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Character Education Based on Bugis-Makassar Local Wisdom: Integrating Sipakatau, Sipakainge, and Sipakalebbi Values into Islamic Education

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Abstract: This study examines the integration of sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi as a foundation for character education rooted in Bugis-Makassar local wisdom within Islamic education. Adopting a qualitative library-research design, it critically reviews scholarship on Bugis-Makassar culture, character education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and relevant Qur'anic passages and Prophetic traditions. The analysis identifies the meanings of the three values, examines their convergences and differences with Islamic educational principles, and considers their translation into learning objectives, classroom interaction, assessment, and school culture. The study finds that sipakatau functions as an ethic of recognizing human dignity, sipakainge as a practice of constructive correction and social responsibility, and sipakalebbi as a form of respectful interaction that sustains interpersonal relationships. These values are mutually reinforcing, yet their application requires critical scrutiny: respect must not become hierarchical obedience, and advice must not become public humiliation. The article proposes a four-layer framework linking the ethical justification of values, the design of learning experiences, teachers' exemplary conduct and institutional practices, and observable indicators of ethical behavior. This framework is a conceptual proposal rather than evidence of demonstrated effectiveness and requires empirical testing in educational settings.

Keywords: *character education; Bugis-Makassar local wisdom; sipakatau; sipakainge; sipakalebbi; Islamic education*

INTRODUCTION

Character education is both a pedagogical and a cultural concern. Schools may articulate an ideal set of values, but character is shaped most visibly when students encounter disagreement, receive correction, cooperate with others, and negotiate their positions within a group. At such moments, Islamic education faces challenges that cannot be resolved by verbal instruction in moral norms alone. Students need learning experiences that demonstrate how respect, care, and moral responsibility are enacted in concrete situations. Scholarship on character education reminds us that knowing what is good is not synonymous with habitually doing good: teachers' example, the classroom climate, and opportunities for ethical action are integral to

moral education.[1] In societies with established traditions of social ethics, local wisdom can connect the principles taught in classrooms with practices familiar to students from their families and communities.

One distinctive expression of South Sulawesi's social ethics is found in three terms frequently invoked together: sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi. Broadly speaking, sipakatau refers to treating one another as fully human, sipakainge to the reciprocal duty of reminding or advising one another, and sipakalebbi to showing mutual respect and esteem. These values are embedded in the social experience of Bugis-Makassar communities, although their uses vary across places, generations, and communicative settings.[2] Ethnographic research in Soppeng has linked sipakatau to the examples set by families, schools, and the wider community.[3] Studies of Bugis cultural values have likewise identified their relevance to cultivating respect for difference in plural societies.[4] Such findings suggest that local values are not merely symbolic expressions maintained during cultural ceremonies; they can also provide a practical orientation for social relations.

Islamic education offers a normative horizon within which these values can enter into dialogue with religious teachings. The Qur'an affirms human dignity and prohibits the belittling of others, while its injunctions to offer mutual counsel and uphold truth with patience convey a sense of social responsibility. Nevertheless, compatibility between local traditions and Islamic teachings should not be presumed. Cultural values must be understood in relation to their historical uses and the social arrangements in which they emerged, while Qur'anic verses and hadith must be read with attention to their meanings and contexts. Treating every cultural practice as a direct reflection of Islamic teaching risks flattening both traditions. Conversely, separating Islamic education from students' cultural experiences can yield instruction that is normatively intelligible yet insufficiently grounded in their everyday lives. What is needed is a framework of integration that remains critically attentive to the sources from which it draws.[5]

Previous research has demonstrated the considerable scope of this field. Rahmawati and Eli examined the implementation of the three values in character education among members of a street-children support community in Makassar.[6] Research in Islamic higher education found that these values are not always incorporated into formal curriculum documents, even when they inform social

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[1] Thomas Lickona, Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

[2] Christian Pelras, The Bugis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[3] Muhammad Tang et al., "Sipakatau Culture and Character Education (Ethnographic Studies on the Bugis-Barang Soppeng Society of South Sulawesi)," Edukasi Islami 12, no. 4 (2023), https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i04.4937.

[4] Hamzah, Asni Zubair, and Satriadi, "The Relevance of the Buginese Local Wisdom Values to Religious Moderation," Al-Qalam 29, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v29i1.1173.

[5] The Qur'an, al-Ḥujurāt 49:11-13.

[6] Rahmawati Rahmawati and Eli, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Budaya Bugis 'Sipakatau, Sipakalebi, Sipakainge' di Komunitas Peduli Anak Jalanan Makassar," Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter 14, no. 2 (2024): 177-186, https://doi.org/10.21831/jpka.v14i2.63715.

interaction on campus.[7] Other studies have linked them to strengthening religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education, while a more recent ethnographic investigation explored both the benefits and the risks of drawing on these values to prevent bullying at school.[8] Taken together, these studies show that bringing the three cultural values into conversation with character education is not itself a wholly new proposition.[9] A more substantive contribution must therefore focus on pedagogical mechanisms, conditions and limits of application, and the relationship between professed values and the quality of classroom interactions.

The central question that still warrants investigation is how the three values can be translated coherently into Islamic education rather than merely introduced as cultural slogans or listed in teaching materials. Sipakatau can provide a basis for recognizing every learner's dignity; sipakainge can foster responsible, corrective dialogue; and sipakalebbi can sustain respect in communication and conflict resolution. Their practical expression, however, requires careful consideration.[10] Appeals to mutual respect may be used to justify unequal opportunities for teachers and students to speak, while reciprocal reminders may turn into a form of social control that humiliates those being corrected. Research on bullying prevention grounded in Bugis-Makassar values has also noted the risk of reproducing hierarchies when these values are applied without critical adaptation.[11] This problem calls for analysis that moves beyond a simple narrative of harmony between culture and religion.

Against this background, the study addresses three questions: What roles do sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi play, individually and collectively, as a system of social ethics? How do they relate to the principles of character education articulated in the Qur'an and Hadith? And how might they be integrated into the aims, processes, and assessment of Islamic education? Drawing on scholarly literature and normative religious sources, the article develops a conceptual framework of integration with pedagogically meaningful indicators, while identifying questions that cannot be resolved without fieldwork.[12] Its principal contribution is not a claim of successful implementation in any particular school, but an argument and an operational design that educators and researchers may test

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[7] Sabriadi HR and Nurul Wakia, "Preservation of Local Wisdom Values of Sipakatau, Sipakalebbi, Sipakainge in Curriculum Development at PTKIN," Ta'dibuna 14, no. 5 (2025): 503-517, https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v14i5.20651.

[8] Ince Ansar H. Arifin et al., "Strengthening Religious Moderation through the Local Wisdom Values of Sipakatau, Sipakalebbi, and Sipakainge in Islamic Religious Education," Edusoshum 6, no. 1 (2026): 178-187, https://doi.org/10.52366/edusoshum.v6i1.227.

[9] Salmiati et al., "Revitalizing Indigenous Wisdom to Prevent Bullying: A Qualitative Ethnographic Study of Bugis-Makassar Cultural Values in Education," Social Sciences & Humanities Open 13 (2026): 102342, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102342.

[10] Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," Educational Researcher 41, no. 3 (2012): 93-97, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244.

[11] Salmiati et al., "Revitalizing Indigenous Wisdom," article 102342.

[12] Geneva Gay, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching," Journal of Teacher Education 53, no. 2 (2002): 106-116, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003.

in diverse educational settings. This orientation is consistent with the view that intangible cultural heritage should be transmitted through education while remaining open to responsible reinterpretation with the participation of the communities that sustain it.[13]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach combining library research with critical-conceptual analysis. The corpus comprises three groups of sources. First are scholarly publications explicitly examining sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi in education, social life, and religious moderation. Second are works on character education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the relationship between subject knowledge and teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Third are relevant Qur'anic passages and hadith concerning human dignity, counsel, civility, and the formation of social relationships.[14] Documents were selected on the basis of thematic relevance, traceability of publication, sufficient methodological information, and their capacity to illuminate both the practices and limitations of integrating cultural values. The study involved no classroom observations, student interviews, or measurement of changes in character. Consequently, the learning activities and assessment indicators proposed here are conceptual designs derived from the literature, not reported outcomes of an educational intervention.

The material was analyzed through repeated reading, identification of meaning units, thematic grouping, and comparison across sources. The first stage identified definitions, patterns of use, and relationships among the values in studies of Bugis-Makassar culture. The second examined their correspondence with Qur'anic verses and hadith without treating cultural terms and religious concepts as fully interchangeable. The third brought these insights into dialogue with theories of character education and culturally responsive pedagogy to develop operational teaching components. The fourth critically examined the risks of hierarchy, pressure to conform, and humiliating forms of correction, and then formulated boundaries for the use of each value. Thematic analysis helped ensure that themes were developed systematically rather than inferred from initial impressions; however, this is not field research, and no claim of interview-data saturation is made.[15] The credibility of the argument was strengthened by cross-checking sources, distinguishing findings from earlier studies from the authors' own proposals, and providing references that readers can independently verify.

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[13] UNESCO, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris, 2003), arts. 2, 14, and 15, https://ich.unesco.org/convention.

[14] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018).

[15] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," Qualitative Research in Psychology 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101, https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sipakatau, Sipakainge, and Sipakalebbi as a System of Relational Ethics

A reading of the literature suggests that the three Bugis-Makassar values are better understood as a relational ethic than as three independent personal traits. Sipakatau concerns recognizing another person as a bearer of dignity; sipakainge establishes a reciprocal obligation to prevent harmful conduct; and sipakalebbi guides how respect is expressed through actions and language. Their sequence is not a fixed hierarchy but a functional relationship that shifts with circumstance. One person may advise a friend precisely because that friend is regarded as worthy of care, while respect for the recipient shapes how the advice is delivered. Ethnographic literature indicates that such values are transmitted through habituation, example, and intergenerational social relationships, not solely through conceptual explanation.[16] This interpretation matters for Islamic education because students need to grasp the ethical reasoning behind an action, rather than merely memorize a list of rules of etiquette.

Sipakatau can serve as a principle ensuring that no student forfeits the right to dignified treatment because of academic performance, family background, language proficiency, or conduct. To 'humanize one another' is to recognize that students who make mistakes retain the capacity to learn and change. In school life, this may be expressed through respectful forms of address, equitable opportunities to speak, and classroom policies that reject negative labeling. Research on character education in a community serving street-connected children underscores the importance of respectful relationships, support, and understanding as conditions for humane education.[17] This understanding should be distinguished from superficial politeness: friendliness does not amount to sipakatau if teaching decisions continue to exclude students who disagree or are considered less capable.

Sipakainge represents the active dimension of social responsibility. Within educational relationships, reminding others means neither allowing harmful conduct to continue nor treating the person advised as an object of punishment. The value assumes that both the giver and recipient of correction may be mistaken. Sipakainge should therefore not operate exclusively from teacher to student; in appropriate circumstances, learners should be able to ask questions, raise respectful objections, or correct inaccurate information. A study proposing a family-counselling model based on these three cultural values indicates that they have been considered as resources for cultivating positive character among adolescents, although classroom use requires a different form of adaptation.[18] Emphasizing reciprocity helps distinguish advice as an educational process from reprimand as an assertion of dominance.

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[16] Tang et al., "Sipakatau Culture and Character Education."

[17] Rahmawati and Eli, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Budaya Bugis," 177-186.

[18] M. Bahari, H. Sari, and Hamka, "Family Counselling Model Based on 3S Values (Sipakatau, Sipakainge, and Sipakalebbi) for Strengthening Positive Character in Junior High School Students," Jurnal Kependidikan 12, no. 2 (2026): 679-690, https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v12i2.20005.

Sipakalebbi complements the other two values by specifying how regard for others can be shown in practice. Respect entails thoughtful choice of words, willingness to listen, recognition of classmates' contributions, and discretion when discussing another person's mistakes. In the classroom, meaningful respect is not always expressed through praise: it may be evident when a teacher refuses to ridicule an incorrect answer or when a learning group makes space for a quiet member to contribute.[19] Local scholarship frequently associates sipakalebbi with social esteem and respect in Bugis society.[20] Yet esteem must not be reserved for seniority or social standing, because character education ought to ensure that every student, including one who disagrees with the teacher, receives appropriate treatment.

The three values also provide checks on one another. Sipakatau without sipakainge risks becoming a superficial friendliness that avoids addressing wrongdoing. Sipakainge without sipakalebbi may produce correction that is substantively justified but damaging to self-respect. Conversely, sipakalebbi without sipakatau may degenerate into ceremonial deference toward those perceived to hold higher status. This relationship is an analytical synthesis of meanings found across the literature, not a single definition claimed to represent all Bugis-Makassar communities. Recent educational research suggests that the values may inform peer mediation, collaborative learning, and bullying prevention, while also requiring scrutiny to ensure that their use does not reproduce inequality.[21] In Islamic education, their interdependence provides a basis for combining respect, moral responsibility, and educational communication.

Connecting Local Wisdom with the Qur'an and Hadith

The relationship between sipakatau and Islamic education can be explored through Qur'anic teachings on human dignity and the prohibition of belittling others. Qur'an 49:11-13 prohibits mockery, derogatory names, and the evaluation of human worth on the basis of group pride. These teachings offer a point of dialogue with sipakatau, particularly when addressing prejudice in classrooms and differential treatment based on social background. The verses are not, however, historically identical to the concept of sipakatau; they emerge from distinct knowledge traditions that converge on questions of respect for human beings. The Qur'an provides a religious normative framework, while the local expression offers a vocabulary of conduct embedded in community life. Maintaining this distinction avoids the suggestion that every local term is a direct translation of scripture.[22]

Sipakainge can be brought into dialogue with Qur'an 103:1-3, which links moral flourishing to mutual counsel in truth and patience. Qur'an 31:17 similarly connects moral commitment with encouraging good, discouraging wrongdoing,

[19] Nel Noddings, Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[20] Hamzah, Zubair, and Satriadi, "Relevance of the Buginese Local Wisdom Values."

[21] Salmiati et al., "Revitalizing Indigenous Wisdom," article 102342.

[22] The Qur'an, 49:11-13.

and remaining patient amid adversity.[23] In the well-known hadith expressed as 'al-dīn al-naṣīḥah' (religion is sincere counsel), advice occupies a central place in religious life.[24] Read together, these sources suggest that correcting another person can be an expression of care, provided that the counsel is well grounded and its delivery does not cause harm. Teachers using sipakainge as a pedagogical principle must therefore teach learners how to examine an action, formulate reasons, choose appropriate language, and allow the recipient to respond.

Sipakalebbi has substantive affinities with Islamic teachings on courtesy and gentleness in social interaction. Qur'an 3:159 connects gentleness with the preservation of social bonds, while Qur'an 16:125 calls for inviting others with wisdom and good instruction.[25] The hadith concerning al-rifq (gentleness) likewise presents gentle conduct as a quality that enhances an action.[26] In educational contexts, these teachings suggest that effective correction depends not only on the accuracy of its content but also on how it preserves opportunities for improvement. A student who fears public humiliation may comply with instructions without understanding their moral rationale. An Islamic education classroom that incorporates sipakalebbi therefore seeks to cultivate communication in which students can ask questions and acknowledge mistakes without losing dignity.

The relationship between cultural values and religious texts should be approached as a critical dialogue rather than a one-way exercise in justification. Not every practice regarded as respectful within a community should be reproduced in classrooms without qualification. An absolute prohibition on correcting an older person, for example, may obstruct scholarly inquiry; conversely, freedom of speech without responsibility may undermine learning. Islamic principles concerning the protection of others from harmful speech and action offer an ethical standard for judging whether a practice genuinely safeguards dignity.[27] Integrating cultural values becomes more meaningful when teachers openly address misinterpretations, differences among family practices, and the reasons why respect must be reciprocal. Such engagement creates space for reflective character education rather than the uncritical reproduction of established habits.

Within Islamic education, the ultimate goal of integrating these values is not to enable students to recite as many cultural expressions and religious proofs as possible. The deeper purpose is to nurture ethical capacities: recognizing others' dignity, offering correction responsibly, accepting criticism, and respecting difference. Recent scholarship has considered integrating Qur'anic and hadith-based values into pedagogical innovation, yet translating normative messages into

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[23] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Īmān, hadith on al-dīn al-naṣīḥah, no. 55 (numbering varies by edition).

[24] The Qur'an, al-ʿAṣr 103:1-3 and Luqmān 31:17.

[25] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Birr wa-al-Ṣilah, hadith on gentleness (al-rifq), no. 2594 (numbering varies by edition).

[26] The Qur'an, Āl ʿImrān 3:159 and al-Naḥl 16:125.

[27] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Īmān, hadith on refraining from harming others through speech and actions, no. 10.

learning experiences requires explicit strategies.[28] By treating local values as a medium of learning, teachers can turn students' everyday experiences into occasions for discussing and interpreting religious teachings.[29] This produces a two-way exchange: religious texts enrich moral evaluation of tradition, while cultural experience makes the ethical implications of those texts more recognizable and actionable in social situations.

Integrating the Three Values into Islamic Education Planning and Classroom Practice

The incorporation of cultural values into teaching should be designed through alignment among objectives, content, activities, and assessment. If a learning objective merely states that students should 'understand sipakatau,' its assessment is likely to stop at recalling a definition. A more operational objective would involve demonstrating respect in discussion, offering reasoned reminders to peers, and responding to disagreement without insult.[30] Teachers can then select Islamic education content conducive to these practices, including etiquette in social relations, fraternity, social responsibility, ethics of speech, and conflict resolution. The concept of pedagogical content knowledge emphasizes that subject mastery must be combined with the ability to turn knowledge into experiences from which students can learn.[31] Introducing cultural vocabulary into teaching materials is consequently only a starting point, not evidence that character formation has taken place.

At the beginning of a lesson, a teacher might introduce situations recognizable to students: someone being laughed at for a wrong answer, a group member being ignored, or a classroom discussion deteriorating into mutual blame. Students would be asked who was affected, which actions undermined dignity, and how disagreements might be resolved. Sipakatau could then be introduced as a lens for examining respect rather than as an item for memorization. The class might proceed to Qur'an 49:11-13 to consider the normative reasons for rejecting mockery and prejudice. Such activities bring cultural experience and religious texts into a discussion grounded in students' lives. Research on deep learning informed by local values points to the potential of storytelling, role-play, and reflective experience for

[28] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 30th anniversary ed., trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000).

[29] Fitrah Sugiarto, "Integration of Qur'an and Hadith Values as Pedagogical Innovation to Improve the Quality of Islamic Education," QALAMUNA 17, no. 1 (2025): 171-184, https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v17i1.6817.

[30] Luis C. Moll et al., "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms," Theory Into Practice 31, no. 2 (1992): 132-141, https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534.

[31] Lee S. Shulman, "Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching," Educational Researcher 15, no. 2 (1986): 4-14, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X015002004.

supporting the internalization of values.[32] Any proposed activities must nevertheless be adapted to learners' ages and educational needs.

During more intensive learning activities, a teacher could form small groups whose members assume the roles of adviser, recipient of advice, observer, and mediator. Each group would consider a comparable scenario and attempt two responses: a judgmental reprimand and a corrective exchange grounded in reasons, empathy, and options for repairing harm. Students could then discuss how the approaches differ in their effects on feelings of safety, receptiveness to criticism, and opportunities for behavioral change. Sipakainge explains why mistakes should be addressed, while sipakatau and sipakalebbi establish the limits and manner of correction. The teacher could connect this reflection to the hadith 'al-dīn al-naṣīḥah' and the principle of gentleness in communication.[33] The exercise would lose its educational purpose if used to expose an identifiable student's personal mistakes before classmates; scenarios should instead be fictional or anonymized.

Integration could extend into collaborative assignments, such as drafting shared classroom discussion agreements, conducting intergenerational conversations about cultural practices, or writing reflections on the experience of receiving correction. For an intergenerational assignment, students might ask relatives how they advise family members who make mistakes, then compare those practices with the ethics of Islamic education. The findings should be discussed openly so that learners can recognize diversity in interpretation and possible shifts in meaning.[34] Culturally relevant pedagogy calls for students' cultural identities to serve as meaningful resources for learning rather than folkloric decorations in the curriculum.[35] Schools must also recognize that not all learners come from Bugis-Makassar families. Local values should be presented as invitations to intercultural dialogue, not as identity tests that marginalize students from other communities.

Teachers play a decisive role in translating these values into educational practice. A teacher who teaches sipakatau but addresses a student with a degrading nickname creates a contradiction between curricular content and the classroom's lived moral experience. A teacher who urges mutual reminders while rejecting all critical questions risks converting sipakainge into one-way control. Similarly, a teacher who expresses respect only toward high achievers reduces sipakalebbi to the allocation of status.[36] Exemplary conduct should therefore be understood as part of the hidden curriculum and examined through ordinary patterns of interaction. Research on preserving local values in Islamic higher education illustrates the

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[32] Salmia, Dideng Kadir, and Muh. Alka, "Integrating Sipakatau and Sipakalebbi Values into Deep Learning Approaches for Character Education in Elementary Schools," Journal of Local Wisdom in Education 1, no. 1 (2025): 1-17, https://doi.org/10.26618/vz382n59.

[33] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, hadith on sincere counsel (al-dīn al-naṣīḥah), no. 55.

[34] bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[35] Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," American Educational Research Journal 32, no. 3 (1995): 465-491, https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465.

[36] John Hattie and Helen Timperley, "The Power of Feedback," Review of Educational Research 77, no. 1 (2007): 81-112, https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487.

importance of consistency between daily practices and formal curricular documents.[37] Such alignment can be fostered through collegial teacher reflection, attention to the language of correction, and periodic review of school rules that contradict reciprocal respect.

An Operational Framework for Integration and the Evaluation of Character Education

The literature synthesis supports an integration framework consisting of four interconnected layers: ethical justification, pedagogical translation, social habituation, and reflective assessment. The first layer explains the sources and moral reasons for a course of action through dialogue between cultural traditions and the Qur'an and Hadith. The pedagogical layer converts these reasons into tasks, questions, conversations, and projects. Social habituation situates the values in everyday interactions among teachers, students, and school staff. Reflective assessment examines consistency of conduct alongside learners' ability to justify their ethical decisions. These four layers should not be mistaken for an experimentally validated intervention. They constitute a conceptual structure that awaits empirical examination. This distinction matters because the inclusion of values in planning documents does not demonstrate that students have internalized them. Taken together, the four layers are intended to prevent character education from fragmenting into ceremonial activities disconnected from the lived experience of learning.

At the first layer, integration begins by aligning the objectives of Islamic education with the principles of sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi. Objectives can be organized into three domains: recognition of dignity, corrective responsibility, and respectful communication. Indicators in the first domain include the willingness to allow others to participate and the rejection of ridicule. The second concerns the ability to provide specific feedback and suggest practicable improvements. The third includes non-derogatory language, attentive listening, and the acknowledgement of peers' contributions.[38] This mapping discourages the use of one indistinct indicator for all three values. Classic accounts of character education link moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral conduct, suggesting that assessment cannot consist solely of asking students to repeat definitions. Research on psychological needs similarly cautions that learning environments must support interpersonal relatedness and a meaningful sense of agency rather than treating compliance as the only sign of success.[39] A single observable action, however, should never be used to infer a student's entire inner moral condition.

The second layer involves learning experiences deliberately designed to confront students with moral choices. Teachers may use case discussions, role-playing, close reading of religious texts, cooperative learning, and reflective

[37] Sabriadi HR and Wakia, "Preservation of Local Wisdom Values," 503-517.

[38] Maarten Vansteenkiste, Richard M. Ryan, and Bart Soenens, "Basic Psychological Need Theory: Advancements, Critical Themes, and Future Directions," Motivation and Emotion 44, no. 1 (2020): 1-31, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-019-09818-1.

[39] Lickona, Educating for Character.

journals. In each activity, learners should do more than name a relevant value: they should explain why a particular action was chosen, how others may experience it, and which alternative would be more equitable. Opportunities to articulate reasons help ensure that sipakainge is learned not as surveillance of others but as a skill for sustaining social relationships. Studies of Bugis-Makassar values in primary education suggest that cultural integration can occur through both classroom activities and school culture, although their findings cannot simply be generalized to every institution. Teachers therefore need to adapt tasks to their students' experiences rather than mechanically reproduce activities from another research setting.[40] The educational aim is reasoned moral participation, not a scripted display of traditional etiquette.

At the third layer, school culture reinforces learning through repeated experience. Possible routines include discussion rules prohibiting insults, opportunities to disagree without intimidation, conflict-resolution procedures that encourage apologies and relationship repair, and appreciation of peer assistance. Such work requires cooperation among classroom teachers, other staff members, and families: character-related messages lose credibility when daily environments contradict one another.[41] UNESCO emphasizes education's role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage while recognizing the importance of participation by the communities that sustain it. Involving families or cultural representatives, accordingly, should not be reduced to a ceremonial visit; they can help determine whether educational materials depict actual cultural practices accurately and avoid stereotypes.[42] A community-of-practice perspective further illuminates how values are learned through sustained participation rather than isolated lectures.[43] The school may thus become a site where moral language is continuously tested against the conduct of its members.

The fourth layer is assessment, combining behavioral observation with reflective evaluation. Teachers can use a concise rubric to examine students' language when challenging opinions, willingness to listen, clarity of reasons offered while advising peers, and readiness to propose restorative steps after conflict. Judgements should draw on evidence gathered across multiple learning opportunities rather than one incident, and students should receive formative feedback with a chance to improve their conduct. Self-assessment and peer assessment may have a limited place, provided safeguards prevent them from

[40] Reski Amalia et al., "Implementasi Nilai Sipakatau, Sipakalebbi, dan Sipakainge dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Sekolah Dasar," Didaktik 12, no. 2 (2026): 284-293, https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v12i02.14114.

[41] UNESCO, Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good? (Paris: UNESCO, 2015), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232555.

[42] UNESCO, "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Education," accessed October 16, 2026, https://ich.unesco.org/en/education.

[43] Etienne Wenger, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803932.

becoming opportunities to judge or stigmatize classmates.[44] Motivation research distinguishes conduct that reflects internal commitment from conduct driven primarily by external pressure, but classroom observations alone cannot conclusively establish which process is at work. Observed actions provide evidence about conduct in specific contexts, not definitive proof of a person's inward piety. Such an approach makes character evaluation a continuing developmental process rather than a system of labeling children as morally 'good' or 'bad'.

The proposed indicators must also be adjusted to students' ages and educational environments. At primary level, observable actions may include refraining from teasing, taking turns to speak, and assisting classmates in need. At secondary level, the indicators can extend to offering respectful arguments, resolving disagreement through dialogue, and repairing conflicts within groups. In higher education, students may be expected to engage in rigorous intellectual criticism without disparaging interlocutors and to recognize the legitimacy of multiple perspectives. These distinctions are illustrative rather than universal developmental categories.[45] Culturally relevant pedagogy suggests that effective instruction takes students' social worlds seriously while preserving academic expectations and critical inquiry. More recent discussions of culturally relevant pedagogy have also insisted that culturally informed teaching must remain responsive to contemporary forms of identity and inequality.[46] Separating academic learning from character formation may, in fact, deprive students of authentic opportunities to practise ethical judgement in intellectual activity.

Challenges, Limits of Integration, and Contributions to Islamic Education

The integration of local wisdom is not without difficulties. Some conventions of respect emerge within social arrangements defined by seniority, family standing, or institutional position. Transferred uncritically into the classroom, such conventions can be used to demand obedience while denying learners the opportunity to question a decision. A recent ethnographic study of bullying prevention acknowledges this danger of hierarchy and conformity in the educational use of Bugis-Makassar values, even as it documents their potential to support respect and peer care.[47] An appropriate pedagogical criterion, therefore, is not whether every student appears silent and compliant but whether learners can express agreement or disagreement responsibly. Sipakalebbi must not become a justification for exempting senior figures from legitimate criticism; sipakatau, on the contrary, requires reciprocal recognition of dignity. This understanding leaves room for education that respects cultural inheritance without diminishing the rights or voices of learners.

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[44] Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior," Psychological Inquiry 11, no. 4 (2000): 227-268, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01.

[45] Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix," Harvard Educational Review 84, no. 1 (2014): 74-84, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751.

[46] Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," 465-491.

[47] Salmiati et al., "Revitalizing Indigenous Wisdom," article 102342.

A second challenge arises when the relationship between local culture and Islam is reduced to an exercise in matching terminology. In strongly normative lessons, a cultural expression may be paired with a verse or hadith and the discussion declared complete, without examining context or the mechanisms of classroom application. This procedure often produces declarative knowledge but offers little practice in ethical decision-making. Conversely, a cultural relativism that treats every local practice as beyond criticism makes it difficult to address customs that sustain unfairness.[48] The present article proposes a dialogue structured around three questions: What does a value mean in the community's lived experience? Which principles of Islamic education are relevant to its interpretation? And which pedagogical actions protect the dignity of all those involved? Education conceived in terms of purposes, rather than measurable compliance alone, provides an important critical reminder here. Local wisdom is approached as a living educational resource open to reasoned evaluation, not as an untouchable cultural artifact.

A further limitation stems from the diversity of learners. Schools in South Sulawesi do not enroll only students of Bugis-Makassar background, and students who share that heritage may still interpret its values differently. When one cultural interpretation becomes the sole standard of polite conduct, others risk being judged morally deficient simply because they express respect in unfamiliar ways. Culturally responsive pedagogy insists that recognition of local identities should be accompanied by attention to educational equity and achievement.[49] Research with Māori students has likewise shown the significance of listening to learners' experiences when designing culturally responsive teaching practices, although the historical circumstances are different and must not be conflated.[50] Teachers can therefore explain sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi while inviting students to compare their meanings with ethical principles known in their own communities. Such dialogue may foster respect across identities without erasing the distinctiveness of Bugis-Makassar culture in the learning materials.

As a matter of research design, a literature-based study can clarify conceptual arguments and generate operational indicators, but it cannot establish that a proposed framework changes students' behavior. Subsequent research should observe teacher-student interactions, interview cultural communities about variations in meaning, evaluate the feasibility of instructional materials, and follow changes in behavior over time. Case studies could elucidate how the values are enacted within particular schools, while design research could test the proposed learning resources and assessment rubrics. Any empirical work should secure informed consent and protect students' identities, especially when it investigates

[48] Gert Biesta, "Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect with the Question of Purpose in Education," Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability 21 (2009): 33-46, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9.

[49] Russell Bishop et al., "Te Kotahitanga: Addressing Educational Disparities Facing Māori Students in New Zealand," Teaching and Teacher Education 25, no. 5 (2009): 734-742, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.01.009.

[50] Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," 465-491.

experiences of reprimand, humiliation, or bullying. These methodological boundaries are essential: claims about the effectiveness of character education must rest on evidence that has actually been collected, not on normative plausibility or the attractiveness of the proposed values.

The theoretical contribution of this article is to interpret the three values as a configuration of relational ethics whose functions are distinguishable yet mutually reinforcing. Sipakatau establishes a fundamental commitment to human dignity; sipakainge provides a dimension of corrective responsibility; and sipakalebbi shapes the expression of respect. Its pedagogical contribution is a four-layer framework connecting ethical justification, the design of learning experiences, institutional culture, and reflective indicators. Compared with accounts that simply recommend adding cultural material to the curriculum, the framework seeks to specify what teachers might do, which forms of behavior can legitimately be observed, and which potential distortions need to be avoided. The distinction does not invalidate previous empirical findings; rather, it builds on the call for a more operational and critically informed translation of local values into educational practice.[51] The framework remains provisional until examined within actual Islamic education classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The analysis indicates that sipakatau, sipakainge, and sipakalebbi can be interpreted as an interconnected system of relational ethics that enriches character education within Islamic learning. Sipakatau affirms the dignity of learners, sipakainge develops the responsibility to offer constructive reminders, and sipakalebbi guides respectful communication. Each has points of contact with Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings on human dignity, sincere counsel, and gentleness, but these connections must be established through critical dialogue rather than treating cultural terms as direct equivalents of religious texts. The proposed approach therefore encompasses the justification of values, the design of learning experiences, the formation of everyday school practices, and the assessment of observable conduct and reflection without claiming access to students' inward moral state.

The article contributes a conceptual integration framework in which teachers' example, corrective dialogue, and mutual appreciation form important elements of culturally grounded character education. Applying the three values requires vigilance against hierarchy, pressures to conform, and public shaming, so that respect for cultural traditions remains compatible with critical thinking and learners' rights. Because this article draws on published literature rather than newly collected field data, the effectiveness of the model cannot yet be asserted. Classroom-based investigations, school case studies, or the development and testing of learning materials are needed to assess feasibility, variations in practice, and effects on educational interaction. Within these limits, Bugis-Makassar values

[51] Sabriadi HR and Wakia, "Preservation of Local Wisdom Values," 503-517.

can function not as decorative cultural slogans but as an educational resource open to scholarly scrutiny and continual improvement.

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