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Integrating Indigenous Wisdom and Green Morality in Citizenship Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

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ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation has increased the urgency of integrating sustainable values into education. This study explores how indigenous wisdom and green morality are internalized within citizenship education to support Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The purpose is to analyze the traditional values of the Kuta indigenous community and their role in fostering civic responsibility and environmental awareness. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that traditional ecological practices and moral customs effectively instill values of environmental stewardship and civic competence. Because these values are passed down through generations and reinforced in daily community life, they offer a sustainable model for character development. The impact of this research lies in demonstrating how indigenous cultural frameworks can strengthen ESD goals, providing practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to promote environmental ethics and civic engagement through culturally rooted approaches.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is capable of developing the character of students. It is essentially a process of maturation and the formation of identity, dignity, and the ability to understand the meaning, nature, and purpose of life, as well as how to fulfill life's responsibilities correctly, intelligently, and honorably (White, 2013). This aligns with the educational objectives stated in the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, which emphasizes the importance of education based on culture or ethnopedagogy. Modern education is no longer solely about imparting knowledge, but more importantly, about developing attitudes, character, personality, intelligence, and moral integrity (Obidovna, 2023). However, education today tends to focus only on delivering updated knowledge and producing high test scores. Consequently, the problem of students' poor character remains a major concern.

School-based education continues to face several challenges that reflect weak character development, such as deviant behavior including motorcycle gang activity, student brawls, intimidation, bullying, school dropouts, truancy, and drug abuse (Sudjimat et al., 2021). Additionally, there are signs of neglecting local culture in favor of Western influences, seen in areas such as art, fashion, food preferences, entertainment, language, lifestyle, and interactions between children and parents or between students and teachers. These trends also reflect the growing dominance of secularism, pragmatism, and hedonism (Modood & Sealy, 2021).

Currently, efforts to build character are often implemented in ineffective ways, failing to instill moral values passed on by families, schools, and society (Tohri et al., 2022). This is evident in the warning signs highlighted by ten indicators of national moral decline, including increased youth violence, poor language use, peer influence in violence, self-destructive behavior such as substance abuse, blurred moral boundaries, decreased work ethic, declining respect for authority figures, reduced civic responsibility, normalized dishonesty, and growing distrust and hatred among citizens (Saputra et al., 2023).

Another concerning issue among youth is drug abuse. The Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN) has reported that 50-60% of drug users in Indonesia are teenagers, including students and university students. The use of injectable drugs has contributed to the rise in HIV/AIDS cases among youth. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, data from January 2011 showed worrying trends in AIDS cases among individuals aged 15–39 (Arifin et al., 2023; Nawi et al., 2021).

These signs are already present in Indonesia. For instance, data from POLDA Metro Jaya in 1998 showed 230 cases of student brawls in Jakarta alone, resulting in deaths and injuries. Research in five junior high schools in Bogor found that 66.7% of students were involved in fights. The identity crisis of modern individuals is largely attributed to technological advancements and social transformation, which have shaped modern behavior and eroded local cultural values through the rise of consumerism, mass culture, and violence (Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias, 2023).

In South Africa, 86% of children between the ages of 13 and 17 are prone to committing crimes (Rachel et al., 2022). Research in Portugal also found that immoral behavior among youth, such as alcohol consumption and violence, contributes to emotional instability and impulsivity, even turning some into perpetrators of violence (d'Urso et al., 2023). Additional studies show that antisocial behavior is linked to poverty and other social indicators (Booth & Shaw, 2023). Poverty is also considered a major factor driving children toward violence and crime due to narrow mental development and reckless behavior (Henderson et al., 2024).

Considering this moral decline among the younger generation, there is a need for an educational process that emphasizes the strengthening of character education. Today, specific strategies are essential to instill positive values in students (Sarbaitinil *et al.*, 2023). Local wisdom contains noble values that shape strong moral character. It is within this context that local wisdom plays a vital role in fostering national character. Through the integration of local wisdom in education, Indonesia can reaffirm its cultural identity and values.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the indigenous community of Kuta internalizes green moral-based values to support environmental education and civic awareness. The novelty of this research lies in highlighting the integration of traditional ecological wisdom into formal citizenship education as a model for sustainable character development rooted in local culture.

2. METHODS

This research used two approaches by combining qualitative and quantitative research methods (mixed methods) to obtain a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. This research was conducted at a public national junior high school (SMPN 1 Cipaku) in Indonesia. Several considerations supported the selection of this location: (i) its proximity to Kuta Village and (ii) SMPN 1 Cipaku's commitment to character-based educational innovation, as reflected in its vision and mission, creating a competitive school to develop intelligent, skilled, and character-driven individuals.

The first part of this research adopted a qualitative approach through a naturalistic method to identify the need for a development model for Civics Character Education Strengthening (PPK-BKLMK) at SMPN 1 Cipaku, as well as its role in developing students' civic awareness at the same school. The subsequent stage of the research utilized an additional (supplementary) paradigm through a quantitative approach to observe behavioral differences among students and to test the effectiveness of the PPK-BKLMK model when applied in the field.

During the study, initial data collection was conducted through observation, followed by interviews and documentation involving selected informants. The data collected were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. To ensure data credibility, triangulation techniques were applied.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. General Description of the Indigenous Peoples of Kuta Village

We found that community awareness regarding environmental preservation in Kuta Village is quite high. This serves as a major strength and a key factor contributing to the community receiving the Kalpataru Environmental Savior Charter in 2002. One of the core objectives of Citizenship Education has also been realized in the lives of the indigenous Kuta community, enabling citizens to understand the true meaning of citizenship and to recognize that they are leaders and stewards of the earth, responsible for maintaining and preserving the environment.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that fostering environmental awareness is a vital aspect of life. This process is expected to reduce environmental damage and mitigate natural disasters. Based on research findings, the application of awareness values in the Kuta Indigenous community is carried out through various service-oriented activities such as orientation, dissemination of information, reflection, introspection, and meditation. These activities help individuals realize their life purpose, roles, and responsibilities as servants and stewards, while also acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses as members of an indigenous community. Guidance for the Kuta Traditional Village community should refer to

their local development programs established after receiving the Kalpataru Award. These programs include: (a) an environmental preservation program featuring various activities; (b) a community economic development program; and (c) a traditional cultural preservation program with relevant initiatives.

Efforts to build awareness will not be successful without the support of strong individual character within the community (Sin & Cahyani, 2022). This aligns with the stages of character development outlined by psychologists, which include: (a) the habituation stage as the foundation of character formation in children; (b) the stage of understanding and reasoning regarding values, attitudes, behavior, and character; (c) the application stage where values are practiced in everyday life; and (d) the reflection stage, in which students assess the impact and meaning of their actions on themselves and others (Alt et al., 2022).

This sequence is evident in the Kuta traditional community, where daily habits are rooted in long-standing traditions. These traditions foster reasoning and understanding of inherited values, ultimately shaping behaviors and identities (Asrial et al., 2021). The value of environmental preservation is consistently practiced through traditional education, emphasizing harmony with nature and discouraging greed in the use of natural resources. Community members are taught to develop self-awareness and self-regulation in their interactions with the environment. Moral values are instilled to avoid large-scale exploitation of nature and to instead use resources responsibly to meet the needs of daily life (Abroto et al., 2022).

These values are embedded in various forms of environmental awareness, such as maintaining the Ciasihan water sources, implementing Clean Friday programs, conducting daily community service to clean roads and home yards, producing plant seedlings for reforestation, managing critical lands, organizing routine communal work voluntarily, supporting youth organizations dedicated to environmental management, and promoting home-based herbal gardens or “living pharmacies”.

3.2. Environmental Preservation Through Internalization of Traditional Values

Philosophically, values are closely related to ethical issues. Ethics is often referred to as the philosophy of values, which examines moral values as a benchmark for human actions and behavior in various aspects of life (Bednar & Spiekermann, 2024). The sources of ethics and morals may come from thoughts, customs or traditions, ideologies, or even religions. While such ethical consistency is rarely observed in society, there are still communities that preserve the noble values of tradition, customs, and culture in social, national, state, and religious life (Suryawati & Syaputri, 2021). As stated in Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, attention and protection for indigenous peoples must be provided in the context of upholding human rights. Article 6 of the law affirms that:

- (i) To uphold human rights, differences and needs within customary law communities must be considered and protected by law, society, and the government.
- (ii) The cultural identity of customary law communities, including rights to customary land, is protected in line with current developments

Based on research findings, the traditional culture of Kuta Village remains sustainable and is maintained by the local community. Generally, the people of Kuta Village continue to uphold the beliefs of their ancestors and demonstrate a strong devotion to God the Creator. In line with their ancestral mandate, the most essential value is to maintain balance in the surrounding environment.

The environmental crisis we face today is not only the result of overpopulation and exploitative technological development but also stems from fundamental philosophical errors

in how humans understand themselves, nature, and their place in the ecosystem (Pérez-Ramírez *et al.*, 2021).

It is clear that the natural environment is deeply influenced by human perspective—how people treat nature shapes its condition. In Kuta, the community prioritizes environmental protection; there is no exploitation of natural resources. Protected forests and the natural landscape are preserved, ensuring harmony and reducing the risk of natural disasters, whether caused by nature or human activity. A lack of environmentally ethical behavior threatens the sustainability of nature. This calls for a wise attitude from each individual to value and protect the richness of the natural world. The issue lies in the anthropocentric ethic, which views humans as the center of the universe, valuing only human life while treating nature merely as a tool to meet human needs (Pérez-Ramírez *et al.*, 2021).

From this understanding, it becomes evident that a new ethical approach is required, one that extends moral consideration beyond human-to-human interaction and includes human responsibility toward all life forms. This ethic acknowledges the intrinsic value of nature and the moral obligation to protect it. The internalization of Kuta Village's traditional cultural values aims to increase students' faith and devotion to God Almighty and is considered highly effective in shaping national character, as aligned with Pancasila's first principle, "Belief in One Almighty God." Gratitude for blessings received from the Creator is central to this belief system. Citizenship education encompasses learning experiences not only in schools but also within families, religious institutions, communities, and media, helping individuals become complete citizens (Tsang *et al.*, 2023).

In the management of natural resources, the people of Kuta act with great wisdom and care. They demonstrate a strong sense of love and responsibility for their environment. Citizenship Education is not limited to formal schooling but plays a more significant role in society. Civic education also includes the study of citizens and their interactions with social, economic, religious, and state institutions (Dobson, 2006).

Therefore, the goals of Citizenship Education (to instill civic knowledge, skills, character, and personality) are essential throughout an individual's life. The concept of lifelong learning applies here. The development of civic competence can be continuously fostered through the habitual attitudes and behaviors of the Kuta indigenous community. Although the community may not explicitly identify their practices as civic competence, their actions reflect such values in daily life.

The internalization of environmental conservation values in the Kuta community is a traditional process passed down from generation to generation. These include social values, cultural values, and environmental care—all of which are upheld with great commitment. These values will continue to be preserved, as they are seen as essential to the continuity of human existence. The continued existence and sustainability of the Kuta traditional village are directly linked to the preservation of its surrounding natural environment.

The people of Kuta strongly adhere to the basic life values and cultural principles. These are presented in **Table 1**. This framework highlights the variation in cultural responses to fundamental life questions, shaping societal norms and behavior (Suryawati & Syahputri, 2021).

The residents of the Kuta indigenous community already have a strong orientation toward the future. In terms of environmental preservation, they are already considering sustainability for future generations. Instilling environmental awareness is key to ensuring the environment remains well-maintained. This is because environmental preservation is a core value from cultural, social, and religious perspectives. Although Kuta residents have the same right to life as other communities, they are deeply dependent on nature in their daily lives. As a result,

they consistently act with wisdom and care toward the environment, believing that living in harmony with nature ensures a lasting life. In addition to respecting nature, the Kuta indigenous people also show mutual respect within their community, understanding that by doing so, they become individuals who are valuable and beneficial to their environment.

Table 1. The framework of the five basic problems in life and their corresponding cultural value orientations adapted from literature (Constantino et al., 2022).

Basic Problems in Life	Cultural Value Orientation 1	Cultural Value Orientation 2	Cultural Value Orientation 3
The essence of life (MH)	Life is bad	Life is good	Life is bad, but humans must try to make it good
The nature of work (MK)	Work is for survival	Work is for position, honor, etc.	Work is a contribution to the creation.
Human orientation toward time (MW)	Orientation to the future	Orientation to the past	Orientation to the present
Human relationship with nature (MA)	Humans are subject to nature	Humans strive to live in harmony with nature	Humans seek to dominate nature
Interpersonal relationships (MM)	Horizontal orientation (cooperation)	Vertical orientation (deference to hierarchy)	Individualism (self-reliance and independence)

3.3. Kuta Village Contributes to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Sustainable development refers to development that, during planning, implementation, and post-implementation, incorporates environmental impact assessments (AMDAL). The purpose is to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same quality and quantity of natural resources that we do today, rather than inheriting pollution and environmental degradation. Environmentally sound development considers the carrying capacity of ecosystems and the preservation of natural resources. It promotes balance and sustainability and typically includes SWOT analysis, evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Development in Kuta Village is primarily focused on empowerment and the cultivation of values that support life, cultural integrity, and environmental respect. This is rooted in the belief that human life not only affects fellow humans but also nature (the cosmos). Every societal action produces consequences and holds significance. Human challenges are no longer limited to social issues but extend to nature, time, and labor (Dobson, 2006).

The essence of human life plays a vital role in national development. This includes the promotion of moral values such as honesty, integrity, discipline, cooperation, independence, tolerance, and responsibility. These values are cultivated through cultural education embedded in all areas of development.

Environmentally sound development also relies heavily on community participation. Every stage of societal development influence human behavior and environmental awareness, which are essential for maintaining the environment as a habitat composed of interconnected biotic and abiotic elements (Abiddin et al., 2022). Preserving and utilizing natural resources is crucial to ensuring that Indonesia's environmental potential and wealth can be inherited by future generations.

Regarding the SWOT analysis of Kuta Village: the main strength lies in the vast natural resources granted by God, which should be managed wisely for the welfare of the community while ensuring sustainability. A noted weakness is that some community members remain unaware of conservation efforts. A key opportunity is the village's potential to win the

Kalpataru Environmental Award again. The primary threat, however, is the erosion of long-standing values of environmental awareness within the community.

The strategy employed by the Kuta indigenous people to combat environmental degradation is to integrate local wisdom into development. This requires creating new paradigms, especially for policymakers, through what is referred to as a green constitution. Despite being passed down orally, the traditions of the Kuta people reflect a deep understanding of environmental stewardship. Oral culture, although unwritten, functions as a constitution passed from one generation to the next.

The environmental conservation practices of the Kuta community are arguably more effective than those of modern societies that often fail to grasp the essence of green living. Their environmental strategies include:

- (i) prohibiting the alteration of waterways for fish ponds, drainage, irrigation, or dams;
- (ii) forbidding entry into sacred forests (*leuweung larangan*) for tree cutting or farming;
- (iii) banning tree cutting altogether;
- (iv) prohibiting the use of chemical technologies such as pesticides, kerosene, and synthetic soaps or toothpaste; and
- (v) ensuring that farming follows traditional customs.

The current threat of environmental degradation, fueled by relentless development that depends on natural resource extraction, has heightened awareness of the need to protect ecological capacity. According to the 1945 Constitution, as interpreted by Jimly Asshidiqie, it is considered a green constitution because it explicitly acknowledges every person's right to a good and healthy environment, as outlined in Article 28H (Tsang *et al.*, 2023). This article states that everyone has the right to live in physical and spiritual well-being, to have shelter, to reside in a healthy environment, and also to access health services. The article's broad scope applies to all elements of the environment, including water, air, land, and ecosystems.

However, Article 33 Paragraph 3 of the same Constitution, often cited in natural resource management, presents challenges for sustainable development. The term "controlled by the state" has frequently been misused to justify centralized power rather than environmental stewardship, thereby creating adverse implications for conservation efforts.

The people of Kuta Village have demonstrated strong environmental ethics. Since ancient times, they have consistently preserved the natural environment, following ancestral traditions aimed at maintaining ecological balance. This long-standing commitment has proven fruitful, as evidenced by their receipt of the National Kalpataru Award. The people of Kuta continue to maintain and enhance this achievement through the development of several key programs:

- (i) The environmental preservation program
- (ii) The economic development programs
- (iii) The Indigenous culture preservation program

For the environmental preservation program, it includes the following activities:

- (i) Preservation and cultivation of sugar palm trees through seed breeding.
- (ii) Protection of springs by planting annual plants around water sources.
- (iii) Conservation of protected forest areas.
- (iv) Fostering a younger generation that cares deeply about the environment.

The economic development program, includes the enhancement of Kuta Village's key commodities:

- (i) Expansion of palm sugar tapping.
- (ii) Advancement of cattle farming.
- (iii) Development of giant prawn cultivation.

- (iv) Growth of home-based industries.
- (v) Development of fisheries.
- (vi) Expansion of banana farming.

For the Indigenous culture preservation program, it includes:

- (i) Development and maintenance of traditional Kuta Village housing.
- (ii) Promotion of cooperation culture.
- (iii) Encouragement of a clean and hygienic lifestyle.
- (iv) Preservation and revitalization of Kuta's traditional arts.

Social cohesion and community networks are crucial to environmental preservation. Social relations that are stable, reciprocal, and integrated ensure community survival (Kurdi, 1995). The people of Kuta recognize that maintaining environmental balance requires active interaction with other communities and external stakeholders. As cultural contact increases in today's globalized world, shifts in lifestyle and behavior, especially among the younger generation, are becoming more visible. This highlights the importance of focusing attention on youth as they are the bearers and shapers of future culture.

One of the major challenges faced in program implementation is the waning trust of the Kuta indigenous community toward the government. This stems from the perception that government actions often prioritize political or bureaucratic interests over the welfare of the people. Despite this, the obstacles remain manageable and have not significantly hindered the process of cultivating environmental awareness among citizens.

4. CONCLUSION

Kuta Village, located in Ciamis Regency, is a traditional community that has steadfastly upheld and practiced the customs and traditions of its ancestors under the leadership of kuncen (traditional guardians) and community elders. The residents of Kuta possess a deep awareness of the importance of environmental preservation, especially in fulfilling daily life needs. This awareness has developed through long-standing public education rooted in customs passed down from generation to generation.

A key component of environmental awareness in Kuta is the internalization of traditional educational values. The people of Kuta continue to hold strong beliefs in the significance of respecting and protecting nature. Environmental preservation contributes positively to the sustainable development of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), particularly within environmental contexts. A wise and thoughtful approach to nature helps minimize environmental damage and disaster. If supported by all levels of society, including through planning, management, and implementation strategies, ESD development in Indonesia can be carried out effectively.

The indigenous community of Kampung Kuta has succeeded in preserving both its natural environment and its cultural heritage through traditional wisdom. Their efforts earned them the National Kalpataru Award in 2002 (in the environmental conservation category). The success of fostering civic awareness around environmental stewardship has been supported by cooperation across multiple sectors—both internally and externally. Without collaboration between the community, traditional leaders, and the government, such progress would not have been possible. Fortunately, existing obstacles remain surmountable and have not significantly disrupted the environmental education process.

The approach of cultivating environmental awareness through the lens of Civics—particularly community-based Civics—has proven effective. Since citizens spend more time in the community than in formal educational settings, this informal civic engagement plays a critical role. The people of Kuta contribute significantly to civic education by modeling active

participation in environmental preservation. This directly supports the development of civic competence, which includes:

- (i) increasing civic knowledge,
- (ii) developing civic skills, and
- (iii) enhancing civic participation, both privately and publicly.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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