

Negotiating Local Wisdom in School Management: An Ethnographic Study of Value Internalization and Cultural Tensions in Education

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Abstract: This study aims to critically examine how Butonese local wisdom values are internalized within school management practices and how these values are negotiated in response to modern educational and socio-cultural dynamics. This study employed a qualitative approach with a critical ethnographic design. Data were collected through prolonged participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants (principals, teachers, students, and community leaders), and document analysis. Data were analyzed using an interactive model involving thematic coding, categorization, and interpretation. The findings indicate that local wisdom values such as gau and pombala (deliberation), poromu inda posaangu (collectivity), and tuturakana sara (honesty and justice) are institutionally embedded in school management processes. However, the internalization of these values does not occur linearly but is shaped through ongoing negotiations between institutional expectations and the realities of students' lives. Tensions arise especially when students face the conflicting influences of digital culture and the social environment, resulting in adaptive, selective, and sometimes resistant behaviors aligning with cultural norms. This study highlights that value internalization is a dynamic socio-cultural process, not a fixed outcome. Schools function not only as transmitters of cultural values but also as mediating spaces where local and global values are negotiated. This study contributes to broadening the understanding of culturally responsive character education by emphasizing the importance of adaptive, context-sensitive strategies.

Keywords: buton society, character education, cultural negotiation, ethnography, local wisdom.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Globalization and digitalization have fundamentally reshaped educational systems, not only by transforming instructional practices but also by reconfiguring students' value orientations (Bui & Nguyen, 2023; Shao, 2026). This situation not only reflects a decline in student character, but recent international studies also point to a more complex phenomenon: the hybridization of values, where local cultural norms increasingly interact

with global, individualistic, and digitally mediated influences (Jornitz & Timm, 2021; Sharonova et al., 2019; Urbaite, 2024). This shift raises a critical theoretical puzzle in character education: to what extent can culturally embedded values be internalized as stable dispositions when students are simultaneously exposed to competing value systems? While schools are traditionally viewed as institutions that transmit and reproduce social values, sociocultural perspectives suggest

that students actively interpret, negotiate, and even resist these values in their everyday experiences (Daniel et al., 2024a; Wu et al., 2025b).

Empirical studies further show that students' behaviors are often context-dependent, shaped not only by school-based character education but also by peer interaction, digital media, and broader sociocultural environments (Chater et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2023; Santosa et al., 2025; Wang & Hofkens, 2019). This indicates that the issue in character education is not merely about value transmission, but about how values are negotiated and enacted in real-life contexts. Students today navigate multiple, often competing value systems, leading to processes of adaptation, negotiation, and sometimes tension in their everyday lives. This situation suggests that the key issue in character education lies not only in transmitting values but also in understanding how these values are interpreted and enacted in real social contexts. However, existing studies have not sufficiently explored these processes in depth, particularly from a contextual and practice-based perspective. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute by examining the internalization of local wisdom values as a dynamic and situated process shaped by everyday interactions in school settings.

Character formation is a paramount task for educational institutions (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Hanifah, 2017; Mar et al., 2025; Mukminin et al., 2019a; Sakti et al., 2024a). Therefore, integrating local wisdom as a source of values in character education is crucial, as local cultural values are believed to shape more contextual and sustainable social behavior. Character education rooted in local wisdom has a significant positive impact on students' social behavior and environmental awareness (Aura et al., 2023; Khojir et al., 2025; Rahim et al., 2024; Trilaksana et al., 2023). However, the implementation of local wisdom values is still taught symbolically through the curriculum without being truly internalized in educational practices

within the school environment. Moreover, globalization and digital developments influence students through modern values that are less aligned with local cultural values (Gadakchyan et al., 2020; Hanifah, 2017; Kropiewnicka-Mielko, 2023; McKenzie & Jensen, 2024a; Zharkynbekova et al., 2025).

In the context of Buton society, local wisdom plays a crucial role in shaping social and moral values, such as togetherness, deliberation, and social responsibility (Afdhal et al., 2024; Ahmar & Azzajjad, 2025; Gede Agung et al., 2024; Suat et al., 2025). These values have strong potential to serve as a foundation for culturally responsive character education. However, studies on local wisdom-based education indicate that the integration of cultural values into school practices often remains at the level of formal or symbolic implementation, without necessarily leading to deep internalization in students' everyday behavior (Gadakchyan et al., 2020; Mannion et al., 2022). Furthermore, the influence of globalization and digital media introduces alternative value systems that may not always align with local cultural norms (Aniag et al., 2025; Iwamoto & Chun, 2020; McKenzie & Jensen, 2024b). As a result, schools increasingly function as spaces where local and global values intersect, creating conditions for negotiation, adaptation, and sometimes tension in the process of character formation.

Although a growing body of research has examined local wisdom-based character education, several important gaps remain. First, most existing studies rely on descriptive or quantitative approaches that focus on measuring outcomes rather than understanding the processes through which values are internalized. Second, limited attention has been given to how cultural values are enacted and negotiated in everyday school practices, particularly through the interactions between teachers and students. Moreover, research on Buton local wisdom has

largely been confined to cultural or philosophical descriptions, with minimal empirical investigation into its implementation within educational settings. This indicates a significant gap in understanding the micro-level dynamics of value internalization and negotiation in real school contexts. Therefore, the urgency of this study is grounded not merely in concerns about character decline, but in the need to critically examine how local cultural values are translated into lived practices within schools and how they interact with the pressures of modernity and globalization.

This research is important and urgent for several reasons, including: 1) the challenges of character education are increasingly complex due to the influence of globalization and digitalization, which have the potential to shift local cultural values; (2) without a deep understanding of how cultural values are internalized in practice, the integration of local wisdom in education risks remaining merely symbolic; and 3) schools need more contextual and adaptive strategies to manage the tension between local values and modernity. Thus, this research is not only academically relevant, but also has practical implications for the development of character education in Indonesia.

The urgency of this research is further heightened by the increasingly complex challenges of education in the era of globalization and digitalization, which not only affect students' cognitive development but also reshape the social and cultural values that underpin character. If not addressed appropriately, this situation has the potential to lead to the loss of local cultural identity and the weakening of the younger generation's character in the long term. Furthermore, although local wisdom has been recognized as an important source of values in character education, its implementation in schools still faces various obstacles, particularly regarding the contextual and sustainable internalization of values. Without a deep understanding of how these values are negotiated in everyday

educational practices, efforts to integrate culture into education risk remaining merely symbolic and having little impact on student character formation.

Therefore, this research is crucial and urgent, as it seeks not only to empirically uncover the process of the internalization of cultural values but also to elucidate the dynamics of negotiations between local values and modernity in the educational context. The results of this study are expected to be the basis for formulating character education strategies that are more contextual, adaptive, and relevant to the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian society. Based on the identified gaps, this study aims to examine the internalization of Butonese local wisdom values in school management and to analyze how these values are negotiated in everyday educational practices. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How are Butonese local-wisdom values internalized in school management practices?

■ **METHOD**

Participant

This study was conducted in secondary schools in Baubau City and the surrounding areas of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The population included educational actors involved in school management and cultural practices, namely principals, teachers, students, and community leaders. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to obtain information-rich cases aligned with the research objectives. The final sample consisted of 4 school principals, 8 teachers, 20 students, and 5 community leaders. Selection criteria included: (1) active involvement in school activities, (2) familiarity with Buton local wisdom values, and (3) willingness to participate in prolonged observation and interviews. The number of participants was determined using the principle of data saturation rather than statistical representation, ensuring depth and variation of data.

Although the number of student participants ($n = 20$) may seem relatively large for an ethnographic study, a stratified purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure both breadth and depth of data. Participants were drawn from a limited number of classes within the same grade level to maintain contextual consistency and allow for continuous observation within a limited social environment. To maintain depth, not all students were engaged with the same intensity: initial observations involved a broader group. In contrast, a smaller subset of key informants (approximately 6–8 students) was selected for more intensive engagement based on their active participation and the richness of their information. These key participants were interviewed multiple times (2–3 sessions, each lasting 30–60 minutes), while others participated in shorter, single-session interviews for triangulation purposes. Through repeated interactions, prolonged observations, and follow-up interviews, this approach allowed the researcher to balance the variety of perspectives with the depth required in ethnographic inquiry, ensuring that the data remained rich, contextual, and analytically meaningful.

Research Design and Procedures

A qualitative approach with an ethnographic design was used (Lim, 2025; Silver & Upenieks, 2021). The ethnographic design allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of research subjects in context (Jayathilaka & Jayathilaka, 2020; Williamson, 2018), specifically examining how Butonese cultural values are interpreted, adapted, and negotiated in educational practices. This study employed a qualitative approach using a critical ethnographic design. Critical ethnography was chosen because it enables not only the description of cultural practices but also the examination of power relations, tensions, and value negotiations within social interactions. Through this approach,

this study illustrates the researcher's relationship and the influence of power relations within the research process. As the primary implementer, the researcher, a university academic, can influence how participants respond during the response process. Therefore, the researcher employed reflection and open communication. During interactions with students, the researcher acted as a natural listener. Meanwhile, interactions with the principal and teachers demonstrated a sensitivity appropriate to institutional dynamics. Furthermore, during data analysis, differences in perspectives among participants were interpreted not as inconsistencies, but as reflections of unequal positions and lived experiences within the school context.

The study was conducted over six months using an iterative research process. The procedures were as follows (Flick, 2022):

1. Entry and rapport building: Establishing access and trust with participants.
2. Participant observation: Observing classroom activities, school rituals, and informal interactions to capture real-life enactment of values.
3. In-depth interviews: Conducting semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perspectives.
4. Document analysis: Examining school policies, curricula, and cultural programs.
5. Reflexive journaling: Recording ongoing reflections and analytical insights

This research was conducted over six months (September 2025 to February 2026) using an iterative research process. During this period, the researcher engaged in prolonged participant observation with an intensive field presence. Observations were conducted approximately 3–4 days per week, with an average duration of 4–6 hours per day, depending on school activities. These observations covered classroom learning, school rituals, extracurricular

activities, and informal interactions between students and teachers. The researcher made ongoing visits to the research site as she was not a teacher at the school. Regular visits were scheduled to ensure a deep understanding of the school environment and the participants' daily practices. This allowed the researcher to build rapport and trust with the participants over time. The intensity and continuity of the field presence support the claim of prolonged engagement, which is crucial in critical ethnographic research for understanding social practices in their natural context.

Instrument

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, supported by an observation guide, a semi-structured interview protocol, critical-incident triggers, and a document-analysis checklist. In this study, critical incident triggers are specific situations or prompts that help participants reflect on their real experiences with cultural values in school life. These were used during interviews and observations to encourage participants to recall concrete moments when values were practiced, questioned, or even challenged. For example, students were asked to share situations where they chose to follow or ignore school values, especially in their interactions with peers or when influenced by social media. Similarly, teachers and principals were invited to reflect on important moments when they addressed student behavior or incorporated cultural values into school policies. By focusing on these real-life experiences, the researcher was able to move beyond general answers and gain deeper, more meaningful insights into how values are actually practiced and negotiated in everyday school contexts.

1. The observation guide focused on how these values are expressed in the natural school environment, including: 1) values such as

empathy, cooperation, and responsibility in their daily activities, 2) discipline and consistency of behavior outside the formal school context, and 3) students' responses to social situations, including how they adapt or reinterpret school values when interacting with peers.

2. Interviews with teachers and principals examined how local wisdom values are integrated into school practices and which values tend to be more or less successfully internalized. Interviews with students focused on their understanding of these values and their experiences applying them in various contexts. Students were also asked to reflect on situations in which they chose not to follow school values and to explain the role of peers and social media in shaping their behavior. Meanwhile, interviews with community leaders provided broader insights into the meaning and relevance of local cultural values in contemporary society.
3. Document analysis was also conducted to understand how local wisdom values are formally represented within school structures. This included reviewing the curriculum, school regulations, character education programs, and institutional documents such as vision and mission statements.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, several validation strategies were implemented. Data were triangulated by comparing information from teachers, students, school leaders, and documents. Additionally, peer discussions were used to review coding decisions and emergent themes. Throughout the research process, an audit trail was maintained to document how data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in stages using the interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis

was conducted using an interactive model through several iterative coding cycles. The process began with open coding, in which meaningful data units such as words, phrases, and sentences related to value internalization and negotiation were identified and labeled inductively from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents without predetermined categories. This was followed by axial coding, in which related codes were grouped into categories by examining patterns and relationships across data sources. In subsequent stages, these categories were refined and integrated into broader themes, which were then organized into matrices and thematic maps to help visualize relationships between key concepts such as value transmission, negotiation, and resistance. Throughout the process, analysis was conducted manually to allow for close engagement with the data. Coding decisions were continuously reviewed and compared across participant groups (teachers, students, and principals) to ensure consistency and to identify patterns and contradictions. Coding logs were maintained as part of an audit trail, and discussions with co-researchers were held regularly to review the development of codes, categories, and themes. Data saturation was reached when no new codes or themes emerged from three consecutive cycles of data collection and analysis, as confirmed through constant comparison and repeated findings in subsequent interviews. The iterative relationship between data collection and analysis allowed emerging insights to guide further data collection. To strengthen validity, triangulation across data sources and member checking were conducted, while differing perspectives were interpreted as part of a value negotiation rather than as inconsistencies.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis found that the internalization of Buton local wisdom values in school management during education was well structured. However, its implementation did not

consistently demonstrate character in student behavior. These findings indicate a gap between instilled values and actual practice, reflecting the process of value negotiation in modern education.

Internalization of Local Wisdom Values in School Management

Butonese cultural values have been integrated into the four management functions in the delivery of education in several schools. The planning stage is evident in the values of *gau* and *pombala*, which are reflected in the value of *musyawarah* (deliberation). Schools apply these cultural values to participatory decision-making through deliberation. This is reflected in the statement of an informant:

Interview Data Supporting 1: “*Every school program is discussed together through meetings, not only by the leadership, but also involving teachers and sometimes student representatives.*” (Principal, formal interview conducted in the principal’s office, September 2025)

An analysis of school work plan documents reveals regularly scheduled activities or forums for deliberation that align with the needs of educational activities. This indicates that democratic values and institutionally structured participation are present in program implementation at schools. Meanwhile, at the organizational stage, the value of togetherness emerges from the internalization of values (*poromu inda posaangu pogaa inda koolota*). Internalization occurs in the division of tasks and teamwork at the school management level, involving all members of the school community. Field observations indicate that school activities are carried out collectively, with a high level of participation from the school community. Teamwork even emerges from the collaboration of teachers and students, as seen in an interview with Teacher A:

“We work as a team in every school activity, because the culture of togetherness has become a habit.” (Teacher A, interview conducted in the teachers’ room, October 2025)

At the implementation management stage, the internalization of local cultural values is reflected in classroom learning activities and social interactions among all members of the school community. Teacher B stated:

“We relate cultural values to students’ daily lives, such as mutual respect and cooperation.” (Teacher B, interview conducted after classroom activities, November 2025) Students also confirmed this:

“We are taught to help each other, especially during group work.” (Student A, informal interview after group learning activities, December 2025).

At the evaluation stage, the values of honesty and fairness (*tuturakana sara*) form the basis of the assessment. The teacher emphasized:

“Assessment is not only based on academics, but also on attitudes, especially honesty and responsibility.” (Teacher C, formal interview in the staff room, January 2026)

The assessment documents show that character aspects are part of the evaluation system, functioning as a hidden curriculum in the internalization of values. Overall, the findings indicate that internalization of values occurs through classroom learning activities, social interactions between teachers and students, extracurricular activities, and school culture. Teachers play a primary role in shaping cultural values through role modeling and contextual learning approaches.

Negotiation of Values in Students’ Daily Practices

Findings on the internalization of Buton cultural values also contributed to the

implementation of student character formation, as reflected in the values of empathy, social awareness, cooperation, and responsibility. This is supported by a teacher’s statement:

“Students here are relatively more concerned about their friends and work together more easily than before.” (Teacher A, interview conducted in the teachers’ room, January 2026). The student also acknowledged:

“We are used to helping our friends, especially in group activities.” (Student B, informal interview after school activities, February 2026)

Findings from student interviews indicate that empathy and cooperation are more frequently evident in students’ daily interactions, particularly during group work and collaborative assignments, where students are encouraged to support one another. In contrast, discipline and behavioral consistency tend to vary across contexts, particularly outside the formal school environment. These values are more evident in formal school settings, such as during classroom instruction or teacher supervision, but tend to be less consistent outside these structured environments. This suggests that some values are more easily internalized in practice, while others remain situational and influenced by social and environmental factors. These findings suggest that the internalization of values has not yet reached the stage of forming a stable habitus among students. In practice, cultural values are not rigidly applied but are adapted according to the social context and students’ needs. This suggests that the internalization of cultural values is dynamic and contextual.

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internalization of cultural values is dynamic and contextual. The identified character values create tensions for value negotiation, such as in teachers' activities that adapt local cultural values to the curriculum, in building student interactions that balance local wisdom values with the inevitable demands of modern life, and in schools' adoption of policies that reflect a cultural approach to local wisdom.

Tension Between Cultural Values and Modern Influences

Although cultural values have been integrated into the school system, findings indicate a discrepancy between the values taught and students' actual practices. One teacher stated:

“At school, they demonstrate good behavior, but outside of school, it's not always

the same.” (Teacher C, interview conducted in the staff room, December 2025). A student expressed a similar sentiment:

“We follow the rules at school, but sometimes they differ outside, depending on the environment.” (Student B, informal interview after school activities, January 2025)

Some students resist cultural values deemed less relevant to modern life, as evidenced by differences in student attitudes toward traditional norms, a tendency to adopt individualistic values, and decreased compliance with culturally based rules.

Based on the findings presented above, the following visualization illustrates the process of value internalization, negotiation, and interaction between cultural values and modern influences in the school context.

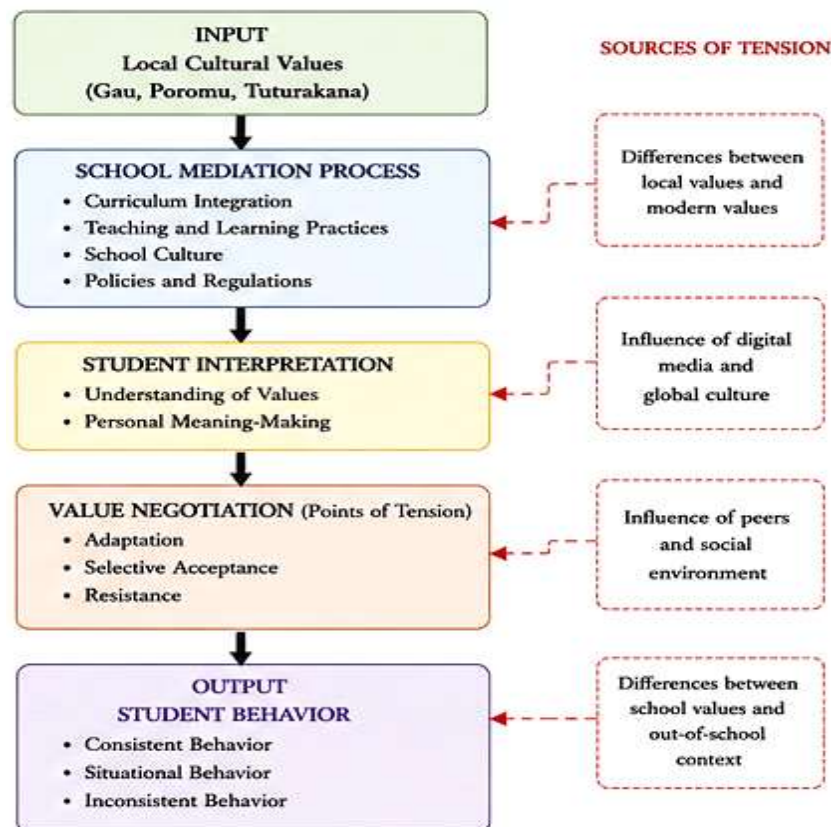


Figure 1. Flowchart of the value negotiation process from input to output

In addition to the flowchart, the process of negotiating values from input (local values) through school mediation to output (student behavior) is illustrated, with the points of tension marked. The following is a map of the four

management functions against three values in the Buton culture.

Based on the findings presented in Figure 1 and Table 1, the following concept map connects local values, digital influences, and

Table 1. Mapping of management functions and button cultural values

Management Function	Cultural Value	Observation Evidence	Interview Evidence	Document Evidence
Planning	Gau / Pombala (Deliberation)	School meetings involve collective discussion	Principal: decision-making involves teachers and students	School work plans include deliberation forums
Organizing	Poromu (Togetherness)	Collaborative school activities and teamwork	Teacher: Teamwork is part of school culture	Task distribution reflects collective responsibility
Actuating	Gau / Poromu	Classroom interaction shows cooperation and respect	Teacher & Student: mutual help in learning activities	Learning plans integrate cultural values
Controlling	Tuturakana (Honesty & Fairness)	Monitoring of student attitudes and behavior	Teacher: Evaluation includes honesty and responsibility	Assessment documents include character indicators

student responses (adaptive, selective, and resistant).

This finding indicates the presence of external influences, such as the social environment and digital media, that influence the consistency

of student behavior. Thus, the internalization of cultural values does not occur in absolute terms but rather through a process of negotiation within students' social lives. The results of this study indicate that the internalization of Buton local

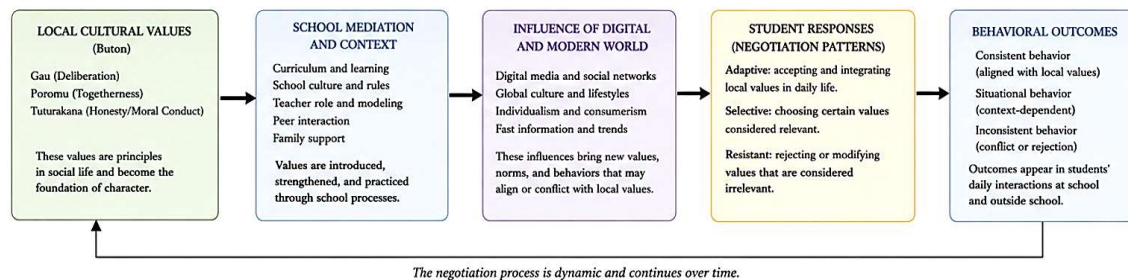


Figure 2. Conceptual relationship between cultural values, modern influences, and student responses

wisdom values in school educational practices does not occur linearly but rather through a complex process of negotiation among cultural values, school policies, and the influence of modernity.

The findings of this study show that the internalization of Butonese cultural values occurs through everyday practices embedded in school life, rather than through formal instruction alone. These values are integrated into classroom

learning, social interactions, and school culture, where teachers play an important role in connecting cultural principles with students' real-life experiences. As one teacher explained, *"We relate cultural values to students' daily lives, such as mutual respect and cooperation."* In contrast, a student confirmed, *"We are taught to help each other, especially during group work."* These repeated interactions gradually shape students' understanding of values such as cooperation, empathy, and responsibility. However, the findings also reveal that students do not simply accept these values as they are; instead, they actively interpret and apply them depending on context. One student noted, *"We follow the rules at school, but sometimes they are different outside, depending on the environment,"* indicating that internalization is not uniform but is negotiated in response to social situations.

This negotiation process also creates tensions between local cultural values and modern influences, particularly from digital culture and peer environments. Teachers observed that students tend to behave in line with cultural expectations at school but show different attitudes outside school, suggesting that consistency in value internalization remains limited. Rather than seeing this as a failure, the findings highlight that such tensions are part of a natural process of adaptation, where students navigate between traditional values and contemporary lifestyles. In this context, schools function not only as transmitters of cultural values but also as mediating spaces that help students balance these differences through daily routines, collaborative activities, and teacher guidance. As a result, the internalization of cultural values contributes positively to students' character development, especially in fostering empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility. However, aspects such as discipline and consistency remain more situational. Overall, these findings demonstrate that value

internalization is a dynamic and ongoing process shaped by interaction, negotiation, and the broader social environment.

The findings indicate the internalization of Buton local cultural wisdom values into systematic teaching and learning activities, and their integration into school management, including planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. This confirms that the internalization of values is not merely a pedagogical process but rather part of the educational organizational system. This finding supports previous studies that local wisdom values are integrated into school curriculum development to avoid tensions between cultural values that must be maintained and global changes in the social environment (Hindaryatiningsih et al., 2025; Mukminin et al., 2019b; Pradita et al., 2020; Sakti et al., 2024b; Samani et al., 2018).

Other studies have shown the diversity of local cultural wisdom values across Indonesia, which are increasingly utilized as learning resources and for character development in the classroom (Rahman et al., 2025). Local culture has even encouraged the development of social awareness, self-management, social relationships, and responsible, constructive decision-making (Agboola & Tsai, 2012; Niman, 2025). These findings demonstrate that local cultural values can be effectively internalized in the implementation of school management systems. However, these findings also extend existing research by demonstrating that value internalization is not a linear process, but involves ongoing negotiations shaped by students' social context and daily experiences.

Rather than proposing an entirely new concept, this study refines existing perspectives in the sociology of education by providing empirical evidence of how value internalization operates as a dynamic, negotiated process within school management practices. While previous studies have emphasized the role of schools in

transmitting cultural values, this study highlights how these values are continuously interpreted, adapted, and sometimes resisted in everyday interactions. Thus, the contribution of this research lies in extending existing theories by showing that institutional embedding alone does not guarantee consistent internalization. Instead, value internalization is shaped by ongoing negotiations between cultural expectations and students' lived realities.

Previous studies have shown that local wisdom-based education can strengthen students' social character (Harun et al., 2020; Nikolaev et al., 2018; Rasna & Tantra, 2017; Supriatna, 2016). However, this study also found that not all values were consistently internalized, particularly regarding discipline and behavioral consistency. This indicates that the internalization process has not yet fully reached the stage of forming a stable habitus. While these findings are consistent with previous research on the integration of cultural values in education, they reveal a more complex dynamic. Unlike previous studies, which tended to present value internalization as stable, this study shows that students actively interpret, adapt, and sometimes reject these values depending on their social environment.

This study not only demonstrates the success of value internalization but also reveals the limitations of internalization in forming habitus, thus providing a more realistic and critical picture than previous studies, which tended to be normative (Lowe & Tapachai, 2021; Tan & Liu, 2022; Wu et al., 2025a). One of the most significant findings is that the internalization of cultural values does not occur linearly, but rather through a process of negotiation between local and modern values. Schools become social spaces where students and teachers actively interpret, adapt, and even negotiate the values they receive.

This finding aligns with previous research that states that schools are arenas for the

interaction of various value systems (Daniel et al., 2024b). Essentially, it is necessary to continue striving towards implementing a systems perspective in educational institutions, which, for its development, must be complemented by transformational leadership and an engaged educational community focused on improving student learning (King & Jasper, 2022; Sierra-Huedo et al., 2023). However, this study goes further by showing how this negotiation occurs concretely in everyday educational practices. Furthermore, the influence of globalization and digitalization amplifies the dynamics of value negotiation in schools that relate to local wisdom values (Ahadiyyah et al., 2024; Layli et al., 2023; Ulfah et al., 2023; Zega et al., 2025).

However, this research shows that this tension is not merely a form of failed value internalization, but rather part of the process of cultural adaptation in a modern context. In other words, value conflict is an unavoidable part of social dynamics. These findings both support and challenge existing research on character education. While previous studies emphasize the effectiveness of value transmission, this study shows that students do not uniformly adopt these values. Rather, they negotiate these values in response to modern influences such as digital media and peer environments, highlighting the contextual and controversial nature of value internalization.

These findings suggest that globalization influences changes in the value orientations of the younger generation (Aimaganbetova et al., 2024; Buribayev et al., 2025; McKenzie, 2024; Rozhkova et al., 2025). In fact, certain forms of globalization appear capable of shaping values in ways many people deem desirable (Berggren & Nilsson, 2015). Students tend to experience decreased social interaction due to the influence of modernity. Social interaction is associated with numerous psychological impacts on children, such as mental health, self-esteem, and executive function (Ellinger et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2011).

Thus, these findings suggest that the tension between local values and modernity is not merely a problem but part of a process of value transformation, which has rarely been addressed explicitly in previous studies. Furthermore, this study confirms that schools are not merely agents of value transmission but also active mediators in value negotiation, expanding their role in character education.

These findings both support and extend previous studies on local wisdom-based education. Consistent with earlier research, this study confirms that integrating cultural values into educational practices can strengthen students' social character, particularly empathy and cooperation. However, unlike studies that tend to present internalization as a stable outcome, this research reveals that the process is often partial and inconsistent. Furthermore, while previous literature highlights schools as agents of value transmission, this study demonstrates that they also serve as arenas for negotiation in which multiple value systems interact. This expands existing arguments by showing that value conflict is not merely a barrier but an integral part of the internalization process. In this way, the study contributes a more nuanced understanding by positioning internalization as a dynamic, context-dependent process rather than a fixed achievement.

■ CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the internalization of Buton local cultural values in school management is not linear but rather dynamic and context-dependent. This process involves continuous negotiation between cultural values, institutional practices, and modern influences such as globalization and digital culture. Students do not simply receive values but actively interpret, adapt, and sometimes resist them in their daily lives. Values such as togetherness, deliberation, and responsibility have been integrated into learning activities, school culture,

and social interactions, demonstrating that schools play an important role as social institutions that shape and reproduce values within the community. At the same time, tensions between local values and modern influences indicate that value internalization is not a fixed outcome but a complex, ongoing process. These findings are important for the field of education because they highlight that effective character education based on local wisdom requires not only value transmission but also the ability to manage value negotiation flexibly and in context.

The implications of this study suggest that schools need to move beyond normative approaches and develop more context-specific strategies to integrate cultural values into students' real-life experiences. Teachers play a key role in making these values meaningful through relevant learning practices, while policymakers are encouraged to design more adaptive and culturally responsive character education frameworks. However, this study also has several limitations. As an ethnographic study conducted in a specific cultural context, the findings may not be directly generalized to other regions with different cultural backgrounds. In addition, although efforts were made to ensure depth through observation and interviews, the involvement of a relatively large number of student participants may limit the intensity of engagement with each individual. Future research is therefore recommended to explore similar processes in different cultural settings, to conduct more longitudinal studies that capture changes over time, and to examine more deeply how digital culture specifically shapes students' value negotiation. Such studies will help to refine further our understanding of how local wisdom can be effectively integrated into contemporary educational practices.

■ DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

During the drafting of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized [Chatgpt.com/OpenAI] to refine

sentence structure/translating text, improving the manuscript's clarity and readability. All content has been reviewed and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final version. Following the use of this tool, the author(s) reviewed and revised the content as necessary and accept full responsibility for the final content of the article.

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