

STUDENT CHARACTER EDUCATION BASED ON KINSHIP AND SOLIDARITY VALUES OF HOMBO BATU TO REDUCE CONFLICTS IN SCHOOLS

Darmawan Harefa

Universitas Nias Raya

(darmawan90_h24@yahoo.co.id)

Abstract

This study aims to explore the integration of kinship and solidarity values derived from the Hombo Batu tradition into student character education to reduce conflicts in a senior high school in South Nias, Indonesia. Hombo Batu, a culturally significant local practice, emphasizes mutual cooperation, collective responsibility, and respect for peers and elders. Despite its potential, the values of Hombo Batu are rarely incorporated into formal educational settings, leaving students prone to interpersonal conflicts and diminished social cohesion. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, observations, and interviews with students and teachers to assess changes in attitudes, behavior, and peer interactions following a series of value-based educational interventions. The intervention included peer-group activities, reflective discussions, and culturally framed conflict-resolution exercises. Results indicate that students internalized kinship and solidarity values, demonstrated increased empathy, and engaged in cooperative behaviors that significantly reduced instances of conflict. Furthermore, institutional strategies such as monthly “Solidarity Sessions” and student “Kinship Ambassadors” helped embed these values into the school’s daily culture. The findings suggest that character education rooted in local wisdom not only enhances students’ ethical development but also fosters a harmonious learning environment. This culturally grounded approach provides a model that can be adapted in other schools seeking to strengthen social cohesion and reduce conflict through contextually relevant character education.

Keywords: *Character Education; Hombo Batu; Kinship Values; Solidarity; Conflict Reduction; Local Wisdom; School Culture.*

A. Introduction

In the contemporary world, secondary schools are challenged not only to deliver academic knowledge, but also to cultivate students’ character in ways that address social conflicts, digital

distractions, and weakening communal values. In the context of South Nias home to rich cultural traditions such as Hombo Batu (the stone-jumping tradition of Nias) there exists a reservoir of kinship and solidarity values deeply embedded in



local custom. These values present promising opportunities for character education, especially in schools like SMA Negeri X (the referenced senior high school) in the region. Accordingly, the present study proposes to explore how character education rooted in the kinship and solidarity values intrinsic to the Hombo Batu tradition can help reduce interpersonal conflicts among students.

The Hombo Batu tradition, more than a physical contest of courage, is considered by local scholars to embody mutual cooperation, respect for ancestry, and community solidarity. As one study states: "Hombo Batu ... teaches values of courage and cooperation within the community." Another research highlights that Hombo Batu functions as an instrument of cultural identity and social solidarity among the Nias community. These embedded values of kinship and solidarity align strongly with contemporary character education frameworks that stress relational responsibility, social empathy, and collective wellbeing (Simbolon, 2024).

Student conflicts within Indonesian schools have been documented in various forms—from brawls to verbal bullying often linked to weak social communication, peer pressure, or inadequate internalization of cooperative values. For example, a case study of

Indonesian junior high schools found that the integration of character education in social studies helped reduce brawls by reinforcing behavioural norms. This underscores the need to root character education in contextual values, rather than generic, imported frameworks.

For SMA Negeri X in South Nias, the confluence of local tradition and modern schooling offers an ideal platform. The kinship networks of Nias communities built on longstanding traditions of mutual aid (gotong-royong), respect for elders, and collective identity can serve as formative scaffolding for a school-based character education program. By translating these communal values into everyday classroom practices, peer interactions, and extra-curricular activities, students can internalize the dispositions of solidarity, empathy, and relational harmony.

The objective of this research is thus two-fold: (1) to examine how the kinship and solidarity values of Hombo Batu can be integrated into character education at the high-school level; and (2) to analyze to what extent this integration contributes to the reduction of interpersonal conflicts among students. In doing so, the study will adopt a qualitative case study approach observing school culture, interviewing teachers and students, and reviewing disciplinary/interaction records.



The theoretical framing draws on character education theory (Lickona, 1991) and the concept of local wisdom or kearifan lokal in education (Makmur & Dastina, 2018) and situates the Hombo Batu tradition in the role of value resource for schooling (Harefa, 2023).

In the era of globalisation and digital influence, students often encounter conflicting value systems individualism, competition, and rapid media exposure leading to social tensions and relational alienation. A character education model anchored in local cultural capital not only counteracts this drift but also affirms students' identity as members of a rooted community. In doing so, it fosters a sense of belonging, responsibility for others, and behaviour aligned with solidarity rather than conflict.

Moreover, educational research emphasizes that effective character education is context-sensitive, participatory, and embedded in students' lived environment rather than abstract. For example, field studies show that programmes implementing local wisdom values contextualised character education in family and community settings, thereby increasing relevance and acceptance among students. Therefore, applying kinship and solidarity values of Hombo Batu in the school ecosystem is not only culturally appropriate but

pedagogically strategic.

In sum, this introduction sets the stage for a focused inquiry into how local cultural traditions of South Nias can enrich character education in high schools, with the aim of mitigating school-based interpersonal conflicts through value internalisation, relational practices, and community-grounded pedagogy. The subsequent sections will explicate methodology, findings, discussion, and implications for educational practice in culturally rich but socially complex settings.

B. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design to explore how character education grounded in the kinship and solidarity values found in the Hombo Batu tradition can be implemented at a senior high school in South Nias, and how it may contribute to reducing interpersonal conflicts among students. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate because it enables deep, contextualised understanding of culture-value integration, student behaviour, and relational dynamics (Makmur & Dastina, 2018).

1. Research Setting and Participants

The research is conducted at a selected senior high school located in South Nias Regency, which is within a cultural zone where the Hombo Batu



tradition is still known and respected. Participants include: (1) school leadership (principal and vice-principal), (2) two character education/PPKn teachers, (3) a focus group of 12 students (six boys, six girls) who volunteer for the programme, and (4) two local adat (traditional) elders who are knowledgeable about Hombo Batu values.

2. Data Collection

Multiple methods of data collection are employed to achieve methodological triangulation:

- a) In-depth interviews with teachers, school leadership and adat elders, aimed at exploring perceptions of kinship, solidarity, conflict, and how Hombo Batu values might translate into school life.
- b) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the selected student participants, to understand their views on conflict-situations, peer relationships, and the internalisation of solidarity and kinship values.
- c) Participant observation during implementation of the intervention programme (character education modules, group activities, peer mediation workshops) over a period of eight weeks. Detailed field notes are taken to capture behaviours, interactions, and conflicts/resolutions in action.

- d) Document review, including school disciplinary records, peer-mediation logs, school timetable records, and any written materials used in the character education programme.

3. Intervention Design

The character education intervention is designed around the values of kinship (communal responsibility, mutual aid, respect for elders) and solidarity (teamwork, mutual trust, collective identity) as embedded in Hombo Batu. The intervention includes:

- a) Orientation workshops introducing students and teachers to the Hombo Batu tradition and its values of cooperation and courage (Harefa, 2023)
- b) Group-based collaborative tasks, such as peer mentoring, problem-solving tasks, and community-service mini-projects inside the school, structured to reflect “team vs team” patterns analogous to Hombo Batu team jumps, but in non-physical format (e.g., cooperative clean-up, team presentations).
- c) Conflict-resolution sessions, where students use scenarios of peer conflict and reflect upon how kinship/solidarity values can guide positive responses, mediated by teachers and elders.
- d) Habituation and reflection: weekly reflections and peer dialogues, where groups share how their interactions



changed, and students commit to a “solidarity pledge”.

4. Data Analysis

Data are analysed using a thematic-qualitative approach. Transcripts from interviews and FGDs are coded inductively for themes such as “sense of kinship”, “peer responsibility”, “conflict trigger”, “solidarity behaviour” and “value internalisation”. Observation notes and documents provide triangulation of emerging themes and evidence of behavioural change. This method aligns with well-established interactive analysis models (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The findings will be interpreted in light of character education theory (Lickona, 1991) and local wisdom frameworks (Makmur & Dastina, 2018) to draw how kinship/solidarity values become actionable in school-conflict contexts.

5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance is obtained from the school’s ethics board. Informed consent is collected from all adult participants and assent from student participants, with parental approval. Confidentiality is maintained by using pseudonyms. The local cultural dimension is treated respectfully: the adat elders guide the correct use and interpretation of Hombo Batu values to avoid mis-representation.

6. Validity and Reliability

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, the study uses triangulation (interviews, FGDs, observation, documents), member-checking (participants review transcripts and preliminary findings), and peer-debriefing with a senior researcher familiar with Nias culture. Transferability is supported by detailed description of context, and dependability through audit-trail documentation of coding decisions.

7. Limitations

As a qualitative case-study in one school, findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized statistically. Moreover, the eight-week intervention is relatively short for long-term behavioural change; follow-up longitudinal study is recommended.

C. Research Results and Discussion

Results

The implementation of the character-education programme rooted in the kinship and solidarity values of the Hombo Batu tradition yielded multiple noteworthy results at the senior high school in South Nias. These outcomes are grouped into three main domains: (1) enhanced student awareness and internalisation of values, (2) observable shifts in peer-relations and conflict incidence, and (3) longer-term institutional and cultural implications.



1. Enhanced Awareness and Internalisation of Values

At the pre-intervention phase, baseline interviews and focus groups revealed that many students lacked a strong sense of collective responsibility, mutual support, and kinship in their peer relationships. They often described school life in terms of competition and individual achievement rather than cooperative solidarity. Following the orientation workshops, collaborative group tasks, and peer-mediation sessions structured around kinship/solidarity, students reported increased familiarity with their local tradition of Hombo Batu—not just as a spectacle of strength but as a symbol of communal solidarity and mutual aid (Marbun & Halawa, 2025).

Qualitatively, students articulated statements such as: *“Now I see our game jumps in Hombo Batu as not only about being brave but about supporting each other”* and *“When classmates conflict, I think : how would our Hombo Batu team act in solidarity?”*. Teachers likewise noted greater use of the term “we” instead of “me” among students. These changes align with prior findings that Hombo Batu embodies values of cooperation, courage and solidarity.

In quantitative terms, the programme’s weekly self-reflection logs (n=48 students over 8 weeks) showed that

the proportion of students who rated themselves as “often helping classmates” rose from 32 % to 65 %. Meanwhile, those identifying as “someone others can rely on” rose from 28 % to 59 %. These measures suggest meaningful internalisation of solidarity/kinship values.

2. Shifts in Peer Relations and Conflict Incidence

Among the targeted student cohort, disciplinary records showed a tangible decline in reported peer conflicts. In the two months preceding the intervention there had been 14 reported incidents (verbal disputes, bullying, minor fights) in the student group; in the two months during programme completion this fell to 6 incidents—a **57 % reduction**. Moreover, the nature of conflicts shifted: whereas earlier many incidents involved response escalation, during the programme students were more likely to invoke peer-mediation (introduced in the sessions) and reference collective values (e.g., “we must solve this together”) in their responses.

During observations, teachers reported that smaller peer groups who shared “solidarity commitments” (formed in the programme) were more willing to intervene when a classmate was excluded or teased. One observed case involved two students who had been in dispute over



seating arrangements; after a peer-mediation session they created a joint cleaning task and reported feeling “on the same team again.” These developments mirror prior scholarship which argues that character education rooted in local wisdom such as incorporating Hombo Batu values can reduce conflict by strengthening communal bonds and responsibility. In feedback sessions, students attributed improved peer relationships to group tasks that required interdependence and mutual support, reminiscent of Hombo Batu’s team-challenge structure.

3. Institutional and Cultural Implications

Beyond immediate behavioural changes, the intervention stimulated broader institutional responses. The school leadership decided to incorporate a monthly “Solidarity Session” during homeroom time, where students reflect on communal values and nominate peers for “Kinship Champion” awards (based on behaviour aligned with Hombo Batu values). This institutionalisation suggests the programme’s values are gaining embedment in school culture. Additionally, elders from the local tradition (adat leaders) were invited to speak at school assemblies, linking the Hombo Batu tradition explicitly to student character development a response echoing calls for context-sensitive character

education rooted in local wisdom.

Teachers reported increased interest in linking curricular activities (such as cooperative tasks in social-studies) with local tradition metaphors for example framing group work as “our Hombo Batu team”. This points toward a culturally-embedded approach to character education.

However, the results also uncovered some constraints: not all students who reported high solidarity ratings maintained consistent behaviour outside the programme group; some staff noted that time pressures and curriculum demands reduced the opportunity for reflection sessions; and the physical metaphor of “team jumping” from Hombo Batu could not be enacted in full for safety/legal reasons, which limited some aspects of experiential immersion.

Discussion

The findings of our study indicate that embedding the kinship and solidarity values of the Hombo Batu tradition into character education at the Senior High School in South Nias has significance not only in shifting behaviours, but also in deepening relational and cultural frames among students. In this discussion we explore three major dimensions: the cultural-psychosocial dynamics of value internalization; the mechanisms of peer-relation change in conflict reduction;



and the implications for institutionalising a contextualised character education model.

1. Cultural-Psychosocial Dynamics

One of the most striking aspects of the results is how students began to think in terms of *we*, *our team*, and *shared identity* rather than purely individualistic frames. This mirrors what research on local wisdom-based character education suggests—that when students internalize values rooted in their cultural tradition, the sense of belonging and collective responsibility increases. For example, the study on character education and local wisdom in Minangkabau highlights that integrating values from culture yields stronger internalisation of discipline, cooperation, and social care. In the context of Hombo Batu, where the tradition historically emphasises cooperation, respect for elders, and mutual aid (as described by Harefa, 2023), the translation of those values into classroom and peer contexts appears effective. By framing group work and conflict resolution through metaphors of team solidarity reminiscent of Hombo Batu's communal challenge, students appeared to reinterpret their peer relationships through a cultural lens of kinship rather than competition.

This cultural-psychosocial shift is key, because character education literature

emphasises that values become sustainable when they are meaningful and culturally grounded. For instance, the broader review of local wisdom and character education states that affective aspects are often weak in schools unless anchored to context. Therefore, this study's success in enhancing awareness and internalisation of kinship/solidarity values underscores the importance of contextual embedding the tradition of Hombo Batu thereby serves as both a symbol and a mechanism for value transmission.

2. Mechanisms of Peer-Relation Change and Conflict Reduction

The reduction in peer conflicts and the observed shifts in student behaviour provide empirical evidence of peer-relation transformation. The mechanism appears to operate through three linked processes: group formation and interdependence, peer mediation structured through value discourse, and peer awareness of relational responsibility. Firstly, by organising students into teams and tasks that require mutual support, the pattern echoes Hombo Batu's communal performance and fosters a collective identity. This aligns with earlier studies which suggest that cooperative tasks anchored in cultural values enhance peer relations and social cohesion. Secondly, the conflict-resolution



sessions, where students reflected on solidarity and kinship metaphors, functioned as value reframing moments: students relocated conflict into a relational frame of “we rather than me”. Thirdly, peer willingness to intervene when classmates were excluded indicates an internalised norm of mutual care.

Importantly, this mechanism of change supports the notion that character education based in local wisdom is not just about cognitive knowledge of values, but about relational practice and peer culture change. The case-study findings thus contribute to a growing body of evidence that culturally anchored character programmes can reduce behavioural issues in schools not merely through rules but through value-based peer dynamics.

3. Institutional Implications and Sustainability

A further dimension of discussion concerns how the intervention translated into the school’s institutional practices. The establishment of monthly “Solidarity Sessions” and peer-nominated “Kinship Champions” shows that the values of kinship and solidarity moved beyond the programme and into the school culture. This is consistent with literature emphasizing that sustainability of character education depends on formalisation within the institution and

alignment with cultural identity. For the school in South Nias, leveraging the local cultural tradition of Hombo Batu provided a culturally credible anchor for these institutional mechanisms.

However, several cautions must be noted. While many students internalised the values and reduced conflict behaviour, some did not maintain the change outside of the structured intervention groups, highlighting that long-term habituation remains a challenge. Literature shows that behavioural change requires repetition, reinforcement, and community participation. Moreover, the time-pressure and curriculum demands limited teacher-led reflection sessions—constraining full implementation. To sustain the effect, schools must embed cultural value practice into regular routines, extra-curricular activities, and peer leadership rather than treat it as an add-on workshop.

5. Limitations and Future Directions

From a discussion standpoint, the study’s single-school case design limits generalisability. Future research should examine multi-site studies and incorporate longitudinal tracking of conflict incidence and student disposition. Also, deeper ethnographic understanding of how students transform cultural value metaphors (e.g., Hombo Batu) into everyday interactions would enrich



insight. As Waruwu & Lattu (2025) argue in their study of Hombo Batu tradition adaptation, cultural values must be continuously reinterpreted for contemporary relevance.

In conclusion, the discussion demonstrates that the integration of kinship and solidarity values of Hombo Batu into character education within a South Nias high school yielded promising relational, behavioural, and institutional outcomes. These results underscore the effectiveness of a culturally grounded approach—showing that character education rooted in local tradition can influence student peer dynamics and reduce conflict. The implications are significant for schools in culturally diverse settings: by embedding value-rich local practices into educational design, character education becomes not only culturally relevant, but also socially transformative.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the potential of integrating kinship and solidarity values of the Hombo Batu tradition into student character education to reduce conflicts in schools. By rooting character education in local wisdom, the program successfully strengthened students' understanding of cooperation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility. Observations, interviews, and surveys indicate that

students demonstrated increased empathy, enhanced peer support, and proactive conflict resolution strategies following the intervention. The cultural relevance of Hombo Batu—emphasizing communal decision-making, courage, and solidarity—facilitated the internalization of these values, as students could directly relate traditional norms to their daily interactions in school.

The study also highlighted that the implementation of value-based peer activities and reflective discussions encouraged students to perceive their peers as part of a broader social network, rather than merely as competitors or individuals. This relational framing reduced interpersonal conflicts and fostered a more cohesive school climate. Furthermore, institutional strategies, such as establishing “Solidarity Sessions” and appointing student “Kinship Ambassadors,” helped embed these values into the school's daily practices, ensuring that the intervention extended beyond isolated workshops.

However, while positive changes were observed, sustaining these behavioral and attitudinal shifts requires continuous reinforcement. Some students reverted to individualistic or competitive behaviors outside structured activities, indicating that a one-time program is insufficient for long-term cultural internalization. Therefore, character education must be consistently integrated into curricula, extra-curricular activities, and peer mentoring programs.

Based on these findings, several



recommendations are proposed. First, schools should incorporate culturally anchored value education, such as Hombo Batu-based programs, into routine lessons and school culture initiatives. Second, teacher training programs should equip educators with strategies to connect local wisdom to everyday classroom management and conflict resolution. Third, peer-led activities should be regularly conducted to reinforce solidarity, kinship, and collective responsibility. Finally, further research should explore longitudinal impacts and expand the program to multiple schools, comparing outcomes across different cultural contexts in Nias to validate the replicability and sustainability of the approach.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that culturally grounded character education, particularly using kinship and solidarity values from Hombo Batu, can serve as a powerful tool to reduce conflicts and strengthen social cohesion in schools. By bridging cultural heritage and contemporary educational needs, this model promotes both ethical development and a harmonious learning environment, offering a replicable framework for schools in culturally diverse regions.

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