

THE APPLICATION OF GOOD HABITS IN ENHANCING HUYULA-BASED CHARACTER EDUCATION AMONG STUDENTS AT SMP NEGERI 3 KABILA, BONE BOLANGO REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of habituation practices in enhancing Huyula-based character education among students at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature review involving the principal, teachers, students, and parents. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that habituation practices are implemented through literacy activities, learning discipline, cooperation, community service, social awareness, and the reinforcement of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action within the school culture. These practices contribute to the development of discipline, responsibility, mutual cooperation, and students' moral awareness, although behavioral consistency is still influenced by social environment and gadget use. This study implies that integrating Huyula local values with habit-based character formation can strengthen sustainable character education in schools

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INTRODUCTION

Schools have introduced values such as discipline, responsibility, and social awareness; however, these values have not yet been developed through structured and continuous habituation practices in students' daily lives (Putri & Wiranata, 2025). Consequently, a gap remains between students' understanding of values and their actual behavior.

Although national policies such as Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 20 of 2018 have emphasized habit-based character education, implementation at the school level remains largely administrative rather than practice-oriented (Kurnianti et al., 2025). In other words, the main issue is not the absence of policies, but the weak operationalization on the ground.

This phenomenon is clearly evident at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila. Based on initial observations conducted through interviews with school officials and analysis of internal data, it was found that over the past three years, there has been an increase in the number of students exhibiting poor character indicators. In 2023, 67 out of 113 students

demonstrated character issues. In 2024, this number rose to 72 out of 98 students, and in 2025, it increased again to 80 out of 116 students. Cumulatively, 219 out of 327 students over the three-year period fell into this category. This data not only indicates the presence of a problem but also reveals a worsening trend.

Character development cannot be achieved merely through advice or rules but requires continuous and experience-based practices (Handhayani et al., 2025). Schools therefore need to function as spaces that support consistent behavioral habituation in students' daily activities.

Furthermore, the fact that the number of students with poor character is on the rise also indicates that current practices have not yet fostered a social environment capable of curbing and guiding student behavior. Schools have not yet fully functioned as spaces for habit formation that provide students with real-life experiences to consistently practice values (W. Fitri et al., 2024). This reinforces the notion that the primary issue lies not in a lack of character education activities, but in the weakness of the design that links values to concrete actions within school routines. Without a clear habit-forming structure, the values taught tend to be temporary and lack the power to influence behavior.

The influence of technology and external social environments has increasingly affected student behavior, while schools have not yet optimally strengthened positive habituation practices. As a result, students are more likely to adopt external behaviors than internalize the values taught at school (Thahir et al., 2025). As a result, students are more likely to adopt behaviors from outside sources rather than internalize the values taught at school. This situation underscores that character education requires an approach that is not merely normative but also operational and sustainable in shaping habits.

The increase in the number of students with poor character cannot be understood as a mere individual failure, but rather as a reflection of the suboptimal nature of the habit-forming system in schools (Wahyuni, 2021). This underscores that efforts to strengthen character education must be directed toward building consistent, integrated, and experience-based practices, so that the values taught do not stop at understanding but develop into actions ingrained in the students (D. S. Fitri et al., 2025; Sunarso et al., 2025).

In recent years, research on character education has indicated a shift in approach from a value-transfer model toward an experience-based and socially engaged approach. Research indicates that character is more effectively developed when students are directly engaged in meaningful social activities (Prasetyo et al., 2025; Indriani et al., 2025). This means that character development is not sufficient through knowledge alone but requires repeated practice in real-world contexts (Laatung & Pangalila, 2025).

The Huyula value is relevant to character education because it emphasizes cooperation, solidarity, and collective responsibility through daily social interaction. Therefore, Huyula provides a contextual foundation for habit-based character formation among students (Dotutinggi et al., 2024; Yunus et al., 2025).

However, there are differing findings in previous research. Some studies indicate that the integration of local values can enhance students' character, particularly when implemented through repeated practice, school cultural support, and consistent teacher involvement. However, in many elementary schools, the implementation of local wisdom has not yet been optimized in the curriculum or daily learning practices, so its impact on student character development has not been significantly evident (Wulandari et al., 2024). This indicates that the success of character education is not solely determined by the values employed but also by how those values are implemented in daily practice (Rohana & Ediyono, 2023).

Furthermore, most studies still employ a descriptive approach that merely describes conditions without delving deeply into the process. Research focus is predominantly on outcomes, while the process of character formation through habit formation has not been extensively examined. Consequently, existing literature has not been able to clearly explain how values can develop into stable habits within students.

Based on this review, there are several significant research gaps. First, empirically, there is still a limited number of studies examining character education based on local wisdom in the context of junior high schools in the Bone Bolango region. Most studies have been conducted in more general contexts or at different educational levels, thus failing to capture specific local dynamics. Second, conceptually, previous research still positions the internalization of values as the core of character education, while habit formation has not been positioned as a primary

element. In fact, without habit formation, values lack the power to change behavior (Madyarini & Wijayanti, 2025; Saputra et al., 2026) Third, methodologically, previous research has not systematically examined the process of habit formation. The focus of research remains on outcomes, not on the process. Consequently, there is currently no model capable of explaining how habits are formed, maintained, and integrated into school life.

Building on this gap, this study proposes a *habit-based character formation* approach that integrates Huyula values into students' daily habituation practices. The novelty of this study lies in positioning habituation practices as the core process of character education supported by local wisdom. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of habituation practices in strengthening Huyula-based character education among students at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila, Bone Bolango Regency.

METHOD

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila, Bone Bolango Regency, Gorontalo Province, from September 2025 to April 2026. The study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of *good habits* in enhancing Huyula-based character education among students at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila (Sugiyono, 2011). This approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding social phenomena, behaviors, and the natural processes of character formation occurring within the school environment. Research subjects were selected using *purposive sampling*, which involves choosing informants based on the consideration that they understand and are directly involved in the implementation of Huyula-based character education at the school. Research informants consisted of the school principal, subject teachers, students, and parents of students. The main informants in this study were the principal of SMP Negeri 3 Kabila, Mr. Buyung Yusuf, S.Pd., subject teacher Mr. Irwan Noho, S.Pd., student Nurain Yusuf, and parent Mrs. Lian Poha.

Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature review. Observations were conducted directly on learning activities, literacy activities, group work, community service, and students' social interactions within the school environment. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach with the principal, teachers, students, and parents to obtain information regarding the implementation of *good habits*, barriers to implementation, and the role of teachers in shaping students' character based on Huyula culture. Documentation was used to supplement research data in the form of photos of activities, school programs, and documents related to character education at the school. Meanwhile, a literature review was conducted to strengthen the theoretical foundation regarding character education, Huyula culture, and the concept of *good habits*.

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1992) which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and grouped data from interviews, observations, and documentation based on the research focus, namely the implementation of habituation practices, implementation barriers, and the role of teachers. The data were then presented in narrative and thematic forms to facilitate analysis of relationships among the findings. Conclusions were drawn gradually through verification between interview, observation, and documentation data to ensure consistency and validity. Data validity was tested through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, students, and parents, while methodological triangulation compared the results of interviews, observations, and documentation regarding the same phenomenon. This process was carried out to ensure the credibility and consistency of the research data.

RESULTS

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila in Bone Bolango Regency, this study found that the implementation of Huyula-based *good habits* has been applied through various forms of habit formation in learning activities and school culture. The research findings also indicate the presence of several obstacles in its implementation, as well as the importance of the teacher's role in sustaining the development of students' character. The research results are organized based on the research focus, which includes:

(1) the application of *good habits* in enhancing Huyula-based character education; (2) obstacles in the implementation of Huyula-based *good habits*; and (3) the role of teachers in supporting the sustainability of Huyula-based *good habits* at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila, Bone Bolango Regency.

The Application of *Good Habits* in Enhancing Huyula-Based Character Education

The research findings indicate that the application of *good habits* to enhance Huyula-based character education at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila is carried out through the process of fostering positive behaviors integrated into learning activities, school culture, and students' social activities. The findings reveal that the school consistently cultivates habits that foster the development of students' character traits, including discipline, responsibility, cooperation, social concern, and moral awareness.

Table 1. Implementation of *Good Habits* in Huyula-Based Character Education at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila

Aspects of Implementation	Form of Practice	Character Orientation
Love of Learning	Academic literacy, study discipline, no cheating	Discipline and responsibility
Huyula in Ambu	Group work, helping one another, community service	Cooperation and social awareness
Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, Moral Action	Instilling moral values and fostering positive behavior	Moral awareness and social behavior

Source: Research Data (2026)

Research findings indicate that the implementation of *good habits* at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila is carried out through various forms of habit formation routinely applied within the school environment. This habit formation occurs not only during classroom learning but also through literacy activities, social interactions among students, group work, school cleaning activities, and activities that foster a sense of community. Based on the results of observations and interviews, the school strives to make habit formation an integral part of the school culture so that students become accustomed to repeatedly performing positive actions in their daily lives.

Regarding the aspect of a love for learning, research findings indicate that students are encouraged to arrive on time, participate in lessons in an orderly manner, pay attention to the teacher during instruction, and complete assignments independently. Teachers also instill in students the importance of academic integrity by discouraging cheating and holding them accountable for assigned tasks. Additionally, the school implements routine literacy activities every Thursday as a means of reinforcing students' reading and learning culture.

Interview results indicate that teachers view fostering a love of learning as a crucial component in shaping students' character. Learning is not only directed toward mastering subject matter but also toward fostering attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and a sense of learning. Meanwhile, students reported that habits such as arriving on time, respecting teachers, and studying independently have begun to become part of their daily activities at school. Parents also noted that the habits instilled by the school influence their children's learning behavior at home, particularly regarding discipline and responsibility.

However, the research findings also indicate that a culture of a love for learning has not yet fully developed optimally. Based on observation results, some students still demonstrate a stronger interest in learning primarily during classroom instruction, whereas outside of formal learning, enthusiasm for reading and literacy remains relatively low. Researchers also found that there are still students who do not fully utilize their free time for learning activities and are more interested in other activities outside of formal learning.

Regarding the Huyula aspect within Ambu, the research findings indicate that the school implements the value of mutual cooperation through fostering group collaboration, class discussions, community service, and school social activities. The Huyula value is understood as a form of togetherness, mutual assistance, consultation, responsibility, and care for others. Based on interview results, teachers strive to instill the Huyula value through collaborative learning that requires students to work together and help one another in completing group tasks.

Students also mentioned that they are accustomed to helping peers who struggle with learning and collaborating during group activities. Additionally, parents explained that the value of mutual assistance is beginning to manifest in home and community settings, particularly during social activities and daily interactions. The school principal noted that the Huyula value has been integrated into various school programs as part of student character development.

Nevertheless, the research findings indicate that the implementation of the Huyula values still faces several challenges that have not yet been optimally addressed. Based on observations, some students remain less active in group work, lack a sense of care for their peers, and tend to rely on other group members. In some group activities, certain students have not demonstrated full engagement, resulting in the expected cooperation not being fully and evenly established.

Furthermore, regarding the aspects of *Moral Knowing*, *Moral Feeling*, and *Moral Action*, the research findings indicate that the school implements character education by instilling moral values in daily life. In the aspect of *Moral Knowing*, students are provided with an understanding of moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, and concern for others. Teachers routinely provide guidance, advice, and reinforcement regarding the importance of moral behavior in school life as well as in the social environment.

Regarding the aspect of *Moral Feeling*, the school cultivates in students a sense of empathy, respect for peers, and concern for others' well-being. Based on interview results, teachers frequently link lessons to real-life situations experienced by students so they can understand others' feelings and develop a social conscience (). Students also expressed that they have begun to get used to helping peers, respecting others, and feeling guilty when committing violations or engaging in actions inconsistent with school rules.

Meanwhile, regarding the aspect of *Moral Action*, the research findings indicate that students are encouraged to apply moral values in concrete actions, such as maintaining cleanliness, speaking honestly, helping peers, behaving politely, and taking responsibility for their tasks and school rules. This practice is carried out consistently through routine school activities and teacher supervision in students' daily lives.

However, the study also found that the implementation of moral values has not yet been fully consistent. While some students have a good understanding of moral values, not all of them are able to consistently apply them in their actual behavior. Based on observation results, there are still students who lack discipline, are easily influenced by their environment, show little concern for peers, and are unable to control their emotions effectively in certain situations. These findings indicate that the development of moral character requires a more intensive and sustained habit-forming process so that moral values are not merely understood intellectually but are truly internalized in students' daily actions

Barriers to the Implementation of Huyula-Based Good Habits

Research results show that the implementation of Huyula-based *good habits* at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila has been carried out through various forms of positive habit formation; however, several obstacles that affect the optimization of students' character development were still identified during implementation. The research findings indicate that these obstacles are related to the consistency of habit formation, environmental influences, the use of technology, and the level of students' awareness in applying character values sustainably.

Table 2. Obstacles to the Implementation of Huyula-Based *Good Habits* at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila

Aspect of Obstacle	Form of Obstacle	Impact on Character Habit Formation
Love of Learning	Learning motivation is not yet stable; excessive use of gadgets	Learning habits are not yet consistent outside the classroom
Huyula in Ambu	Awareness of cooperation is not yet widespread	Group participation is not yet optimal
Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, Moral Action	The implementation of moral values is not yet consistent	Moral values have not yet fully become a habit

Source: Research Data (2026)

Research findings indicate that barriers to implementing *good habits* regarding a love of learning are evident in the instability of students' learning motivation outside the classroom. Based on interviews and observations, students generally demonstrate enthusiasm for learning during classroom instruction; however, independent study habits and a culture of literacy outside of formal learning still require reinforcement.

Interviews with teachers revealed that the use of gadgets and social media is one of the factors affecting students' consistency in studying at home. Additionally, the lack of supervision due to parents' busy schedules also affects the regularity of students' study schedules. Students also mentioned that they are sometimes more interested in playing on their phones or hanging out with friends than reviewing lessons on their own.

Nevertheless, the research findings indicate that schools have made efforts to foster a culture of learning through regular literacy activities, instilling discipline, and reinforcing students' sense of responsibility for their learning. However, these efforts still require more consistent support from the family environment to ensure that students' study habits can develop sustainably both at school and at home.

Regarding the Huyula aspect in Ambu, the research findings indicate that implementation barriers are more evident in the uneven level of students' awareness regarding the development of cooperation and social concern. Based on observations, most students have begun to get used to collaborating in group activities and school social events. However, in certain situations, some students remain less active within groups or tend to delegate tasks to other classmates.

Interview results indicate that differences in students' personalities are one factor influencing participation levels in group activities. Teachers explained that some students are naturally cooperative and highly considerate of peers, while others still require guidance to become more active and responsible in shared activities.

Additionally, students noted that group collaboration sometimes does not run optimally because there are still peers who do not fully participate in completing group tasks. Nevertheless, the values of mutual cooperation and camaraderie are beginning to develop through the regular practice of group work, community service, and social activities implemented by the school.

Furthermore, regarding the aspects of *Moral Knowing*, *Moral Feeling*, and *Moral Action*, the research findings indicate that students generally understand moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and concern for others. However, implementation challenges remain evident in the consistency of applying these values in daily life.

Based on observation results, some students have already demonstrated positive behaviors such as helping peers, respecting teachers, maintaining cleanliness, and taking responsibility for school tasks. Nevertheless, under certain conditions, some students still exhibit a lack of discipline, are easily influenced by their social environment, and are unable to consistently control their behavior.

Teachers explained that the influence of the social environment and social media is a significant factor affecting students' behavior. Furthermore, the development of moral character requires a continuous process of habit formation so that moral values are not merely understood as knowledge but truly become an integral part of students' daily behavior.

Research findings also indicate that the implementation of Huyula-based character education requires sustained collaboration among schools, teachers, parents, and the students' social environment. Although various forms of habit-forming practices have been implemented in schools, character development still requires consistent environmental support so that values such as discipline, cooperation, social responsibility, and morality can develop optimally within students.

The Role of Teachers in Supporting the Sustainability of Huyula-Based Good Habits

Research findings indicate that teachers play a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of Huyula-based *good habit* implementation at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila. The findings reveal that teachers serve as mentors, role models, motivators, and reinforcers of character-building habits through both instructional activities and school culture. This

role is evident in teachers' efforts to build study habits, instill the value of mutual cooperation, and guide students in applying moral values in their daily lives.

Table 3. The Role of Teachers in Supporting Huyula-Based *Good Habits* at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila

Aspects of Teachers' Roles	Form of Role	Impact on Character
Love of Learning	Learning motivation, instilling discipline, learning guidance	Strengthening discipline and responsibility
Huyula in Ambu	Fostering cooperation and social awareness	Strengthening mutual aid and solidarity
Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, Moral Action	Exemplary behavior and the cultivation of moral habits	Strengthening moral awareness and action

Source: Research Data (2026)

Research findings indicate that regarding the aspect of a love for learning, teachers play a role in creating an active, orderly, and conducive learning environment so that students become accustomed to participating effectively in the learning process. Based on interview results, teachers consistently provide motivation, guidance, and reinforcement to students to foster habits of discipline, responsibility, and honesty in their studies.

Observation results show that teachers encourage students to arrive on time, participate actively in lessons, complete assignments independently, and maintain academic integrity. Additionally, teachers support the implementation of school literacy activities as part of strengthening students' learning culture. Research findings indicate that the habits fostered by teachers have a positive influence on students' learning attitudes, although their implementation still requires sustained reinforcement outside the school environment.

Students reported that teachers frequently provide guidance and motivation when they face learning difficulties. Meanwhile, parents explained that the habits instilled by teachers at school also help build their children's discipline and sense of responsibility toward learning at home. These findings indicate that teachers play a crucial role in sustaining students' learning culture.

Regarding the Huyula aspect within Ambu, the research findings indicate that teachers play a role in guiding students to develop cooperation, social concern, and the habit of mutual assistance within the school environment. Teachers encourage students to participate in group work, class discussions, community service, and social activities that emphasize the values of togetherness and mutual aid.

Observation results indicate that teachers do not merely convey Huyula values theoretically but also set examples through direct involvement in school activities and social interactions with students. Teachers also strive to encourage students who are less active in groups to become more engaged in cooperation and shared responsibility.

Students reported that teachers frequently remind them of the importance of cooperation and mutual assistance among peers in group activities and other school activities. Additionally, students' parents observed that the habits fostered by teachers are beginning to influence students' social attitudes within the home and community environments. These findings indicate that teachers play a role in reinforcing Huyula values as part of students' social character development.

Furthermore, regarding the aspects of *Moral Knowing*, *Moral Feeling*, and *Moral Action*, the research results show that teachers play a role in imparting an understanding of moral values, fostering empathy, and instilling positive behaviors in students' daily lives. Based on interview results, teachers routinely reinforce values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and concern for others.

In the aspect of *Moral Feeling*, teachers foster students' emotional awareness by cultivating attitudes of respecting peers, caring for others, and maintaining good social relationships within the school environment. Teachers also strive to instill empathy through an approach that connects moral values with students' daily experiences.

Meanwhile, regarding the *Moral Action* aspect, the observation results indicate that teachers guide students to apply moral values in concrete actions such as speaking honestly, maintaining cleanliness, respecting teachers and

peers, and taking responsibility for school tasks and rules. This practice is reinforced repeatedly through teachers' supervision and guidance during students' daily activities at school.

Nevertheless, the research findings indicate that character development through Huyula-based *good habits* requires a continuous process of habit formation and consistent support from both the family and the students' social environments. In this context, teachers play a key role in ensuring the continuity of character-building practices within the school environment so that the values instilled can gradually become an integral part of the students' daily behavior.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Huyula-based *good habits* at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila not only serves as a strategy for fostering disciplined behavior and social responsibility but also demonstrates the school's efforts to build character education rooted in local culture through a continuous habit-forming process. Character development is not achieved through verbal moral advice alone, but through social practices embedded in school culture, learning activities, and students' daily interactions (Ahsanulkhaq, 2019). This indicates that the school strives to steer character education from mere knowledge acquisition toward tangible social experiences.

This perspective aligns with Lickona's concept of character education, which positions *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action* as crucial components in character formation (Susanti, 2022). Character education is not sufficient if it merely provides an understanding of moral values; it must also foster emotional engagement and repeated concrete actions until they become habits (Efendi & Ningsih, 2019). Therefore, school culture serves as a vital means of shaping students' moral habits through daily practices of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and social concern.

School culture also functions as a *hidden curriculum* that indirectly shapes students' behavior through habits, rules, and patterns of social interaction (Wulan et al., 2025). Nadziroh(2025) explains that character education based on habit formation is more effective than instructional approaches because students learn through direct experience. A similar view is expressed by Afda(2022), who states that habituation within school culture fosters social order among students because values are consistently practiced in school life. Schools function not only as academic institutions but also as social spaces that shape students' values and behaviors.

Although habituation is underway, the internalization of values has not yet fully developed in depth. The culture of discipline and habituation in school is more evident when students are under teacher supervision and school rules, but it has not yet fully become a personal awareness outside the school environment (Nufus & Wahono, 2026). This indicates that habituation still predominantly shapes *behavioral compliance* rather than reflective moral awareness. Students' disciplinary behavior is still largely influenced by school control, not entirely because those values have grown into a moral need within them.

This situation indicates that schools still face challenges in transforming habit formation into the internalization of enduring values. Previous studies have concluded that habit formation directly shapes students' positive character (Azzahra et al., 2025; Amalia & Harfiani, 2024). However, the results of this study show that strong conditioning does not necessarily result in consistent behavior if it is not supported by students' reflective awareness as well as reinforcement from the family and social environment. Therefore, character education in schools cannot operate in isolation but requires continuity of values between schools, families, and the community.

Hirschi's social control theory explains that individual behavior is influenced by the strength of social environmental control (Torro, 2022). Schools successfully establish social control through rules, a culture of discipline, habit formation, and supervision, enabling students to exhibit behavior aligned with school norms. However, when students are outside of school, the influence of external social and cultural environments becomes more dominant. Consequently, the success of character education is not determined solely by school programs but also by the school's ability to collaborate with families and the community in reinforcing students' character values.

Regarding the Huyula aspect in Ambu, the school demonstrates efforts to integrate local cultural values into character education. Values such as mutual aid, solidarity, togetherness, and social concern are incorporated into the school culture through group work, community service, and other social activities. In this regard, the school serves as

a space for transmitting local cultural values to the younger generation (Sabidullah et al., 2025). It can be said that education rooted in local culture is more readily accepted by students because it aligns closely with the social life of the community. Therefore, the integration of Huyula values not only strengthens students' social character but also ensures the sustainability of local cultural values.

On the other hand, the application of Huyula values also faces challenges due to changes in the social interaction patterns of the younger generation. Uneven student participation in group work indicates that the value of collectivism is beginning to clash with the individualistic culture that is developing through social media and digital interactions (Bunta et al., 2026). Some students are more oriented toward personal interests than shared responsibilities. This indicates that schools face challenges in maintaining the value of mutual cooperation amidst the changing social culture of the younger generation.

This situation demonstrates that character education rooted in local culture cannot be achieved solely through formal routines and school cultural symbols. Schools need to foster more reflective and participatory learning so that students understand the social significance of cooperation and social concern, rather than merely carrying out group tasks in a formal manner. Without such a reflective process, the value of Huyula risks becoming merely a ceremonial activity and has not yet fully developed into students' social awareness (Yunus et al., 2025).

In the aspects of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*, schools have sought to build moral education through the cultivation of positive behaviors and the reinforcement of values in daily life. However, the primary issue remains the gap between students' moral understanding and their moral actions. Knowledge regarding discipline, responsibility, and honesty has developed quite well, but its implementation in actual behavior is not yet fully consistent. This situation reinforces Lickona's view that the greatest challenge in character education lies not in mastering moral concepts, but in transforming values into actions carried out consciously and sustainably (Darwanti et al., 2025).

Zainudin (2019) explains that moral education in schools often succeeds in enhancing students' understanding of moral values, but does not necessarily foster stable moral behavior because moral actions are influenced by emotions, social environment, life experiences, and daily habits. Schools still place greater emphasis on reproducing norms through rules and habit formation, while students' space for moral reflection has not yet developed optimally. Consequently, students are more directed toward complying with moral values rather than understanding the ethical reasons and social significance of such behavior.

Therefore, schools need to develop character education that is more reflective, dialogic, and participatory so that students do not merely engage in positive behavior because of school rules, but truly understand those values as part of their moral and social identity. Teachers hold a crucial role as social mediators who help students connect moral values with the realities of daily life (Aini & Ramadan, 2024). Teacher role modeling, a consistent school culture, and the involvement of families and the social environment are key factors ensuring that Huyula-based character education does not remain merely a formal habit-forming process but evolves into a living moral consciousness within students' behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Huyula-based habituation practices at SMP Negeri 3 Kabila contribute to strengthening students' discipline, cooperation, social awareness, and moral behavior through learning activities and school culture. The findings highlight that character education becomes more effective when local values are consistently practiced in students' daily experiences rather than taught only as moral knowledge. Teachers also play a central role in sustaining character formation through guidance, role modeling, and reinforcement of positive behavior. The study further reveals that the success of character education is influenced not only by school programs but also by family support, social environment, and digital media use. This finding implies that character formation requires continuous collaboration between schools and students' broader social environments.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the view that local wisdom-based character education can support democratic pedagogy through participatory and experience-based learning. However, this study was limited to one school context and did not extensively examine the influence of family and digital environments. Therefore, future

research is recommended to explore more adaptive and technology-integrated models of local culture-based character education across different school contexts

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