

Local Culture-Based Education in the Hidden Curriculum: A Strategy for Fostering Tolerance and Peace in Maluku Secondary Schools

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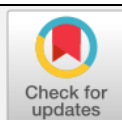
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ARTICLE INFO

Publication Info:

Research Article



How to cite:

Litaay, S. C. H., Manuputty, F. M. L., Afdhal, A., & Makaruku, N. D. (2025). Local Culture-Based Education in the Hidden Curriculum: A Strategy for Fostering Tolerance and Peace in Maluku Secondary Schools. *Society*, 13(1), 192-207.

DOI: [10.33019/society.v13i1.777](https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v13i1.777)

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Received: January 22, 2025;

Accepted: March 7, 2025;

Published: March 11, 2025;

ABSTRACT

This study examines how local cultural values are integrated into the hidden curriculum to promote tolerance and peace in secondary schools in Maluku. It investigates the influence of traditions such as Pela, Gandong, Famili, Badati, Masohi, and Ma'anun, which are not formally included in the curriculum but play a crucial role in shaping students' social behavior and fostering inclusive learning environments. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research provides a contextualized analysis of how these cultural values function within school settings. Data were gathered through observations and in-depth interviews with teachers and students. The findings highlight the significant role of local cultural values in fostering tolerance and peace. Pela and Gandong reinforce interfaith solidarity through collaborative student activities, while the concept of Famili cultivates a sense of belonging and mutual respect. Badati and Masohi promote cooperation through project-based learning, and Ma'anun encourages an appreciation for diversity. These findings suggest that a hidden curriculum rooted in local culture can strengthen social harmony in pluralistic school environments. Beyond Maluku, this study offers insights into how culturally embedded hidden curricula can inform inclusive educational policies and curriculum design, providing a framework for other diverse and conflict-prone regions. The research underscores the importance of integrating local cultural wisdom into education as a pathway to sustainable peacebuilding.

Keywords: Hidden Curriculum; Local Culture; Maluku; Peace; Tolerance

1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia, particularly in pluralistic regions such as Maluku, faces significant challenges in creating school environments that foster tolerance and peace (Hasudungan, 2021). The history of social conflicts in Maluku is a strong reminder of the importance of building harmony from an early age. Although the formal curriculum emphasizes character education, it often fails to capture the rich dynamics of local culture, which has great potential in shaping tolerant and peaceful behaviors (Manuputty et al., 2024). In this context, local culture, deeply embedded in the daily interactions of Maluku's society, holds significant power that can be implicitly integrated into the hidden curriculum—an aspect of education that is not explicitly taught yet profoundly influences students' values and attitudes (Gunio, 2021).

This study explores how local culture can be integrated into the hidden curriculum as a strategy for fostering tolerance and peace in secondary schools in Maluku. The primary focus is to understand the process of identifying and incorporating Maluku's local cultural values into the hidden curriculum in schools. Additionally, this research analyzes how implementing a local culture-based hidden curriculum contributes to developing tolerance and peaceful attitudes among students. Equally important, the study seeks to uncover the challenges and opportunities schools face in integrating Maluku's local culture into the hidden curriculum, providing a reference for more contextual and humanistic educational practices in the region. This becomes particularly relevant given the urgency of nurturing a young generation capable of coexisting in diversity, especially in areas with a history of conflict, such as Maluku (Leiwakabessy, 2024). By leveraging local cultural potential as the foundation of education, this research offers a more contextual and humanistic approach to fostering a more harmonious society.

In recent years, research on the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping student behavior has produced varied results. Some studies highlight its contribution to developing students' moral and ethical values but often overlook the local cultural context more closely related to students' daily lives. The research underscores the hidden curriculum's role in shaping students' morality, particularly cooperation, responsibility, and honesty (Gunio, 2021; Sahide et al., 2023). However, these studies do not specifically explore integrating local cultural values or social norms in multicultural school environments. A further study examines how the hidden curriculum can create inclusive and supportive classroom atmospheres, though its emphasis remains on Western educational settings with homogeneous cultures (Rossouw & Frick, 2023).

More relevant to the Indonesian context, previous research investigates integrating local cultural values into school education (Hasanah et al., 2023; Sakti et al., 2024). Local wisdom plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. However, the application of local culture remains limited to extracurricular activities or specific school programs rather than being an integral part of daily interactions within the hidden curriculum (Ariansyah et al., 2023). This suggests that the formal use of local wisdom has not yet been optimized as part of a broader educational structure.

Other studies demonstrate that local culture significantly influences social behavior and integration within school communities (Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2020; Sakti et al., 2024). Culture-based social interactions can reduce social conflicts in school contexts (Sakti et al., 2024). However, there remains a gap in explaining the hidden curriculum as a mechanism to achieve this goal. Asian schools that adopt a culture-based hidden curriculum tend to produce students more responsive to tolerance values (Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2020). However, their research does not detail the specific strategies for integrating these values into daily teaching practices.

Studies further strengthen the argument that informal cultural values, such as *gotong royong* (cooperation), contribute to strong social solidarity (Argadinata et al., 2022; Mouratidis & Poortinga, 2020). Education in ethnically and religiously diverse regions of Indonesia successfully promotes social harmony through the teaching of values such as *gotong royong* and kinship (Argadinata et al., 2022). However, these values are often not systematically integrated into the school environment, relying instead on individual teacher initiatives and incidental activities (Mouratidis & Poortinga, 2020). Additionally, research highlights the importance of culture-based education in addressing social conflicts in highly pluralistic regions (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Terepyshchyi, 2021). Emphasizing local educational values, particularly in developing countries, enhances cross-cultural understanding and reduces the likelihood of conflict. However, these studies focus primarily on non-formal education or community-based initiatives rather than integrating these values into formal education structures.

Furthermore, research on character education in Indonesia suggests that while the hidden curriculum has been implemented in some schools, its integration with local values remains suboptimal, especially in ethnically and religiously diverse environments (Husni et al., 2021). This study identifies a gap between the intention to implement character education and its actual execution, where local values are often not formally or systematically taught.

From these various studies, a clear gap emerges regarding the comprehensive application of local cultural values through the hidden curriculum in highly diverse schools. While many studies emphasize the importance of local culture in education, few have explored how local culture can be systematically and sustainably integrated into the hidden curriculum to foster tolerance and peace. Previous research has generally been descriptive or limited to formal curriculum contexts, lacking detailed explanations of how local values interact within school social environments.

In contrast to prior research, this study specifically examines integrating Maluku's cultural values—Pela, Gandong, *Famili*, Badati, Masohi, and Ma'anu—into the hidden curriculum in secondary schools. These values have long functioned as social norms that strengthen interpersonal relationships in Maluku society, yet they have not been explicitly accommodated within the formal education system. By analyzing how these values operate within social interactions at school, this study seeks to explain the mechanisms of integrating a local culture-based hidden curriculum as a sustainable educational strategy.

Beyond its academic contributions, this study is also relevant to national education policy. In recent years, efforts have been made to incorporate local cultural elements into education, such as through the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes contextual learning based on the surrounding environment. However, its implementation remains questioned, particularly in highly pluralistic regions such as Maluku. Therefore, this research provides theoretical insights into a local culture-based hidden curriculum and offers a practical model that can be adapted to Indonesia's education policies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Hidden Curriculum and Culturally-Based Education in Maluku Schools

The hidden curriculum concept has become a significant focus in educational studies due to its substantial influence on shaping students' character, values, and cultural identity. The hidden curriculum refers to aspects of education that are not explicitly written in formal curriculum documents but are conveyed through daily interactions, practices, and school culture (Guraya et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2023). This component includes social values, cultural norms, and behavioral patterns students acquire through school experiences. In Maluku's

education context, the hidden curriculum has great potential to strengthen culturally-based education, given the region's rich cultural heritage and traditional values.

Research indicates that the hidden curriculum can effectively integrate cultural values into education, particularly in culturally diverse regions such as Maluku (Keryapi, 2022). In Maluku, formal education is often influenced by local norms that reflect values such as *gotong royong* (Masohi), tolerance, and respect for traditions. These values are not always explicitly stated in the written curriculum but are implicitly instilled through teacher-student interactions, school activities, and relationships among students from various cultural backgrounds.

For instance, the tradition of Masohi, which embodies the spirit of *gotong royong* (cooperation) in Maluku society, can be transmitted through the hidden curriculum in the form of group work, participation in school events, and the habitual practice of helping one another in the school environment. Additionally, interfaith tolerance—an essential value in Maluku's social life—can be taught through classroom diversity management and inclusive learning approaches (Rahawarin et al., 2021). The hidden curriculum teaches students academic knowledge and how to live harmoniously in a multicultural society.

However, the hidden curriculum also presents challenges, particularly when the values implicitly conveyed do not align with the goals of inclusive education. Manik highlights that if the hidden curriculum is not properly monitored, there is a risk of reinforcing stereotypes or biases that may disadvantage certain groups, especially in multicultural societies (Manik, 2023). Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that the hidden curriculum in schools supports an education system that values local culture while promoting tolerance and diversity.

In the context of Maluku, culturally-based education that leverages the potential of the hidden curriculum can be strengthened by integrating local traditions into everyday educational practices. This includes introducing local cultural arts, such as the Cakalele traditional dance and Maluku folklore, and incorporating local languages in informal school communication. According to Swaminathan, this approach enhances students' cultural identity and contributes to the preservation of local cultural heritage (Swaminathan, 2023).

2.2. Tolerance and Peace from the Perspective of Maluku's Culture

Maluku, one of Indonesia's most culturally, religiously, and ethnically diverse regions, has a long history of tolerance and peace dynamics. Although the region experienced horizontal conflicts in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it has become an important example of how reconciliation efforts and reinforcing tolerance values can contribute to sustainable peace. Literature on tolerance and peace in Maluku highlights the role of local culture, religion, and social institutions in fostering harmony amidst diversity.

The values of tolerance in Maluku have long been embedded in societal life through cultural traditions, one of the most prominent being Pela Gandong. Pela Gandong represents a bond of brotherhood between villages, regardless of religious or ethnic differences. This bond teaches that diversity is a strength and that conflicts must be avoided to maintain social harmony (Sahertia et al., 2023). This tradition serves as Maluku's moral and ethical foundation, ensuring harmonious relationships amid social and political changes.

Additionally, local cultural practices such as Masohi (*gotong royong* or cooperation) reinforce the values of unity and mutual assistance regardless of differences. The community is taught to respect diversity and collaborate for the common good through collective activities. Instilling these values from an early age through formal and non-formal education in Maluku

helps shape a young generation that appreciates diversity and remains committed to peace (Anderson, 2020).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to understand how a local culture-based hidden curriculum—incorporating values such as *Pela*, *Gandong*, *Famili*, *Badati*, *Masohi*, and *Ma'an*—is integrated into secondary school life to foster tolerance and peace among students. This method allows researchers to explore daily social interactions that are not recorded in the formal curriculum yet play a significant role in shaping students' character. This approach is well-suited for examining complex and contextual phenomena, such as integrating cultural values into education through social interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The study focuses on three Ambon City and three Central Maluku Regency schools. These schools were selected purposively based on their sociocultural and historical characteristics in implementing values of tolerance and peace in the educational environment. Ambon City was chosen as it serves as the administrative and educational center of Maluku, a region with a significant history of social conflict yet rich in diversity. Meanwhile, Central Maluku Regency is known for its strong cultural traditions, particularly in implementing the *Pela* and *Gandong* system as a form of interfaith and interethnic brotherhood. The selected schools reflect variations in how the local culture-based hidden curriculum is implemented.

The three schools in Ambon City were chosen because they have a more heterogeneous student background regarding religion and ethnicity, allowing for a deeper examination of how social interactions within the school environment contribute to the development of tolerance and peace. Meanwhile, the three schools in Central Maluku Regency were selected due to their proximity to communities that actively uphold local traditions, enabling an analysis of how these values are passed down and applied in the educational context.

The study's subjects include teachers, school principals, students, and parents. Teachers and school principals were chosen because of their strategic role in designing and implementing educational policies incorporating local culture into the hidden curriculum. As the primary learners, students were the main focus in understanding the impact of cultural value internalization through daily school interactions. Meanwhile, parents were also involved, as they contribute to shaping a social environment that supports culture-based education outside the school setting (Fontana & Frey, 2019).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. In-depth interviews allowed researchers to explore participants' perceptions and experiences regarding implementing the hidden curriculum in daily school life. Participant observation provided direct insights into student interactions inside and outside the classroom, particularly in collaborative activities that reflect local cultural values. For instance, group projects and community-based initiatives in schools often embody the principles of *gotong royong* (as seen in *Badati* and *Masohi*), which not only promote cooperation but also strengthen social solidarity. Additionally, documentation included the analysis of school policies, student handbooks, and activity reports to determine the extent to which local cultural values are embedded in official school documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2017).

The data analysis process employed thematic analysis, involving coding based on key themes such as tolerance, peace, and local cultural values. After coding, the researchers identified patterns from students' and teachers' experiences internalizing cultural values. For example, *Pela* and *Gandong* were frequently cited as frameworks for fostering interfaith

brotherhood in schools, where students from different religious backgrounds worked together on various community projects and social initiatives, reinforcing unity and solidarity (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Meanwhile, the *Famili* principle was crucial in creating an inclusive and respectful school environment, preventing potential conflicts, and promoting harmony (Kerebungu & Fathimah, 2023).

This study used data triangulation to ensure data validity and reliability by combining interviews, observations, and documentation analysis. This approach enabled researchers to verify the consistency of findings from different perspectives, ensuring that the data collected were not biased. Additionally, preliminary findings from the data analysis were validated through a member-checking process, where participants provided feedback on the researchers' interpretations, enhancing the credibility and authenticity of the final results (Miles & Huberman, 2020).

Several challenges emerged throughout the data collection process that could impact the validity and reliability of the findings. One of the primary challenges was the potential bias in interviews, both from the researchers and participants. Confirmation bias could occur if the researchers unintentionally framed questions or interpreted data to align with the initial research expectations. To minimize this, researchers maintained openness in data analysis and used open-ended questions that did not lead participants toward specific answers. Additionally, social desirability bias among participants, particularly teachers and school principals, was a concern, as they might provide responses that reflect socially acceptable norms rather than actual conditions. To address this, the researchers used observations as a verification tool, ensuring that the claims made during interviews were reflected in actual school interactions.

Another challenge during fieldwork was limited access to certain school documents relevant to the study, such as internal policies on culture-based education. Some schools were reluctant to share these documents for administrative reasons. To overcome this limitation, the study relied on in-depth interviews with school stakeholders as an alternative means of gathering information on policies and practices related to the hidden curriculum (Yin, 2015)(Yin, 2015).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Integrating Pela and Gandong Cultural Values into the Hidden Curriculum

Pela and Gandong are two cultural concepts from Maluku that have proven effective in maintaining and strengthening interfaith and interregional brotherhood. These values function not only in social contexts but also hold great potential for integration into formal education at the secondary school level. According to the study's findings, teachers and students in several schools in Maluku explained that Pela and Gandong are not only taught in formal subjects such as history and civics but are more frequently applied in daily school life. Students from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds actively participate in collaborative activities such as study groups, sports events, and community projects. These activities are intentionally designed to create spaces for interaction, fostering bonds of brotherhood similar to the traditional practices of Pela and Gandong, which emphasize unity amid differences.

Interviews with several teachers also revealed that they often use Maluku's historical conflicts as a reflection in their lessons. They incorporate stories about how Pela and Gandong were used as reconciliation tools to resolve community divisions. A history teacher from a secondary school in Ambon stated, "When we teach about past religious conflicts, we always

emphasize the role of Pela and Gandong in restoring peace. Our students learn from history that differences are not barriers to unity but opportunities to support one another.”

These findings indicate that integrating Pela and Gandong values through the hidden curriculum significantly contributes to social awareness and strengthens student relationships. As described by Rossouw & Frick, the hidden curriculum refers to all forms of values and social norms absorbed by students through interactions and informal activities at school (Rossouw & Frick, 2023). While not explicitly written in the formal curriculum, Pela and Gandong manifest as values of brotherhood taught through everyday school experiences, particularly in activities that foster cross-group cooperation.

From a multicultural education perspective, culturally based education, such as the integration of Pela and Gandong, promotes inclusivity and reinforces the recognition of diversity. Mubarok argues that effective education in pluralistic societies should reflect their social realities, including cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity (Mubarok, 2019). Integrating Pela and Gandong into secondary schools becomes a relevant solution to address diversity challenges in Maluku, which has a history of religiously motivated conflicts. Collaborative activities that reflect Pela and Gandong practices allow students to understand and appreciate differences while building social solidarity.

From a sociology of education perspective, integrating local cultural values such as Pela and Gandong can also be explained through Émile Durkheim’s theory of social solidarity. Durkheim asserts that education is central to shaping the collective consciousness necessary for maintaining social order (Durkheim, 2023). Through education, individuals learn to adapt to the norms and values of society. In the case of Maluku, Pela, and Gandong, values are internalized through the hidden curriculum, fostering a collective awareness of the importance of unity in diversity.

Furthermore, Durkheim emphasizes the importance of organic solidarity in modern, diverse societies. Organic solidarity refers to social bonds formed due to interdependence among individuals or groups with different backgrounds. This concept is reflected in the application of Pela and Gandong in secondary schools in Maluku, where students from various religious and ethnic backgrounds collaborate in various activities. These interactions highlight the necessity of mutual dependence in achieving academically and socially shared goals.

Paulo Freire’s perspective on education also supports this approach as a process of liberation. Freire argues that education should empower individuals to understand the social realities around them and contribute to social change (Freire, 2020). In the Maluku context, integrating Pela and Gandong values helps students recognize the importance of brotherhood and interfaith cooperation while encouraging them to become agents of change who promote peace and social harmony.

In the context of character education, Pela and Gandong’s values shape students into individuals with strong social awareness. Character education based on local values educates students cognitively, emotionally, and socially. Character education should instill moral virtues that support individual well-being and societal harmony (Berkowitz et al., 2020; Lickona, 2013). The value of brotherhood embedded in Pela and Gandong provides a strong moral foundation for students to appreciate differences and strengthen social cohesion within the school environment.

Integrating these values into the hidden curriculum demonstrates how education can extend beyond the boundaries of the formal curriculum. By practicing local values in daily life, schools become spaces where students learn academic knowledge and how to coexist harmoniously, even amidst diversity.

4.2. *Famili* as the Foundation for Strengthening Kinship and Solidarity in Schools

The *Famili* culture, which reflects strong kinship and social bonds, is evident in various interactions among students, teachers, and school staff. Based on observations, a warm, family-like atmosphere is visible when teachers mediate minor conflicts between students using a personal, attentive, and empathetic approach. One teacher revealed that in every conflict, they always try to speak with students individually, provide understanding, and encourage them to see the issue from another perspective. “We do not only act as educators but also strive to be second parents at school,” stated one teacher. This sense of kinship extends beyond student interactions to include teacher-student relationships. For instance, in some cases, teachers proactively assist students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds by providing them with learning materials. Even school principals are often regarded as “second parents,” demonstrating care and affection for students, especially those who require greater social and academic support.

Additionally, observations show that many schools in Maluku, particularly those in remote areas, play a significant role in ensuring academic, emotional, and psychological student well-being. In interviews with several students, they referred to school as a second home, offering them a sense of security and attention they may not always receive at home. One student stated, “When I am at school, I feel like I am at home. The teachers here care about us, not just academics but also our lives.”

These findings emphasize the importance of kinship values in creating an inclusive and peaceful school environment. A school environment that reflects kinship values fosters solidarity and mutual support among students while strengthening relationships between teachers and students (Abdullah et al., 2023). This *Familial* approach aligns with humanistic education theory, emphasizing that empathetic and caring relationships are key to developing students’ character and awareness of social environments (Sun, 2019). Attentive interpersonal relationships in educational settings allow students to grow academically and emotionally optimally.

With interactions rooted in kinship values, schools become formal learning institutions and supportive communities for students’ social and emotional development. In this context, schools function beyond their conventional role as educational institutions, transforming into “extended *Families*” that prioritize the well-being of all their members. This model reflects the school’s role as an agent of socialization, extending family values into the educational sphere, consistent with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, in which social values within a community are reflected and reinforced through school interactions (Bourdieu, 1986).

Following Bourdieu’s perspective, the *Famili* values practiced in schools also help shape a more inclusive and tolerant habitus. These kinship values foster an open school culture where everyone is valued and included. Through principles such as mutual care and sharing, students are taught to be more aware of differences and to perceive the school as a broader community beyond a mere place of learning. Students learn directly from daily interactions about maintaining healthy and peaceful social relationships in this *Familial* atmosphere.

Reinforcing kinship values in schools also significantly impacts students’ character development. Character education integrated with *Famili* values strengthens the bond between students and teachers, fostering a sense of mutual respect and appreciation. Lickona emphasizes that effective character education teaches moral values and involves students in real-life practices, such as interacting with one another in a school environment that mirrors a family (Lickona, 2013). Thus, applying *Famili* values in schools promotes academic achievement

and cultivates students into individuals who care for others, manage conflicts effectively, and strengthen social bonds within the school environment.

4.3. The Practice of Badati and Masohi as Tools for Promoting Cooperation and Social Solidarity

The Badati and Masohi practices, representing forms of *gotong royong* (cooperation) in Maluku's local culture, have become integral to school learning. Observational data show that students actively participate in various project-based activities, such as cleaning the school environment, organizing school events, and engaging in community service projects. One of the routine activities observed was students gathering to clean the schoolyard every weekend, an event also attended by teachers and school staff. An informal interview with one of the students highlighted how this experience taught them valuable lessons about togetherness and cooperation. "When we work together, all differences become irrelevant. What matters is that we complete the task successfully," said an 11th-grade student. Student involvement in such activities strengthens social cohesion and significantly reduces potential conflicts due to religious or social status differences.

Beyond school cleaning initiatives, Masohi activities also involve students in community service projects, such as helping build homes for underprivileged *Families* or organizing social events for nearby villages. A school principal interviewed informally emphasized the importance of Masohi as a medium to introduce the younger generation to the value of cooperation. "These activities not only teach them about hard work but also about the importance of helping others without expecting anything in return," he stated. Through Masohi, students learn about the significance of social solidarity and how they can contribute to strengthening their communities.

These findings reaffirm that Badati and Masohi are crucial in fostering student social solidarity. These two *gotong royong* practices are meant for accomplishing physical tasks and are highly effective mediums for reducing social and cultural differences among students. This aligns with Putnam's social cohesion theory, which asserts that group cooperation can reduce social fragmentation and enhance a sense of unity (Putnam, 2000). When students work together on projects requiring collective responsibility, they learn to set aside personal differences and focus on shared goals.

The Badati and Masohi practices demonstrate how Maluku's local wisdom can be adapted into formal education to create an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. As explained by Vygotsky & Cole's social learning theory, social interactions in a cooperative setting accelerate the learning process and foster a sense of belonging among students (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Through *gotong royong* activities, students learn about moral values and acquire practical skills that will be useful in their future lives. This proves that education is not merely about knowledge transfer but also about character formation through real-life practice.

Furthermore, adapting cooperation-based activities can be seen as schools' efforts to function as effective agents in reinforcing solidarity. According to Durkheim, social solidarity is key to maintaining societal cohesion (Durkheim, 2023). In the school context, Badati and Masohi provide students with direct experiences in teamwork, understanding their role in the community, and building strong social bonds with their peers. Students accustomed to working together on collective projects are more likely to develop mutual respect and stronger peer relationships, ultimately minimizing potential conflicts.

Moreover, these findings also reflect Korstenbroek's perspective, which emphasizes the importance of communication in achieving understanding and consensus within social groups (Korstenbroek, 2022). In *gotong royong* activities, students learn to communicate effectively, resolve differences through discussion, and collaborate to achieve common goals. This process goes beyond physical labor—it involves negotiation, coordination, and the development of deeper cooperation, which positively affects their social lives beyond school.

In this regard, the Badati and Masohi practices in Maluku schools serve as an important bridge connecting students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, teaching them the importance of collaboration and mutual support. By strengthening social cohesion and solidarity, these activities contribute to students' academic success and help shape individuals who are more empathetic, socially aware, and prepared to contribute positively to their communities.

4.4. Ma'anun Values as the Foundation of Tolerance in Schools

The Ma'anun value, which refers to respect for differences in Maluku culture, has been successfully internalized in school through various educational approaches. Interviews with several teachers revealed that they actively integrate the Ma'anun principle into lessons, particularly in subjects related to social studies, religion, and civics. These teachers do not only teach tolerance theoretically but also encourage students to view religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity as a strength that enriches communal life. One teacher stated, "We strive to instill in our students the understanding that the diversity in our classroom is our wealth. No one is superior or inferior—we are all equally important." This is implemented through classroom discussions, conflict simulations, peaceful resolution exercises, and group activities involving students from various backgrounds. Interviews with one student also revealed that this approach helped them better accept peers from different faiths and backgrounds, fostering mutual respect.

Teachers also often use a personalized approach to handle situations that could lead to division, such as minor conflicts arising from differences in viewpoints or identity-related issues. "We always encourage students to talk, listen to one another, and find solutions that prioritize unity," explained one school principal. This demonstrates how Ma'anun is not only part of the formal curriculum but is also embodied in daily interactions within the school environment.

These findings support the relevance of Ma'anun values in character education, particularly in cultivating respect for diversity, which is essential in multicultural societies such as Maluku. Berkowitz et al. (assert that character education should focus on moral development and values that promote social cohesion, with respect for differences as one of its core pillars (Berkowitz et al., 2020). In Maluku, which has a history of religious-based conflicts, education emphasizing respect for diversity is highly urgent in preventing future tensions.

The application of Ma'anun aligns with the inclusive education theory proposed by Williams & Carter, which highlights the importance of creating an educational environment that is open and accepting of diversity (Williams & Carter, 2022). This theory asserts that schools must be spaces where all students feel accepted and respected regardless of their backgrounds. By teaching Ma'anun, schools in Maluku educate students to achieve academic success and shape them into individuals who can live harmoniously amidst differences. This is especially crucial considering Maluku's historical religious tensions. Teaching respect for differences through Ma'anun also reinforces the need to create a peaceful and inclusive learning environment. In this regard, teachers play a critical role as agents of change, facilitating dialogue and mutual

understanding among students. A school environment that fosters diversity significantly shapes a more tolerant society (Sulaiman et al., 2023). When values like Ma'an'u are consistently taught and practiced, students learn to respect others and recognize that diversity is a source of strength rather than a threat.

From a sociology of education perspective, integrating local cultural values like Ma'an'u into character education can be a key strategy for fostering social cohesion. Education is crucial in promoting social solidarity (Herzog, 2018). By instilling local values that encourage respect and brotherhood, schools lay the foundation for a more harmonious society. Ma'an'u, as a reflection of Maluku's communal values, can serve as a bridge to overcome social divisions, strengthen relationships among students from diverse backgrounds, and educate a generation that is more aware of and sensitive to diversity.

Furthermore, implementing Ma'an'u in education reflects Freire's perspective on education as a tool for empowerment. Freire believes education should empower students to critically analyze their social realities and become change agents (Freire, 2020). By internalizing Ma'an'u values, students learn to accept differences and recognize their role in creating a more just and inclusive society. They are encouraged to reflect on past conflicts and how values of brotherhood and respect for diversity can prevent similar tensions from reoccurring.

4.5. Tolerance and Peace through the Development of a Local Culture-Based Curriculum

This study found that a hidden curriculum based on Maluku's local culture – incorporating values such as Pela, Gandong, Badati, Masohi, and Ma'an'u – plays a crucial role in fostering a school environment conducive to tolerance and peace. Although these values are not explicitly stated in the formal curriculum, teachers recognize that their internalization through various school activities significantly impacts students' character development. Interviews with several teachers revealed that they frequently incorporate these local cultural values into daily interactions, both in teaching and extracurricular activities. One teacher noted, "Cultural values such as Badati and Pela are often taught through direct examples when students collaborate in groups. This is far more effective than simply teaching through textbooks." These findings reaffirm that local cultural aspects serve as an active hidden curriculum, shaping students' thinking and behavior in their social interactions.

Moreover, field observations indicate that students learn about these cultural values theoretically and actively practice them through collaborative activities, such as community service projects and *gotong royong* (cooperation) initiatives involving students from diverse backgrounds. One school principal emphasized, "Through joint activities, we strive to instill cultural values such as cooperation and unity. This is an inseparable part of the character education we promote." Consequently, Maluku's local culture-based hidden curriculum has proven to be an effective means of fostering social solidarity while minimizing potential student conflicts.

These findings have important implications for curriculum development in Maluku, particularly in designing an educational approach more contextual and relevant to the region's sociocultural conditions. As a region with a history of religious and ethnic-based conflicts, integrating local values into the formal education system could be a vital step in strengthening social harmony and cohesion. As Lee et al. state, the hidden curriculum is an unwritten yet highly influential element in shaping students' character (Lee et al., 2023). These values are often absorbed indirectly through social interactions and daily school activities, but their impact is far more profound than what is immediately visible. In Maluku's context, the values of Pela,

Gandong, and Masohi, which emphasize brotherhood and cross-group cooperation, have demonstrated great potential in creating an inclusive and peaceful educational climate.

Given these findings, the Maluku regional government must consider formally integrating these cultural values into the education system. While these values are currently internalized through the hidden curriculum, a more systematic approach could be taken to ensure that all students in Maluku receive an education deeply rooted in local wisdom. The multicultural education theory proposed by Mirzachaerulsyah et al. supports this approach, emphasizing the importance of recognizing diversity and incorporating local cultures into the curriculum (Mirzachaerulsyah et al., 2023). An education system based on local values will help students understand and appreciate their culture and equip them with the necessary skills to live in a pluralistic society.

Furthermore, such policy initiatives would align with national education goals, as outlined in the National Education System Law, which emphasizes character development to shape individuals who are morally upright, socially aware, and capable of peaceful coexistence. Integrating Pela and Gandong values into the formal curriculum would substantially reduce regional social tensions in Maluku's context. Therefore, a local culture-based hidden curriculum should not be seen as a supplementary or informal educational element but as a core component in developing a more inclusive and contextually relevant curriculum.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating Maluku's local cultural values—Pela, Gandong, Badati, Masohi, and Ma'anu—through the hidden curriculum is crucial in fostering an inclusive, harmonious, and peaceful school environment. Although these values are not explicitly written in the formal curriculum, they are integral to character education, and implemented through daily school activities. Teachers, students, and school principals play a key role in internalizing these values, directly contributing to social cohesion, respect for diversity, and solidarity across religious and social differences.

The values of Pela and Gandong have been successfully integrated into educational practices through collaborative activities, such as group projects, sports, and community service initiatives, helping to reduce potential conflicts caused by religious differences. The *Famili* value reflects the importance of strong kinship bonds between teachers, students, and staff, creating a supportive and empathetic school environment. Meanwhile, the Badati and Masohi practices instill the spirit of *gotong royong* (cooperation) in students, reinforcing social solidarity and serving as key tools for fostering collaboration in overcoming shared challenges.

The findings of this study support inclusive education and social cohesion theories, emphasizing that social interactions and cooperation within schools can reduce social fragmentation. The integration of local values also aligns with the hidden curriculum, which, while not explicitly documented, has a significant impact on shaping students' character. Therefore, it is essential for Maluku's regional government and education policymakers to formally integrate these cultural values into the education curriculum as a strategic step toward strengthening peace and inclusivity in a region with a history of social conflict.

Overall, an education system based on Maluku's local values has great potential to cultivate a younger generation that is tolerant, resilient, and capable of thriving in a diverse and peaceful society. The findings of this study indicate that a hidden curriculum rooted in local wisdom is not only relevant in Maluku but can also be adapted to other regions with similar sociocultural backgrounds.

6. Acknowledgment

The authors extend their sincere gratitude to the principals, teachers, students, and parents of Ambon State Senior High School 1, Ambon State Senior High School 10, Ambon State Senior High School 2, Central Maluku State Senior High School 1, Amahai State Senior High School 3, and Tehoru State Senior High School 3 for their valuable participation and contributions to this study. The authors also thank the Department of Education of Ambon City and Central Maluku Regency for their continuous support. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge the insightful feedback from academic colleagues and the reviewers, whose constructive suggestions have helped refine this article.

7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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