study. First, narrative descriptions were developed to explain the meanings of Sasak character values and the contexts in which they were communicated and practised. Second, thematic matrices were constructed to compare data across participant categories, including religious leaders, customary leaders, school principals, teachers, academics, community leaders, and local residents. These matrices enabled the researcher to identify similarities, differences, and complementary perspectives among participant groups. Third, analytical tables were created to organise the data according to cultural sources, character values, relational domains, modes of transmission, and school-based implementation strategies. For example, one matrix connected oral traditions with the values they communicated, while another linked customary and religious ceremonies with their educational meanings. A further matrix examined how Sasak values were translated into school practices through the curriculum, extracurricular programmes, teacher modelling, school regulations, religious activities, and parental participation. Fourth, direct quotations from participants were selected to illustrate the principal themes and preserve participants' voices. Quotations were chosen based on their clarity, representativeness, and relevance to the interpretation being presented. Diagrams and conceptual relationships were also developed to illustrate how oral traditions, narrative traditions, customary ceremonies, religious observances, and school practices collectively supported character formation.

These displays enabled the researcher to move beyond isolated descriptions and examine the broader structure of the phenomenon. Through this process, three major domains of Sasak character values became visible: the relationship with oneself, relationships with others, and the relationship with God. The displays also revealed that the different cultural sources served complementary pedagogical functions.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Conclusion drawing involved identifying meanings, patterns, relationships, explanations, and propositions from the condensed and displayed data. Preliminary conclusions were developed from the early stages of data collection and were continuously refined as additional evidence became available. These initial interpretations remained open and provisional until they were supported by sufficient evidence from multiple participants and data sources.

The conclusion-drawing process included identifying the principal themes emerging from the data, analysing relationships among these themes, interpreting their cultural and educational meanings, and developing statements concerning Sasak local wisdom as a foundation for character education. Particular attention was given to the relationship between cultural sources and pedagogical functions. Oral traditions were interpreted as mnemonic and communicative mechanisms, folklore as a narrative mechanism for illustrating moral choices and consequences, ceremonies as experiential forms of moral learning, religious observances as spaces for spiritual and social formation, and schools as institutions that formalised and reinforced community values.

The findings were verified through several procedures. First, interview data were compared with observational evidence and documentary sources to establish methodological triangulation. Second, information was compared across participant groups to assess whether the identified themes were supported by different perspectives. Third, emerging interpretations were repeatedly checked against the original transcripts and field notes to ensure that conclusions remained grounded in the data. Peer discussion was also used to examine the coherence of the coding structure and the credibility of emerging interpretations. In addition, deviant or contradictory accounts were considered to prevent the analysis from presenting Sasak local wisdom as entirely homogeneous or uncontested. Analytical decisions, revisions to categories, and the development of themes were documented through memos and an audit trail.

Integration of the Analytical Process

The three analytical components were not undertaken in a linear sequence. Data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification occurred interactively and cyclically throughout the research process. For example, an emerging category identified during coding could lead the researcher to revisit an interview transcript, reorganise a data matrix, or seek additional clarification from observational and documentary evidence. Likewise, preliminary conclusions were revised when new data offered a different or more complex interpretation.

This iterative analytical process produced a contextualised understanding of Sasak local wisdom as a multidimensional foundation for character education. It enabled the researcher to identify not only the character values contained in Sasak traditions but also the cultural mechanisms through which those values were communicated, experienced, reinforced, and incorporated into formal education.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical safeguards were applied throughout the research process in accordance with established standards for qualitative research reporting (O'Brien et al., 2014; Tong et al., 2007). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Universitas Indonesia Research Ethics Board prior to data collection (this paper is based on doctoral research under Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia). Before participation, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, their right to decline to answer particular questions or withdraw without consequence, and the intended use of the data. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained before interviews and audio recording.

Particular attention was given to confidentiality because the research was conducted in a relatively small community where participants could potentially be identified through their social roles, institutional affiliations, or quotations. To protect external confidentiality, participants' names were replaced with codes or pseudonyms, and identifying details that were not analytically necessary were removed or generalised in transcripts and publications. To protect internal confidentiality, care was taken not to combine potentially identifying information such as age, institutional position, village role, or unique personal experiences in ways that could allow other community members to infer a participant's identity. Quotations were therefore reported only when they could be presented without creating a reasonable risk of deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009).

Research data were stored securely in a researcher drive, with access restricted to the research team. Audio files, consent records, and de-identified transcripts were stored separately, while any document linking participant identities to research codes was kept in a separate protected location. Data were retained for five years in accordance with Universitas Indonesia policy and securely destroyed thereafter. These procedures were intended to protect participant privacy while maintaining the credibility and auditability of the qualitative dataset.

3. RESULTS

The findings revealed that Sasak local wisdom in Mengkuru Village functions as a culturally embedded foundation for character education. Character values were not transmitted through a single institution or educational activity. Instead, they were reproduced through interconnected cultural sources, including oral traditions, written traditions, folklore, customary ceremonies, religious observances, and school practices. These sources enabled moral values to be remembered, interpreted, practised, and transmitted across generations.

Three principal domains of character formation emerged from the data: the relationship with oneself, the relationship with other people, and the relationship with God. Values related to the self emphasised honesty, perseverance, and moderation. Interpersonal values included benevolence, social concern, careful communication, equality, friendliness, solidarity, and mutual respect. The religious domain included obedience to religious teachings, proper conduct toward religious authorities, gratitude, and tolerance. The findings therefore demonstrate that Sasak character education is holistic because it connects personal morality, social responsibility, cultural identity, and religious commitment.

Cultural Sources of Sasak Character Values

Participants identified three broad sources of Sasak local wisdom: oral traditions, written and narrative traditions, and customary and religious practices. Oral traditions included *lelakaq* or

traditional verse, *paribase* or proverbs, *sesenggak* or figurative expressions, and *waran* or stories. Written traditions were represented by *babad* and *mewacan*, while ceremonial sources included practices associated with marriage, pregnancy, birth, death, Islamic celebrations, and communal thanksgiving. These sources did not operate independently. Oral expressions provided concise moral guidance that could be memorised and repeated. Stories presented moral dilemmas through contrasting characters and consequences. Ceremonies transformed values into collective actions, while schools translated them into curricular, extracurricular, disciplinary, and religious activities. Table 1 summarises the relationship between the cultural sources and their educational functions.

Table 2. Cultural sources of Sasak character education

Cultural source	Principal forms	Main educational function	Character orientation
Oral traditions	*Lelakaq*, *paribase*, *sesenggak*, and *waran*	Communicating moral principles through memorable language, metaphors, and everyday expressions	Personal integrity, social conduct, religious commitment
Written and narrative traditions	*Babad*, *mewacan*, folklore, and traditional stories	Presenting moral contrasts, exemplary figures, conflict, consequences, and collective memory	Responsibility, resilience, wisdom, sacrifice, social harmony
Customary ceremonies	Marriage, pregnancy, birth, and death rituals	Embedding values in life-cycle practices and collective participation	Responsibility, protection of life, solidarity, mutual assistance
Religious observances	Eid celebrations, *Maulidan*, Nuzulul Qur'an, Isra' Mi'raj, and *rowah*	Strengthening religious consciousness through worship, storytelling, gratitude, and communal gathering	Faith, gratitude, compassion, knowledge seeking, togetherness
Formal education	Curriculum, extracurricular activities, teacher modelling, discipline, parent collaboration, and religious programmes	Translating community values into structured educational practices	Honesty, hard work, equality, respect, obedience, responsibility

The importance of oral transmission was repeatedly emphasised by participants. A customary leader explained that *lelakaq*, *paribase*, *sesenggak*, and *waran* were more easily understood and remembered by community members than abstract explanations. Their concise and metaphorical forms helped people connect moral teachings delivered by the *Tuan Guru* with behaviour in everyday life. Oral tradition therefore served not merely as cultural entertainment but as a practical mnemonic system for moral education.

Character Values Embedded in Oral Traditions

Oral traditions contained the most explicit articulation of Sasak character values. The values were organised into three relational domains. The first concerned the cultivation of the self, the

second regulated relationships with others, and the third guided relationships with God and religious authority.

Table 3. Character values represented in Sasak oral traditions

Relational domain	Sasak value	Approximate meaning	Character meaning in practice
Relationship with oneself	*Lomboq*	Honesty	Maintaining consistency between words and actions; avoiding lies and deception
Relationship with oneself	*Pacu*	Hard work	Applying physical and intellectual effort; remaining diligent, curious, and enthusiastic
Relationship with oneself	*Paut*	Moderation	Using resources appropriately, living simply, and avoiding excess
Relationship with others	*Solah*	Benevolence	Showing tolerance, avoiding revenge and violence, and respecting differences
Relationship with others	*Rema*	Social concern	Helping others regardless of background and responding to their difficulties
Relationship with others	*Onyaq*	Carefulness	Exercising caution in speech and action and protecting other people's feelings
Relationship with others	*Kupu'*	Equality	Respecting the rights and dignity of others regardless of social status
Relationship with others	*Gerasaq*	Friendliness	Communicating politely and welcoming others without discrimination
Relationship with God	*Soleh*	Religious devotion	Obeying religious teachings based on the Qur'an and Hadith
Relationship with God	*Patut*	Proper and respectful conduct	Demonstrating courtesy, dignity, and respect, particularly toward the *Tuan Guru*
Relationship with God and society	*Soloh*	Religious tolerance	Recognising difference and maintaining peaceful relations across religious boundaries

The self-oriented values indicate that character begins with personal discipline. *Lomboq* requires individuals to align their speech with their conduct, while *pacu* promotes sustained effort and intellectual engagement. *Paut* limits excessive behaviour by encouraging simplicity and the proper use of material resources. The interpersonal domain was broader and placed strong emphasis on living harmoniously with others. *Solah* discouraged hostility and retaliation, whereas *rema* required active concern for people experiencing difficulty. *Onyaq* regulated interpersonal sensitivity, especially in speech, while *kupu'* emphasised fairness and equal dignity. *Gerasaq* framed friendliness and polite communication as moral responsibilities rather than superficial social behaviour.

The religious domain did not stand apart from social conduct. *Soleh* required obedience to religious principles, while *patut* connected religious morality with respect for teachers and community authorities. *Soloh* extended religious character to the acceptance of difference and the maintenance of peaceful relations. This integration shows that Sasak morality connects piety with social responsibility.

Moral Learning through Sasak Folklore

Traditional stories and folklore provided another significant medium of character education. Unlike short oral expressions, stories communicated values through plots, character contrasts, conflict, suffering, and resolution. Their educational power lay in illustrating the consequences of moral and immoral conduct.

Table 4. Moral orientations in selected Sasak stories

Story	Central moral contrast or figure	Character values conveyed
Cupak Gerantang	Cupak represents negative conduct, while Gerantang represents moral conduct	Honesty, responsibility, forgiveness, problem solving, and rejection of envy, arrogance, deceit, and irresponsibility
Dewi Anjani	Dewi Anjani as a revered and knowledgeable female figure	Piety, compassion, willingness to help, love of knowledge, and moral beauty
Sigar Penjalin	A figure who withstands hardship	Resilience, determination, optimism, courage, and perseverance
Minang Sie	A figure confronting difficult life circumstances	Patience, sincerity, self-control, and loyalty to communal principles
Putri Mandalika	A figure who sacrifices personal happiness for collective unity	Self-sacrifice, public responsibility, peace, and social unity
Doyan Medaran	A wise figure who negotiates differences	Wisdom, openness, compromise, inclusiveness, and conflict resolution

The stories employed both positive exemplars and negative contrasts. In *Cupak Gerantang*, learners could distinguish destructive traits such as envy, deceit, arrogance, and irresponsibility from Gerantang's honesty, responsibility, and ability to resolve problems. Other narratives highlighted perseverance, patience, knowledge seeking, sacrifice, and deliberation. Folklore therefore supported character formation by inviting listeners to evaluate conduct through narrative consequences rather than through direct moral commands alone.

Character Formation through Customary Ceremonies

Customary ceremonies constituted an experiential source of moral learning. Their educational significance emerged from community participation, role distribution, ritual obligation, and collective responsibility. Values were therefore learned by taking part in socially meaningful events.

Table 5. Character values embedded in Sasak life-cycle ceremonies

Life-cycle ceremony	Selected practices	Character values and educational meanings
Marriage	*Perondongan*, *merarik lamar*, *selarian*, *mesejati*, *nyelabar*, *tobat rapah*, *sorong serah*, *nyongkol*, and *bejanggoh*	Parental responsibility, social accountability, integration of religion and custom, and harmony among human beings, nature, and God
Pregnancy	*Mandiq*, collective prayers, *bubus tian*, and *selametan tian*	Protection of mother and child, respect for new life, prayerfulness, and communal care
Birth	Burial of the placenta, extinguishing the ritual fire, disposal of ashes, hair cutting, first contact with the ground, and circumcision	Protection, health, religious awareness, respect for prophetic traditions, and gradual development of independence
Death	Notification of death, condolence visits, preparation of the body, *tahlilan*, and commemorations on designated days	Solidarity, empathy, mutual assistance, religious devotion, and support for bereaved families

Marriage ceremonies taught responsibility not only to the couple but also to parents, kinship groups, customary leaders, and the wider community. Pregnancy and birth ceremonies expressed protection of vulnerable life and the community's obligation to accompany new family members. Death rituals made solidarity visible through condolence visits, prayer, food preparation, and sustained support for the bereaved family. Thus, customary ceremonies transformed moral values into collective social practice.

Character Values in Religious Observances

Religious observances reinforced the integration of Sasak cultural identity with Islamic teachings. Their educational function extended beyond ritual worship because they created spaces for learning, social interaction, remembrance, and moral reflection.

Table 6. Educational values in Sasak religious observances

Religious observance	Main forms of participation	Character values developed
Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha	Congregational prayer, remembrance, supplication, family visits, and visits to ancestral graves	Gratitude, reconciliation, kinship, remembrance, and continuity with previous generations
Maulidan	Competitions, religious sermons, recitation of blessings, and reading of the *Barzanji*	Love for the Prophet, strengthened faith, compassion, social inclusion, and religious commitment
Nuzulul Qur'an	Religious study groups and sermons during Ramadan	Faith in revelation, enthusiasm for learning, and respect for religious knowledge
Isra' Mi'raj	Religious lectures and narration of the Prophet's journey	Awareness of prayer obligations and strengthened religious understanding
Rowah or communal thanksgiving	Inviting neighbours, remembrance, prayer, and communal meals led by a *Tuan Guru*	Gratitude, togetherness, generosity, social bonds, and religiosity

The data indicate that religious education was experienced communally. Gratitude, faith, and worship were consistently connected with kinship, compassion, social participation, and respect for knowledge. Religious observances therefore functioned as collective pedagogical spaces in which moral teachings were enacted rather than merely explained.

4. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that Sasak local wisdom constitutes a multidimensional cultural foundation for character education. Character formation in the Sasak community is not limited to formal instruction or the direct communication of moral rules. Instead, values are transmitted through an interconnected cultural system comprising oral traditions, written and narrative traditions, customary ceremonies, religious observances, family relationships, community participation, and formal education. These cultural resources enable moral principles to be communicated verbally, represented narratively, practised collectively, reinforced religiously, and institutionalised educationally.

The findings identify three relational domains within Sasak character education: the relationship with oneself, relationships with others, and the relationship with God. Self-oriented

values, such as *lomboq*, *pacu*, and *paut*, emphasise honesty, perseverance, self-discipline, and moderation. Social values, including *solah*, *rema*, *onyaq*, *kupu'*, and *gerasaq*, regulate interpersonal conduct through benevolence, care, careful communication, equality, and friendliness. Religious values, such as *soleh*, *patut*, and *soloh*, connect piety with respect, proper conduct, and tolerance. This structure suggests that Sasak character is understood relationally: a good person is expected to maintain personal integrity, contribute to harmonious social relationships, and fulfil religious responsibilities.

The findings also show that each cultural source performs a distinct pedagogical function. Proverbs, traditional verses, figurative expressions, and oral stories make values memorable through concise and culturally meaningful language. Folklore illustrates the consequences of behaviour through moral contrasts, exemplary figures, conflicts, and resolutions. Customary and religious ceremonies enable individuals to experience values through participation, obligation, cooperation, and collective memory. Schools subsequently translate these values into curriculum, extracurricular activities, teacher modelling, discipline, religious programmes, and parent–school collaboration. Sasak character education can therefore be conceptualised as an ecological process in which the family, community, religious institutions, customary structures, and schools jointly contribute to moral formation.

The findings reinforce the argument that character education is most effective when it is embedded in the culture and everyday practices of an educational community. Berkowitz and Bier (2004) maintain that character education should not be reduced to the teaching of isolated moral concepts; it requires coordinated practices across curriculum, relationships, institutional ethos, and opportunities for moral action. The present study extends this position by showing that the relevant moral community is broader than the school itself. In the Sasak context, character is cultivated through interactions among schools, families, religious leaders, customary leaders, oral traditions, and communal ceremonies. Thus, a whole-school approach may be insufficient unless it is connected to the wider cultural ecology in which students live.

This finding is consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy, which recognises students' cultural knowledge, identities, and community experiences as educational resources rather than barriers to formal learning (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Sasak expressions such as *lomboq*, *pacu*, *rema*, and *patut* provide learners with culturally familiar concepts through which universal moral concerns can be interpreted. Honesty, responsibility, respect, equality, and compassion may be recognised across different societies, but their meanings and expressions are mediated by culturally specific language, social relationships, and practices. The results therefore support the view that culturally grounded education does not necessarily reject universal values. Instead, it gives those values locally meaningful forms through which students can understand and practise them.

The findings also correspond with ethnopedagogical research in Indonesia. Sakti et al. (2024) found that local wisdom could be revitalised through character education when schools engaged teachers, parents, and community members in culturally grounded learning. Their study emphasised that ethnopedagogy strengthens cultural awareness while enabling local values to become educational resources. Similarly, the current study shows that Sasak local wisdom becomes pedagogically significant when community narratives, ceremonies, religious practices, and social values are connected to school activities. However, the present research broadens the scope of

ethnopedagogy by identifying not only how local wisdom is used in education but also the cultural sources from which character values emerge.

Religious observances identified in this study can also be situated within the broader Indonesian scholarship on Islamic and pesantren-based character education. Research in Indonesian pesantren indicates that character formation is not confined to explicit moral instruction but is embedded in religious learning, habituation, institutional routines, and everyday social practices. Hidayat and Bujuri (2020), examining pesantren in Yogyakarta and Jambi, found that character education was integrated across curricular, co-curricular, extracurricular, and habituation activities, through which students practised religiosity, discipline, honesty, responsibility, mutual assistance, tolerance, and social concern in their daily lives. Similarly, Miftahuddin et al. (2024) showed that Islamic character formation at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Boarding School in Purwokerto was embedded in Islamic Religious Education, particularly through *Akhlaq, Aqidah, Fiqh,* and *Tarikh Islam*, demonstrating the centrality of religious knowledge and practice in shaping moral dispositions. The present findings extend this pesantren-based literature by showing that Islamic character formation also operates beyond formal religious institutions through culturally embedded communal observances. Practices such as *Maulidan, Nuzulul Qur'an, Isra' Mi'raj,* Eid celebrations, and *rowah* function as collective pedagogical spaces where religious commitment is enacted together with gratitude, compassion, kinship, knowledge seeking, and social responsibility. Thus, in the Sasak context, Islamic character education emerges from the intersection of religious practice, local cultural traditions, community participation, and formal education rather than from classroom instruction alone.

The findings provide more detailed empirical support for Tohri et al. (2022), who argued that Sasak local wisdom has substantial potential to form the basis of character education in East Lombok. Their study identified the absence of a methodologically adequate model for integrating Sasak values into elementary education and recommended holistic integration across intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. The present study confirms this urgency but demonstrates that curriculum integration represents only one dimension of the process. Sasak character education also depends on teacher exemplarity, community participation, parent–school collaboration, religious leadership, folklore, customary ceremonies, and oral transmission. In this respect, the current findings move beyond a school-centred model toward a community-embedded model of character education.

The role of oral traditions in this study is particularly significant. Previous research on culturally grounded education has often focused on incorporating local content into textbooks, learning materials, or classroom activities. The present study demonstrates that oral traditions possess their own pedagogical architecture. *Lelakaq*, *paribase*, *sesenggak*, and *waran* communicate moral knowledge through rhythm, metaphor, repetition, contrast, and narrative memory. This finding is compatible with Indigenous education scholarship, which recognises oral history, storytelling, observation, participation, and intergenerational relationships as legitimate ways of knowing and learning (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007; Dei, 2008). From this perspective, oral traditions should not be treated merely as cultural objects to be described in lessons. They are pedagogical methods through which knowledge is organised, remembered, and socially validated.

The experiential role of customary ceremonies further distinguishes this study from approaches that equate character education with moral explanation. Marriage, pregnancy, birth, and

death ceremonies provide contexts in which responsibility, solidarity, care, gratitude, and respect are enacted collectively. Participants do not simply hear that solidarity is important; they practise it by assisting families, attending ceremonies, contributing resources, praying together, and supporting those experiencing major life transitions. This reflects an embodied conception of character in which virtues are learned through repeated participation in meaningful social practices.

Religious observances similarly integrate spiritual and social character. Eid celebrations, *Maulidan*, Nuzulul Qur'an, Isra' Mi'raj, and *rowah* cultivate faith while also reinforcing gratitude, compassion, knowledge seeking, generosity, kinship, and communal belonging. The findings therefore challenge a strict separation between religious education and civic or social character education. Within the Sasak context, devotion to God is expected to produce appropriate conduct toward other people. Religious character is consequently evaluated not only through ritual obedience but also through social responsibility and interpersonal respect.

Nevertheless, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that all inherited cultural practices are automatically educationally desirable. Mahaswa and Syaja (2025) warn that Indonesian scholarship may romanticise local wisdom by representing it as coherent, uniformly positive, and unaffected by historical change or social power. This caution is relevant because the educational use of Sasak traditions requires critical interpretation. Schools must distinguish between values that promote dignity, equality, responsibility, and peaceful coexistence and practices that may no longer correspond with children's rights, gender equality, inclusion, or contemporary educational principles. Local wisdom should therefore be engaged as a living and discussable knowledge system rather than preserved as an unquestionable collection of traditions.

This study has several limitations. First, it employed an intrinsic case study focused primarily on Mengkuru Village and related communities in East Lombok. The findings provide an in-depth account of one culturally distinctive setting but cannot be statistically generalised to all Sasak communities. Local terminology, ceremonial practices, and interpretations of values may differ across villages, districts, generations, and social groups. Second, participants were predominantly adults who possessed cultural, religious, educational, or community knowledge. Although their perspectives were essential, the study did not sufficiently examine how children and students themselves understand, negotiate, accept, or resist Sasak character values. Third, the study identified values and implementation strategies but did not measure their effects on students' behaviour, moral reasoning, school engagement, or long-term character development. Finally, because some cultural knowledge was transmitted orally, interpretation and translation into English may not fully capture the semantic depth of particular Sasak concepts.

Theoretically, this study proposes that local wisdom-based character education should be understood as a cultural ecosystem rather than a collection of local values added to the curriculum. Character emerges through interactions among language, narrative, ritual, religion, social relationships, institutional practices, and exemplary figures. This perspective expands conventional whole-school models by introducing a whole-community dimension in which schools operate as one part of a broader moral and cultural environment. Practically, schools in Sasak communities should develop learning materials that use local proverbs, stories, and culturally meaningful concepts without reducing them to decorative content. Teachers require professional development to interpret local wisdom critically, connect it with learning objectives, and facilitate dialogue between local and universal values. Storytelling, reflective discussion, community projects, visits by cultural

and religious figures, and participation in appropriate cultural practices can make character education more experiential. Teachers must also model the values being taught because the findings show that students encounter character through observed behaviour as much as through explicit instruction.

Schools should strengthen partnerships with parents, customary leaders, religious figures, cultural practitioners, and community organisations. Such collaboration can support the authenticity of cultural content and prevent the school from misrepresenting local practices. At the policy level, curriculum developers should provide flexibility for locally grounded character education while maintaining critical safeguards concerning equality, inclusion, child protection, and religious tolerance. Future research should involve students, compare multiple Sasak communities, and use longitudinal or mixed-method designs to examine how culturally grounded educational practices influence character development over time.

At the policy level, the recommendation for greater curriculum flexibility should be situated within Indonesia's current curriculum architecture. Kurikulum Merdeka, formally established through Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, provides schools and teachers with greater flexibility to design learning according to students' needs, local contexts, and the characteristics of individual educational settings. This policy framework was further refined through Permendikdasmen No. 13 of 2025, which retained Kurikulum Merdeka while replacing the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* terminology with the eight-dimensional *Profil Lulusan* and introducing more flexible forms of co-curricular learning. These arrangements provide a concrete policy space for Sasak schools to integrate locally grounded character resources—such as proverbs, folklore, religious observances, customary practices, and community participation—into contextual classroom and co-curricular activities. Such practices can be aligned particularly with the graduate-profile dimensions of faith and devotion to God, citizenship, collaboration, independence, and communication. Thus, the integration of Sasak local wisdom need not be treated as an additional or parallel curriculum; rather, it can operate within the flexibility already provided by Indonesia's national curriculum framework, while remaining subject to national expectations concerning inclusion, equality, tolerance, and student development.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Sasak local wisdom provides a culturally grounded and multidimensional foundation for character education. Character values within the Sasak community are transmitted through an interconnected system of oral traditions, written and narrative traditions, customary ceremonies, religious observances, family relationships, community participation, and formal educational practices. These cultural sources shape character across three main relational domains: the relationship with oneself, relationships with others, and the relationship with God. Values such as *lomboq* or honesty, *pacu* or hard work, *paut* or moderation, *rema* or social concern, *kupu'* or equality, *gerasaq* or friendliness, *patut* or proper conduct, and *soloh* or tolerance demonstrate that Sasak character education integrates personal integrity, social responsibility, cultural identity, and religious commitment.

The findings further show that Sasak local wisdom operates through different but complementary pedagogical mechanisms. Oral traditions make moral values memorable through culturally meaningful language and metaphor. Folklore illustrates moral choices and consequences through exemplary and contrasting characters. Customary and religious ceremonies transform

values into collective and experiential practices, while schools institutionalise them through curriculum integration, extracurricular activities, teacher modelling, discipline, religious programmes, and collaboration with parents. Character education in this context should therefore not be understood merely as the transmission of predetermined virtues within the classroom. It is a culturally situated and community-embedded process in which schools, families, religious leaders, customary authorities, and local communities share responsibility for moral formation.

This study contributes to character education scholarship by proposing that local wisdom should be treated as a living cultural ecosystem rather than as supplementary cultural content. The educational use of Sasak local wisdom requires both preservation and critical interpretation so that culturally meaningful values can be maintained while remaining consistent with contemporary principles of inclusion, equality, child protection, and religious tolerance. Although the findings are limited to one instrumental case study in East Lombok, they offer a strong basis for developing culturally responsive character education in other diverse settings. Future research should involve students more directly, compare different Sasak communities, and examine the long-term influence of locally grounded educational practices on students' behaviour, moral reasoning, and social participation.

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