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Integrating Local Cultural Values into Early Childhood Education to Promote Character Building

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Abstract. This paper describes the process of integrating local cultural values into Early Childhood Education (ECE), focusing on character development. Employing the systematic literature review (SLR) method following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, this case study was conducted in several steps: article identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion, and analysis presentation using tools such as Publish or Perish version 7 and VOSviewer. The initial selection resulted in 235 articles, which were meticulously screened down to 30 selected papers. The research findings highlight that incorporating local cultural values into ECE significantly enhances character development. These values, deeply rooted in local culture, also bear relevance to universal aspects of character building, such as cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility. The use of learning methods, with emphasis on direct experience and active participation of children in local cultural activities, manifests a significant positive impact. This research offers valuable insights into the enduring effects that integrating local cultural values has on children's character development. Future studies would benefit from adopting an interdisciplinary approach, fostering collaboration among experts in education, developmental psychology, and cultural anthropology. Additionally, exploring the integration of educational technology could optimize children's learning experiences within local cultural contexts.

Keywords: character; Early Childhood Education; integration; local cultural values

1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a pivotal role in the development of character and foundational values crucial for individual growth. In the Indonesian context, integrating local cultural values stands as a key effort to enhance the quality of character education from an early age (Lilly, 2019). These cultural values not only enrich people's sense of identity but also have the power to shape strong characters that are pertinent to global demands (Webb & Williams, 2019). The process of integrating these values into ECE significantly contributes to character development, emphasizing universal virtues such as cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility (Ciampa & Wolfe, 2021). Numerous studies conducted in various countries, including Japan, China, Malaysia, and South Korea, have illustrated that incorporating local culture into character education cultivates the mental and moral strength of a nation, fostering exceptional personalities (Jordan, 2023). While the integration of local cultural values may seem localized, these values possess profound relevance on a global scale. Virtues such as cooperation, respect for others, and social responsibility are universally essential, especially in our increasingly interconnected global society (Octarra & Hendriati, 2018).

According to research (Qodriani & Kardiansyah, 2020), Indonesia, as a country rich in cultural diversity from various tribes, ethnicities, languages, and customs, can use local cultural values in ECE with various cultural approaches that exist in the learning environment of students. Teaching children about these values goes beyond imparting knowledge; it cultivates an appreciation for diversity, reducing prejudice against different cultures and fostering ethical and responsible character traits (Sifa & Wahyuseptiana, 2019). Integrating these cultural values significantly impacts the development of an inclusive character (Hadianto et al., 2022). These values not only preserve indigenous wisdom but also align with universal values crucial for addressing global challenges (Raguindin, 2020). Early childhood character education emphasizing local cultural values lays a robust foundation for adaptable, cultured, and ethical characters, vital in navigating our complex world (Acharibasam & McVittie, 2022). Studies across nations underscore the significance of this approach, shaping characters that are diverse, inclusive, and of high quality, preparing children to confront the complexities of our global society (Acharibasam & McVittie, 2022).

Understanding local cultural values is crucial in the development of a strong character. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact that values such as responsibility and cooperation found in local cultures has on character building (Park & Chang, 2019). Further research indicates that methods involving direct interaction with these values significantly enhance character development, especially at the early childhood level (Goodman, 2019). These local values, while rooted in specific cultures, also align with universal values such as tolerance, cooperation, and social responsibility (Bauto, 2021). This analysis demonstrates that introducing local cultural values not only enriches children's character with essential universal aspects but also equips them with qualities vital in a global context.

ECE is an important foundation for children's character development. In Indonesia, local cultural values are often not optimally integrated in the ECE curriculum. In fact, the introduction of cultural values from an early age can strengthen children's cultural identity and character. Research by Suhartini et al. (2019) shows a decline in moral and ethical values among the younger generation due to the influence of social media on children. Hanifah (2019) stated that globalization has caused many children to no longer know their local culture. Related to some of these findings, the study by Harun et al. (2020) suggests that character education is more effective when based on the local cultural context. This research is therefore important to test this hypothesis and provide empirical evidence.

The incorporation of local cultural values in ECE profoundly influences the development of diverse and inclusive characters (Ferdiawan & Putra, 2019). This integration establishes a robust foundation for addressing global challenges by instilling a comprehension of universal values applicable worldwide. The incorporation of local culture can be achieved through curriculum integration, utilizing traditional stories, engaging in art activities, participating in traditional games, exploring historical sites, and collaborating with local communities (Garrod & Dowell, 2020). An interactive and enjoyable approach is essential to keep children engaged in learning these values. Consequently, early character education becomes more inclusive and pertinent and aids children's adaptation in our intricate world. However, sometimes, some cultural practices can perpetuate gender, racial, or social inequalities. This is where it is important for education to incorporate local cultural values as a careful consideration to take an approach that is appropriate to the social conditions of the community.

While there are many studies on character education, most of them do not focus on the integration of local cultural values in the ECE curriculum. Integrating local cultural values in ECE not only preserves cultural heritage but also builds stronger child character. This research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by providing consistent empirical and methodological evidence on the effectiveness of this approach.

Examining research on integrating local cultural values at the early childhood level is crucial, and while previous studies have touched on this issue, there is a need for deeper exploration, particularly in interdisciplinary approaches and the utilization of educational technology. In the context of Indonesia's diverse ethnic and cultural richness, this approach offers valuable insights into how ECE can foster robust and adaptable character traits. By conducting a systematic review and rigorous analysis of past research, this paper aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the significance of integrating local cultural values into ECE. Research underscores the profound influence of local cultural values in ECE (Sayfiddinovich, 2022), noting that it helps in developing a diverse and inclusive character. This integration is crucial in addressing global challenges by instilling universal values that apply worldwide. Meanwhile, Solati Asl et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of integrating local culture through various methods, such as curriculum integration, traditional stories, art activities, traditional games,

exploration of historical sites, and collaboration with communities. These methods help to make character education more inclusive and relevant, thus helping children adapt to a complex world. Studies conducted in various regions in Indonesia show the positive impact of incorporating local cultural values into ECE. For example, the use of traditional Balinese dance and music in early childhood programs has been shown to improve children's cultural identity and social skills (Starostin & Olesov, 2021).

The focus in this paper will be on universal values in character development, utilizing collaboration between educational experts, developmental psychology, and cultural anthropology. This interdisciplinary approach is key to nurturing a future generation that is not only moral and cultured but also globally competitive. This study provides a comprehensive analysis and empirical evidence highlighting the crucial role of incorporating local cultural values in ECE in Indonesia. Utilizing a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, the research delved into various articles that discuss the integration of indigenous cultural values into ECE. The aim was to create a comprehensive understanding of the methods employed in this integration process. The research endeavored to culminate in a detailed report outlining the concept of infusing local cultural values into kindergarten education. The central research questions guiding this research were:

1. What are the methodologies employed in integrating local cultural values within ECE in Indonesia?
2. How do these values relate to universal aspects of character development?
3. What impact does this integration have on the character development of the child?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Integrating Local Cultural Values

In the era of rapid globalization, integrating local cultural values is an urgent need. Cultural diversity is a valuable asset that needs to be preserved and appreciated. The integration of local cultural values in children's character building has a significant positive impact. Local culture includes traditions, norms, languages, and values that are passed down from generation to generation. Incorporating these elements in ECE can enrich students' experiences and teach them an appreciation for cultural diversity (Septiwiharti & Mutawakkil, 2023). One important aspect of integrating local cultural values is within the education system. Research has highlighted how the introduction of local cultural values in the curriculum can enhance students' identity and pride in their cultural heritage (Ergashev & Farxodjonova, 2020). Furthermore, Maimunah et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of involving local communities in the education process, to ensure that values are not only taught but also lived by the younger generation.

The integration of local cultural values into ECE helps build a sense of pride and identity in children. Through this approach, children can more easily relate learning to the context of their daily lives, increase learning motivation, and appreciate cultural diversity (Acharibasam & McVittie, 2022). The integration of

local cultural values not only impacts on improving children's knowledge of their culture but also contributes to character development, social skills, and critical thinking skills (Abubakar et al., 2021). This proves that education that includes local values can provide long-term benefits for children's development. By providing learning experiences rooted in local culture, children can grow up more aware of their cultural values.

2.2 Character Building

Character building in early childhood is an important aspect of a child's personal development. This process has a lasting impact on children's social, emotional, and intellectual development. Through this literature review, we will explore the different aspects and factors that influence early childhood character formation (Bennett et al., 2020). Early childhood character formation can be defined as the process of developing values, attitudes, and behaviors that form the basis of a child's personality (White & Warfa, 2011). It involves a complex interaction between internal and external factors that form the child's moral and ethical foundation. Families have a central role in early childhood character formation.

A loving family environment, emotional support, and positive values provide a strong foundation for children's moral and social development. ECE that integrates local culture can create meaningful learning experiences. Case studies have shown that children who engage in local-culture-based activities are more likely to internalize positive values and develop positive attitudes toward diversity (Thyssen, 2010). Traditional folktales and fairy tales often contain moral teachings and ethical values that can shape children's character. Research has shown that reading local folktales to children can enhance their understanding of cultural values and strengthen cultural identity (Shubert et al., 2019).

Local culture plays a vital role in shaping early childhood character. Integrating cultural values in education and care can ensure that children grow up to be individuals with good morals and a strong sense of identity with their cultural heritage (Supeni et al., 2019). Further studies are needed to understand more about how best to integrate local culture in the context of early childhood character building. Shaping early childhood character through the integration of local culture not only contributes to the moral and ethical formation of children but also builds a strong foundation for the development of their cultural identity (Winterbottom & Schmidt, 2022). The diversity of local cultures poses a challenge in creating universally applicable strategies. Research often focuses on specific cultural contexts, which makes it difficult to generalize findings across different cultural settings. Existing studies often provide general recommendations but fall short on offering practical guidelines or curricula that educators can easily implement. Further studies are needed to address these gaps and to understand more about how best to integrate local culture in the context of early childhood character building.

3. Methodology

This research was conducted using the SLR method, a structured approach for identifying, evaluating, and analyzing research to address specific research

questions (Tian et al., 2018). The SLR method in this paper focused on examining the incorporation of local cultural values into ECE. The research commenced by identifying relevant articles pertaining to nationalist education in elementary schools within the Scopus database. The SLR approach in this paper adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) technique. The research specifically targeted the latest articles within the Scopus database to identify the processes involved in integrating local cultural values into ECE. The research process was conducted in four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of selected articles.

3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in Paper Selection

During the inclusion and exclusion stage, we established specific criteria for selecting articles for their research. First, the search was limited to articles indexed by Scopus. Second, the search process in the Scopus database was facilitated using the Publish or Perish version 7 application. Third, articles included in the research were limited to those published in journals between 2019 and 2023. Fourth, articles were selected based on their relevance to the research theme and topic. Fifth, the scope was further narrowed to include only reports published in scientific journals and written in English. These criteria ensured a focused and comprehensive selection process in line with the research objectives.

3.2 Assessment and Feasibility Test of the Papers for Data Analysis

The findings from the Scopus database underwent rigorous filtering, including scrutiny of titles, abstracts, and keywords. Relevant articles, totaling 50, were selected and imported into the Mendeley application in the research information system (RIS) format. Subsequently, the VOSviewer application was utilized to map the initial network of thematic relationships among these articles. The analysis revealed a complex pattern of associations concerning the integration of cultural values into ECE, specifically focusing on character development in kindergarten. The thematic analysis, depicted in Figure 1, demonstrated close connections, with related themes such as character education, traditional games, multicultural education, local wisdom, early childhood education, and social responsibility. The implementation aspect of character values within the context of integrating cultural values was distinct from themes such as values education, character values, ethnopedagogy, cultural awareness, and cultural values. This emphasizes the intricate and multifaceted nature of integrating cultural values into ECE, especially concerning character development in kindergarten.

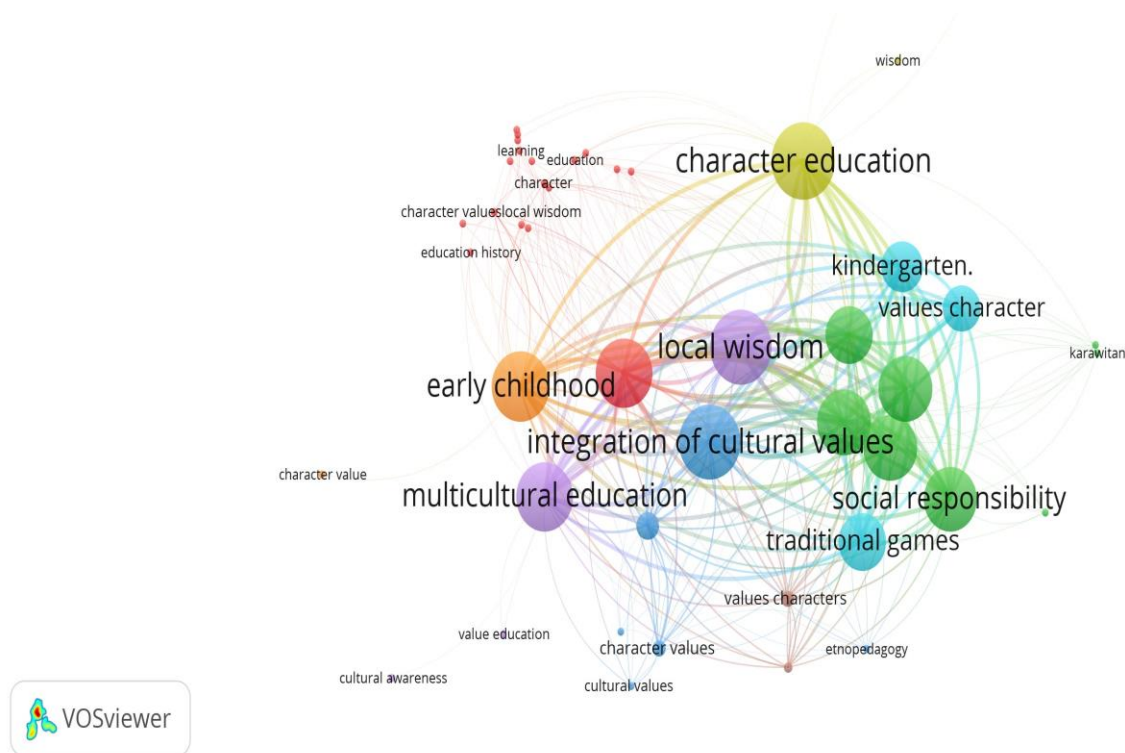


Figure 1: The networking visual

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1 PRISMA Flowchart

The articles selected from the screening and eligibility assessment underwent a comprehensive analysis, considering the themes holistically from the title to the conclusion. The PRISMA flowchart is illustrated in Figure 2. The results are subsequently presented according to the research questions posed. From the initial pool of 235 articles identified in the Scopus database using various keywords, a meticulous selection process was conducted. Specifically, using the keywords “Integration of Cultural Values”, 24 reports were identified, while “Character Education” yielded 183 articles. Additionally, there were 10 articles related to “Local Cultural Values”, 9 articles associated with “Integration of Local Culture in Early Childhood”, and 11 articles under “Character of Nationalism in Elementary Schools”. After eliminating duplicate articles, a total of 30 papers were chosen for further analysis. Before delving into the qualitative results aligned with the research questions (RQ1: process of integrating local cultural values; RQ2: relevance to universal aspects in character building; RQ3: influence on children’s character development), it was imperative to present the article findings systematically. This presentation included pertinent details such as the year of publication, journal name, volume, edition, methodology, country, and their relevance to the specific research questions.

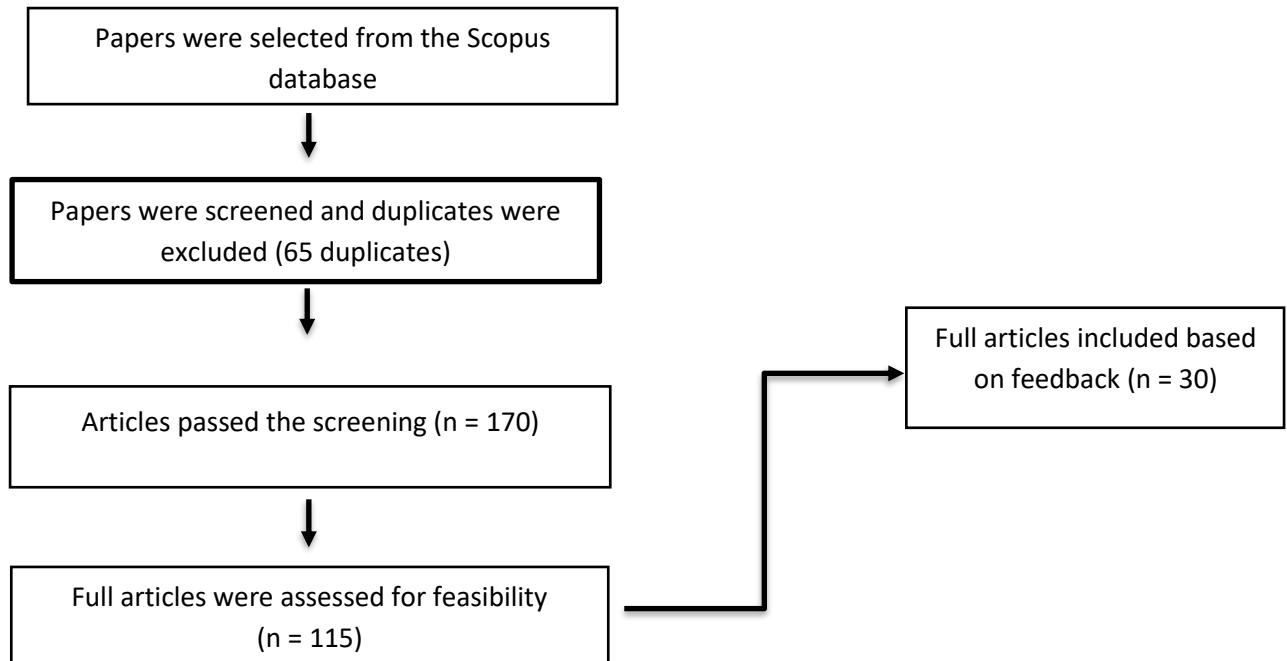


Figure 2: PRISMA flowchart of article selection and screening

Table 1 presents the most important details of the selected articles.

Table 1: Results of mapping 30 articles based on research question links

No.	Methodology	Country	RQ
1	Qualitative descriptive (Erdemir, 2022)	Syria	RQ2
2	Descriptive analysis (Haslip & Gullo, 2019)	America	RQ1
3	Mixed methods approach (Bühler, 2019)	The Netherlands	RQ3
4	Qualitative study (Hanson et al., 2018)	Australia	RQ1
5	Ethnography (Ling-Yin, 2022)	China	RQ1
6	In-depth analysis (Mudiappa & Kluczniok, 2021)	India	RQ2
7	Qualitative (Kim & Dreamson, 2020)	Singapore	RQ1
8	Mixed methods (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007)	Australia	RQ3
9	Case study (Biana et al., 2021)	Uganda	RQ2
10	Case study (Scarpa et al., 2021)	Indonesia	RQ1
11	Positivistic approach (Suciati et al., 2023)	Indonesia	RQ2
12	Mixed methods (Huda Shofyana et al., 2022)	Indonesia	RQ1
13	Comparative research (Yang & Li, 2022)	China	RQ2
14	Qualitative descriptive (Webb & Williams, 2019)	Australia	RQ3
15	Deep analysis (Kristanto, 2020)	Indonesia	RQ2
16	Qualitative research methods (Supeni et al., 2019)	Indonesia	RQ1
17	Mixed methods (Adams, 2021)	South Korea	RQ2
18	Qualitative descriptive (Ernawati et al., 2019)	Japan	RQ1
19	Systematic literature review (Helzer et al., 2019)	Indonesia	RQ2
20	Qualitative (ethnographic approach) (Hoge, 2022)	Indonesia	RQ1
21	Systematic investigation (Kusumandari, 2021)	Indonesia	RQ2
22	Investigative research (Li, 2019)	Malaysia	RQ3
23	Analytical research (Hayward & Charrette, 2022)	China	RQ2
24	Case study (Sultoni et al., 2019)	Indonesia	RQ1
25	Case study (Semali & Stambach, 2019)	South Africa	RQ3

26	In-depth analysis (James, 2010)	England	RQ1
27	Qualitative method (Suyitno et al., 2019)	Japan	RQ3
28	Qualitative research method (Asfar et al., 2021)	Indonesia	RQ2
29	Qualitative (empirical analysis) (Yang & Li, 2019)	China	RQ3
30	Qualitative and comparative study (Pan, 2021)	Hong Kong	RQ1

4.2 Process of Integrating Local Cultural Values

The process of integrating local cultural values into ECE in Indonesia encompassed comprehensive and profound steps. It initiated with the identification of specific local cultural values that were intended for integration. Subsequently, it involved the introduction and in-depth understanding of the aspects of local culture that hold relevance for the development of children's character. The integration of these local cultural values into children's character development ensured that they comprehend, respect, and apply the foundational values of their culture. This integration has a profound impact on students, fostering the development of a robust personality, nurturing empathy toward others, and cultivating a deeper understanding of the world around them (Sondakh et al., 2021). Various countries offer a rich array of local cultural values that can be seamlessly integrated into the character development of children. Table 2 presents how cultural values are incorporated into the education system for early childhood.

Table 2. Integrating Local Cultural Values into Early Childhood Education

Local cultural value	Explanation
Gotong royong (Indonesia)	The concept of <i>gotong royong</i> teaches about cooperation, mutual assistance, and contributing for the common good. Children can be taught to work together in groups, share tasks, and understand that individual success is closely related to collective achievement.
Respect for elders	Many cultures emphasize respect for parents and elders. Teaching children to respect and listen to their elders helps shape attitudes of respect, politeness, and responsibility.
Harmony with nature	Some cultures have a strong connection with nature and the environment. Teaching children about the importance of preserving the environment, maintaining the sustainability of nature, and appreciating the beauty of nature helps develop environmental awareness.
Perseverance	The values of perseverance and determination in the face of obstacles are highly regarded in many cultures.
Family bonds	Families often serve as the center of culture and values. Teaching children about the importance of family relationships, mutual support, and maintaining emotional bonds can help in shaping their identity.
Diversity and inclusion	Many cultures result from the blending of ethnicities, religions, and other backgrounds. Teaching children to respect diversity, appreciate differences, and accept others without prejudice helps foster an inclusive attitude.
Traditions and rituals	Teaching children about cultural traditions and rituals helps them appreciate their ancestral heritage and history.

	It can also impart moral values and ethics embedded in those traditions.
Gratitude	Teaching children to be grateful for what they have and to the people who help them fosters a positive, humble attitude and an appreciation for the contributions of others.
Story telling	Many cultures have story telling traditions that contain moral lessons and values. Teaching children to listen to and tell these stories can help them understand the complexity of cultural values.

Identifying opportunities in the curriculum to integrate local cultural values in Indonesia is a multifaceted approach that can be applied across a range of learning activities in children's play centers (Rybczynski & Troy, 2019). In this context, educational activities and projects are designed to incorporate cultural values directly into the curriculum by involving various subjects and infusing cultural elements and values, a practice successfully applied in countries such as Japan and South Korea (Mulyadi, 2020). For instance, children engage in traditional games that involve mathematical concepts, integrating cultural values and mathematics learning. This unique approach not only fosters a practical understanding of mathematical concepts but also instills a deep respect and understanding of their cultural heritage (Barton & Yang, 2021).

Furthermore, students are encouraged to create visual artworks inspired by traditional motifs and local cultural symbols, nurturing an appreciation for local aesthetics and enabling creative expression through art. By embedding local cultural values in the ECE curriculum in Indonesia, students can profoundly feel the richness of these values in their learning journey. This integration not only enhances their understanding of their cultural heritage but also cultivates a sense of cultural identity and promotes insight into diverse cultures, fostering a well-rounded and culturally aware educational experience.

Integrating local cultural values into early childhood character education in Indonesia necessitates a collaborative effort involving schools, teachers, and parents. Within the context of early childhood character education, educators and parents play pivotal roles in creating an environment where children can actively engage with their local culture (Supriatna, 2020). Involving children in local traditions, such as festivals or cultural celebrations, provides valuable opportunities for them to grasp the underlying values embedded in their heritage. The integration of these local cultural values serves as a robust foundation for character education, as these values often encompass essential qualities such as cooperation, tolerance, respect, and social responsibility (Sulton et al., 2019). Through these experiences, children not only learn these vital character principles but also internalize them, guiding their actions and decisions. By understanding and internalizing local cultural values, children can grow into individuals with strong character, greater awareness, and a deep appreciation of other interconnected cultures (Dike et al., 2020).

4.3 Relevance of Universal Aspects in Character Building

The integration of local cultural values into character building is intricately connected to universal aspects that shape a virtuous and ethical personality. By blending local and universal cultural values, children can cultivate robust and morally upright characters. Similar to practices in countries such as China, Russia, and India, local cultural values enable children to comprehend their roots, acknowledge their group identity, and understand their societal roles (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2022). A strong self-understanding serves as a fundamental cornerstone in the development of a resilient character. Integrating local cultural values with universal elements in character building offers a diverse and comprehensive foundation for children's development, providing them with a rich tapestry of values that contribute to their ethical growth and moral integrity. The integration of local culture with universal aspects in character building stands as a pivotal process in both individual and societal development. It not only preserves cultural diversity but also promotes universal values that fortify the character of individuals and society as a whole. Local culture imparts crucial lessons, teaching individuals to value the diversity within their own society, nurturing qualities such as tolerance, respect for other cultures, and an open-minded attitude toward differences (Park & Chang, 2019).

Simultaneously, universal principles such as human rights, empathy, integrity, and justice can be instilled and practiced within local cultural contexts. This integration not only shapes individuals with a robust foundation of moral values but also equips them to comprehend and appreciate their cultural roots, providing a sturdy base for personal identity. Local culture frequently imparts vital social skills crucial for effective social interactions, including communication ethics, cooperation, and respect for elders. These teachings significantly contribute to shaping good character within a social context (Die, 2022). The integration of local culture with universal values constitutes a dynamic and intricate process, demanding continuous adaptation and the harmonious merging of local cultural aspects with pertinent universal values (Siska et al., 2021). This integration nurtures a character that is not only rooted in cultural heritage but also flexible, open-minded, and resilient, enabling individuals to navigate diverse situations and challenges in life with grace and understanding.

While every country boasts its distinct culture, traditions, and context, there are notable universal elements in the integration of character education across diverse nations. Many countries share a common focus on teaching fundamental moral values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity (Bauto, 2021). Character education in these nations frequently encompasses ethical and moral development, enabling individuals to navigate intricate moral dilemmas and make sound decisions. This facet is pivotal in shaping individuals with strong principles and unwavering integrity (Jaedun & Manaf, 2020). Character building also encompasses the cultivation of social skills, including effective communication, cooperation, and leadership (Yang & Li, 2019). These skills empower individuals to engage harmoniously in society and collaborate effectively with others. While these aspects hold universal significance in character development, the implementation of character education can diverge

based on cultural context, educational systems, and the values upheld by individual countries. In Indonesia, this process is integrated through the formal school curriculum, extracurricular programs, and teaching methodologies employed by educators, and is also influenced by family environments and broader societal factors (Tamara, 2019).

4.4 Impacts on Character Building in Children

Incorporating local culture into kindergarten education stands as a crucial initiative in nurturing children's cultural identity and awareness from an early age. Research findings underline the significance of integrating local culture in Indonesian kindergartens, as it introduces children to the rich cultural tapestry of their surroundings (Rahmawati, 2020). This exposure fosters tolerance and mutual respect between different cultures, shaping children into culturally sensitive individuals. By immersing children in local cultural values from their formative years, they gain a profound understanding of the cultural nuances in their vicinity. This knowledge not only deepens their connection to local heritage but also instills a sense of responsibility to preserve it for future generations (Rasna & Tantra, 2019). Through this process, children are encouraged to recognize the cultural legacy passed down by their ancestors, further bolstering their local identity (Hidayati et al., 2020). The integration of local culture into learning serves as a catalyst for children's creativity and innovation. It empowers them to apply unique local traditions in artistic expressions, dance, music, and other creative endeavors, fostering creativity and environmental stewardship, which are values inherited from their ancestors.

In various countries, local cultural values consistently emphasize tolerance and cooperation among individuals (Darmadi, 2018). Introducing these values early in a child's life fosters a profound understanding of their significance in everyday interactions. Children grasp these character values more readily, enhancing their ability to apply them in practical situations. Moreover, this early exposure nurtures their creativity and language skills (Pratama et al., 2021). Understanding the intricacies of their local culture not only instills love and pride for their heritage but also promotes increased tolerance and cooperation among individuals. Research conducted in Japan and China highlights the positive impact of integrating local cultural values into education, particularly in enhancing feelings of national pride. Similarly, in South Korean schools, integrating education with local culture has been shown to strengthen human values, cultivate loyalty to national unity, foster respect for national symbols, and bolster national identity. This integration not only enriches the educational experience but also plays a vital role in shaping a society characterized by mutual respect, cultural pride, and harmonious cooperation among its members.

The integration of local culture in education plays a pivotal role in nurturing a strong character and fostering a profound understanding of social values among students. Early exposure to local cultural values has numerous positive impacts on children's character development, including enhancing their pride and love for their cultural heritage and reinforcing national identity. Researching local culture enables students to appreciate the uniqueness and beauty of their regional

heritage (Marini, 2020). This approach also boosts students' motivation to learn, as it connects their education with real-life experiences and their immediate environment, making the learning process more engaging and relatable (James, 2010). Moreover, integrating local culture in education cultivates attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect between cultures. Understanding local cultural norms and values enables students to develop respect for diversity, encouraging cooperation, honesty, and responsibility. This understanding not only shapes good character but also strengthens social bonds within the community. Additionally, involving parents in their children's learning through activities related to local culture enhances school-family relationships, fostering a collaborative environment that supports the holistic development of children's character (Ciampa & Wolfe, 2021).

This research focuses on how local cultural values can be integrated into ECE to develop children's character. This approach not only helps in character building but also ensures that children remain connected to their cultural heritage. The research has shown that learning methods that emphasize hands-on experience and children's active participation in local cultural activities have a significant positive impact on character development. This highlights the importance of practical approaches in ECE. Overall, this research displays novelty in the way ECE is approached by incorporating local cultural values, using systematic methodologies and advanced technology, and provides insights into the positive impact of this approach on children's character development.

5. Conclusion

Integrating local cultural values into ECE offers a powerful framework for character development. The incorporation of cultural values not only fosters cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility but is also in line with universal character-building principles. The methodology of this research, following the PRISMA protocol and using tools such as Publish or Perish version 7 and VOSviewer, ensured a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the selected literature. This study may have been limited by its regional focus, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, reliance on existing literature may have introduced inherent bias in the studies reviewed. This study supports theories that emphasize experiential learning and sociocultural development and highlights the importance of contextual learning environments in early childhood. This conceptual framework integrates local cultural values with character development, illustrating its connection to broader educational goals. Comparative analysis with other studies revealed consistent findings regarding the benefits of culturally integrated education, though variations in implementation and outcomes suggest the need for context-specific strategies. Indonesia's rich cultural heritage significantly influenced the study's outcomes, demonstrating the potential of integrating local cultural values into character education. Future research should continue to explore interdisciplinary approaches, utilize educational technology, and consider broader cultural contexts to optimize learning outcomes.

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