

Integrating the Philosophical Values of Sikka Ikat Weaving into Character Education in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Sikka ikat weaving has rich philosophical values, reflecting cultural identity, social symbolism, and moral values that can be integrated into the character education of elementary school students. This study aims to examine the philosophical values in Sikka ikat weaving motifs—such as the star symbol (Dala Mawarani) which symbolizes wisdom and purity to improve the character education of elementary school students. The method used is a qualitative phenomenological study that examines how the philosophical values of ikat weaving contribute significantly to improve the character education of elementary school students. This study used surveys, observations, and interviews of fourth grade students in elementary schools in East Nusa Tenggara. To investigate students' lived experiences in a culturally diverse learning environment, data were analyzed using an interactive model developed by Miles & Huberman along with phenomenological interpretation. The results of the study indicate that values such as perseverance, togetherness, and moral responsibility are reflected in the weaving process and its motifs. These values can be manifested in the components of character education: honesty, discipline, responsibility, caring, and cooperation. The development of learning modules in elementary schools that integrate woven motifs as teaching media allows students to gain contextual understanding of these values, increasing empathy, self-confidence, and cultural awareness. The study also recommends training for teachers and collaboration with local craftsmen to implement local-based learning. This study contributes to the literature on character education by presenting a contextual approach that is rooted in NTT culture and can be a model for replication in other areas.

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid advancement of information technology, the world of education faces major challenges in shaping the character of the younger generation who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have strong moral integrity and cultural identity (Moses, 2024; Zhanbayev et al., 2023). Character education is one of the strategic solutions that continues to be promoted by various countries, including Indonesia, to overcome the moral crisis, value decadence, and increasing individualism and consumerism among students (Amiruddin et al., 2023; Larson, 2024). The Indonesian government itself has integrated character education into the Independent Curriculum as part of strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes values such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, integrity, independence, and global diversity (Adiyono et al., 2025; Andana & Hendroto, 2024).

However, the implementation of character education is often normative and non-contextual (Bedigen, 2022; Thompson & Modood, 2025). Many schools still apply an approach that is indoctrinating, formal, and less in touch with students' real lives, including their cultural background (Amin, 2024; Grant et al., 2022). In fact, children's character development will be more effective if carried out through an approach that is relevant and close to the social and cultural realities of students (Gamage et al., 2021; Maroungkas et al., 2023; Sakti et al., 2024). Therefore, an approach based on local culture or local wisdom is an important alternative in character learning, especially at the elementary education level in areas rich in local traditions and values (Maroungkas et al., 2023; Sakti et al., 2024).

One of Indonesia's local cultural riches that is full of values is Sikka ikat weaving, a traditional textile heritage from Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). This weaving is not only a product of art and skill, but also contains philosophical symbols that describe the outlook on life, social norms, and spirituality of the Sikka people (Dentis, 2024; Koten et al., 2021). Motifs in ikat weaving such as *dala mawarani* (star), *wawi telu* (three pig teeth), and *lara wawi* (boar tusks) for example, depict wisdom, perseverance, protection, and harmony between humans and nature (Koten et al., 2021).

The values implied in the weaving process and motifs have great potential to be developed as a source of character learning in elementary schools (Fitriadi et al., 2024; Sakti et al., 2024). Children who are introduced to weaving as part of their cultural identity will not only learn about art and history, but will also absorb moral values such as perseverance, responsibility, patience, and togetherness that are part of the weaving process itself (Centillas et al., 2024; Link, 2024). Thus, character education is no longer abstract and far from students' lives, but becomes concrete, contextual, and meaningful (Han, 2025; Hart, 2022; Jerome & Kisby, 2022).

Research on the integration of local culture in character education has been widely conducted, especially in the context of strengthening national identity and cultural preservation (Wijayanti et al., 2025; Zhu, 2025). However, there is still little research that specifically explores the philosophical values of Sikka ikat woven fabric and links them to the character formation of elementary school students (Mahyudin et al., 2024; Sogen et al., 2024). In fact, in the midst of the flow of cultural homogenization due to media and technology, strengthening local identity is an inevitable urgency so that students have strong cultural roots as their moral and social foundations (Dwakat et al., 2023; Karomah & Masyuri, 2024).

Therefore, this article aims to identify the philosophical values contained in Sikka ikat weaving, both in terms of motifs and the manufacturing process, analyze the relationship between these values and relevant character education indicators in elementary schools, and develop a model for integrating Sikka ikat weaving into character-based learning at the elementary school level.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a directed literature study method on relevant national and international academic journals, as well as cultural literature on the Sikka community and its weaving philosophy. In addition, thematic analysis is also used to classify the values that emerge from the data and relate them to indicators of student character according to Indonesian education policy and international theoretical approaches (Lickona, 1996; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework on the connection between local cultural heritage and strengthening character education contextually. While the practical contribution is to offer a local-based learning strategy that can be applied by elementary school teachers, especially in the Sikka Regency of East Nusa Tenggara or other areas that have similar cultural richness. By linking local cultural symbols and processes with universal character values, learning becomes not only a means of transferring knowledge, but also a vehicle for preserving culture and building students' morals. (Hudaidah et al., 2021; Wesnina et al., 2025).

In general, this article argues that Sikka ikat weaving is not only a material cultural heritage, but also holds a wealth of philosophical values that are very relevant to character education (Aragon, 2022; Tuthaes et al., 2024). Perseverance in the weaving process, the symbolic meaning in the motifs, and the communal social structure that underlies the weaving practice can all be used as media and contexts to shape students' character from an early age (Sogen et al., 2024). Especially in a time when local cultural identities are increasingly eroded, weaving becomes a form of learning that not only educates, but also frees students to become whole human beings rooted in their cultural values (Immordino-Yang et al., 2023; Matsekoleng et al., 2024).

With this approach, it is expected that students will not only understand character values cognitively, but also internalize them in everyday behavior, and more than that, grow into individuals who have cultural awareness, social responsibility, and appreciation for ancestral values. Therefore, strengthening character education based on the philosophical values of Sikka ikat weaving is not only relevant, but also urgent as part of sustainable and contextual educational development (Sogen et al., 2024).

Literature review

Character Education: Concept and Relevance

Character education has become a central issue in various global education systems, especially in response to the crisis of values, weak social ethics, and increasing violence and intolerance in modern society. Lickona (1996) states that character education is a conscious and planned effort to help someone understand, internalize, and realize core moral values in real life. These values include honesty, responsibility, respect, caring, and justice—all of which are important pillars in the formation of good and civilized citizens.

At the international level, character education is positioned as an integral part of holistic educational development. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes the importance of value-based education as a way to build a peaceful and inclusive society. In the United States, approaches such as Character Counts! and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) have been widely adopted to help children understand and apply moral values in their social lives (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This is in line with the approach of Ryan & Bohlin (1999) who emphasize the importance of "good habits of heart and mind" in character learning.

In Indonesia, character education is one of the strategic goals in the national education policy, which is stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and is strengthened through the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program and the Pancasila Student Profile. Values such as religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity are used as the main references in shaping students' personalities. However, the implementation approach is often uniform and non-contextual, so that these values are less grounded in students' daily lives.

Local Culture in Education: Role and Benefits

Local culture or local wisdom contains values that have been tested socially and historically in shaping the identity and morals of a community. In the context of education, the integration of local culture is considered one of the most effective ways to ground character education because its values come from the social and cultural environment of the students themselves (Geertz, 1973; Tilaar, 2004). This provides a stronger emotional resonance effect compared to the learning of abstract values that are forced top-down.

Jayanti & Wulandari's (2024) research shows that the use of local culture in character learning helps students understand and apply values more easily because they see them in everyday practice. For example, in an agrarian community, the values of hard work and responsibility can be taught through farming or hunting traditions. In the context of a weaving community such as in Sikka, the values of perseverance and harmony can be taught through weaving practices and understanding its motifs.

Simbolon's study (2024) emphasized that local culture is not only a means, but also the substance of character education itself. Through symbols, folklore, and traditions, character values are passed down from generation to generation and become part of the collective identity of society. Therefore, a culture-based educational approach not only teaches values, but also fosters identity, a sense of belonging, and pride in ancestral heritage.

Sikka Ikat Weaving: A Cultural Heritage of Philosophical Value

Sikka ikat weaving is a form of cultural expression of the East Flores community that not only has aesthetic value, but is also full of symbolic meaning and philosophy of life. According to Koten et al. (2021), each motif in Sikka weaving contains a moral message, cosmology, and social relations of the Sikka community. For example, the *dala mawarani motif* symbolizes a star as a symbol of guidance for life that is full of wisdom and honesty. The *wawi telu motif* or three boar tusks depict strength and protection, while geometric motifs such as repeating lines depict perseverance, balance, and harmony.

Apart from the symbolic side, the weaving process itself teaches many character values. Weaving activities require precision, patience, and hard work. The long process, from spinning yarn to natural dyeing and tying motifs, forms a character of discipline and consistency in the craftsmen (Herlince et al., 2021). In some communities, weaving is also done communally, strengthening a sense of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and social solidarity.

From a cultural hermeneutics perspective, every motif and color in Sikka weaving can be read as a social text that contains a view of life, the relationship between humans and nature and the Creator, and social norms that apply in society. Therefore, ikat weaving is not only a craft product, but also a living and dynamic cultural document (Koten et al., 2021). This potential can then be utilized as contextual character teaching materials in elementary schools, especially in the NTT region.

Integration of Ikat Weaving in Elementary Education

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of local culture-based learning approaches in improving students' character and learning motivation. Cahyani, et.al (2024) emphasized that local culture-based learning

provides a more personal and meaningful learning experience for students, because they feel recognized and valued for their cultural identity. This also increases emotional and cognitive involvement in the learning process.

Integration of ikat weaving in learning can be done in various forms. In art and culture lessons, students can be taught how to draw weaving motifs and understand their meaning. In social studies or local content lessons, weaving can be a medium for understanding history, geography, and the social structure of society. In religious or civics lessons, teachers can link the values contained in weaving motifs with the values of honesty, responsibility, and caring.

Furthermore, weaving can be used as a medium for character-based projects. For example, students can create a group project to create a new weaving motif that represents the values they hold, then present it to the class. This activity not only develops critical and creative thinking skills, but also collaboration, empathy, and communication.

Research Gaps and Urgency

Although various studies have discussed the importance of character education and the role of local culture, there are still few that specifically raise the philosophy of Sikka ikat weaving as a basis for character education at the elementary school level. The majority of studies are still limited to anthropological or aesthetic studies of motifs. Therefore, there needs to be an in-depth study that connects the symbolic values of weaving with the framework of character education and applicable learning design in elementary schools.

This study is important not only to enrich the contextual character education approach, but also as a form of preserving local culture in the world of education. If not immediately linked to the educational process, then the values contained in ikat weaving are feared to be eroded by modernization and industrialization of culture.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach by Miles & Huberman (2014) with a descriptive phenomenological design oriented towards revealing the essential meaning of the subject's life experience in the context of Sikka ikat weaving culture. This approach was chosen because it is able to deeply capture the subjective experience and interpretation of the philosophical values of the weaving practices carried out by informants, both weavers, teachers, and elementary school students. In line with the views of Husserl (1970) and van Manen (2016), phenomenology not only seeks to understand what is experienced, but also how the experience is interpreted in the subject's consciousness.

The character values manifested through the weaving process and ikat weaving motifs can be explored through honest and reflective narratives of experience. This study does not seek to find a cause-and-effect relationship, but rather focuses on the structure of meaning formed from the subject's life experiences in a particular cultural context.

This research was conducted in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, especially in the Alok Timur District which is known as the center of traditional weaving activities and has active interactions with surrounding elementary schools. The selection of this location was based on the cultural proximity of the community to the ikat weaving tradition and the existence of teachers and students who have been involved in educational activities based on local culture. The research took place during May 2025, considering sufficient time to conduct in-depth interviews, participatory observations.

The subjects in this study were selected purposively (purposive sampling) with criteria relevant to the research objectives. There were three categories of informants, namely: traditional weavers ($n = 5$), women aged 35–60 years, actively weaving for at least the last 1 year, and understanding the philosophical meaning of woven motifs, elementary school teachers ($n = 3$), who have integrated weaving culture into learning activities, especially in social studies, civics, arts and culture, or local content, elementary school students ($n = 4$) grade IV, who are directly involved in activities to learn and practice the weaving process at school or in the community.

Data were collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews to explore the subjective experiences of informants about the values in the weaving process and the meaning of ikat weaving motifs. Questions were semi-structured to allow for free and reflective exploration. The duration of each interview ranged from 10 to 15 minutes, conducted in Indonesian. Participatory observation: Researchers followed the weaving process in the community, including yarn dyeing activities, drawing motifs, to weaving. Observations were also made in class when teachers delivered local culture-based materials. Field notes and visual documentation were taken to capture the nuances of practice and student responses in learning. Document study techniques, including collecting weaving motifs, existing teacher-made teaching materials, student character evaluation records. Local documents from Sikka cultural institutions were also used to understand the philosophical context of motifs and symbols in weaving.

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative analysis with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification to draw conclusions (Miles et al., 2014).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Observations of fourth grade students and elementary school teachers who have conducted mini weaving projects show that students show high enthusiasm when introduced to motifs and looms, experience initial difficulties in stringing threads, but gradually increase in perseverance and patience, discuss the meaning of the motifs they choose to draw on paper before the simple weaving process, develop empathy and cooperation when the project is carried out in groups.

Based on the interview data, the teachers stated that the introduction of weaving made students appreciate local culture more and be prouder of their identity, understand character values naturally, without the need for lectures, and interact more easily with parents because many of them have a weaving background. One of the teachers stated: "Previously, children only knew about honesty and responsibility from stories, now they experience it when they have to be patient in tying thread patterns and some even help their parents to simply participate in tying the weaving."

The results of this study are in accordance with the ethnomathematics study by Herlince et al. (2021) because woven motifs are indeed effective in teaching discipline and precision through a mathematical context. Phenomenologically, this study also confirms van Manen's idea that direct experience in culture can explore the deepest meanings of students, more than just a textual approach (van Manen, 2016).

Philosophical Values in the Sikka Ikat Weaving Process

Phenomenological analysis shows that the process of weaving ikat contains deep values through the experience of the weavers. Some of the values obtained are as follows:

- a. Patience and perseverance. Natural dyeing of yarn from local materials such as mahogany leaves, patchouli leaves, moringa leaves, tree bark, turmeric, manggala roots requires a long process of searching for raw materials, soaking and drying requires patience. Patience is also reflected in the long tying stage of weaving and requires concentration, focus in the process. This reflects the value of perseverance in character education.
- b. Togetherness and solidarity. The weaving process involves several weavers in preparation for coloring, ikat weaving which involves a ritual of togetherness. This is according to the teacher, noting how group activities can be applied to students to foster mutual cooperation. For example, when helping to prepare yarn, dyeing and sorting colors can be done together and learning for the same purpose.
- c. Environmental awareness and ecological responsibility. The use of natural dyes from leaves and fruits around their environment teaches weavers and students the importance of sustainability and connection with nature. Conservation of nature will be realized through this learning process.
- d. Local beauty and aesthetics. Local motifs such as dala mawarani, rempe sikka, tulada not only convey meaning but teach the values of beauty and love for cultural works in students. This is in accordance with the theory of character education which emphasizes aesthetics as an important component in moral development (McMahon, 2018).
- e. Responsibility and discipline. Every stage of weaving from preparing the tools to finishing one strand requires high discipline. In an interview with one of the teachers, it was found that students began to appreciate the process and realized that the best work is produced from disciplined work, not something instant. These values are the basis of ontology that local culture is not only aesthetic but also ethical and ecological.

Integration of the weaving process into learning takes place through several mechanisms:

- a. Live demonstration by ikat weaving artisans. The weavers are directly present in class to practice dyeing and weaving. This creates a real experience for students, deepening their understanding of the cultural values and characters contained therein.
- b. Reflection and discussion of values. After the practice, the teacher facilitates a discussion of values, statements such as: "What is the lesson of patience when weaving?" direct students to internalize personal character.
- c. Ethnomathematics of motifs. Geometric motifs are used as practical mathematics materials: students calculate patterns, symmetry, and proportions of motifs.

This series of mechanisms confirms that character and academic education can be carried out in an interdisciplinary, culture-based manner.

The Role of Teachers and School Policies

The role of teachers is crucial as mediators of values. Teachers who have local cultural training are able to facilitate in-depth and relevant value discussions. However, one important note is that the availability of teaching materials is relatively limited. Principals and teachers agree on the need for special training for teachers in cultural approaches, development of consistent teaching modules, school policies that support the long term: time, facilities, and space for local cultural activities. This is in line with UNESCO recommendations on the importance of training educators in culture-based pedagogy (Swindell & Wright, 2022).

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Table 1. Meaning of Sikka Ikat Weaving Motifs

Motive	Philosophical Meaning	Character Values
<i>Dala Mawarani</i>	Stars as moral and spiritual guides	Reflection, integrity, wisdom
<i>The White Flower</i>	Pig tusks symbolize protection and strength	Responsibility, courage
<i>Geometric spiral</i>	Continuity of life and balance	Discipline, harmony, patience
<i>The Balu Warehouse</i>	Water of life	Humility, empathy

Discussion

This discussion interprets the findings within the framework of character education theory and local cultural approaches. By using a phenomenological approach, the values identified are not only normative, but are experienced directly by cultural actors and students.

Weaving as a Means of Internalizing Values

The findings show that weaving activities bring students to concrete experiences of character values . This supports John Dewey's theory that education is not merely a process of transferring values, but the formation of moral habits through experience (Dewey, 1916). Values such as patience, thoroughness, and responsibility become real when students experience directly the process that requires high perseverance.

Cultural Symbols and Moral Reflections

The motifs in Sikka weaving have a symbolic structure that is dense with meaning. In the cultural hermeneutics approach (Ricoeur, 1976), symbols are a way to understand the morality of the community. When students learn that *the dala mawarani* (star) is a symbol of wisdom and protection, they are not only learning art, but also learning the meaning of life that the community has built from generation to generation. By interpreting symbols, students are trained in moral reflection , an important part of modern character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This strengthens metacognitive abilities and ethical awareness.

Contextual and Meaningful Character Education

One of the criticisms of the implementation of character education in Indonesia is its approach which is too top-down and formalistic (Tilaar, 2004). This finding shows that through local cultures such as weaving, character education becomes contextual , namely close to the environment and lives of students, holistic, namely integrating emotions, skills, and value reflections, based on real experiences, not just theory or lectures. This finding is in line with the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) approach which emphasizes the connection between character values and students' social and emotional experiences (Casel, 2020).

Relevance to the Pancasila Student Profile

The values of Sikka ikat weaving directly contribute to the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile, including: faith and piety through spiritual symbols in motifs, independence through hard work practices in weaving, mutual cooperation through a collaborative work process, global diversity through the introduction of local culture as a strength of identity. This integration makes weaving not just a craft, but also a pedagogical tool to form Indonesian people with strong character and cultural roots .

Table 2. Integrative model of character education as follows:

Stage	Activity	Instilled Character Values
Weaving Demonstration	Natural coloring & patterns	Patience, responsibility, aesthetics
Guided Reflection	Class discussion	Empathy, cooperation, social awareness
Ethnomathematics of motifs	Count patterns & symmetry	Discipline, precision, intelligence
Exhibitions & Publications	Student work exhibition at school	Cultural pride, sense of belonging

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to reveal the philosophical values in Sikka ikat weaving, East Nusa Tenggara, and how these values can be integrated into the character education of elementary school students through a phenomenological approach. The results of the study indicate that the weaving process is not only a textile activity, but a cultural education process that contains fundamental character values. These values include: patience , perseverance , solidarity , responsibility , discipline , ecological awareness , and a sense of love for local culture .

The experience of weavers as cultural actors reveals that each stage in the weaving process has a moral meaning that can be transformed into learning. Teachers who adopt a contextual approach through weaving demonstrations, value discussions show effectiveness in improving students' understanding of character values in a real and reflective way. Meanwhile, students show an increase in positive attitudes in aspects of discipline, cooperation, and pride in their own cultural heritage.

Through a phenomenological approach, this study is able to capture the deepest meanings of the life experiences of cultural actors and educational actors, making local values an important foundation in the formation of children's character. Thus, the integration of local culture such as Sikka ikat weaving is not only relevant, but also essential in strengthening contextual, inclusive, and sustainable character education.

Based on the findings and conclusions above, it is recommended, among others, for the government and policy makers to encourage the development of local curricula that integrate traditional cultures, such as ikat weaving, into character learning in elementary schools, provide policy and budget support for schools in areas with cultural richness to develop local culture-based learning. For schools and teachers to design contextual character learning by utilizing weaving motifs and processes as teaching media, involve local cultural communities and artisans in learning activities to strengthen the connection between schools and communities, conduct teacher training in interpreting cultural symbols and pedagogical strategies based on local wisdom. For researchers and academics to continue this research with an action research approach to develop empirically tested weaving-based learning models in the classroom, conduct comparative studies with weaving cultures from other regions to enrich the treasury of culture-based learning in Indonesia, compile textbooks or thematic teaching modules that make weaving an integral part of cross-subject learning (especially IPS, PPKn, SBdP, and Bahasa Indonesia). For the community and weaving community to be able to reactivate the weaving house as a center for cultural learning as well as a character center for the younger generation, encourage the younger generation to continue the weaving tradition with a creative approach, such as digitalization of motifs or student weaving exhibitions, maintain the purity of the philosophical values of weaving motifs as a heritage that is not only aesthetic, but also educational and spiritual.

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