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Malay Local Wisdom-Based Ethnopedagogy Integrated with the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children: Associations with Civic Character and Social Literacy among Elementary Students

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ABSTRACT

Culturally grounded instruction may strengthen civic character and social literacy by connecting learning with students' cultural experiences. However, limited evidence has examined Deli Malay local wisdom integrated with the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Movement (G7KAIH) compared with an active value-based approach. This study examined differences in civic character and social literacy between Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and Value Clarification Technique (VCT) conditions. A quantitative pretest-posttest control-group design with intact-class random assignment was conducted in two elementary schools in Medan, Indonesia. The sample included 73 fifth-grade students: 38 in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group and 35 in the VCT group. Data were collected using a civic character questionnaire and social literacy test and analyzed using MANCOVA with pretest scores as covariates. A significant multivariate difference was observed, Pillai's Trace = .301, $F(2, 68) = 14.658$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .301$. Adjusted mean differences favored Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH by 15.94 points for civic character and 12.78 points for social literacy. Because students were nested within only two intact classes, the findings represent sample-specific differences between instructional conditions rather than definitive causal effects. Replication with multiple classes and schools is needed to establish broader effectiveness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digitalization-driven social change has expanded the contexts in which elementary school students interact while simultaneously increasing the need to strengthen their civic character and social literacy. Internet-based learning without adequate value-oriented

guidance may diminish the quality of face-to-face interaction, care, respect, ethical conduct, and responsibility in students' daily lives [1]. Living in a multicultural society also requires students to understand diversity, demonstrate inclusive attitudes, and critically evaluate social information as part of their civic competence [2]. Technological development that is not balanced by the reinforcement of cultural values may foster individualism and pragmatism while weakening students' attachment to their local identities and social environments [3].

These challenges require elementary education to adopt learning approaches that connect civic values with the cultures embedded in students' immediate environments. Character education grounded in local wisdom can provide an ethical foundation, strengthen cultural identity, and help students adapt to social change without losing the fundamental values of their communities [4]. A meta-analysis of 30 studies found that local wisdom-based learning media had a significant effect on students' character, with an effect size of 1.237, categorized as very strong, and no indication of publication bias [5]. Ethnopedagogy enables community values, traditions, social practices, and lived experiences to be integrated into meaningful learning activities [6], [7].

Malay local wisdom in this study specifically refers to Deli Malay local wisdom rather than Riau Malay culture or a generalized Malay cultural framework. Deli Malay culture developed along the eastern coast of North Sumatra, particularly in Medan and Deli Serdang, which constitute the sociocultural setting of the study [8]. Deli Malay local wisdom encompasses politeness in communication, respect for others, appreciation of customary traditions, social harmony, solidarity, moral responsibility, and a balanced relationship between humans and the environment. These values are expressed through pantun, customary expressions, natural symbolism, communication etiquette, and community social practices [9].

Deli Malay pantun functions not only as oral literature but also as a medium for cultural communication, moral education, social ethics formation, and the transmission of environmental knowledge. Its verses represent politeness, mutual respect, solidarity, cultural preservation, and natural symbolism through which moral and social meanings are communicated [9]. Ecolinguistic evidence further demonstrates that Deli Malay pantun contains representations of flora, fauna, ecological landscapes, and natural phenomena that convey social ethics and human-environment relationships [9]. These characteristics make Deli Malay cultural practices relevant resources for contextualizing civic values and social issues in elementary education.

The implementation of ethnopedagogy requires learning resources and activities that are appropriate to students' cognitive development and social experiences. Local wisdom-based teaching materials have been shown to be feasible and effective in improving learning outcomes while supporting character development through contextual and meaningful learning [10]. Local cultural content remains inadequately represented in school textbooks, indicating a need for learning resources that connect curricular competencies with students' cultural environments [11]. Character education also continues to face limitations in the availability of methodologically sound instructional models, although the integration of local

cultural values has contributed to discipline, solidarity, social concern, and the ability to prioritize collective interests [12], [13].

The Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Movement (G7KAIH) is a national character education program developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to cultivate positive behavior through consistent daily habituation. The program promotes seven habits: waking up early, engaging in religious observance, exercising, consuming healthy and nutritious food, enjoying learning, participating in community life, and going to bed early [14]. Its implementation involves collaboration among educational institutions, families, and communities and may be adapted to different sociocultural contexts [15]. G7KAIH supports children's physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social development while fostering discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. The integrated approach positions ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay local wisdom, and G7KAIH as three distinct but complementary components. Ethnopedagogy functions as the instructional framework that organizes learning around students' cultural and social experiences. Deli Malay local wisdom provides the cultural content and value system through which students interpret civic and social issues. G7KAIH functions as the habituation mechanism that translates culturally contextualized values into recurring practices in school, family, and community settings. This integration connects cultural understanding, value reflection, and repeated behavioral enactment.

Cultural contextualization makes responsibility, tolerance, respect, social concern, deliberation, and participation more concrete and relevant to students. G7KAIH-based habituation provides repeated opportunities to apply these values in everyday life. The combined process is expected to strengthen the transition from value understanding to internalization and from internalization to consistent civic behavior. Civic character and social literacy are examined simultaneously because they represent complementary dimensions of students' capacity to participate constructively in social life. Civic character concerns students' dispositions and behavioral values, including responsibility, respect, tolerance, social concern, and willingness to participate appropriately in collective life, whereas social literacy concerns students' ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and respond appropriately to social situations and problems. Examining both outcomes together therefore makes it possible to determine whether an instructional approach not only develops students' value-based dispositions but also equips them with the social understanding and reasoning needed to apply those values when interpreting and responding to real-life social situations. The Value Clarification Technique (VCT) offers a relevant comparison approach because it helps students select, analyze, appreciate, and take responsibility for values through discussion, reflection, and decision-making activities [16], [17]. Previous reviews indicate that VCT can strengthen cooperation, tolerance, responsibility, social concern, moral reasoning, empathy, and respect for others' opinions [18], [19]. Its implementation may still be constrained by conventional teaching practices, limited instructional media, insufficient contextual problems, and inadequate teacher understanding of value clarification processes [20].

Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT both actively engage students in value education but operate through different mechanisms. VCT primarily emphasizes value selection,

consequence consideration, appreciation, justification, and action. Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH combines value reflection with cultural contextualization and repeated habituation. The integrated approach is expected to provide additional benefits by simultaneously supporting cognitive understanding, affective attachment to culturally meaningful values, and behavioral enactment through daily practice. This distinction is particularly relevant to the two outcomes examined in this study: civic character reflects whether students develop stable value-based dispositions and behavioral orientations.

In contrast, social literacy reflects whether students can use social understanding and evaluative reasoning to interpret and respond to social circumstances. Accordingly, improvement in only one outcome would provide an incomplete picture of the intervention's educational contribution. In contrast, simultaneous improvement in both outcomes would indicate a more comprehensive development of students' capacity to understand social situations and act according to civic values. Previous studies show that culturally grounded instruction can support character development, conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and cultural literacy. A thematic module based on Riau Malay ethnopedagogy improved fifth-grade students' conceptual understanding and cultural literacy but did not examine civic character and social literacy simultaneously [21]. Culturally integrated citizenship education materials also influenced critical thinking and cultural literacy, but the study was conducted at the secondary level and did not compare ethnopedagogy with VCT.

The Riau Malay study demonstrates the broader educational potential of Malay ethnopedagogy but does not represent the cultural basis of the present intervention. Research on Deli Malay culture has primarily examined pantun values, communication functions, moral education, cultural preservation, and ecological meanings through qualitative approaches [8], [9]. Existing evidence has not established how Deli Malay values can be operationalized within an elementary school intervention integrated with a national habituation program. The research gap extends beyond the limited number of studies examining both outcomes. In particular, examining civic character and social literacy simultaneously matters because culturally responsive value education may influence both what students value and how they understand and respond to social situations. Treating these outcomes as separate and unrelated dimensions would overlook the possibility that value internalization and social reasoning reinforce one another in the development of socially responsible behavior. The conceptual relationship between cultural contextualization, systematic habituation, value internalization, civic dispositions, and social problem-solving remains insufficiently explained. Methodological evidence is also limited because previous studies have commonly focused on instructional-material development, a single outcome, descriptive cultural analysis, or comparisons with conventional instruction rather than an active value-education approach.

This study addresses these conceptual, contextual, comparative, and methodological gaps by examining civic character and social literacy simultaneously, controlling for pretest scores, and comparing Deli Malay local wisdom-based ethnopedagogy integrated with G7KAIH with VCT. Simultaneously assessing both outcomes provides a more complete evaluation of the intervention by capturing both the dispositional-behavioral dimension of civic character and the cognitive-social dimension of social literacy. Its conceptual novelty

lies in combining cultural contextualization and behavioral habituation. Its instructional novelty lies in positioning ethnopedagogy as the framework, Deli Malay local wisdom as the cultural content, and G7KAIH as the habituation mechanism. Its methodological novelty lies in examining two outcomes simultaneously and using VCT as an active comparison condition. This study aimed to examine the effects of Deli Malay local wisdom-based ethnopedagogy integrated with G7KAIH on elementary school students' civic character and social literacy, using VCT as an active comparison approach. By examining the outcomes together, the study evaluates whether the intervention can bridge students' value-based dispositions with their ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and respond to social situations. The study contributes theoretically by explaining how cultural meaningfulness and repeated habituation may jointly support value internalization and social understanding, and contributes practically by providing a culturally responsive framework for implementing G7KAIH in elementary education. The research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H1. After controlling for civic character and social literacy pretest scores, students taught through Deli Malay local wisdom-based Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH will demonstrate higher combined adjusted civic character and social literacy outcomes than students taught through VCT.

H2. After controlling for civic character pretest scores, students taught through Deli Malay local wisdom-based Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH will demonstrate higher adjusted civic character scores than students taught through VCT.

H3. After controlling for social literacy pretest scores, students taught through Deli Malay local wisdom-based Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH will demonstrate higher adjusted social literacy scores than students taught through VCT.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a true experimental pretest-posttest design to compare elementary school students' civic character and social literacy under two instructional conditions: Deli Malay local wisdom-based ethnopedagogy integrated with the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Movement (G7KAIH) and the Value Clarification Technique (VCT). The quantitative approach was selected because the study involved numerical measurement, hypothesis testing, between-group comparisons, and statistical analysis [22], [23]. Randomization was conducted at the intact-class level. We selected two eligible fifth-grade classes and randomly allocated them to the two instructional conditions through a simple drawing of lots after the pretest. One class was assigned to the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group, while the other was assigned to the VCT active comparison group. Students remained in their original classes throughout the study. Both groups completed civic character and social literacy pretests before the intervention and corresponding posttests after the intervention. Civic character and social literacy pretest scores were included as covariates, while the corresponding posttest scores served as the dependent variables. Each instructional condition was represented by only one intact class. Potential differences associated with the class, school, facilities, and learning context were therefore considered when interpreting the findings.

2.2. Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted at SD Swasta PAB 27 Tanjung Mulia and SD Negeri 066652 Helvetia in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The participants were 73 fifth-grade students from two intact classes. The sample included 38 students from SD Swasta PAB 27 Tanjung Mulia and 35 students from SD Negeri 066652 Helvetia. The schools and classes were selected through purposive sampling based on the availability of fifth-grade classes, the schools' willingness to participate throughout the study, compatibility between the school schedules and the intervention, and readiness to implement the instructional procedures. Purposive sampling enables researchers to select study units that meet the study's objectives and methodological requirements [24]. Students were eligible to participate when they were officially enrolled in the selected fifth-grade classes, obtained parental or guardian consent, agreed to participate, completed the pretest and posttest, and attended at least five of the six instructional sessions. Students were excluded from the analysis when they withdrew, missed either assessment, did not meet the attendance requirement, or submitted responses that could not be scored. All 73 participants completed the study, and no data were missing.

The two eligible classes were randomized through a simple drawing of lots conducted by the researcher after the pretest. One class comprising 38 students was assigned to the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group, while the other class comprising 35 students was assigned to the VCT group. The allocation results were communicated to the teacher after all students completed the pretest. The same teacher delivered instruction to both groups. The teacher received guidance regarding the research objectives, instructional materials, Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT procedures, and assessment procedures. Using the same teacher was intended to reduce variation associated with teaching style, instructional experience, and classroom management.

2.3. Intervention Procedures

The intervention was conducted over six sessions, with each session lasting 70 minutes. Both groups received the same general topics, learning objectives, number of sessions, and time allocations. The groups differed in the instructional framework and mechanisms used to support value internalization. The Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group received instruction that positioned ethnopedagogy as the instructional framework, Deli Malay local wisdom as the cultural content, and G7KAIH as the habituation mechanism. The cultural materials included pantun, customary expressions, natural symbolism, communication etiquette, and Deli Malay communities' social practices. The values addressed included politeness, respect, responsibility, discipline, deliberation, cooperation, social concern, appreciation of customary traditions, and harmony between humans and the environment.

G7KAIH included seven daily habits: waking up early, engaging in religious observance, exercising, consuming healthy and nutritious food, enjoying learning, participating in community life, and going to bed early. The VCT group followed the stages of choosing, prizing, and acting. These stages involved selecting values, considering the consequences of available alternatives, appreciating the selected values, explaining the

reasons for the choices, and planning corresponding actions. Table 1 presents the topics, cultural materials, instructional activities, and targeted outcomes for the six sessions.

Table 1. Six-Session Instructional Intervention

Session	Topic	Deli Malay Cultural Material	Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH Activities	VCT Activities	Targeted Outcomes
1	Politeness and respect	Pantun about greetings and communication etiquette	Analyzing pantun and role-playing polite communication	Selecting and explaining appropriate forms of communication	Tolerance and social understanding
2	Responsibility and discipline	Values related to keeping promises and following rules	Analyzing responsibilities and developing daily habit plans	Clarifying value choices related to fulfilling responsibilities	Responsibility and problem identification
3	Deliberation and cooperation	Pantun about solidarity and cooperation	Solving problems through group deliberation	Selecting and defending alternative decisions	Civic participation and social analysis
4	Tolerance and social concern	Pantun about harmony and mutual respect	Analyzing peer conflicts and designing supportive social actions	Clarifying values in situations involving differences of opinion	Social concern and social evaluation
5	Health and environmental concern	Natural symbolism in Deli Malay pantun	Analyzing health and environmental problems	Selecting responsible actions related to health and the environment	Social analysis and problem solving
6	Integration of civic values	Previously studied pantun and social practices	Reflecting on learning and developing a habituation plan	Reflecting on selected values and developing an action plan	Civic character and social literacy

Instructional implementation was observed during each session using a 12-indicator observation sheet with a four-point rating scale. The implementation indicators covered adherence to the instructional stages, use of cultural materials, student participation, reflection activities, reinforcement of daily habits, time management, and achievement of learning objectives. The implementation fidelity score was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Implementation Fidelity Score} = \left(\frac{\text{Obtained Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}}\right) \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

2.4. Instrument

The independent variable was the instructional condition, while the dependent variables were civic character and social literacy. The pretest scores for both dependent variables were included as covariates. The civic character questionnaire was developed by synthesizing indicators of civic behavior relevant to elementary school students and

culturally grounded character education [25], [26]. The questionnaire consisted of 40 statements rated on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). Negatively worded items were reverse-scored before the total Score was calculated. Table 2 presents the dimensions, operational indicators, and item distribution of the Civic Character Questionnaire.

Table 2. Civic Character Questionnaire Blueprint

No.	Aspect	Operational Indicators	Number of Items
1	Responsibility	Completing assignments, fulfilling obligations, keeping promises, admitting mistakes, and accepting the consequences of one's actions	8
2	Discipline	Following classroom and school rules, being punctual, maintaining order, and practicing positive daily habits	8
3	Tolerance	Respecting differences, listening to others' opinions, avoiding ridicule, and treating classmates respectfully	8
4	Social Care	Helping others, protecting the environment, participating in mutual assistance, and prioritizing shared interests	8
5	Social Participation	Participating in deliberation, expressing opinions politely, cooperating with others, and carrying out collective decisions	8
		Total	40

The raw questionnaire score ranged from 40 to 160. The raw Score was transformed into a scale ranging from 0 to 100 using the following formula:

$$\text{Civic Character Score} = \left(\frac{\text{Raw Score} - 40}{120}\right) \times 100 \quad 2)$$

Table 3. Social Literacy Test Blueprint

No.	Aspect	Operational Indicators	Multiple-Choice Items	Essay Items
1	Social Understanding	Understanding social norms, roles, rights, responsibilities, interactions, and cultural diversity	6	1
2	Problem Identification	Identifying social problems, the parties involved, relevant information, and the main issue in a social situation	6	1
3	Social Analysis	Explaining causes and consequences, relationships among social events, and the effects of individual or group actions	6	1
4	Social Evaluation	Comparing opinions, distinguishing facts from opinions, evaluating information, and considering different perspectives	6	1
5	Problem Solving	Selecting appropriate solutions, providing logical reasons, considering fairness, and proposing responsible actions	6	1
		Total	30	5

The social literacy test was developed to measure students' abilities to understand social situations, identify and analyze social problems, evaluate information and perspectives, and determine responsible solutions [27]. The test consisted of 30 multiple-choice items and five constructed-response items. Each dimension was measured using six multiple-choice items and one constructed-response item. Table 3 presents the dimensions, operational indicators, and item distribution of the social literacy test.

Each correct multiple-choice response received one point, while incorrect or unanswered items received zero points. Each constructed-response item was scored from 0 to 4 using an analytic rubric. The maximum total Score was 50, comprising 30 points from the multiple-choice section and 20 points from the constructed-response section. The social literacy score was converted into a scale ranging from 0 to 100 using the following formula:

$$\text{Social Literacy Score} = \left(\frac{\text{Obtained Score}}{50}\right) \times 100 \quad 3)$$

Form A was administered during the pretest, while Form B was administered during the posttest. Both forms were designed to be equivalent in terms of dimensions, indicators, number of items, content coverage, and difficulty level.

2.5. Instrument Validity and Reliability

Instrument quality was evaluated through measurement model analysis using SmartPLS 4, based on pretest data from 73 participants. The measurement model comprised five dimensions of civic character and five dimensions of social literacy. Convergent validity was assessed using indicator outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). Indicators with outer loadings of at least .70 were considered acceptable, while dimensions with AVE values of at least .50 were considered to demonstrate adequate convergent validity. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values of at least .70 considered acceptable [28]. The outer loading ranges, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, composite reliability values, and AVE values for each dimension are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Aspect	Number of Indicators	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Civic Character	Responsibility	8	.832-.913	.956	.963	.764
	Discipline	8	.720-.890	.949	.957	.692
	Tolerance	8	.860-.930	.950	.960	.800
	Social Concern	8	.849-.913	.960	.966	.781
	Civic Participation	8	.853-.935	.960	.966	.783
Social Literacy	Social Understanding	7	.882-.943	.965	.971	.826
	Problem Identification	7	.848-.947	.962	.968	.814
	Social Analysis	7	.861-.956	.969	.974	.843
	Social Evaluation	7	.874-.953	.968	.973	.838
	Problem Solving	7	.831-.921	.948	.958	.764

As presented in Table 4, the indicator outer loadings ranged from .720 to .956 and met the recommended minimum criterion of .70. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .948 to .969, while composite reliability values ranged from .957 to .974. The AVE values ranged from .692 to .843. All coefficients exceeded the recommended thresholds, indicating adequate convergent validity and internal consistency reliability. Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). HTMT values below .85 indicated adequate empirical distinction among the dimensions [29]. The discriminant validity results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Results

Dimension	CP	D	PI	PS	R	SA	SC	SE	SU	T
Civic Participation (CP)										
Discipline (D)	.649									
Problem Identification (PI)	.155	.111								
Problem Solving (PS)	.059	.092	.510							
Responsibility (R)	.526	.623	.092	.103						
Social Analysis (SA)	.076	.093	.542	.672	.090					
Social Concern (SC)	.553	.675	.101	.081	.435	.136				
Social Evaluation (SE)	.157	.228	.567	.543	.078	.523	.109			
Social Understanding (SU)	.120	.157	.621	.457	.076	.473	.070	.625		
Tolerance (T)	.565	.696	.072	.103	.541	.077	.528	.124	.106	

As shown in Table 5, all HTMT values were below .85, ranging from .059 to .696. These findings indicated adequate discriminant validity among the ten dimensions. The measurement model therefore demonstrated acceptable convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity.

2.6. Data Collection and Analysis

Both groups completed the civic character questionnaire and Form A of the social literacy test as pretest measures. The intervention was subsequently conducted over six instructional sessions. The Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group received culturally contextualized instruction integrated with the seven G7KAIH habits, while the comparison group received instruction through VCT. Both groups then completed the civic character questionnaire and Form B of the social literacy test as posttest measures. All responses were checked, scored, anonymized, and entered into the research dataset. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate means, standard deviations, minimum scores, and maximum scores. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to examine differences in civic character and social literacy between the groups after controlling for the corresponding pretest scores. The instructional condition served as the independent variable, the posttest scores served as the dependent variables, and the pretest scores served as the covariates.

Assumption testing included univariate normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test, multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance, homogeneity of variance using Levene's test, homogeneity of covariance matrices using Box's M test, linearity, multicollinearity, and homogeneity of regression slopes. The multivariate group difference was evaluated using

Pillai's Trace. The analysis was followed by Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, estimated marginal means, 95% confidence intervals, partial eta squared, and pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment. Statistical significance was evaluated at an alpha level of .05. The study involved one intact class in each instructional condition. Student observations within the same class could not be assumed to be fully independent. The MANCOVA results were interpreted as exploratory comparisons while considering possible influences associated with the class, school, and learning context. No a priori power analysis was conducted because the sample included all eligible students from the two participating classes. Research permission was obtained from both schools. Written consent was obtained from parents or guardians, while student assent was obtained before participation. Participation was voluntary, participant identities were replaced with identification codes, and all data were stored confidentially.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Participant Flow and Classroom Characteristics

A total of 73 fifth-grade students from two intact classes were allocated to the instructional conditions and included in the analysis. The Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition comprised 38 students, while the VCT condition comprised 35 students. Complete pretest and posttest data were available for all participants, and no cases were excluded because of missing data. The available participant flow and classroom information are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Participant Flow and Classroom Characteristics by Instructional Condition

Characteristic	Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH	VCT
School	SD Swasta PAB 27 Tanjung Mulia	SD Negeri 066652 Helvetia
Grade level	Fifth grade	Fifth grade
Unit of allocation	One intact class	One intact class
Students allocated, *n*	38	35
Students completing the pretest, *n*	38	35
Students completing the posttest, *n*	38	35
Students included in the analysis, *n*	38	35
Cases excluded because of missing data, *n*	0	0
Teacher	Same teacher	Same teacher
Instructional sessions	6	6
Duration per session	70 minutes	70 minutes

As shown in Table 6, all allocated students completed the pretest and posttest and were included in the analysis. Both conditions involved one intact fifth-grade class, the same teacher, six instructional sessions, and an equal duration of 70 minutes per session. The study did not report individual demographic characteristics because such data were not available in the study records.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the pretest and posttest scores for civic character and social literacy in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT groups. Data from all 73 students were included in the analysis because no values were missing. The descriptive statistical results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Civic Character and Social Literacy Scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Civic Character Pretest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	38	49.74	25.648	8	99
	VCT	35	49.62	26.000	4	97
Civic Character Posttest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	38	73.40	18.022	23	100
	VCT	35	57.31	22.865	5	98
Social Literacy Pretest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	38	48.95	26.401	0	96
	VCT	35	48.11	24.800	2	96
Social Literacy Posttest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	38	69.11	19.841	14	100
	VCT	35	55.94	21.124	2	96

Table 7 shows that the mean civic character pretest scores were numerically similar between the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT groups. A similar descriptive pattern emerged for mean social literacy pretest scores. These similarities should not be interpreted as evidence of complete group equivalence because each condition involved a different intact class and school. After the intervention, mean scores for both civic character and social literacy increased in both groups. The Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group showed a mean increase of 23.66 points in civic character and 20.16 points in social literacy. The VCT group showed a mean increase of 7.69 points in civic character and 7.83 points in social literacy. The increases were greater in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group, which also obtained higher posttest means than the VCT group for both outcomes.

3.3. Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test because each group comprised fewer than 50 students. The normality assumption was considered satisfied when the corresponding p-value was greater than .05. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Variable	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.
Civic Character Pretest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	0.955	38	0.128
	VCT	0.961	35	0.253
Civic Character Posttest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	0.947	38	0.072
	VCT	0.974	35	0.553
Social Literacy Pretest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	0.947	38	0.072
	VCT	0.974	35	0.575
Social Literacy Posttest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	0.951	38	0.099
	VCT	0.969	35	0.411

Table 8 shows that all pretest and posttest scores had Shapiro-Wilk p-values greater than .05. The score distributions therefore showed no statistically significant departures from normality. Homogeneity assumptions were assessed using Box's M test, Levene's tests, and interaction tests between the instructional condition and each covariate. Box's M test examined the equality of covariance matrices, while Levene's tests assessed the equality of variances for each dependent variable. The interactions between the instructional condition and the covariates were examined to assess the homogeneity of regression slopes. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Homogeneity Assumption Test Results

Test	Variable or Effect	Test Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	Decision
Box's M	Covariance matrices	M = 2.808; F = 0.907	3	1.169, 956.389	0.436	Met
Levene's Test	Civic Character Posttest	F = 1.476	1	71	0.229	Met
Levene's Test	Social Literacy Posttest	F = 0.398	1	71	0.530	Met
Regression slope	Class × Civic Character Pretest	Pillai's Trace = 0.001; F = 0.047	2	66	0.954	Met
Regression slope	Class × Social Literacy Pretest	Pillai's Trace = 0.014; F = 0.465	2	66	0.630	Met

Table 9 shows that Box's M test was nonsignificant, indicating no statistical evidence of unequal covariance matrices across the groups. Levene's tests for the civic character and social literacy posttest scores were also nonsignificant. The interactions between the instructional condition and each pretest covariate were nonsignificant, indicating that the regression slopes did not differ significantly between the groups. The evaluated assumptions therefore supported proceeding with MANCOVA.

3.4. MANCOVA Results

MANCOVA was conducted to examine simultaneous differences in civic character and social literacy between the Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT groups, controlling for pretest scores of both variables. The multivariate effect of the learning approach was evaluated using Pillai's Trace. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Multivariate Test of Learning Approach

Hypothesis	Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Decision
H1	Learning Approach	Pillai's Trace	0.301	14.658	2	68	< 0.001	0.301	Supported

Table 10 shows a statistically significant multivariate difference in civic character and social literacy between the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT groups after controlling for both pretest scores, Pillai's Trace = .301, $F(2, 68) = 14.658$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .301$. The result provided statistical evidence consistent with H1, subject to the limitations of the

two-class design. Each dependent variable was subsequently examined using tests of between-subjects effects. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Decision
H2	Civic Character Posttest	13.895	1	69	< 0.001	0.168	Supported
H3	Social Literacy Posttest	11.112	1	69	< 0.001	0.139	Supported

Table 11 shows a statistically significant adjusted difference in civic character between the groups, $F(1, 69) = 13.895$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .168$. This finding provided statistical evidence consistent with H2. A statistically significant adjusted difference was also found in social literacy, $F(1, 69) = 11.112$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .139$, providing statistical evidence consistent with H3. The partial η^2 values indicate nontrivial sample-specific differences after adjustment for pretest performance. Their educational relevance is more directly represented by the adjusted mean differences on the 0 to 100 outcome scales. The direction of the between-group differences was examined using estimated marginal means. These values represent adjusted posttest means calculated at the overall civic character pretest mean of 49.68 and the overall social literacy pretest mean of 48.55. The comparison results are presented in Table 12.

Table 10. Estimated Marginal Means and Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable	Group	Adjusted Mean	SE	95% CI	Mean Difference	Sig.
Civic Character Posttest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	73.325	2.960	67.420 to 79.229	15.935	< 0.001
	VCT	57.390	3.084	51.238 to 63.542		
Social Literacy Posttest	Etnopedagogy-G7KAIH	68.920	2.654	63.626 to 74.214	12.776	< 0.001
	VCT	56.144	2.765	50.628 to 61.660		

Table 12 shows that the adjusted mean for civic character was higher in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group than in the VCT group. The adjusted mean difference was 15.935 points, 95% CI = 7.407 to 24.463, $p < .001$. The Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH group also obtained a higher adjusted mean for social literacy than the VCT group. The adjusted mean difference was 12.776 points, 95% CI = 5.130 to 20.422, $p < .001$. Differences of approximately 16 points in civic character and 13 points in social literacy may be educationally important on scales ranging from 0 to 100. These estimates nevertheless remain specific to the two participating classes and cannot be interpreted as effects entirely independent of school and classroom contexts.

3.4. Discussion

The findings revealed a statistically significant multivariate difference between the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT conditions in the combined outcomes of civic character and social literacy after controlling for the corresponding pretest scores. Separate analyses

also showed higher adjusted posttest scores in civic character and social literacy in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition. These findings provided statistical evidence consistent with H1, H2, and H3, although they should be interpreted cautiously because each condition was represented by only one intact class from one school. The findings indicate an association between participation in the integrated Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition and the observed outcomes, rather than demonstrating that any single component of the intervention independently produced the differences. The intervention was implemented as a bundled condition comprising ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay local wisdom content, and G7KAIH habituation; therefore, the separate contribution of each component cannot be isolated within the present design. Learning models integrated with local cultural wisdom have generally produced stronger student outcomes than learning models that do not meaningfully incorporate cultural contexts [30]. Culturally responsive learning can also connect academic instruction with cultural identity, social ethics, and awareness of cultural sustainability [31].

The stronger adjusted outcomes in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition may be explained by the overall integration of cultural experience, contextual learning, and repeated value-oriented activities within the intervention package. Local knowledge becomes educationally meaningful when instruction connects academic concepts with students' cultural frames of reference, community practices, language, and lived experiences [32]. Such contextualization may help students understand abstract social and moral concepts through situations that are familiar to them. Culturally responsive and communicative teaching also emphasizes cultural self-awareness, sensitivity to social situations, and constructive interaction with individuals from different backgrounds [33]. These perspectives provide a possible explanation for why the integrated condition was associated with stronger outcomes, but they do not establish whether the observed differences were attributable primarily to ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay content, G7KAIH habituation, or the interaction among these components.

The cultural specificity of the intervention is particularly important because the learning materials were drawn from Deli Malay traditions rather than from a generalized concept of Indonesian local wisdom. Deli Malay pantun represents politeness, respect, ethical communication, customary values, and the preservation of harmonious social relationships [8]. These cultural elements provided students with concrete references for discussing responsible behavior, appropriate communication, and relationships with others. The ecological vocabulary and natural symbolism contained in Deli Malay pantun also communicate relationships among human conduct, community life, and environmental balance [8]. Deli Malay cultural content therefore constituted an important element of the integrated instructional condition, but the present study cannot determine whether these cultural materials independently accounted for the observed differences.

Cultural familiarity provides a meaningful foundation for the internalization of civic character because values are presented through recognizable language, situations, advice, narratives, and social expectations. Malay cultural teachings contain expressions, advice, and prohibitions that guide responsible conduct, environmental care, collective well-being, and the protection of shared resources [34]. In elementary education, an ethnopedagogical

approach can connect these principles with character formation through contextual learning activities. Ethnopedagogical practices have been associated with the development of religious character, nationalism, independence, integrity, and cooperation among elementary school students [35]. This literature supports the relevance of ethnopedagogy as part of the intervention framework, but the current findings should not be interpreted as evidence of an independent ethnopedagogical effect because ethnopedagogy was implemented simultaneously with Deli Malay cultural content and G7KAIH habituation.

The role of G7KAIH within the integrated condition can be understood through its function as a structured habituation framework that connects values with repeated daily practices. Character education requires more than conceptual understanding because students also need opportunities to practice self-regulation, discipline, responsibility, healthy behavior, learning commitment, cooperation, and community participation. Local wisdom-based learning can support cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, respect for diversity, and moral conduct within elementary school activities [36]. Character values may be strengthened further when they are consistently integrated into academic learning, spirituality, healthy living, personal development, role modelling, and social participation [37]. Because G7KAIH habituation was delivered together with the other two components, these findings do not permit a conclusion about the unique effect of habituation itself. Instead, G7KAIH should be viewed as one component of the integrated instructional package examined in this study.

The VCT group also showed descriptive improvements in civic character and social literacy, indicating that the comparison condition was not educationally passive. Students in this condition participated in value-related discussion, reflection, consideration of alternatives, and action planning. VCT gives students opportunities to construct the meaning of values by discussing choices, considering consequences, and reflecting on their decisions [18]. The adjusted differences should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that VCT was ineffective. Previous studies have also associated VCT with character development, social attitudes, learning interest, and critical thinking among elementary school students [20]. The higher adjusted outcomes observed in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition should therefore be interpreted as differences between instructional conditions rather than evidence that a particular component of the integrated intervention was superior to VCT. The Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition additionally provided culturally specific Deli Malay materials and repeated habituation activities. Integrating VCT with local wisdom has been reported to support elementary students' character values, suggesting that cultural contextualization can strengthen value-based learning [38].

The internalization of values becomes more profound when students are given opportunities to enact them through shared cultural activities. Traditional games such as Congklak can function as learning media for strengthening tolerance, environmental concern, positive behavior, and attachment to national culture [39]. Cultural activities allow students to experience cooperation, rule-following, responsibility, and respect in observable situations rather than merely discussing these values conceptually. Religiously grounded local wisdom can similarly promote tolerance and peaceful social conduct among students, as demonstrated through the educational use of the Syarafal Anam tradition [40]. These

studies provide contextual support for incorporating cultural activities into value-oriented learning, although they do not establish that similar activities within the present intervention were independently responsible for the observed outcomes.

Culturally embedded learning may also strengthen students' ability to live constructively within diverse communities. Cultural literacy and peace education can support solidarity, mutual cooperation, openness, and acceptance among different social and religious groups [41]. These values are relevant to civic character because they encourage students to respect differences and participate responsibly in collective life. The incorporation of indigenous knowledge into social studies can also improve cooperation, listening, communication, and positive relationships among elementary school students [42]. In the present study, these processes represent plausible pathways through which the integrated instructional condition may have supported students' development, but the study design does not permit the pathways to be attributed to one component separately.

The movement from value comprehension to social action is closely related to the development of social literacy. Ethnosocial learning should reflect children's social development and the cultural characteristics of their immediate environment [43]. Contextually familiar situations allow students to understand social norms, recognize relationships, and interpret events within their communities. Local wisdom-based social studies materials can support students in identifying problems, analyzing social situations, evaluating alternatives, and proposing contextually appropriate solutions [43]. The present findings are consistent with this perspective because the integrated condition provided culturally familiar learning situations and opportunities for reflection and application. However, the evidence does not establish whether these processes were generated by ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay content, G7KAIH habituation, or their combined implementation.

The relationship between civic character and social literacy becomes especially evident when students encounter problems requiring both moral consideration and social judgment. Problem-based learning integrated with local wisdom can encourage students to examine contextual problems, evaluate relevant information, and consider responsible responses [44]. In the present study, discussions, collaborative activities, and reflection may have required students to apply cultural values as a basis for reasoning rather than simply recalling them. Positive teacher-student relationships may also strengthen students' participation, sense of acceptance, and willingness to express and evaluate different perspectives within the classroom [45]. These classroom processes may have contributed to the observed outcomes, but their individual contributions were not experimentally separated from the other elements of the instructional package.

Meaningful cultural learning depends on support from the broader educational environment. The educational environment, cultural openness, sociocultural interaction, and access to information can influence students' critical and cultural literacy [46]. These factors indicate that instructional outcomes cannot be separated entirely from school and community contexts. Teachers also require opportunities to collaborate with families, cultural experts, and community members so that culturally responsive materials reflect authentic experiences rather than superficial cultural symbols. Community-based professional

development can help educators acquire the cultural knowledge and pedagogical competence required to develop contextually appropriate learning materials [47].

The findings have practical implications for teacher preparation, culturally valid material development, family engagement, implementation monitoring, and cultural adaptation. Teachers require training to transform local cultural values into age-appropriate cases, reflection questions, role-playing activities, collaborative tasks, and behavioral routines. Deli Malay materials should be reviewed with cultural experts, families, and community representatives to maintain cultural authenticity and avoid using local traditions merely as decorative elements. Family engagement is particularly important because several G7KAIH habits are practiced outside school. Adaptation in other regions should begin by identifying the language, values, traditions, and social practices of the relevant community rather than directly transferring Deli Malay materials into different cultural settings. Implementation monitoring should document the extent and quality of implementation of each component so that future research can examine whether differences in implementation are associated with differences in outcomes.

Alternative explanations should be considered when interpreting the adjusted differences. The observed outcomes may have been influenced by teacher enthusiasm, the novelty of culturally integrated instruction, school climate, facilities, peer relationships, differential implementation, or pre-existing classroom characteristics. The use of the same teacher reduced variation attributable to different teachers, but it did not eliminate possible differences in enthusiasm or instructional delivery across the two conditions. The results therefore indicate differences associated with the instructional conditions within the participating classes, rather than definitive evidence that the intervention components alone caused all observed differences. More specifically, the study cannot determine whether the observed differences were attributable to ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay cultural content, G7KAIH habituation, or the combined effect of these components.

Several limitations constrain the interpretation of the findings. The study involved only two schools and two intact classes, with one class representing each instructional condition. The instructional condition was therefore confounded with school and class. The sample was relatively small, and the schools were selected purposively. The intervention lasted only six sessions, and no delayed follow-up assessment was conducted. Civic character was measured through student self-report and may have been affected by social-desirability or response bias. The study did not independently establish the empirical equivalence of the social literacy pretest and posttest forms, and it used the same sample for instrument validation and intervention analysis. An additional limitation is that the intervention was delivered as a bundled instructional package consisting of ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay local wisdom content, and G7KAIH habituation. Consequently, the study was not designed to estimate the separate effects or relative contributions of these three components. These limitations restrict the causal interpretation and generalizability of the findings.

Future studies should include more schools and multiple intact classes within each instructional condition so researchers can estimate school-level and classroom-level variation. Researchers should conduct an a priori power analysis, validate the instruments

using an independent sample, and empirically examine the equivalence of the pretest and posttest forms. Student self-reports should be combined with teacher ratings, behavioral observations, or performance-based assessments. Delayed posttests are also needed to determine whether the observed differences persist over time. To determine the specific contribution of each intervention component, future research should consider component-comparison, factorial, dismantling, or sequential designs that examine ethnopedagogy, Deli Malay cultural content, and G7KAIH habituation separately or in systematically varied combinations. Mixed-method or component-based studies could further distinguish the contributions of Deli Malay cultural contextualization, G7KAIH habituation, teacher implementation, and family participation. Such designs would provide stronger evidence regarding whether the effectiveness observed in the present study is attributable to the integrated package as a whole or to particular combinations of its components.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined differences in civic character and social literacy between Deli Malay local wisdom-based Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH and VCT after controlling for baseline performance. Within the present two-class study, students in the Ethnopedagogy-G7KAIH condition obtained higher adjusted posttest scores in both outcomes. The study contributes an integrated framework that combines local cultural content, contextual social learning, and G7KAIH-oriented habituation. The cultural relevance and repeated activities may help explain the findings, although the study did not measure these mechanisms directly. Practically, the framework may help teachers design culturally grounded learning connected to students' daily lives. The findings should be interpreted cautiously because only two schools and two intact classes were involved, with one class representing each condition. The intervention was therefore confounded with school and classroom characteristics, limiting causal interpretation and generalizability. Future studies should involve larger samples, multiple classes per condition, multilevel analyses, independent instrument validation, and delayed posttests. Replication across different settings is needed before broader instructional effectiveness can be concluded.

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