

Strategy for Strengthening Character Education Based on Sasak Local Wisdom in Senior High Schools of West Lombok Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines strategies for strengthening character education based on Sasak local wisdom in senior high schools in West Lombok Regency. The study assumes that character education becomes more effective when moral values are integrated with students' cultural context. Using a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to students and teachers, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were integrated at the interpretation stage to develop a comprehensive understanding of implementation strategies and outcomes. The findings show that character education implementation is at a moderate level, with greater emphasis on moral integrity and discipline than cultural awareness. The integration of Sasak local wisdom occurs mainly through school culture and informal practices rather than structured lesson planning. Quantitative findings indicate a positive relationship between the integration of Sasak local wisdom and students' character outcomes, particularly cultural awareness and social cooperation. Qualitative findings further indicate that contextual learning, supportive school culture, teacher cultural literacy, and institutional support are key factors in effective implementation. The study concludes that character education based on Sasak local wisdom can strengthen students' moral development and cultural identity when implemented systematically. Integrating local wisdom into curriculum design, teaching practices, and school culture provides a sustainable strategy for developing character while preserving local cultural values.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a critical concern in contemporary educational systems, particularly in societies undergoing rapid social and cultural transformation. Globalization, digital expansion, and increased cultural exposure have altered students' value systems and social behavior. Schools are now required to perform not only academic functions but also moral and cultural formation (Lickona, 2013). This shift positions character education as a strategic component of national education systems, including Indonesia.

In Indonesia, character education is formally embedded in national education policy through the Strengthening Character Education Program. The program emphasizes values such as integrity, religiosity, nationalism, independence, and mutual cooperation (Kemdikbud, 2017). However, the implementation of character education often remains normative and procedural. Many schools apply character education through slogans, ceremonial activities, or isolated moral lessons without meaningful integration into learning processes (Sari & Sumardi, 2020).

This implementation gap reduces the effectiveness of character education. Students tend to perceive moral values as abstract concepts disconnected from daily life. Research shows that character education becomes effective when values are contextual, experiential, and culturally relevant (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). Without contextual grounding, moral instruction struggles to shape students' attitudes and behavior.

Local wisdom provides a concrete foundation for contextual character education. Local wisdom reflects collective ethical systems formed through long-term social interaction and cultural experience. It regulates social behavior, conflict resolution, and communal responsibility (Widodo, 2020). Integrating local

wisdom into education aligns moral learning with students' social reality, making values easier to understand and internalize.

In multicultural societies, culturally grounded education strengthens students' identity and social cohesion. Banks (2015) argues that education that acknowledges students' cultural backgrounds promotes inclusivity and moral engagement. Culturally responsive pedagogy allows students to see their culture represented in formal education, which enhances learning motivation and ethical awareness (Wahyudi & Prasetyo, 2021).

The Sasak community of Lombok represents a cultural group with strong ethical traditions rooted in communal life. Sasak local wisdom emphasizes harmony, mutual assistance, obedience to social norms, and deliberative decision-making. Values such as *besiru* promote collective responsibility, while *reme* reinforces consensus and respect in social interaction (Rahman & Wahid, 2019). These values function as moral guidelines within Sasak society.

However, the transmission of Sasak local wisdom to younger generations faces serious challenges. Modern lifestyles, digital media influence, and standardized education systems reduce students' exposure to traditional values. Adolescents increasingly adopt individualistic attitudes that contrast with communal ethics (Santrock, 2018). This shift threatens cultural continuity and weakens moral foundations among youth.

Senior high school students are particularly vulnerable to this condition. At this stage, adolescents develop moral reasoning, social identity, and value orientation. Education at this level plays a decisive role in shaping long-term character outcomes (Nucci et al., 2014). Therefore, senior high schools represent a strategic setting for strengthening character education based on local wisdom.

West Lombok Regency presents a relevant educational context for this study. The region maintains strong Sasak cultural traditions while experiencing social and economic change. Schools serve students from diverse rural and semi-urban backgrounds. This diversity requires adaptive educational strategies that integrate national standards with local cultural values (Hadi & Rahayu, 2021).

Despite this potential, many schools in West Lombok have not systematically integrated Sasak local wisdom into character education. Local values are often limited to cultural events or extracurricular activities. They rarely influence curriculum design, teaching strategies, or school culture. This fragmented approach limits the transformative impact of character education (Sulasmono, 2019).

Effective character education requires strategic integration across educational components. Values must be embedded in learning objectives, instructional methods, assessment, and school norms. Sugiyono and Yuliani (2022) emphasize that school culture plays a crucial role in reinforcing moral values taught in classrooms. Consistency between instruction and practice supports value internalization.

Teachers serve as key agents in this process. Their cultural understanding, pedagogical skills, and moral example directly influence students' character development. Social learning theory explains that students learn values through observation and interaction with significant figures (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). Teachers who embody local wisdom strengthen moral learning through daily practice.

Policy support also affects implementation success. While national policies encourage character education, they often lack operational guidance for local adaptation. Schools require flexible frameworks that allow integration of local wisdom without compromising academic standards (UNESCO, 2017). Strategic models rooted in local culture can bridge this policy gap.

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws on character education theory, social learning theory, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Character education theory emphasizes moral knowledge, moral emotion, and moral action as interconnected dimensions (Lickona, 2013). Culturally responsive pedagogy stresses the importance of aligning instruction with students' cultural experiences (Banks, 2015).

Empirical studies confirm that character education based on local wisdom improves students' moral behavior, social responsibility, and cultural awareness (Akmal & Murniati, 2020). However, most research focuses on elementary or junior high school contexts. Studies examining senior high school implementation remain limited, particularly in eastern Indonesian regions.

This research addresses this gap by examining strategies for strengthening character education based on Sasak local wisdom in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency. It analyzes integration methods, institutional support, and implementation challenges. The study aims to formulate strategic recommendations that enhance character education effectiveness and cultural sustainability.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods research design to examine strategies for strengthening character education based on Sasak local wisdom in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency. Mixed methods research integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex educational phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design was selected because character education involves measurable outcomes as well as contextual, cultural, and behavioral dimensions that cannot be fully captured through a single method.

The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed in the first phase to identify general patterns related to character education implementation. Qualitative data were collected in the second phase to explain, deepen, and contextualize the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014). This sequence allowed the researcher to explore not only the extent of character education practices but also the underlying strategies and cultural meanings associated with Sasak local wisdom.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in public senior high schools located in West Lombok Regency, Indonesia. The region was selected due to its strong Sasak cultural background and its relevance to the research focus. The population included school principals, teachers, and students involved in character education programs.

Quantitative participants consisted of students and teachers selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across grade levels and academic streams. Qualitative participants were selected using purposive sampling. They included principals, senior teachers, and cultural informants who possessed in-depth knowledge of Sasak local wisdom and school practices. This combination ensured data diversity and credibility (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the implementation of character education and the integration of Sasak local wisdom. The questionnaire assessed dimensions such as moral values, social behavior, cultural awareness, and school climate. Items were developed based on character education theory and culturally responsive education frameworks (Lickona, 2013; Banks, 2015).

The instrument used a Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was validated through expert judgment and pilot testing. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. Quantitative data collection aimed to capture patterns and trends in character education practices across schools.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of character education implementation. Inferential analysis examined relationships between the integration of local wisdom and character-related outcomes. Statistical analysis provided empirical evidence of the effectiveness and limitations of current practices (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

The results of quantitative analysis served as the basis for selecting qualitative participants and formulating interview questions. This integration reflects the core principle of mixed methods research, where one data set informs the next phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' experiences, strategies, and challenges in integrating Sasak local wisdom into character education. Observation focused on teaching practices, student interaction, and school culture. Document analysis examined lesson plans, school regulations, and character education programs.

Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility while maintaining focus on research objectives. This approach enabled participants to express culturally grounded perspectives in their own terms (Miles et al., 2014). Data collection continued until saturation was achieved.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Coding was conducted to identify recurring themes related to character education strategies, cultural values, and institutional support (Miles et al., 2014).

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of data sources and methods. Member checking was applied to validate interpretations. This process enhanced the credibility and dependability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Integration occurred at the interpretation stage. Quantitative findings were compared and explained using qualitative insights. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of how and why certain strategies were effective or ineffective. Data integration strengthened the validity of conclusions and supported the development of strategic recommendations (Fetters et al., 2013).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research principles. Participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from school authorities to conduct the study. Ethical conduct ensured respect for participants and cultural sensitivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Research Results

Quantitative data were collected from students and teachers in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency to measure the level of character education implementation and the integration of Sasak local wisdom. Data analysis focused on descriptive statistics and relational patterns between variables.

Level of Character Education Implementation

The results indicate that character education implementation in senior high schools was generally at a moderate level. Schools had formally adopted character education policies, but practical integration varied across dimensions.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Character Education Implementation

Dimension	Mean	Category
Moral Integrity	3.82	High
Discipline and Responsibility	3.76	High
Social Care and Cooperation	3.45	Moderate
Cultural Awareness	3.21	Moderate
Respect and Tolerance	3.67	High
Overall Mean	3.58	Moderate

The data show that moral integrity and discipline were the strongest dimensions. Cultural awareness scored lower than other dimensions, indicating limited exposure to local cultural values in formal learning activities.

Integration of Sasak Local Wisdom in Learning

Quantitative findings reveal that Sasak local wisdom was partially integrated into character education. Teachers acknowledged the importance of local values, but their application remained inconsistent.

Table 2. Integration of Sasak Local Wisdom in School Practices

Dimension	Mean	Category
Use of Sasak values in classroom examples	3.18	Moderate

Integration in lesson plans	3.05	Moderate
Use in school rules and norms	3.72	High
Application in student social activities	3.54	Moderate
Teacher understanding of Sasak local wisdom	3.11	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.32	Moderate

The strongest integration occurred in school rules and norms, while lesson plan integration showed the lowest score. This finding indicates that local wisdom was more visible in informal school culture than in structured instruction.

Relationship Between Local Wisdom Integration and Character Outcomes

Statistical analysis revealed a positive relationship between the integration of Sasak local wisdom and students' character outcomes. Schools with higher levels of local wisdom integration demonstrated stronger social behavior and moral responsibility among students.

Table 3. Correlation Between Local Wisdom Integration and Character Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Category
Moral Integrity	0.46	Moderate
Social Cooperation	0.52	Moderate
Cultural Awareness	0.61	Strong
Respect and Tolerance	0.49	Moderate

The strongest correlation appeared in cultural awareness, confirming that exposure to local wisdom directly influences students' understanding and appreciation of cultural values.

Qualitative Research Results

Qualitative data were obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The analysis identified four major themes related to strategies for strengthening character education based on Sasak local wisdom.

Strategy 1: Value Internalization Through Contextual Learning

Teachers who integrated Sasak values into real-life examples reported higher student engagement. Values such as *besiru* were often linked to group assignments and cooperative learning. Students demonstrated increased responsibility and mutual support during collaborative tasks. However, this practice depended heavily on individual teacher initiative rather than institutional policy.

Strategy 2: School Culture as a Medium of Character Formation

School culture played a significant role in reinforcing character education. Daily routines, such as collective cleaning activities and deliberative student meetings, reflected Sasak values of cooperation and consensus. Observations showed that students were more responsive to values practiced consistently rather than those taught verbally.

Strategy 3: Teacher Capacity and Cultural Literacy

Teacher understanding of Sasak local wisdom varied. Senior teachers demonstrated deeper cultural insight, while younger teachers relied more on general character education concepts. Limited training opportunities reduced teachers' ability to systematically integrate local wisdom into lesson planning.

Strategy 4: Institutional and Policy Support

School leaders supported character education in principle but lacked clear operational strategies. Local wisdom integration was not explicitly stated in curriculum documents. This absence weakened consistency across subjects and grade levels.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The integration of findings confirms that character education based on Sasak local wisdom has a positive influence on students' moral and social development. Quantitative results showed moderate implementation levels, while qualitative findings explained the underlying causes. Limited teacher training, lack of curriculum guidance, and reliance on informal practices reduced program effectiveness.

However, schools that combined contextual learning, strong school culture, and culturally literate teachers demonstrated better character outcomes. This integration supports the conclusion that strategic, systematic incorporation of Sasak local wisdom strengthens character education in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that character education implementation in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency remains at a moderate level, despite strong policy endorsement at the national level. This condition reflects a persistent gap between policy formulation and classroom practice. Character education has been formally institutionalized, yet its operationalization often lacks strategic depth. This result aligns with previous studies that identify character education in Indonesian schools as procedural rather than transformative (Sulasmono, 2019; Hadi & Rahayu, 2021).

The relatively high scores in moral integrity and discipline indicate that schools prioritize values that are easily regulated through rules and sanctions. These values tend to be reinforced through formal mechanisms such as school regulations, attendance systems, and behavioral codes. While effective in shaping compliance, this approach does not necessarily foster internal moral awareness. Lickona (2013) emphasizes that character education should move beyond rule adherence toward moral reasoning and ethical commitment.

In contrast, cultural awareness received a lower score, highlighting limited integration of Sasak local wisdom into structured learning. This finding suggests that local cultural values are not yet positioned as core educational content. Instead, they remain peripheral elements of school culture. Widodo (2020) notes that local wisdom often becomes symbolic when schools lack curricular frameworks that explicitly connect culture with learning objectives.

The moderate level of Sasak local wisdom integration confirms this structural limitation. Teachers tend to incorporate local values informally through examples or school norms rather than through lesson planning and assessment. This pattern indicates reliance on individual teacher initiative. According to Banks (2015), culturally responsive education requires systematic planning, not incidental exposure. Without institutional guidance, cultural integration remains inconsistent and unsustainable.

The strong correlation between local wisdom integration and cultural awareness outcomes reinforces the importance of context-based character education. Students who experienced higher exposure to Sasak values demonstrated stronger cultural understanding and appreciation. This result supports social learning theory, which asserts that values are internalized through repeated social interaction and contextual modeling (Bandura, 1986). Local wisdom provides a concrete moral context that abstract values cannot replace.

The moderate correlations with moral integrity and social cooperation further suggest that Sasak local wisdom contributes to broader character dimensions. Values such as *besiru* promote collective responsibility and empathy, which directly influence social behavior. This finding aligns with Berkowitz and Bier (2014), who argue that character education grounded in lived experience has greater behavioral impact than moral instruction alone.

Qualitative findings deepen this understanding by revealing how contextual learning strategies facilitate value internalization. Teachers who connected Sasak values to daily learning activities reported higher student engagement. This practice reflects constructivist learning theory, where meaning is built through experience rather than transmission (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Contextualization allows students to relate moral values to real-life situations.

School culture emerged as a powerful medium for character formation. Practices such as collective activities and deliberative meetings reflected Sasak principles of cooperation and consensus. These routines functioned as moral laboratories where students practiced values rather than merely discussed them. Sugiyono and Yuliani (2022) emphasize that school culture plays a decisive role in shaping moral behavior because it operates continuously.

However, the effectiveness of school culture depends on consistency. When values promoted in classrooms contradict everyday practices, students receive mixed signals. This inconsistency weakens moral internalization. Nucci et al. (2014) argue that coherence between moral discourse and institutional behavior is essential for character development. Schools must align policies, routines, and instruction with declared values.

Teacher capacity emerged as a critical factor. Variations in teachers' understanding of Sasak local wisdom influenced implementation quality. Senior teachers demonstrated deeper cultural integration, while younger teachers relied on general character education concepts. This gap highlights the need for professional development focused on cultural literacy. Wahyudi and Prasetyo (2021) stress that culturally responsive pedagogy requires deliberate training, not assumed competence.

The absence of systematic teacher training limits scalability. Without shared understanding, character education becomes fragmented. Teachers may support cultural integration conceptually but lack methodological tools. Creswell (2014) notes that implementation fidelity depends on practitioner readiness. Training programs should therefore address both cultural knowledge and pedagogical strategy.

Institutional support also influenced outcomes. School leaders expressed commitment to character education but lacked operational guidelines. Sasak local wisdom was not explicitly embedded in curriculum documents. This omission reduced accountability and coherence. UNESCO (2017) highlights that policy effectiveness depends on clear implementation frameworks that allow local adaptation.

The findings suggest that character education strategies must operate at multiple levels. Classroom instruction, school culture, teacher development, and institutional policy must function in synergy. Isolated interventions yield limited impact. Integrated strategies, by contrast, reinforce values across contexts. This multi-level approach aligns with ecological models of education, which view learning as embedded within systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

From a theoretical perspective, the results support the integration of character education theory and culturally responsive pedagogy. Moral knowing, feeling, and action were more strongly aligned when values were culturally grounded. Students did not merely understand values; they practiced them. This outcome reflects Lickona's (2013) assertion that character education succeeds when cognition, emotion, and behavior are integrated.

The study also contributes to the discourse on cultural sustainability in education. Sasak local wisdom functions as both moral content and cultural identity reinforcement. In the context of globalization, such integration helps students navigate modern challenges without losing cultural grounding. Banks (2015) argues that education must prepare students for global citizenship while maintaining cultural roots.

The moderate overall implementation level should not be interpreted as failure but as potential. Schools already possess cultural resources and supportive attitudes. What they lack is strategic structure. By formalizing local wisdom integration into curricula, training, and evaluation, schools can enhance effectiveness. Fetters et al. (2013) emphasize that integration is a deliberate process requiring planning and reflection.

This discussion underscores the importance of shifting from symbolic to strategic character education. Sasak local wisdom should not be treated as supplementary content. It should inform learning objectives, instructional design, and assessment criteria. Such positioning elevates local culture from tradition to pedagogy.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that character education based on Sasak local wisdom positively influences students' moral and cultural development when implemented systematically. Quantitative data confirm the relationship, while qualitative insights explain the mechanisms. Effective strategies require contextual learning, strong school culture, culturally literate teachers, and institutional support. These elements form an integrated framework for strengthening character education in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that character education based on Sasak local wisdom has a meaningful and positive role in shaping students' moral, social, and cultural development in senior high schools of West Lombok Regency. The findings demonstrate that while character education has been formally implemented, its effectiveness depends largely on the depth of local cultural integration and the consistency of strategic execution across educational components.

The quantitative results indicate that character education implementation remains at a moderate level, with stronger emphasis on discipline and moral integrity than on cultural awareness. This imbalance reflects a tendency to prioritize easily regulated values over culturally grounded ones. However, the positive correlations between Sasak local wisdom integration and character outcomes, particularly cultural

awareness and social cooperation, confirm that local wisdom functions as a powerful catalyst for character formation when applied meaningfully.

Qualitative findings strengthen this conclusion by revealing that contextual learning, school culture, teacher cultural literacy, and institutional support are decisive factors. Schools that embedded Sasak values into daily practices and learning activities showed stronger character outcomes than those relying on symbolic or incidental approaches. This result confirms that character education is most effective when values are practiced consistently rather than taught abstractly.

The study also highlights structural challenges, including limited teacher training, absence of clear curricular guidelines, and uneven institutional commitment. These constraints prevent Sasak local wisdom from being systematically integrated into lesson planning and assessment. Without strategic frameworks, character education risks remaining fragmented and dependent on individual teacher initiative.

Overall, this research affirms that strengthening character education requires a shift from normative implementation to strategic, culturally responsive practice. Sasak local wisdom should be positioned as a core pedagogical foundation rather than supplementary content. By integrating local values into curriculum design, teaching methods, school culture, and policy support, senior high schools in West Lombok Regency can develop students who are morally responsible, socially engaged, and culturally rooted.

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