

Strengthening Religious Character through Local Wisdom *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* in Schools

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ABSTRACT: *This study analyzes the role of the local wisdom Nggahi Rawi Pahu in strengthening students' religious character in schools in Dompu, Indonesia. In the context of globalization and increasing concerns about moral degradation among young people, the integration of local cultural values into educational practices has become an important strategy for character education. The main objective of this research is to examine how the values of Nggahi Rawi Pahu are interpreted, implemented, and internalized in school environments to support the development of students' religious character. This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of local wisdom in educational settings. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving teachers, students, school principals, and community leaders in Dompu. These data sources were used to understand both the conceptual meaning of Nggahi Rawi Pahu and its practical application in school activities, learning processes, and daily interactions within the school community. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to value transmission and character formation. The findings reveal that Nggahi Rawi Pahu, which emphasizes consistency between words and actions, honesty, responsibility, and moral integrity, provides a strong cultural foundation for strengthening students' religious character. The values are reflected in school culture, teacher modeling, and community-supported activities. However, the implementation remains partial and has not yet been systematically integrated into the formal curriculum or structured character education programs. This study highlights the importance of developing culturally grounded educational models that integrate local wisdom into formal learning processes, thereby supporting more contextual and sustainable approaches to religious character education in Indonesian schools.*

Penelitian ini menganalisis peran kearifan lokal *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* dalam memperkuat karakter religius siswa di sekolah-sekolah di Dompu, Indonesia. Dalam konteks globalisasi dan meningkatnya kekhawatiran tentang degradasi moral di kalangan anak muda, integrasi nilai-nilai budaya lokal ke dalam praktik pendidikan telah menjadi strategi penting untuk pendidikan karakter. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk meneliti bagaimana nilai-nilai *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* diinterpretasikan, diimplementasikan, dan diinternalisasi dalam lingkungan sekolah untuk mendukung pengembangan karakter religius siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi kearifan lokal dalam lingkungan pendidikan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan guru, siswa, kepala sekolah, dan tokoh masyarakat di Dompu. Sumber data ini digunakan untuk memahami baik makna konseptual *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*

maupun penerapannya secara praktis dalam kegiatan sekolah, proses pembelajaran, dan interaksi sehari-hari dalam komunitas sekolah. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang berkaitan dengan transmisi nilai dan pembentukan karakter. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*, yang menekankan konsistensi antara ucapan dan perbuatan, kejujuran, tanggung jawab, dan integritas moral, memberikan landasan budaya yang kuat untuk memperkuat karakter religius siswa. Nilai-nilai tersebut tercermin dalam budaya sekolah, teladan guru, dan kegiatan yang didukung masyarakat. Namun, implementasinya masih parsial dan belum terintegrasi secara sistematis ke dalam kurikulum formal atau program pendidikan karakter yang terstruktur. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya mengembangkan model pendidikan yang berakar pada budaya dan mengintegrasikan kearifan lokal ke dalam proses pembelajaran formal, sehingga mendukung pendekatan yang lebih kontekstual dan berkelanjutan terhadap pendidikan karakter religius di sekolah-sekolah Indonesia.

Keywords: *Religious Character, Local Wisdom, Nggahi Rawi Pahu.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also possess strong moral integrity. In the context of Indonesia's national education system, character development has become a key priority, particularly in fostering religious character that reflects faith, piety, and noble conduct (Fitrah et al., 2024).

However, the rapid development of globalization, digitalization, and social transformation has significantly influenced students' behavior. Phenomena such as declining discipline, weakened honesty, and low levels of religious awareness indicate the existence of a character crisis among younger generations (Komara, 2018).

In response to these challenges, a more contextual and relevant educational approach is required—one that aligns with students' lived experiences. One promising approach is the integration of local wisdom into the educational process. Local wisdom represents a system of values that has evolved within society and functions as a guiding framework for behavior (Irwan et al., 2023; Septarinjani et al., 2025).

In Dompu Regency, there exists a philosophical principle known as *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*, which means "what is spoken must be realized in action." This value emphasizes the importance of honesty, integrity, and consistency between words and actions.

Despite its strong philosophical foundation, the implementation of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* within formal education remains suboptimal. Therefore, this study aims to examine how members of the school community understand this value and how it is implemented in strengthening students' religious character.

Religious Character Education

Religious character constitutes a fundamental dimension of character education, reflecting the integration of spiritual, moral, and social behavioral values within individuals. This character encompasses not only faith (iman) as the foundation of belief but also piety (taqwa), manifested through adherence to religious teachings, and moral conduct (akhlaq),

the concrete expression of this in everyday actions. Within this framework, religious character is not merely understood as a normative identity but rather as an internal value system that guides individuals in making ethical decisions and engaging responsibly in social life (Porter-Stransky & Gallimore, 2022; Septarinjani et al., 2025).

Lickona (1992) posits that character education consists of three core dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These dimensions form an integrated and inseparable unity. Moral knowing refers to the rational understanding of moral values, including the ability to make ethical judgments. Moral feeling relates to the affective domain, such as empathy, conscience, and commitment to goodness. Meanwhile, moral action represents the actualization of these dimensions in consistent behavior aligned with internalized values (Dalmeri, 2014; Lickona, 1992).

However, in educational practice, religious character education is often reduced to cognitive or ritualistic aspects alone. Such an approach may lead to a gap between knowledge and behavior, in which individuals understand religious values but fail to apply them in real-life contexts. Therefore, a more holistic and integrative approach is required—one that connects cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously (Porter-Stransky & Gallimore, 2022).

In this context, religious character can be understood as a form of internalized morality, in which moral values are deeply embedded within an individual's self-awareness. This internalization does not occur instantaneously, but rather through social processes involving interaction, role modeling, habituation, and continuous reflective experiences. Educational environments, particularly schools, play a strategic role in creating conditions that facilitate this internalization process (Kehl et al., 2024).

Furthermore, from a contemporary educational perspective, religious character is closely related to the concepts of self-regulation and moral agency. Individuals with strong religious character tend to regulate their behavior based on internal values rather than external pressures (Alamsyah, 2025; Yuliawati et al., 2025). This is particularly relevant in the era of globalization, characterized by value pluralism and the rapid flow of information that may influence students' moral orientations.

Therefore, strengthening religious character cannot be achieved in part but requires a systemic approach that encompasses curriculum design, school culture, and contextual pedagogical practices. The integration of religious values into meaningful learning experiences enables students not only to understand religious teachings conceptually but also to consistently and reflectively apply them in their daily lives.

Local Wisdom in Education

Local wisdom refers to values that develop within society and function as guiding principles for life. These values are shaped by long historical processes and are transmitted across generations as part of a community's social and cultural system. In this context, local wisdom serves not only as cultural heritage but also as a normative mechanism that regulates individual behavior in everyday life. The integration of local wisdom into education can enhance the relevance of learning and strengthen students' cultural identity (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024; Abolafia et al., 2014).

Furthermore, local wisdom holds significant potential as a contextual source of learning, as it is deeply rooted in students' social realities. Learning grounded in local contexts

enables students to connect academic content to their lived experiences, thereby making the process of value internalization more meaningful and profound. This perspective aligns with the constructivist approach in education, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through interaction between individuals and their environment (Kehl et al., 2024).

In addition, the integration of local wisdom into education contributes to the strengthening of cultural identity in the midst of globalization. In situations where global values often dominate, local wisdom serves as a crucial counterbalance, ensuring the continuity of indigenous cultural values. Thus, education functions not only as a means of knowledge transmission but also as a medium for cultural preservation and identity formation among students (Andersson & Tornin, 2025).

However, the implementation of local wisdom within formal education systems still faces several challenges. One of the primary challenges is the tendency of national curricula to be standardized and uniform, thereby limiting opportunities for the optimal development of local values. In addition, teachers' limited understanding of the concepts and practices of local wisdom also becomes a barrier to its integration into classroom learning.

From a contemporary educational perspective, local wisdom can be situated within the framework of culturally responsive education, an approach that places students' cultural backgrounds at the center of the learning process. Through this approach, local values are not merely taught as knowledge but are embodied in everyday educational practices through role modeling, social interaction, and habituation (Abdullah, 2020; Tamam & Fikriyah, 2026).

Therefore, the integration of local wisdom into education represents a strategy that not only enhances pedagogical quality but also plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, grounding them in cultural values while equipping them with moral resilience to navigate global dynamics.

***Nggahi Rawi Pahu* as Cultural Philosophy**

Nggahi Rawi Pahu represents a form of local wisdom that has long been embedded and sustained within the community of Dompu, West Nusa Tenggara. Etymologically, this expression means "what is spoken must be realized in action," reflecting a fundamental principle of integrity between words and deeds. Within a cultural context, this value functions not only as a social norm but also as a moral standard that binds individuals in their social lives (Mawardi, 2011; Rokhmah & Siregar, 2025).

Conceptually, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* can be understood as a representation of performative integrity, that is, a value that does not merely exist at the level of discourse but demands concrete realization in action. This value aligns closely with the concept of morality in character education, particularly in the dimension of consistency between moral knowing and moral action. Thus, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* not only emphasizes the importance of understanding moral values but also underscores the obligation to implement them in everyday life (ALI, 2018; Fadli et al., 2024).

From a religious perspective, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* is closely associated with the principles of honesty (*sidq*) and trustworthiness (*amanah*), which are central to religious moral teachings. The alignment between speech and action serves as a key indicator of an individual's faith. Therefore, this value can function as a bridge between normative

religious teachings and real-life practices, enabling a more contextual and applicable internalization of religious values (Amin, 2025; Muliandari, 2023).

Furthermore, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* can be analyzed within the frameworks of moral identity and self-consistency theory, in which individuals strive to maintain alignment between their internalized values and their outward behavior. Inconsistency between words and actions is not only viewed as a social violation but also as a form of moral inconsistency that can undermine personal integrity. Accordingly, this value operates as an internal control mechanism that encourages individuals to act authentically and responsibly (Nurazizah & Anwar, 2024).

In the context of education, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* holds significant potential as a foundation for strengthening religious character. This value can be integrated through various pedagogical practices, such as teacher role modeling, behavioral habituation, and the development of a school culture that emphasizes consistency and moral responsibility. This approach aligns with the paradigm of culture-based education, which positions local values as primary sources in the learning process (Hidayat, 2019).

However, the primary challenge in implementing *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* lies in transforming it from mere cultural knowledge into a deeply internalized practice within students. This requires educational strategies that are not only instructional but also transformational—capable of reshaping students' ways of thinking, attitudes, and behaviors in a sustainable manner.

Therefore, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* is not only relevant as a form of cultural heritage but also holds significant theoretical and practical value in the development of contextual, authentic, and sustainable religious character education.

Research Gap

Studies on character education and local wisdom have developed significantly over the past decades. However, most research tends to position these two concepts within separate frameworks. Character education is often examined from a normative and universal perspective, emphasizing general moral values. In contrast, local wisdom is predominantly treated as a subject of cultural study, with limited integration into formal educational practices (Komara, 2018).

This separation indicates a conceptual gap in understanding how local values can be operationalized concretely within educational systems. In culturally diverse societies such as Indonesia, educational approaches that overlook local dimensions risk producing learning experiences that are less contextual and less meaningful for students (Hude et al., 2019).

Furthermore, studies that specifically examine the implementation of particular local wisdom values—such as *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*—within formal education remain limited. Existing research largely focuses on describing cultural values or conducting conceptual analyses, without deeply exploring how these values are practiced in everyday school life. This reveals a gap at the empirical level, particularly regarding the processes of value internalization and implementation strategies and their impact on students' character development.

In addition, methodological approaches employed in previous studies tend to be quantitative or broadly descriptive, thus lacking the capacity to capture the complexity of social practices and cultural dynamics within educational settings. A deeper understanding of local value implementation requires an exploratory qualitative approach to uncover the meanings, experiences, and interpretations of educational actors holistically (Hartiwisidi et al., 2022; Lumbu et al., 2026).

Based on these gaps, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by providing an in-depth examination of how *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* is understood and implemented within formal education, particularly in strengthening students' religious character. This study goes beyond conceptual analysis by focusing on real-world practices in school settings, thereby offering both theoretical and empirical contributions to the development of character education grounded in local wisdom.

Accordingly, this research positions local wisdom not merely as a cultural backdrop but as a substantive element within the educational process, while also offering a novel perspective on integrating local values into a contextual and applicable framework of religious character education.

II. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design to explore in depth the implementation of the local wisdom value *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* to strengthen students' religious character. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand meanings, experiences, and social practices related to value internalization in educational contexts (Creswell, 2012). The case study design enables the researcher to examine this phenomenon within its real-life setting, particularly in schools where cultural and educational interactions occur (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted in several schools in Dompu Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, which were purposively selected for their strong cultural connection to the value of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*. This design allows the researcher to capture cultural, social, and institutional dynamics that influence the integration of local wisdom into educational practices.

The study was conducted in several schools in Dompu Regency, selected using purposive sampling because the region maintains strong traditions related to the local wisdom value *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*. Participants consisted of school principals, teachers, students, and community leaders, as these actors play significant roles in the process of value transmission and character formation. School principals provided insights into institutional policies and school culture; teachers explained instructional practices related to character education; students shared their experiences of learning and practicing these values; and community leaders contributed perspectives on the cultural meaning of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*. The number of participants was determined using the principle of data saturation, meaning data collection continued until no new significant information emerged (Patton, 2002).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to ensure comprehensive understanding and data triangulation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, students, and community leaders to explore their perspectives on the meaning, implementation, challenges, and impact of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* in education. Participant observation was conducted in school settings

to examine daily interactions, teaching practices, religious activities, and behavioral patterns that reflect the internalization of these values. In addition, document analysis was conducted on school curricula, lesson plans, school regulations, and religious activity programs to examine how local wisdom values are formally integrated into educational policies and practices.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, conducted iteratively alongside data collection. The analysis began with data transcription, followed by open coding to identify meaningful units. These codes were then organized into broader categories through axial coding, which allowed the researcher to identify relationships among emerging concepts. Finally, selective coding was conducted to generate major themes that represent patterns in the implementation, challenges, and impacts of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* in strengthening students' religious character. The themes were interpreted by linking empirical findings to relevant theoretical frameworks to deepen understanding of culture-based character education (Zamili, 2015).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through data triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement with participants to validate interpretations. Transferability was achieved by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and educational settings, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar contexts. Dependability was maintained by systematically documenting the research process through an audit trail. At the same time, confirmability was ensured through reflexive practices, field notes, and the preservation of raw data, thereby minimizing researcher bias and maintaining transparency.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Understanding of Nggahi Rawi Pahu

The research results showed that most participants had a relatively uniform understanding of the meaning of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu*, namely, as a moral principle emphasizing harmony between words and actions. This value is seen as a guideline for life that must be embodied in daily behavior.

Teachers generally associate this value with honesty, responsibility, and discipline. One teacher stated:

"Nggahi Rawi Pahu means that what we say must be done. So we always emphasize to students not only to be eloquent, but also to be honest in our actions." (Teacher, interview, 2025)

Meanwhile, students understand this value in more practical terms, such as not lying and keeping promises. One student stated:

"If we say something, we must do it. For example, a promise to a friend or teacher must be kept." (Student, interview, 2025)

This indicates that the value of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* is understood across educational actors, albeit at varying levels of depth.

Implementation in Schools

The implementation of the *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* values in the school environment is carried out through various formal and informal practices. However, this implementation occurs more implicitly through school culture than through a structured curriculum.

One primary form of implementation is through teacher role models. Teachers act as figures who demonstrate consistency between words and actions. One principal stated:

"We try to set an example for the students. If teachers are inconsistent, it will be difficult for students to apply these values." (Principal, interview, 2025)

Furthermore, these values are integrated into school regulations, such as the obligation to arrive on time and to be honest when completing assignments. Observations show that teachers actively remind students to be responsible for what they have said or promised.

Implementation is also evident in religious activities, such as congregational prayer and Quran recitation, which emphasize the importance of sincerity in worship as a means of consistency between belief and action.

However, the results of the document analysis show that the *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* values have not been explicitly stated in the curriculum or learning tools, so their implementation remains unsystematic.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its great potential, the implementation of the values of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* in education faces several challenges. First, the lack of formal integration into the curriculum means these values are not taught in a structured manner. One teacher stated:

"These values are actually important, but they haven't been specifically included in the curriculum. So they're only taught verbally or through habits." (Teacher, interview, 2025)

Second, teachers' limited understanding of how to integrate local wisdom into learning. Some teachers still view these values as part of the culture rather than as a source of learning.

Third, the influence of global culture on student behavior. A community leader stated:

"Nowadays, children are more influenced by social media, so local values are starting to diminish." (Community leader, interview, 2025)

These findings indicate that implementation challenges are not only internal (within the school) but also external (in the social environment).

Impact on Students

Although implementation has not been optimal, this study found that the *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* values have a positive impact on the development of students' religious character.

Teachers observed improvements in honesty and responsibility. One teacher stated:

"Students are now getting used to admitting mistakes. This is quite a positive change compared to before." (Teacher, interview, 2025)

Furthermore, students showed improvements in discipline, particularly in attendance and assignment completion. Observations indicated that students were more careful in their

speech and actions, especially when reminded of the value of consistency. Regarding religious aspects, students demonstrated increased awareness in carrying out religious duties, which is seen as a form of consistency between belief and practice.

However, this impact remains gradual and unevenly distributed among students, indicating the need for more systematic implementation.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the values of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* strongly align with the concept of religious character, particularly in terms of integrity, honesty, and consistency between words and actions. This finding reinforces the character education framework proposed by Lickona (1992), which states that character formation extends beyond understanding values (moral knowing) to embodying them (moral feeling) and putting them into action (moral action).

In this context, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* serves as a cultural mechanism that bridges normative religious values with students' daily practices. These values provide concrete forms for abstract concepts in religious teachings, facilitating the internalization of values. In other words, local wisdom serves as a contextual medium that operationalizes religious values in concrete actions (Byrd, 2016).

The research findings also indicate that the implementation of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* values occurs more through school culture and teacher role models than through the formal curriculum. This indicates that the process of religious character formation is not always effective if it relies solely on instructional approaches. Instead, habituation, social interaction, and a supportive environment play a more significant role in shaping student behavior. This finding aligns with the perspective of culturally responsive education, which emphasizes the importance of social and cultural context in the learning process (Byrd, 2016; Hartiwisidi et al., 2022; Muliandari, 2023).

However, this study also found a gap between the potential of local wisdom values and their implementation in the formal education system. The lack of systematic integration within the curriculum has resulted in the underutilization of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* values as a learning resource. This situation reflects the dominance of universal educational approaches that lack sensitivity to local contexts (Fitrah et al., 2024; Rokhmah & Siregar, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to the development of the concept of character education by positioning local wisdom as a substantive element, rather than merely an add-on. *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* can be understood as a form of internalized morality, in which moral values are not only known but also become part of an individual's identity, reflected in consistent behavior (Kehl et al., 2024; Tamam & Fikriyah, 2026).

Furthermore, research indicates that these values help strengthen students' self-regulation, namely the ability to control behavior based on internal values rather than solely on external pressures. This is crucial in facing the challenges of globalization, which brings a variety of values that do not always align with local or religious norms (Fadli et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the challenges encountered, such as teachers' limited understanding and the influence of global culture, indicate that integrating local wisdom into education requires a more systematic and strategic approach. Without policy support and the strengthening of educator capacity, local values risk remaining merely cultural symbols without concrete implementation (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024; Abdullah, 2020).

Thus, this discussion confirms that strengthening religious character through local wisdom is not only culturally relevant but also has pedagogical and theoretical significance. The integration of *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* values into education can be an alternative, more contextual, authentic, and sustainable approach to shaping student character in the modern era.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* represents a significant local-wisdom value that helps strengthen students' religious character, particularly by fostering integrity, honesty, and consistency between words and actions. The findings reveal that although this value functions as a strong moral foundation, its implementation in schools remains largely implicit and has not yet been systematically integrated into the formal curriculum or learning practices. Instead, the internalization of the value primarily depends on individual initiatives such as teacher role modeling and the cultivation of school culture, which limits its broader and more consistent impact. Nevertheless, *Nggahi Rawi Pahu* demonstrates considerable potential as a culturally relevant approach to character education that can strengthen both students' moral development and cultural identity in the face of globalization. The study highlights the importance of integrating local wisdom into educational systems through structured policies, curriculum development, and school culture to ensure sustainable implementation. In practice, schools are encouraged to develop culture-based character education models supported by teacher capacity-building, consistent school norms, and collaboration with local communities. From a policy perspective, education stakeholders should promote culturally responsive curricula that incorporate local values into teaching and learning processes. Future research is recommended to employ mixed-method approaches or broader research settings to examine the wider applicability and impact of local wisdom-based character education.

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