

The Implications of Sundanese Customary Law in the Character Formation of IPI Garut Students

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Abstrak: Pendidikan merupakan salah satu sarana utama pembentukan karakter yang bertujuan untuk mempersiapkan peserta didik menjadi individu yang tidak hanya cerdas tetapi juga mempunyai integritas dan tanggung jawab sosial. Penelitian sebelumnya telah membahas tentang integrasi kearifan lokal dalam pendidikan, namun hanya sedikit yang fokus pada bagaimana nilai-nilai hukum adat Sunda secara spesifik dapat membentuk karakter mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan mengkaji bagaimana nilai-nilai tersebut dimaknai, dihayati, dan ditransformasikan menjadi sikap perilaku di kalangan mahasiswa IPI Garut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui implikasi nilai-nilai hukum adat Sunda dalam membentuk karakter mahasiswa Institut Pendidikan Indonesia (IPI) Garut. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif asosiatif-korelasional untuk mengetahui hubungan antara pemahaman nilai-nilai adat Sunda dengan karakter siswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner yang disebarakan kepada 316 responden dan dianalisis menggunakan korelasi Pearson dan regresi linier sederhana dengan software SPSS 30. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hukum adat Sunda berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap pembentukan karakter ($r = 0,478$; $p < 0,001$; $R^2 = 0,229$), artinya 22,9% variasi karakter siswa dapat dijelaskan oleh pemahaman dan penerapan nilai-nilai hukum adat. Nilai-nilai tersebut, antara lain silih asah, silih asih, dan silih asuh, tercermin dalam sikap moral, tanggung jawab sosial, dan integritas akademik. Kajian tersebut menyimpulkan bahwa mengintegrasikan hukum adat Sunda ke dalam pendidikan tinggi dapat memperkuat pendidikan karakter kontekstual yang berakar pada kearifan lokal dan identitas budaya..

Kata Kunci: *Sundanese Customary Law, Character Formation, Local Wisdom, Higher Education, IPI Garut*

Abstract: Education is one of the main means of character building, which aims to prepare students to become individuals who are not only intelligent but also have integrity and social responsibility. Previous research has discussed the integration of local wisdom in education, but few have focused on how the values of Sundanese customary law can specifically shape the character of university students. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how these values are interpreted, lived, and transformed into behavioral attitudes among students of IPI Garut. This study aims to explore the implications of Sundanese customary law values in shaping the character of students at Institut Pendidikan Indonesia (IPI) Garut. The research employed a quantitative associative-correlational design to determine the relationship between the understanding of Sundanese customary values and student character. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 316 respondents and analyzed using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression with SPSS 30 software. The findings revealed that Sundanese customary law has a positive and significant effect on character formation ($r = 0.478$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.229$), meaning that 22.9% of the variation in student character can be explained by the understanding and application of customary law values. These values, including silih asah, silih asih, and silih asuh, are reflected in moral attitudes, social responsibility, and academic integrity. The study concludes that integrating Sundanese customary law into higher education can strengthen contextual character education rooted in local wisdom and cultural identity.

Keywords: *Sundanese Customary Law, Character Formation, Local Wisdom, Higher Education, IPI Garut*

Introduction



In the era of globalisation, social, technological and cultural changes are developing rapidly and often threaten the existence of local cultural identities. Ergashev and Farxodjonova (2020) emphasise that globalisation is an objective process that has both positive and negative impacts on national cultures. On the one hand, globalisation enriches civilisation through the exchange of knowledge and universal values, but on the other hand, it can lead to a weakening of national consciousness and alienation from one's own cultural roots. Therefore, every nation is required to be able to integrate its cultural values in order to remain relevant in the modern context without losing its identity. A nation's success in facing globalisation is not determined by how far it imitates foreign cultures, but by its ability to strengthen local values as the foundation of its national character.

The formation of national character is a very important issue to study, especially amid the rapid pace of globalisation, which brings in foreign cultural values that can erode national identity (Dimiyati, 2018). After independence, character and national culture education received serious attention through its integration into school learning. The achievements and development of character and national culture education have undergone dynamics due to several factors, such as changes in social values and the influence of mass media. Limited resources, a lack of awareness of the urgency of character education, and differences in religion and culture as a multicultural nation have meant that the discussion of character education has never ceased, especially in relation to the preservation of local wisdom values (Suriaman, et al., 2024).

In this context, Sundanese customary law, as part of local wisdom, has great potential in shaping the character of students based on noble values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, mutual respect, and maintaining harmony with nature (Kembara, et al., 2021). Sundanese customary law (*hukum adat Sunda*) is rich in local wisdom that upholds harmony, respect, and humanity, encapsulated in the philosophy of *silih asah*, *silih asih*, *silih asuh*. These principles contain educational values that can be internalized in modern learning contexts, especially in higher education institutions that aim to shape professional and moral educators.

These values are highly relevant for building a young generation with strong identity and noble character. The main issue to be addressed in this study is the weak internalisation of character values in the national education system, especially at the higher education level, which emphasises cognitive aspects over affective and value aspects. In addition, there is a gap in previous research, which has been limited in examining the integration of customary law values, particularly Sundanese customs, in the systematic and measurable formation of student character. Therefore, it is important to explore how these local values can be effectively internalised in the context of formal education in higher education.

Character formation among university students has become an essential concern in higher education, especially amid the rapid flow of globalization that threatens to erode local and national values. Sundanese customary law, as one form of local wisdom, contains noble values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), *pamali* (taboo), and adherence to *pikukuh adat* (customary rules) that foster ethics, social responsibility, and moral integrity. Nevertheless, in formal education, these values have not yet been fully and systematically internalized.

This research has high urgency and relevance for the development of science, education, and society at large. In the field of science, this research contributes to the study of customary law, character education, and the integration of local wisdom into the curriculum. In the world of education, this approach can enrich character education strategies, which have so far been general and lacking in context. From a societal perspective, strengthening character based on local culture can increase national awareness and strengthen social cohesion (Muslihah, et al., 2019). The uniqueness of the approach used lies in the exploration of Sundanese customary law values as a source of character building for students through an implementation model in higher education curricula. In addition, this study also offers an interdisciplinary approach that combines legal, educational, and cultural sociological perspectives. The integration of customary law in student character building also refers to similar practices in the Samin indigenous community, which has successfully internalised moral values through their social and informal education systems (Tetep, et al., 2020).

Theoretically and empirically, this study is supported by a number of previous theories and studies that show that local wisdom plays an important role in shaping the character of students. The theory of value internalisation explains that external values can become part of an individual's personal value system if they are processed continuously and through meaningful experiences. Social

constructivism theory emphasises the importance of social interaction in value formation, while social cognitive theory highlights the role of the environment and models in shaping individual behaviour. Research by Balaya and Zafi (2020) shows that character education based on local culture helps students appreciate their own cultural identity and strengthens their love for their country. Studies by Prayoga (2020) and Hikmasari, et al. (2021) also support the importance of character education in shaping a positive school culture. Meanwhile, the recognition of customary law in the constitution through Article 18B paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution (Burhanudin, 2021) provides a strong legal basis that customary law has a legitimate place in the national education system.

Previous studies (Dimyati, 2018; Muslihah et al., 2019; Kembara et al., 2021) emphasize the role of local wisdom in education, but few have empirically measured how Sundanese customary values affect students' character in higher education. This research thus aims to fill that gap by quantitatively examining the extent to which Sundanese customary law values contribute to shaping the moral and social character of IPI Garut students. The uniqueness of the approach lies in the exploration of Sundanese customary law values as a source for shaping student character through a model of implementation in higher education curricula. In addition, this study also offers an interdisciplinary approach that combines perspectives from law, education, and cultural sociology. The integration of customary law in shaping student character also refers to similar practices in the Samin indigenous community, which has successfully internalised moral values through their social system and informal education (Tetep, et al., 2020).

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the interdisciplinary integration of legal, educational, and sociocultural perspectives to model how traditional law can be internalized in modern academic contexts. At the end of this section, the objective is clearly stated: This study aims to analyze and identify the influence of Sundanese customary law values on the character formation of IPI Garut students.

Method

This study employed a quantitative associative-correlational design, which is appropriate for examining the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between continuous variables. As Creswell (2018) explains, this design allows researchers to measure the statistical influence of one variable on another, thereby identifying how changes in one construct are associated with variations in the other.

The research aimed to determine the correlation between the understanding of Sundanese customary law values (independent variable) and the character formation of IPI Garut students (dependent variable). The population included all active students of Institut Pendidikan Indonesia (IPI) Garut in the academic year 2024/2025. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, 316 students were selected through purposive sampling.

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire developed based on indicators of Sundanese customary values (pikukuh adat, pamali, kasepuhan wisdom) and student character traits (ethics, discipline, social responsibility, and integrity). Prior to data collection, instrument validation and reliability testing were conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were 0.721 for the independent variable and 0.757 for the dependent variable, indicating high internal consistency.

Data analysis included: descriptive analysis, classical assumption tests (normality, linearity, homoskedasticity), Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression to test the effect of X on Y, with a significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. All analyses were performed using SPSS 30.

Result and Discussion

Analysis of data from 316 respondents indicates a positive and significant correlation between Sundanese customary law values and student character formation ($r = 0.478$; $p < 0.001$). The regression equation $Y = 2.067 + 0.328X$ with $R^2 = 0.229$ shows that 22.9% of the variation in student character formation is explained by the level of understanding and practice of Sundanese customary law.

The descriptive mean scores ($X = 3.12$; $Y = 3.10$) reflect students' positive attitudes toward cultural values and moral behavior. These findings affirm that Sundanese customary law plays a tangible role in shaping ethical and social behaviors in educational contexts. This result is consistent with Setiawan et al. (2024), who assert that customary law holds local wisdom essential to moral

education, and aligns with Suherman et al. (2019), who found that value-based education fosters national character.

The result aligns with White & Shin (2017), who propose the Integrative Character Education (ICE) framework emphasizing prosocial development grounded in cultural-humanistic values. In their perspective, education that integrates cultural ethics fosters resilience, empathy, and self-regulation key attributes also found in Sundanese philosophical tenets of *silih asih*, *silih asah*, and *silih asuh*. The results of this study indicate that Sundanese customary law values have a significant influence in shaping student character, particularly in the context of social studies education. These empirical findings are in line with various studies that emphasise that customary law is not only a social norm, but also a source of moral and cultural values that guide individual behaviour in society (Wirawan, 2023). In the context of education, customary law serves as a moral foundation that fosters cultural identity awareness, appreciation of local values, and social responsibility among students.

As emphasised by Setiawan et al. (2024), customary law contains local wisdom that needs to be integrated into education so that students understand the noble values of their society. This integration encourages the formation of character traits such as mutual cooperation, honesty, and responsibility values that are also at the core of national character education. The results of this study indicate that students who have a strong understanding of Sundanese norms and ethics (such as *silih asih*, *silih asah*, *silih asuh*) tend to have positive social behaviour and higher moral awareness. Similarly, Alfani et al. (2024) emphasize that character education must be transformative and rooted in values such as honesty, cooperation, humility, and tolerance, derived from both religious and cultural paradigms. This mirrors the Sundanese principle of *someah hade ka semah* (hospitality and respect toward others), which reinforces social and moral integrity among university students. Thus, the local cultural dimensions reflected in Sundanese customary law contribute to developing both intellectual virtue and moral consciousness as essential components of higher education character education.

Character, in this context, refers to a person's moral and ethical qualities, which are expressed through attitudes, actions, and social interactions. Character education is a process of learning moral values mediated by the family, social, and cultural environment (Muttaqin & Hariyadi, 2020; Syafruddin, et al., 2022). Students' character is shaped by moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions influenced by the cultural context in which they live. In explaining the relationship between customary law and character formation, several theoretical perspectives provide relevant foundations. The Theory of Value Internalization asserts that external values such as those embedded in customary law can become part of an individual's personal value system through processes of recognition, understanding, and acceptance. Meanwhile, the Social Constructivist Theory emphasizes the importance of social and cultural interactions in shaping individual knowledge and understanding. Within this framework, students construct their character values through continuous engagement with their customary and cultural environments (Pasaribu & Robiyanti, 2022). Furthermore, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory highlights how observation, modeling, and reinforcement within the customary context play a crucial role in shaping individual behavior and moral character (Melati, 2016). Taken together, these perspectives position customary law as a powerful cultural agent that facilitates the internalization of moral and social values through both educational and sociocultural processes.

Character education understood as the deliberate cultivation of virtues, values, and moral dispositions in education does not operate in a cultural vacuum. Several recent works emphasise that cultural contexts provide the meaning, content, and processes through which character is developed and enacted. For example, a study by Liu & Kalmayllin (2024) on the transmission of intangible cultural heritage in Chinese dance shows how educational practices embed and transmit culture through character-relevant behaviours and dispositions. Similarly, Ruswinarsih (2025) conducted a bibliometric mapping of research on "local culture and character education," showing that much of the literature situates character education within cultural settings (i.e., local wisdom, community values) rather than as a universal, decontextualised set of traits.

Furthermore, these results support the national character education framework as stipulated in the 2013 Curriculum, which places character building as the main objective of education (Juharti & Kartika, 2021). This curriculum adopts customary law principles such as respect for the community and compliance with social norms as an integral part of learning. Suherman et al. (2019) add that character education based on local values strengthens students' social cohesion and

nationalism, as they learn to understand their personal responsibilities as well as their social responsibilities to the nation and society. Empirical studies illustrate how culture moderates character education implementation and outcomes. A comparative study by Fauzi (2023) compared Indonesia and the Netherlands: the typical methods, cultural-ideological bases, and challenges of character education differed notably by national context. In Indonesia, character education is strongly aligned with national ideology and cultural/religious norms; in the Netherlands, habituation (rather than direct instruction) is emphasised. Another study from Saudi Arabia (Osman, 2024) investigated role-modelling programmes for character development showing that local cultural expectations (e.g., authority, respect) influence which character traits are emphasised and how role models are perceived. In Indonesia again, Sakti et al. (2024) explored early childhood character education through the lens of “local wisdom” (ethnopedagogy). They found that revitalising local cultural practices helped embed character education more deeply: teaching values rooted in community traditions increases relevance and resonance for children and families

Furthermore, Sutiapermana et al. (2024) show that the practice of indigenous community-based character education (for example, in the Baduy community) instils compliance with social agreements and customary law as a medium for shaping collective morality. In the context of this study, students who understand Sundanese customary moral principles show a similar tendency namely, judging good behaviour based on its conformity with community values, not merely personal interests. In addition, Suryawan et al. (2023) found that local cultural practices in Bali such as *menyama braya* (social solidarity) enhance moral identity and responsibility among students. This parallel indicates that indigenous cultural systems across Indonesia can serve as valid pedagogical foundations for strengthening national character, supporting the argument that *kearifan lokal* is a contextual yet universal source of moral education. These findings are also consistent with Munaddifah et al. (2023) and Haerudin et al. (2023), who emphasise that character education combined with local wisdom values can enhance students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. This reinforces the empirical results of this study, in which students who are more aware of traditional values are better able to control themselves, work together, and be responsible towards others.

From an educational governance perspective, Putriana et al. (2021) highlight the importance of local leaders' participation in educational decision-making so that traditional values remain alive in the academic environment. This involvement is relevant to the context of IPI Garut as a socially-based university that upholds Sundanese cultural values in its curriculum and student activities. In the view of Agustini et al. (2023), character education based on local cultural values can create a collaborative and harmonious learning environment, where students learn to respect differences and uphold social responsibility.

This context is in line with the principles of civic education, which places character education as an integral part of social studies education. Dimiyati (2018) emphasises that contextual-based civic education encourages the strengthening of national character through an understanding of the social and cultural values that exist within society. Thus, when students study Sundanese Customary Law through a contextual approach, they not only learn about legal norms but also practise these values in their social and academic lives.

Furthermore, Melati (2016) highlights the role of civic education teachers in fostering student ethics through habit formation and exemplary behaviour. Teachers play an important role as facilitators of values, ensuring that students not only understand the concept of character but are also able to internalise it in their daily behaviour. In the context of this study, lecturers and academic advisors at IPI Garut serve as role models in transforming customary law values into ethical and responsible academic and social behaviour among students.

Furthermore, the results of this study support the national character education policy regulated in the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasises a balance between knowledge, skills, and moral attitudes (Juharti & Kartika, 2021). In line with Muslihah et al. (2019), the educational process that utilises local cultural wisdom can be an effective means of ‘socialising education’ that is, bringing education closer to the social, cultural, and needs of the surrounding community. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of IPI Garut, where Sundanese cultural values form an institutional identity that can be integrated into student character education programmes. So, the remaining 77.1% of variation in students' character formation is likely influenced by other contextual and psychosocial factors, including family upbringing, campus culture, lecturer modeling, peer interaction, and the effects of globalization, which together shape moral reasoning and social

responsibility among students” (Dimyati, 2018; Melati, 2016; Muttaqin & Hariyadi, 2020; Syafruddin et al., 2022).

The literature reveals that the relationship between character education and culture is both dynamic and multidimensional. Character education becomes more meaningful and sustainable when it is firmly embedded within the local cultural context, as values and virtues rooted in community traditions tend to resonate more deeply with learners than abstract or universal principles. This cultural grounding ensures that moral education reflects the lived experiences, norms, and belief systems of the society in which it operates. Moreover, the methods through which character education is implemented are themselves shaped by cultural expectations whether through habituation, role-modelling, rituals, or storytelling all of which are influenced by local conceptions of authority, learning, and teacher student relationships. However, tensions often emerge between global frameworks, such as those advocated by UNESCO, which promote universal values like respect, empathy, and global citizenship, and local interpretations of those values. These tensions highlight the need for culturally responsive approaches that reconcile global aspirations with local meanings. Importantly, culture functions not only as the context in which character education occurs but also as its content, as many programs explicitly teach local wisdom, indigenous knowledge, and community-based values, thereby making character education a vital vehicle for cultural preservation and transmission. For this process to be successful, alignment among the curriculum, school culture, parental expectations, and national ideology is crucial. When these dimensions are inconsistent, challenges often arise—students may resist lessons that feel culturally foreign, teachers may lack proper training, and the values being taught may appear disconnected from daily life (Astawa et al., 2025).

Character education based on local cultural values is an important pillar in maintaining national identity amid the rapid pace of globalisation. As explained in the book *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures* (The National Academies, 2022), education rooted in local wisdom not only instils moral and social values, but also fosters cultural awareness that strengthens national competitiveness and identity. Sundanese traditional values such as *silih asah*, *silih asih*, and *silih asuh* reflect the principles of character education that balance the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of students. The integration of these values into academic and social activities in higher education institutions makes the educational process more contextual and meaningful. This is in line with the idea that education based on local culture can serve as a moral bulwark in facing global challenges, as well as a means of preserving the nation's cultural heritage (The National Academies, 2022).

This study examines the implications of customary law on the character formation of students, which requires a deep understanding of two main concepts: customary law and character. Customary law is a set of social norms and values that have developed over generations within indigenous communities. It reflects a philosophy of life and collective values that are culturally inherited (Balaya & Zafi, 2020). Customary law not only regulates social behaviour but also internalises moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and mutual cooperation in everyday life.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the view that Sundanese customary law values play an important role in social education and character building for students. The integration of customary law into the learning process not only strengthens cultural identity but also improves the moral and social quality of students so that they become citizens with integrity and empathy. The values *silih asah*, *silih asih*, *silih asuh* embody social ethics and cooperative learning principles relevant to higher education. The integration of these values into civic education and PGSD courses resonates with Dimyati (2018), who emphasizes contextual PKn learning for character strengthening, while Melati (2016) highlights the teacher's role as a moral model in guiding value internalization among students.

This study makes a new contribution by quantitatively confirming that Sundanese Customary Law values are not merely cultural symbols, but have empirical power in influencing the character of students in a university environment. Unlike previous studies, which were predominantly descriptive and qualitative (Muslihah et al., 2019; Kembara et al., 2021), this study uses an associative-correlational approach to prove the statistical relationship between customary values and character formation. Furthermore, the results of this study expand the discourse on local wisdom-based character education in the context of early adult students, not just primary or secondary school students as in previous studies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the understanding of Sundanese customary law has a positive and significant effect on the character formation of students at the Institut Pendidikan Indonesia (IPI) Garut. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.478$; $p < 0.001$) and regression model ($R^2 = 0.229$) indicate that 22.9% of the variation in student character formation is explained by the internalization of Sundanese customary law values, while the remaining 77.1% is influenced by other contextual factors such as family background, campus culture, and social environment. This finding confirms the research hypothesis that the stronger the understanding of *silih asah*, *silih asih*, and *silih asuh*, the higher the level of student responsibility, moral awareness, and social empathy. The results also achieve the main research objective, which is to identify the influence of customary law values on character development in higher education. In summary, Sundanese customary law functions as an effective moral foundation that nurtures ethical awareness, collective harmony, and local cultural identity among university students. Practically, this study suggests that universities should integrate local wisdom values into civic education, character education, and student development programs as part of a culturally responsive pedagogy. For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample size and employ a multidimensional or mixed-methods approach to explore other contributing variables such as family, media, and social interaction that may strengthen the holistic understanding of character formation in the Indonesian cultural context.

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