

From Local Cultural Values to Civic Character: A Case Study of Bugis–Makassar Value Internalization in a Multicultural Elementary School in Makassar

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how Bugis–Makassar cultural values are internalized and enacted as civic character through the lived culture of a multicultural elementary school in Makassar, Indonesia, addressing the limited understanding of how culturally specific values are translated into everyday civic dispositions in diverse school settings. Using a qualitative single-case study design, the research involved 31 purposively selected participants, including the principal, teachers, students, and parents. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis and were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis involving iterative familiarization, deductive and inductive coding, theme development, review, and interpretive refinement. The findings revealed four interconnected themes: Bugis–Makassar values as a shared moral vocabulary, school culture as a mechanism of value internalization, the enactment of local values as civic character, and the negotiation of local values within a multicultural environment. Values such as *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, *sipakainge'*, *siri'*, and *pacce/pesse* were enacted through teacher modelling, habituation, classroom interaction, school routines, peer relationships, and reflective correction. These practices fostered respect, responsibility, empathy, tolerance, cooperation, integrity, and participation. The findings indicate that school culture functions as a mediating space between local moral traditions and broader civic dispositions, extending previous perspectives on local wisdom by conceptualizing it as a socially negotiated moral resource rather than fixed cultural content. The single-school context limits transferability, suggesting the need for comparative studies across culturally diverse educational settings.

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Introduction

Preparing children to live as responsible citizens in culturally diverse societies has become an increasingly important educational concern. Citizenship in contemporary societies requires more than knowledge of political institutions, laws, or national symbols; it also involves dispositions and competencies that enable individuals to respect human dignity, negotiate differences, cooperate with others, assume social responsibility, and participate constructively in collective life. Banks (2017) argues that citizenship education in plural societies needs to move beyond assimilation-oriented approaches toward forms of transformative citizenship that enable culturally diverse learners to maintain meaningful cultural identities while participating fully in the larger civic community.

Similarly, the Council of Europe (2018) conceptualizes democratic competence as an integration of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding required for living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies. The global competence framework also emphasizes the capacity to understand different perspectives, interact respectfully across cultures, and take responsible action for collective well-being (Asia Society & OECD, 2018). These perspectives suggest that civic character is not merely taught as abstract knowledge but is developed through sustained participation in social and cultural practices that allow children to experience respect, responsibility, solidarity, dialogue, and coexistence in everyday life.

Schools are therefore not simply instructional institutions; they are cultural environments in which children encounter norms, identities, relationships, symbols, routines, and expectations regarding how people should live together. Multicultural education emphasizes that culturally diverse learners should not be required to detach themselves from their cultural backgrounds in order to become legitimate members of a national community; rather, educational environments should recognize cultural identities while building common civic commitments (Banks & Banks, 2019). From a pedagogical perspective, culturally responsive teaching similarly positions students' cultural experiences as intellectual and social resources for learning rather than as peripheral additions to the curriculum (Gay, 2018). Character formation consequently extends beyond formal lessons into what students repeatedly observe and experience in classroom relationships, teacher modelling, peer interaction, rituals, disciplinary practices, collaborative activities, and institutional expectations. Research on caring communities in elementary schools further indicates that character-related dispositions develop more effectively when caring relationships, respect, shared responsibility, and humane values become characteristics of the school community rather than isolated instructional messages (Kawuryan, 2021). Thus, school culture provides an important analytical bridge between cultural values as normative ideals and character as everyday social practice.

This relationship is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where citizenship, cultural diversity, and character formation occupy an explicit position within national educational goals. The current Indonesian Graduate Competency Standards identify *kewargaan* (citizenship) as one of eight dimensions of the graduate profile alongside faith and spirituality, critical reasoning, creativity, collaboration, independence, health, and communication (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2025). Within this framework, citizenship encompasses love of country, respect for social rules and norms, social responsibility, concern for others, appreciation of Indonesian culture and diversity, democratic participation, and contribution to the common good. The national framework for *Pembelajaran Mendalam* further emphasizes holistic education through meaningful learning environments and the interconnected cultivation of intellectual, ethical, affective, social, and physical dimensions (Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, 2025). Consequently, the development of civic character cannot be separated from the cultural environments in which Indonesian students construct meanings about respect, responsibility, solidarity, diversity, and collective belonging. Local cultural values may therefore serve not merely as heritage content but as contextual ethical resources through which national civic principles become meaningful in students' everyday lives.

A growing body of Indonesian research supports the educational potential of local wisdom for character formation. Harun et al. (2020), for example, found that multicultural and community-based

local wisdom provides relevant foundations for developing dimensions such as honesty, responsibility, independence, respect for others, compliance with shared rules, national identity, communication, and environmental concern. Faiz and Soleh (2021) likewise demonstrate how local cultural resources can be integrated into educational practice to cultivate cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of character. At the elementary-school level, Irsan et al. (2023) show that the internalization and actualization of local cultural values occur through classroom interaction as well as school-wide literacy activities, extracurricular programs, rules, and habituation. More recently, ethnopedagogical research has demonstrated that embedding local wisdom in educational environments can simultaneously strengthen cultural awareness, character formation, and connections among schools, families, and local communities (Sakti et al., 2024). Masrukhi et al. (2024) similarly emphasize the potential of local-wisdom-based character education to support participation, cultural awareness, and the values associated with the Pancasila-oriented learner profile. Taken together, these studies establish local culture as an important pedagogical resource, while also indicating that value formation occurs through a combination of curriculum, social interaction, modelling, routines, and school environments rather than through classroom content alone.

The Bugis–Makassar cultural context provides a particularly rich setting for examining this relationship. Bugis–Makassar moral philosophy encompasses interconnected values concerning dignity, humanity, mutual recognition, social responsibility, empathy, honesty, perseverance, cooperation, and appropriate interpersonal conduct. Among the most frequently discussed concepts are *siri'*, which relates to dignity, self-respect, and moral consciousness; *pacce* or *pesse*, associated with compassion and social solidarity; *sipakatau*, or recognizing and treating others as fully human; *sipakalebbi*, or mutually respecting and honoring others; and *sipakainge'*, or responsibly reminding one another. Jamaluddin et al. (2022) identify additional cultural values including *lempuk* (honesty), *reso* (hard work), *sipatokkong* (mutual support), *tongeng* (sincerity), and *abbulosibatang* (collaboration) that demonstrate the broader ethical architecture embedded within Makassar-Buginese cultural traditions. Herlin et al. (2020) further demonstrate that *sipakatau*, *sipakainge*, and *sipakalebbi* contain substantial potential for fostering tolerance and mitigating intolerance in diverse social settings. These cultural principles overlap conceptually with contemporary civic virtues such as respect for human dignity, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, tolerance, and solidarity, suggesting that Bugis–Makassar cultural ethics can provide a locally grounded vocabulary through which civic character is understood and practiced.

Educational research in Makassar has begun to explore this potential. Azis et al. (2020), in a study involving primary-school teachers in Makassar, found broad recognition of the contemporary relevance of *siri' na pacce* and of teachers' responsibility for transmitting these values. However, the study also identified a significant implementation issue: although teachers reported conveying *siri' na pacce* inside and outside the classroom, systematic planning for integrating the values into learning remained comparatively limited. Building on this concern, Azis et al. (2022) developed a *siri' na pacce*-based learning model involving the stages of acquiring initial knowledge, thinking, discussing, communicating, and reflecting. Other research has broadened attention toward *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, and *sipakainge* as foundations for respectful interpersonal relationships and character formation (Rahmawati & Eli, 2024). More recent scholarship has synthesized *siri'*, *pacce*, *sipakatau*, and *tabe'* as interconnected resources for holistic character education (Rusli & Putri,

2026), while a systematic review of *tabe'* culture highlights teacher modelling, habituation, curriculum integration, and school culture as major mechanisms through which respect, politeness, empathy, discipline, and social responsibility can be cultivated among elementary-school students (Ahmar et al., 2026). These developments demonstrate increasing scholarly recognition of Bugis–Makassar values as educational resources.

Nevertheless, a closer reading of this literature reveals an important conceptual and empirical gap. Existing studies have predominantly approached Bugis–Makassar values as cultural content to be identified, moral principles to be preserved, values to be integrated into instruction, or foundations for developing specific learning models. Considerably less attention has been given to the process through which these values become part of the lived culture of a school and are subsequently interpreted and enacted by children as civic dispositions in everyday interaction. For example, teacher perceptions of *siri' na pacce* have been documented (Azis et al., 2020), instructional models have been designed around these values (Azis et al., 2022), and conceptual mappings have linked local wisdom to dimensions of character education (Rusli & Putri, 2026). Yet these approaches do not fully explain how cultural values travel from normative cultural discourse into routines, relationships, disciplinary practices, classroom interaction, peer behaviour, and children's own meaning-making. This distinction is analytically important because the presence of a cultural value in curriculum documents or teachers' discourse does not necessarily mean that the value is experienced, negotiated, or practiced by students in the same way. The literature therefore suggests a need to shift from studying the *inclusion* of local wisdom toward examining its social process of internalization and enactment within actual school life. This gap is especially significant for elementary education, where repeated interaction, modelling, habituation, and peer relationships constitute central mechanisms of moral and social development.

A second gap concerns the relationship between local cultural identity and citizenship within multicultural school environments. Local wisdom is sometimes discussed primarily in terms of cultural preservation, while civic education is discussed in terms of national identity, democratic responsibility, or Pancasila values. Such a separation risks overlooking how local and national moral vocabularies intersect in children's everyday experience. In a multicultural school, values such as *sipakatau* and *sipakalebbi* may operate not only as markers of Bugis–Makassar cultural identity but also as practical resources for respecting classmates from different ethnic, linguistic, religious, or social backgrounds. Likewise, *pacce* may develop beyond in-group solidarity toward broader civic empathy, while *sipakainge'* may provide a culturally recognizable basis for shared moral responsibility. However, cultural values are not transferred automatically or uniformly; they are interpreted within particular institutional and social contexts. Multicultural citizenship therefore requires educational processes that allow cultural particularity and shared civic commitments to coexist rather than positioning them as competing identities (Banks, 2017; Banks & Banks, 2019). Investigating how Bugis–Makassar values are negotiated within a culturally diverse elementary-school environment can consequently illuminate the transition from local cultural belonging to inclusive civic character.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the internalization of Bugis–Makassar cultural values within the lived culture of a multicultural elementary school in Makassar. Rather than treating local values as independent character traits or evaluating a predetermined instructional intervention, the study conceptualizes internalization as a socially embedded process involving

cultural meanings, school norms, teacher modelling, classroom practices, routines, institutional rituals, peer interaction, and students' everyday enactment of civic dispositions. Civic character is therefore understood as observable and interpreted orientations toward respect, responsibility, tolerance, empathy, cooperation, fairness, solidarity, and participation that emerge through students' engagement with others in school life. The study focuses particularly on *siri'*, *pacce/pesse*, *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, and *sipakainge'* while remaining open to other culturally salient values emerging from the case. By examining how these cultural principles are interpreted within a multicultural educational setting, the study positions local wisdom not as static heritage but as a dynamic cultural resource that may mediate the relationship between local identity, school culture, and contemporary citizenship.

Accordingly, the study addresses three questions: (1) How are Bugis–Makassar cultural values represented and practiced within a multicultural elementary school? (2) Through what school practices and social processes are these values internalized into students' civic character? and (3) How do students interpret and enact them in everyday interactions? The study contributes by providing a process-based account of how local cultural values move from shared moral meanings to habitual school practices and students' civic dispositions. From this process, it proposes a conceptual understanding of school culture as a mediating space between local values and civic character. The findings also offer pedagogical implications for Pancasila Education, particularly for integrating local wisdom through modelling, habituation, dialogue, reflection, and everyday social interaction. Thus, the study focuses not only on which Bugis–Makassar values are relevant to civic education, but on how they become lived civic character in a multicultural school community.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to examine how Bugis–Makassar cultural values are internalized and enacted as civic character within the lived culture of a multicultural elementary school in Makassar, Indonesia. A case study was considered appropriate because the research sought to understand a contemporary social and educational phenomenon within its natural context, particularly when the boundaries between cultural values, school practices, and students' everyday interactions could not be clearly separated (Yin, 2018). Rather than measuring predetermined variables, the study investigated the meanings, practices, interactions, and institutional processes through which local cultural values became embedded in school life.

The case was bounded by one elementary school, its school community, and everyday educational practices during the 2026/2027 academic year. The school was purposively selected because it met three criteria: (1) it enrolled students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds; (2) it demonstrated an explicit commitment to character and citizenship education; and (3) local Bugis–Makassar cultural values were visible in school routines, interpersonal relations, learning activities, or institutional programs. The school is referred to by the pseudonym Mutiara Elementary School to protect institutional and participant confidentiality.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were recruited through purposive and criterion-based sampling to obtain information from individuals occupying different positions within the school culture. The proposed participant group consisted of one principal, six teachers, eighteen students, and six parents, resulting in a total

of 31 participants. Teachers included classroom teachers and teachers involved in Pancasila Education and character-development activities. Student participants were selected from Grades 4–6 because students at these levels were considered sufficiently able to articulate experiences, interpersonal values, and interpretations of school practices. Maximum variation was considered in selecting students based on gender, grade level, and cultural background.

Parents were included to provide contextual information regarding the relationship between cultural values practiced at home and those promoted at school. Participant recruitment continued until the collected information provided sufficient depth and recurring patterns relevant to the research questions.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Group	n	Gender	Age/Grade Range	Key Characteristics
Principal	1	1 female	45–55 years	School leadership and policy
Teachers	6	2 male, 4 female	30–55 years	Classroom teachers and Pancasila Education/character-related roles
Students	18	9 male, 9 female	Grades 4–6; approximately 9–12 years	Diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic, and family backgrounds
Parents	6	2 male, 4 female	30–50 years	Parents of participating students from varied cultural backgrounds
Total	31	12 male, 19 female		Multiple perspectives on school culture and value internalization

Data Collection

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. These multiple sources enabled methodological triangulation and provided an opportunity to compare formally articulated cultural values with values actually practiced in school life.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the principal, teachers, and parents. Student interviews were conducted individually or in small groups of two to three participants using age-appropriate language. Interviews explored participants' understanding of Bugis–Makassar values, including *siri'*, *pacce/pesse*, *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, and *sipakainge'*, as well as their perceptions of how these values were expressed through school rules, teaching practices, interpersonal relationships, and student behaviour. Particular attention was given to experiences involving respect, responsibility, empathy, tolerance, cooperation, fairness, and participation. Interviews lasted approximately 30–60 minutes for adults and 20–30 minutes for students and were audio-recorded with consent.

Observations focused on classroom instruction, Pancasila Education lessons, school assemblies, morning routines, break-time interaction, collaborative activities, extracurricular programs, disciplinary encounters, and spontaneous peer interactions. Field notes documented both verbal and non-verbal manifestations of cultural and civic values. Approximately 12–15 observation sessions were planned across different school settings to capture recurring and contrasting patterns.

Documentary data included the school vision and mission, regulations, character-development programs, teaching modules, lesson plans, student activity records, school posters, photographs of cultural symbols, and relevant institutional documents.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following the iterative procedures of familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and interpretive reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Analysis combined deductive and inductive coding. Deductive codes were informed by the conceptual framework, including Bugis–Makassar cultural values, school-culture mechanisms, internalization practices, and civic character. Inductive coding was used to identify unexpected meanings, tensions, adaptations, and forms of cultural negotiation emerging from the field.

Initial codes included *human dignity, mutual respect, moral reminding, social solidarity, teacher modelling, habituation, disciplinary practices, peer support, tolerance, responsibility, and student participation*. Codes were subsequently organized into broader themes explaining how local cultural values moved from cultural discourse into everyday civic practices.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Research credibility was strengthened through data-source triangulation, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, member reflection with selected adult participants, and comparison of interview accounts with observed practices and documentary evidence. An audit trail was maintained to document coding decisions and theme development. Thick description was used to enhance transferability, while reflexive notes helped identify potential researcher assumptions during interpretation.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee before data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from adult participants and parents or guardians, while children provided age-appropriate assent. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any stage. Pseudonyms were used for the school and all participants, and identifiable information was removed from transcripts and research reports.

Result and Discussion

Result

The analysis revealed that the internalization of Bugis–Makassar cultural values within the school did not occur through a single instructional activity. Instead, it emerged through an interconnected process involving school norms, teacher modelling, habitual practices, classroom interaction, peer relationships, and students' interpretation of cultural meanings. Four major themes were identified: (1) Bugis–Makassar values as a shared moral vocabulary; (2) school culture as the primary mechanism of value internalization; (3) the enactment of local values as civic character; and (4) the negotiation of local cultural values within a multicultural school environment. Across these themes, the findings indicate that local values became educationally meaningful when they moved beyond cultural terminology and were translated into concrete social practices.

Table 2. Thematic Structure of the Findings

Main Theme	Subthemes	Dominant Cultural Values	Civic Character Dimensions
Bugis–Makassar values as a shared moral vocabulary	Human dignity, mutual respect, moral responsibility, solidarity	<i>Sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge', siri', pacce/pesse</i>	Respect, responsibility, empathy
School culture as the mechanism of internalization	Teacher modelling, habituation, school routines, Pancasila Education, corrective interaction	<i>Sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge', siri'</i>	Discipline, responsibility, civility
Enactment of values as civic character	Respecting differences, peer support, cooperation, accountability, participation	<i>Sipakatau, pacce/pesse, sipakalebbi, sipakainge'</i>	Tolerance, empathy, cooperation, participation
Negotiating local values in a multicultural school	Inclusive reinterpretation, cultural adaptation, tensions between knowing and practicing values	<i>Sipakatau, siri', pacce/pesse</i>	Inclusive citizenship, fairness, social responsibility

Bugis–Makassar Values as a Shared Moral Vocabulary

The first theme concerned the way Bugis–Makassar cultural values functioned as a shared moral vocabulary for interpreting appropriate behaviour within the school community. Participants repeatedly referred to *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, *sipakainge'*, *siri'*, and *pacce/pesse* when explaining how students were expected to treat other people, respond to interpersonal differences, assume responsibility, and provide support to others.

Among these values, *sipakatau* emerged as the most frequently articulated principle. Participants interpreted *sipakatau* as recognizing another person as an equal human being whose dignity should be respected regardless of differences in ethnicity, religion, social background, or academic ability. The principal explained: “*Sipakatau* is very important in our school because it teaches students to see others as equally valuable human beings. We remind them that differences in ethnicity, religion, family background, or academic ability should never become a reason to treat someone differently.” (P1)

This interpretation positioned *sipakatau* not merely as an ethnic cultural norm, but as an interpersonal ethic applicable to the entire school community. Teachers similarly connected *sipakatau* with the avoidance of humiliation, discrimination, and exclusion. A related value, *sipakalebbi*, was understood as the practice of appreciating and honoring others. Its manifestation in school life included listening when another student spoke, appreciating different opinions, using polite forms of address, and avoiding ridicule when peers made mistakes. One teacher explained: “For me, *sipakalebbi* means appreciating others in a proper way. In the classroom, I always tell students that respect is not only shown to teachers. They also have to listen to their friends, appreciate different opinions, and avoid making fun of someone who makes a mistake.” (T2)

Observational data supported this interpretation. During a Grade 5 classroom discussion, one student gave an incomplete answer and several classmates began to laugh. Rather than reprimanding the students harshly, the teacher reminded the class that everyone had the right to learn and make

mistakes. The student was then given another opportunity to answer with peer assistance. This interaction demonstrated how respect for dignity was enacted through classroom practice.

The value of *sipakainge'* introduced the dimension of reciprocal moral responsibility. Participants explained that reminding another person about inappropriate behaviour was not necessarily understood as interference or judgment, but rather as a form of social concern. "*Sipakainge'* does not mean judging another person. It means reminding each other because we care. When a student reminds a friend not to disturb the class or to complete a responsibility, I see that as part of learning to care about the group." (T4) This value was particularly visible during collaborative activities and classroom responsibilities. During one observation, a student attempted to leave before completing the assigned classroom-cleaning duty. Another student reminded him that the task was the responsibility of the whole group. The reminder was delivered without ridicule, and the student returned to complete the task. This episode illustrated the enactment of *sipakainge'* as peer-based responsibility.

The concepts of *siri'* and *pacce/pesse* provided complementary moral orientations. Participants generally associated *siri'* with dignity, moral self-control, and responsibility. Importantly, *siri'* was not described exclusively in terms of shame. A parent explained: "Children should have *siri'*, but we do not teach it as fear or embarrassment. We teach it as knowing what is proper, being responsible for what they do, and understanding that their behaviour reflects their dignity." (PR3) Meanwhile, *pacce/pesse* was predominantly interpreted as empathy, compassion, and solidarity. Students commonly associated this value with helping friends experiencing academic, emotional, or social difficulties. "If a friend is having difficulty, we should not just leave them alone. We usually help them, especially when they do not understand the lesson. Our teacher says that helping others is also part of *pacce*." (S7) Taken together, these findings indicate that the five cultural concepts formed an interconnected moral repertoire. *Sipakatau* emphasized human dignity, *sipakalebbi* mutual appreciation, *sipakainge'* reciprocal responsibility, *siri'* moral accountability, and *pacce/pesse* empathy and solidarity.

Table 3. Translation of Cultural Values into Civic Character

Cultural Value	Meaning within School Culture	Observable Practice	Civic Character
<i>Sipakatau</i>	Recognizing equal human dignity	Non-discrimination, respectful interaction, inclusion	Respect, equality, tolerance
<i>Sipakalebbi</i>	Appreciating and honoring others	Listening, politeness, appreciating opinions	Respect, civility
<i>Sipakainge'</i>	Mutual moral responsibility	Reminding peers, responsible correction	Responsibility, moral agency
<i>Siri'</i>	Dignity and moral self-control	Accountability, self-discipline, admitting mistakes	Integrity, responsibility
<i>Pacce/Pesse</i>	Compassion and solidarity	Helping, sharing, supporting peers	Empathy, care, solidarity

School Culture as the Primary Mechanism of Value Internalization

The second theme showed that local cultural values were internalized primarily through repeated social experience within school culture rather than through explicit explanation alone. Five mechanisms were particularly visible: teacher modelling, habituation, school routines, curricular integration, and corrective interaction.

Teacher modelling represented the most immediate mechanism. Students observed how teachers spoke to them, responded to mistakes, managed disagreement, distributed opportunities, and resolved conflict. The principal stressed that school values would have limited meaning if teachers did not demonstrate them through their own behaviour:

"Values will not become character if they are only written on the wall. Students have to see them in the way teachers speak, solve problems, give sanctions, and treat children. That is why teacher behaviour is very important." (P1)

A teacher made a similar point:

"I cannot teach respect by only saying, 'You must respect others.' I have to show it. When students give an answer that is not correct, I try not to embarrass them. I ask another question and guide them. That is also *sipakatau* because their dignity should be protected." (T1)

The observation data reinforced this finding. Teachers frequently corrected inappropriate behaviour without publicly humiliating students. Such practices indicated that discipline itself could become an arena for cultural-value internalization.

The second mechanism was habituation. Daily activities such as greeting others, maintaining classroom cleanliness, participating in group duties, sharing materials, helping classmates, and respecting speaking turns provided repeated opportunities for students to practice cultural values.

"We use simple routines every day. Students greet each other, work together to clean the classroom, share tasks, and help classmates. We may not mention the words sipakatau or pacce every day, but the values are practiced repeatedly." (T5)

This statement highlights an important finding: cultural values were not always verbalized explicitly. Their internalization frequently occurred through repeated behaviour. Students therefore encountered local values simultaneously as explicit cultural concepts and implicit norms of everyday conduct.

Pancasila Education provided an additional curricular mechanism. Teachers connected local cultural values with broader concepts such as mutual cooperation, responsibility, respect for diversity, justice, deliberation, and national unity.

"In Pancasila Education, when we discuss mutual cooperation, responsibility, or respect for diversity, I connect these ideas with values students already know from Bugis–Makassar culture. It helps them understand that Pancasila is not something distant from their daily lives." (T3)

This connection suggests that local and national value systems were not treated as separate domains. Instead, teachers used culturally familiar concepts to make civic values more concrete. *Sipakatau* was connected with equality and respect, *pacce* with social concern, and *sipakainge'* with responsibility toward others.

Corrective interaction also played a particularly important role. Teachers often used conflict or misconduct as an opportunity for reflection rather than relying exclusively on punitive discipline. During one break-time observation, two students argued during a game and one used an insulting expression. The teacher invited both students to explain the conflict, identify which values had been

violated, and consider how they could respond differently. The interaction ended with an apology and agreement about how to continue the game.

This pattern indicates that the school functioned as a cultural ecosystem in which curriculum, modelling, routines, discipline, and interpersonal interaction collectively mediated the internalization of local values.

From Local Cultural Values to Enacted Civic Character

The third theme concerned the transformation of cultural meanings into observable civic dispositions. Students demonstrated the strongest evidence of internalization when they encountered authentic social situations requiring respect, empathy, cooperation, responsibility, or participation.

Respect and tolerance became particularly visible in interactions among students from different backgrounds. A student explained:

"My friends come from different backgrounds, but in class we are treated the same. If someone has a different religion or comes from another ethnic group, it does not matter. We still work together and become friends." (S4)

The significance of this statement lies in the extension of *sipakatau* beyond ethnic boundaries. In a multicultural school, treating others as equal human beings became closely associated with non-discrimination and inclusive friendship.

Student participation during group activities provided another context in which civic character became visible. Students were expected not only to cooperate but also to listen to one another and negotiate differences.

"When we work in groups, sometimes we disagree. Usually we discuss it first. If someone keeps forcing their opinion, another friend will remind them to listen. The teacher says everyone should have a chance to speak." (S11)

This behaviour reflected the convergence of several cultural values: *sipakalebbi* through listening and appreciation, *sipakainge'* through reminding peers, and *sipakatau* through recognition of equal participation. Empathy was most evident in spontaneous peer support. During one classroom observation, a student experienced difficulty completing a written task. Without teacher instruction, two group members moved closer, explained the task, and shared their notes while allowing the student to remain involved in the activity. A student similarly stated:

"When my friend forgot to bring her stationery, I shared mine. I think helping a friend is normal because if I have a problem, I also want someone to help me." (S15)

Teachers regarded spontaneous behaviour as particularly important evidence of internalization:

"I can see the values most clearly when the teacher is not directly instructing them. For example, when a student spontaneously helps a classmate, reminds a friend politely, or invites someone who is alone to join a group. That is when the value has started to become behaviour." (T6)

Responsibility also developed beyond compliance with school rules. Students described responsibility as acknowledging mistakes and correcting behaviour.

"If I make a mistake, I have to admit it. Sometimes I feel ashamed, but the teacher says the important thing is to be responsible and correct it. So I think siri' also means being brave enough to admit what we did." (S9)

This interpretation demonstrates an important transformation of *siri'*. Rather than being reduced to feelings of shame, the value was reframed as accountability and moral courage. Overall, the data indicate a progression from cultural knowledge toward civic enactment. Students first encountered the meanings of local values, experienced them through school interaction, and gradually applied them in authentic interpersonal situations.

Negotiating Local Cultural Values in a Multicultural School

The fourth theme revealed that Bugis–Makassar values were reinterpreted within the multicultural context of the school. Participants did not generally describe the values as belonging exclusively to students of Bugis or Makassar ethnicity. Instead, they were presented as culturally grounded but socially inclusive principles. The principal explained: “These values come from Bugis–Makassar culture, but in school we do not teach them as values that belong only to Bugis or Makassar students. Respect, empathy, and helping others are universal. Every student can practice them.” (P1)

A teacher similarly stated:

“We explain sipakatau as treating everyone humanely. Therefore, it is very relevant in a multicultural school. A child does not need to be Bugis or Makassar to understand that another person deserves respect.” (T2)

This inclusive reinterpretation was also confirmed by a parent from a different cultural background:

“I come from a different ethnic background, but I do not feel that these values are imposed on my child. The school explains them as values for living together. I think that is why they can be accepted by different families.” (PR5)

Students themselves demonstrated a similar reinterpretation. One student who had not previously encountered the terminology at home explained:

“I had never heard the word sipakatau at home before. I learned it at school. For me, it means we should not choose friends only because they are the same as us.” (S13)

These accounts suggest that cultural internalization involved both preservation and transformation. The cultural origins of the values remained recognizable, but their practical meanings expanded as they were applied within an ethnically and socially diverse school community.

Nevertheless, the internalization process was neither uniform nor complete. A significant negative case was the presence of a knowing–doing gap: some students could articulate the expected cultural values but did not consistently enact them, particularly in emotionally charged situations. This finding modifies the internalization model by showing that value internalization is not a linear progression from knowledge to stable behaviour. Rather, it is a recursive and context-dependent process in which moral understanding must be repeatedly translated into action through habituation, social interaction, feedback, and reflective correction. Emotional pressure, peer dynamics, and situational demands could temporarily disrupt this translation, revealing that civic character remains subject to reinforcement and renegotiation. The model therefore includes not only the transmission and enactment of values, but also moments of inconsistency, correction, and re-internalization as integral to the development of civic character.

One teacher observed:

“Sometimes students know the value but do not always practice it. They can explain that they must respect friends, but during competition or conflict they may still mock each other. That is why the values have to be continuously reinforced.” (T4)

A student provided a similar account:

"Sometimes when we are angry, we forget what the teacher has told us. After fighting, the teacher usually asks us to talk again and explain why our words can hurt someone." (S6)

Another teacher regarded this inconsistency as part of the educational process rather than evidence that value education had failed.

"There is still a gap between knowing the value and consistently practicing it. Students may understand sipakatau, but during peer conflict they can still exclude someone. For us, that becomes an opportunity to discuss the value again, not simply punish them." (T1)

These negative cases are important because they demonstrate that value internalization was neither automatic nor linear. Students continuously negotiated cultural norms in relation to emotion, peer pressure, competition, family socialization, and everyday conflict. Thus, civic character emerged through an iterative process of practice, violation, correction, reflection, and re-enactment.

Cross-Theme Synthesis: From Cultural Values to Civic Character

Across the four themes, the findings reveal a four-stage process through which Bugis–Makassar cultural values became civic character: cultural recognition, institutional mediation, social enactment, and civic transformation.

In the first stage, students encountered concepts such as *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, *sipakainge'*, *siri'*, and *pacce/pesse* through cultural discourse, family knowledge, classroom explanations, and school narratives. The second stage involved institutional mediation, where these values were translated into teacher behaviour, classroom norms, routines, Pancasila Education, disciplinary practices, and collective activities. During the third stage, students enacted the values through peer interaction, group work, conflict resolution, mutual assistance, and participation. Finally, through repeated interaction in a multicultural environment, locally grounded cultural values acquired broader civic meanings involving equality, tolerance, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, fairness, and inclusive participation.

Table 4. Process of Bugis–Makassar Cultural Value Internalization

Stage	Main Process	School Mechanism	Indicative Outcome
Cultural Recognition	Encountering and interpreting local values	Cultural narratives, teacher explanations, family knowledge	Understanding cultural meaning
Institutional Mediation	Translating values into school norms	Modelling, habituation, curriculum, routines, discipline	Repeated value experience
Social Enactment	Applying values in authentic situations	Peer interaction, group work, conflict resolution, mutual assistance	Observable value-based behaviour
Civic Transformation	Expanding local values into inclusive civic dispositions	Multicultural interaction and collective participation	Respect, tolerance, empathy, responsibility, cooperation, participation

The findings demonstrate that school culture operated as the critical mediating environment between inherited cultural values and contemporary civic character. Local wisdom did not become civic character simply because students knew its terminology. Rather, internalization occurred when

cultural principles were repeatedly modelled, experienced, negotiated, reflected upon, and enacted within real social relationships. The multicultural character of the school further transformed these values by extending their meaning from culturally specific moral traditions toward inclusive civic principles applicable to all members of the school community. The overall process can therefore be represented in Figure 1.

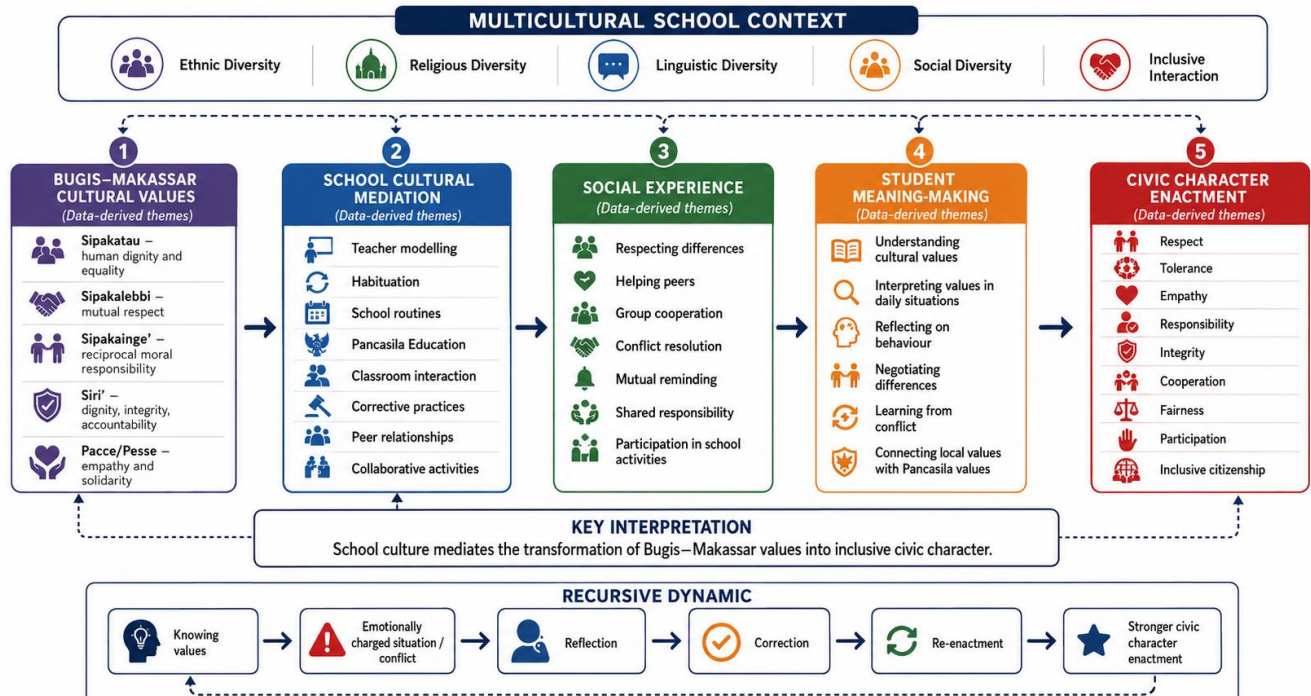


Figure 1. Conceptual process of Bugis–Makassar cultural value internalization into civic character.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the internalization of Bugis–Makassar cultural values into civic character is not reducible to the transmission of cultural knowledge. Instead, it constitutes a recursive socio-cultural process in which values are recognized, interpreted, modelled, rehearsed, negotiated, and enacted through everyday school relationships. The prominence of *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, *sipakainge'*, *siri'*, and *pacce/pesse* indicates that Bugis–Makassar traditions continue to provide a meaningful moral vocabulary for contemporary citizenship education. These findings support Jamaluddin et al. (2022), who identified compassion, honesty, mutual respect, reciprocal guidance, cooperation, and social responsibility as educational dimensions of *siri'*. They are also consistent with Herlin et al. (2020), who positioned *sipakatau*, *sipakainge'*, and *sipakalebbi* as culturally grounded resources for preventing intolerance. Nevertheless, the present study advances this literature by demonstrating that recognition of cultural values alone is insufficient: their civic significance emerges only when they are converted into observable practices, including equitable participation, respectful disagreement, mutual assistance, and responsibility for collective well-being.

A particularly important result concerns the transformation of culturally specific principles into inclusive civic dispositions. *Sipakatau*, for example, operated not merely as an ethnic convention but as an ethic of equal human dignity across ethnic, religious, and social differences. Likewise, *pacce/pesse* was enacted as empathy and solidarity toward peers beyond the boundaries of Bugis–Makassar identity. This finding accords with Banks' (2017) transformative citizenship framework, in

which learners retain meaningful cultural identities while acquiring the capacity to participate equitably in pluralistic civic communities. It also supports culturally responsive and sustaining perspectives that treat community knowledge as an intellectual and ethical resource rather than a cultural ornament (Gay, 2018; Smith et al., 2022). Internationally, Lash (2021) similarly found that multicultural citizenship education can help students negotiate ethnic and national identities while critically responding to exclusionary social narratives. However, whereas that study emphasized political resistance in the United States, the present findings reveal a more relational mechanism: inclusive citizenship developed through culturally familiar expectations of dignity, reciprocal respect, collective care, and morally responsible correction. Thus, the study extends predominantly Western conceptualizations of transformative citizenship by showing how civic inclusion may be generated through indigenous relational ethics.

The central role of school culture further confirms that values become educationally consequential through sustained social mediation. Teacher modelling, classroom routines, habituation, corrective dialogue, collaborative tasks, and peer interaction provided the conditions through which abstract values were translated into conduct. This pattern corresponds with international evidence showing that character education is most effective when values are reinforced across teaching practices, relationships, and institutional environments rather than delivered as isolated moral lessons (Birhan et al., 2021). Da Silva et al.'s (2024) systematic review likewise concludes that the successful integration of indigenous knowledge depends on meaningful connections among curriculum, community knowledge, and teachers' pedagogical capacities. Similarly, Anyichie and Butler (2023) found that culturally responsive learning environments strengthen engagement when students' identities and experiences are incorporated into meaningful classroom tasks. The present findings nevertheless add an important qualification: cultural responsiveness is not determined solely by culturally representative content. Its effectiveness depends on whether the interactional norms of the school embody the values being taught.

Indonesian evidence reinforces this interpretation. Suarta et al. (2022) found that teachers' indigenous knowledge and cultural competence positively affected students' cognitive, interpersonal, and social outcomes, with student engagement serving as a significant mediating mechanism. Sakti et al. (2024) similarly demonstrated that ethnopedagogy revitalizes local wisdom when cultural values are embedded in stories, activities, relationships, and school practices. Hadianto et al. (2022) further reported that instructional designs integrating local cultural discourse and activities improved meaningful student engagement with literacy. More specifically, Mambu et al. (2026) show that Indonesian indigenous knowledge can function as a foundation for critical and spiritual character formation rather than simply as supplementary cultural content. Collectively, these studies corroborate the present finding that local wisdom becomes pedagogically productive when learners actively interpret and experience it. However, the current study contributes greater processual specificity by identifying school culture as the mediating ecology between cultural recognition and civic enactment.

Teacher conduct was especially influential within this ecology. Students learned *sipakatau* not simply when teachers defined it but when teachers protected learners from humiliation, distributed classroom participation fairly, listened across differences, and corrected misconduct without denying personal dignity. This result is compatible with Gulya and Fehérvári's (2024) review, which identifies teachers' reflexivity, cultural knowledge, relationship-building, and adaptive pedagogical

competence as essential components of culturally responsive practice. It is also consistent with Al Khansa et al. (2024), including Muhammad Sufian, who found that values become more meaningful when learning is connected to students' everyday experiences and accompanied by reflection, collaboration, and contextual application. The findings therefore challenge punitive interpretations of discipline. Through *sipakainge'*, correction can be understood as reciprocal moral responsibility, while *siri'* can promote ethical accountability. Nevertheless, *siri'* must be pedagogically managed with care because an excessive emphasis on shame could reproduce fear, exclusion, or public humiliation. Anakotta et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that *siri' na pesse* involves a complex interaction among pride, dignity, shame, guilt, and social harmony. Consequently, teachers should cultivate the dignity-preserving and restorative dimensions of *siri'* rather than its potentially coercive expressions.

The connection between local cultural values and Pancasila Education represents another significant contribution. Teachers' association of *sipakatau* with equality, *pacce* with social concern, and *sipakainge'* with shared responsibility indicates that local wisdom can provide an interpretive bridge to otherwise abstract civic principles. Hasni et al. (2022) similarly found that integrating *siri' na pacce* into social studies made civic learning more culturally relevant in the digital era. Koderi et al. (2023), including Muhammad Sufian, also demonstrated that culturally grounded media can connect Lampung local wisdom with communicative learning, thereby illustrating how localized cultural representations can support participation and cultural identification. These findings suggest that local culture and national citizenship should not be treated as parallel or competing moral systems. Instead, local values can translate national ideals into concepts that learners recognize through their social experiences. This argument is consistent with culturally sustaining scholarship, although it also responds to da Silva et al.'s (2024) warning that indigenous knowledge may become tokenistic when it is inserted into curricula without community participation or critical examination.

Peer relationships constituted a further mechanism of internalization. Spontaneous helping, mutual reminding, collaborative decision-making, and conflict negotiation indicate that students were not passive recipients of character education but active participants in reproducing and revising its meanings. Putri et al. (2025), writing in *Digital Learning, Social Science, and Life-course Studies*, similarly found that structured cooperative learning enhanced participation and social studies outcomes, although its effectiveness varied according to students' motivational profiles. The present findings extend this conclusion from academic engagement to moral socialization: collaboration provided a setting in which students could practise respect, solidarity, accountability, and reciprocal correction. At the same time, the observed knowing-doing gap demonstrates that internalization was neither automatic nor linear. Students who could explain the values did not always enact them during competition, interpersonal conflict, or emotional pressure. Such inconsistency should not necessarily be classified as program failure. Rather, conflict may function as a formative episode through which students confront consequences, reconsider moral principles, and repair relationships. Accordingly, civic-character assessment should examine behaviour across situations and over time instead of equating verbal knowledge with stable character.

Theoretically, pedagogically, and politically, the findings support a refinement of transformative citizenship and culturally responsive education by positioning school culture as the mediating ecology through which culturally particular values are reconstructed as inclusive civic dispositions. Pedagogically, schools should incorporate Bugis-Makassar values through teacher modelling, culturally contextualized cases, peer mediation, reflective dialogue, cooperative projects,

restorative discipline, and community participation rather than relying on memorization. Such practices may strengthen engagement and emotional well-being by protecting dignity, cultivating empathy, and providing non-humiliating processes for resolving conflict. These principles should also be extended cautiously to media literacy and digital citizenship: students can apply *sipakatau* to respectful online communication, *sipakainge'* to responsible peer intervention, and *pacce* to empathetic responses to cyberbullying. This recommendation is relevant because Sharma and Gera (2025) show that culturally shaped digital environments affect adolescents' emotional expression and identity formation; however, the present study did not directly investigate online behaviour, so this extension requires empirical testing. At the policy level, curriculum frameworks should recognize local wisdom as a substantive source of civic competence, provide teacher development in ethnopedagogy and restorative practice, establish safeguards against coercive uses of shame, and assess behavioural enactment alongside civic knowledge. Policies should consequently promote partnerships among schools, families, cultural authorities, and mental-health professionals rather than standardizing local values without contextual consultation.

The novelty of this study lies in its explanation of *how* Bugis–Makassar values become civic character within a multicultural school. Previous research has largely catalogued cultural values or advocated their curricular inclusion, whereas the present study identifies a recursive mechanism comprising cultural recognition, school-cultural mediation, relational experience, student meaning-making, civic enactment, and reflective reconstruction following conflict. Recent research has connected the same values with bullying prevention (Salmiati et al., 2026), but this study broadens the analytical focus by demonstrating how teacher conduct, peer agency, restorative correction, and the knowing–doing gap jointly shape internalization. Methodologically, the attention to everyday interaction moves the literature beyond declarative claims of value integration and provides an empirically grounded account of local wisdom as a dynamic, negotiated, and potentially inclusive civic resource.

Several limitations require caution. The study's geographically bounded and context-specific design restricts statistical and cultural generalizability, while participant accounts may have been influenced by social-desirability bias, particularly because the values under investigation are socially esteemed. Observations may also capture situational compliance rather than durable internalization, and the absence of longitudinal, comparative, and behavioural measures limits conclusions about persistence beyond school. Moreover, the perspectives of families, cultural authorities, minority students, and community organizations may not have been represented equally. Future research should therefore undertake longitudinal multi-site studies across urban, rural, Bugis–Makassar-majority, and culturally heterogeneous schools; compare student interpretations according to ethnicity, religion, gender, and socioeconomic background; and combine ethnography with validated civic-disposition measures, peer-network analysis, and behavioural scenarios. Further studies should also examine whether these values transfer to online interaction, reduce bullying, support emotional regulation, and remain inclusive when taught to students who do not identify with Bugis–Makassar culture.

Conclusion

This study shows that the internalization of Bugis–Makassar cultural values into civic character occurs not simply through explicit teaching, but through a recursive and socially embedded process involving teacher modelling, habituation, school routines, classroom interaction, peer relationships,

corrective practices, and students' meaning-making. Values such as *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, *sipakainge'*, *siri'*, and *pacce/pesse* function as a culturally grounded moral vocabulary that can be enacted as respect, responsibility, empathy, tolerance, cooperation, integrity, and participation. The principal contribution of the study is to conceptualize school culture as a mediating environment through which local values are experienced, negotiated, reflected upon, and re-enacted. The findings also indicate that this process is not linear, as the knowing-doing gap reveals cycles of conflict, reflection, correction, and renewed practice.

Practically, the findings suggest that local cultural values should be integrated not only into Pancasila Education and formal learning materials, but also into teacher conduct, school routines, disciplinary practices, collaborative activities, and peer interaction. However, the study is limited by its single-case design, its location in one multicultural elementary school in Makassar, and the context-specific nature of the qualitative evidence; therefore, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization. Future research should examine the transferability of the proposed process across multiple schools, regions, and cultural communities, and explore how local values interact with family socialization, digital culture, and contemporary forms of civic participation.

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