Integrating Boru Ni Raja Values into Character and Contextual Education in Silindung

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the urgent need to strengthen character education in response to the moral degradation caused by globalization, which has weakened students' connection to local cultural values. It specifically aims to analyze the integration of Boru Ni Raja, a Batak Toba cultural concept that honors women as symbols of family dignity and moral integrity, into character and contextual education in the Silindung region. Using a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA framework, 42 relevant articles published between 2015 and 2025 were analyzed to identify theoretical patterns, challenges, and opportunities for cultural integration in education. The findings reveal that Boru Ni Raja embodies values of respect, responsibility, loyalty, and social solidarity that align with the goals of 21st-century character education. The study is novel because it introduces a gender-based cultural framework, a perspective rarely discussed in previous educational literature on Batak Toba local wisdom. Academically, it contributes to expanding the theory of culture-based and gender-responsive education, while practically, it provides guidance for teachers to design contextual learning rooted in local culture. The study recommends future empirical research to validate this conceptual model in schools across Silindung and to compare it with other cultural contexts in Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

21st century education faces major challenges in the form of moral degradation and character crises among students. Many students are trapped in an instant culture, lack of an attitude of responsibility, and low social awareness. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the current of globalization which often erodes local cultural values that should be the foundation of the nation's character. Character education is very important because it is the foundation for the younger generation

to have morality and responsibility (Hariyanto et al., 2022; Kallia et al., 2021). In the Silindung area, similar problems also arise when young people are more influenced by modern culture than the noble values of Batak Toba. This condition causes a fading appreciation for local wisdom, including the role of women in customary social structures. Therefore, an educational strategy is needed that is able to bridge the needs of 21st-century character with the richness of local culture.

Silindung is known as the center of Toba Batak civilization which is full of local wisdom, including the concept *of Boru Ni Raja* which glorifies the role of women in customs. However, in educational practice in schools, these noble values have not been fully integrated into the learning process. As a result, the younger generation only understands customs as ceremonial symbols, not as a guide for daily life. This is in line with the view that national education tends to ignore the potential of local culture as a source of learning (Agbo et al., 2019; Branzan, 2022). In fact, education rooted in culture will be more contextual and meaningful for students. This loss of connectedness has the potential to create a generation uprooted from its cultural identity. Therefore, the main issue of this research is how to integrate the values of *Boru Ni Raja* into character education and contextual learning.

Normatively, Indonesia's national curriculum has emphasized the importance of character education and strengthening the profile of Pancasila students. However, in practice, the integration of local wisdom is still very limited and more often symbolic. Teachers use textual approaches more than contextual, so students do not experience learning that is relevant to real life. Education must liberate students through the socio-cultural context they experience. This gap shows that there is still a wide gap between regulation and implementation (Abdullah et al., 2017; Al-Hatem et al., 2018). Especially in Silindung, the rich values of Toba Batak are rarely used as a source of contextual learning. This is an important basis for conducting a literature review on the integration of local wisdom in education.

Character education in schools is often still limited to slogans without real implementation in learning activities. Many character programs are carried out ceremonially, such as ceremonies or extracurricular activities, but are not integrated into daily learning. Character education must touch the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously (Nurtanto & Sofyan, 2015; Wijaya, 2020). Teachers emphasize more on the cognitive aspect so that children lack a rooted moral example. In this context, *the value of Boru Ni Raja* which teaches determination, loyalty, and social service can be a concrete answer. The gap that arises is the low exploration of local wisdom in shaping students' characters. Therefore, this literature review aims to find a more operational and effective integration pattern.

One alternative solution that can be done is to integrate the values of local Batak Toba wisdom, especially the concept of *Boru Ni Raja*, into contextual learning. Contextual learning allows students to relate knowledge to everyday life and the surrounding culture. Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) helps students build understanding through hands-on experience (Chen et al., 2015; Septiana, 2015). Thus, education is not only oriented to the transfer of knowledge, but also the internalization of cultural values. In the Silindung area, *the Boru Ni Raja* value can be used as a rich learning resource. This also supports the achievement of national education goals that emphasize the character based on local wisdom. This kind of integration is expected to be a solution to the gap between policy and implementation.

The integration of local wisdom in education is not only a matter of material, but also the process of forming students' social identity. The concept *of Boru Ni Raja* teaches that women have an honorable position in the Toba Batak custom, which symbolizes family honor. These values can be translated in character learning such as responsibility, reward, and social solidarity. Culture is a system of meaning that is inherited through symbols, and education serves to preserve that system (Bertolino & Corrado, 2022; Yuliani et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers in the Silindung area need to design contextual learning that explores the symbolic meaning of *Boru Ni Raja*. This alternative solution not only forms knowledge, but also a moral attitude to life. Thus, character education becomes more grounded and relevant.

A number of previous studies have shown that the integration of local wisdom can strengthen character education. For example Sukhfi et al. (2025) emphasizing the importance of local Batak Toba wisdom as a source of social ethics that supports community harmony. Another study states that

culture-based education is able to increase students' connection with their environment (Gordah & Fadillah, 2014). However, specific studies discussing the concept *of Boru Ni Raja* in the context of education are still rare. This means that there are research gaps that have not been explored much. This literature review is here to fill this gap by examining the potential of *Boru Ni Raja* in education. Thus, this research has a contribution to expanding the academic perspective. In addition, this study can be a reference in the development of a locally-based curriculum.

The results of previous research on culture-based learning have shown its effectiveness in improving learning outcomes. Culturally responsive teaching helps students understand concepts more deeply (Lai, 2023; Leonard et al., 2018). In the Indonesian context, it also proves that local wisdom can be the basis for strengthening multicultural education (Sugihartono, 2024; Taufik et al., 2023). However, these studies are still general and have not underlined the specificity of *Boru Ni Raja*'s values. It is this emptiness that drives the need for a more in-depth study of the literature. By examining the integration of local Batak Toba wisdom, this study provides new insights for the development of character education. This approach is also relevant to the spirit of contextual education mandated by the national curriculum. Thus, this study complements and expands on previous research.

This research lies in the focus of exploring the value of *Boru Ni Raja* which has not been touched much in the educational literature. This concept is unique because it contains the meaning of respect for women as a symbol of family and community honor. By integrating these concepts, the research offers a new perspective on gender- and culturally based character education. Research based on local contexts will result in relevant educational innovations (Basri et al., 2024; Dewantara, 2024). Thus, the novelty of this research is not only in terms of the cultural concept raised, but also an in-depth literature review approach. Thus, this research can be an academic reference as well as a practical one. This distinguishes this study from similar studies that are more common in discussing local wisdom in general.

The urgency of this research from the academic side is to make a theoretical contribution in the field of character education based on local wisdom. In the educational literature, the integration of local culture is often considered secondary to academic material. In fact, according to Banks (2016), Multicultural education must instead place local culture as a central part. With this study, it is hoped that a new theory will emerge about the implementation of *Boru Ni Raja* in contextual learning. This urgency is also related to the need for local research that can be published in international academic forums. In addition, the results of this study can enrich the literature on cultural integration in education. This research not only fills the gap, but also paves the way for further research. That way, the contribution is long-term.

From a practical perspective, this research is important to provide guidance for teachers in the Silindung area. So far, teachers have had difficulty connecting subject matter with local culture. With the integration *of Boru Ni Raja* values, teachers have rich and relevant contextual resources. Learning based on real experiences is easier for students to understand (Wang et al., 2023; Yates et al., 2021). Therefore, this study can help teachers design more meaningful learning. Practical urgency can also be seen in the community's need for education that preserves cultural values. Through this research, schools can play an active role in maintaining the identity of Batak Toba. That way, education becomes a bridge between tradition and modernity.

Education in the 21st century faces serious challenges in the form of moral degradation and character crises among the younger generation. Globalization and rapid modernization often erode local cultural values that should be the foundation for the formation of the nation's character. Character education forms a person who is moral, responsible, and has integrity. However, in practice, many schools still focus on the cognitive aspect and ignore the internalization of cultural values. This condition is exacerbated by the dominance of instant culture that weakens students' attitudes of responsibility and social awareness. Therefore, an educational strategy that is able to integrate local values is needed so that learning is more meaningful and contextual.

One of the cultural riches owned by the Toba Batak people is the concept of *Boru Ni Raja*, which places women as a symbol of family honor and guardian of social values. The culture of a system of

meaning is inherited through symbols, and education has an important role in preserving that system. Unfortunately, the noble value of *Boru Ni Raja* is more understood as a ceremonial symbol, not as a guideline for daily life. This shows that there is a gap between the potential of local culture and the implementation of education in schools. Previous research has mostly discussed the local wisdom of Batak Toba in general, but has not focused on examining the strategic role of *Boru Ni Raja* in character education. Thus, this research is here to close the gap.

International research confirms that education based on local culture is able to increase students' connection with their environment and strengthen cultural identity (Banks, 2016; Lai, 2023). The concept of multicultural education even places local values as the center of the learning process to be relevant to the social reality of students. In the context of Silindung, the integration of *Boru Ni Raja* values into contextual learning is in line with the *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) approach which emphasizes the importance of real experience in understanding concepts (Johnson, 2014). Therefore, this research has academic as well as practical urgency, namely providing a character education model based on the local wisdom of Batak Toba.

Character education is the basis for the formation of a moral and responsible person, but the current educational practice still focuses on the cognitive aspect without internalizing cultural values (Xiong et al., 2022). In this context, the local wisdom of Batak Toba, especially the concept *of Boru Ni Raja* which places women as a symbol of family honor and a guardian of social harmony, has great potential to strengthen character education. However, this noble value has not been optimally integrated in learning in schools. Previous research has mostly discussed the local wisdom of Batak Toba in general without specifically highlighting the concept of *Boru Ni Raja*, thus creating a research gap that is important to be studied more deeply.

This study is novel because it specifically integrates the Boru Ni Raja concept—rarely explored in educational research—into the framework of contextual and character education. Previous studies have generally discussed Toba Batak local wisdom such as Dalihan Na Tolu or traditional ethics in broad cultural terms, without emphasizing the gender-based moral dimension embedded in Boru Ni Raja. The uniqueness of this research lies in highlighting the role of women as moral anchors and symbols of honor within the Batak Toba social system, which has not been systematically examined in prior educational frameworks. By incorporating this gender-based cultural value, the study expands the theoretical scope of culture-based education from merely cultural preservation to gender-responsive character formation. It also offers a conceptual model that connects local moral values with modern pedagogical approaches such as Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) and project-based education. This perspective provides a more inclusive and holistic understanding of character education rooted in local wisdom. Thus, the study contributes not only to the enrichment of educational theory but also to the development of culturally grounded, gender-sensitive pedagogical practices.

In line with Sartika et al. (2023) that culture is a system of meaning that is inherited through symbols, as well as the theory of multicultural education Reddick et al. (2017) which places local values as the center of learning, the integration of *Boru Ni Raja* in character education becomes very relevant. *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) approach as described Yildiz & Baltaci (2016) It also supports real-life experiential learning that links cultural values to everyday life. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the integration of *Boru Ni Raja values* in character education and contextual learning in the Silindung area. The results of the research are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of a character education model based on local wisdom, as well as a practical guide for teachers to realize contextual, meaningful, and rooted learning in the Toba Batak culture.

2. METHOD

Types of research

This study uses a literature review approach to examine the integration of Toba Batak local wisdom through the concept of *Boru Ni Raja* in character education and contextual learning. Literature review was chosen because it allows researchers to examine theories, research results, and empirical

practices from various sources in depth. Literature review functions to map the development of knowledge and find research gaps that are still open (Curasma et al., 2021). With this method, the research is not only descriptive, but also analytical and critical of the sources studied. The literature used includes books, journal articles, proceedings, research reports, and education policy documents. This approach is relevant to answer the research gap related to the lack of exploration of *Boru Ni Raja* values in the context of education. Thus, this type of research is in accordance with the objectives of the conceptual study.

Data source

Research data sources are obtained from relevant academic literature, both national and international. The journal articles selected came from reputable databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ. The selection of credible literature sources is important to maintain the validity of research findings. In addition, books on Toba Batak culture, local wisdom, and character education are also used as the main reference. National education policy documents such as the Independent Curriculum were also reviewed to see the suitability of the context. The literature was selected based on the criteria of relevance to the topic, relevance of the content, and its contribution in answering research questions. With diverse data sources, this research has a strong analytical foundation. This strengthens the academic and practical arguments of the review.

Data collection techniques

The data collection technique was carried out by the method of documentation of the selected literature. Each literature was analyzed based on title, abstract, keywords, and main content to assess its suitability for the research topic. Systematic literature review requires a structured selection process so that the results are more targeted (Mohmad & Maat, 2023). Therefore, the researcher uses search strategies with keywords such as *local wisdom*, *Batak Toba*, *Boru Ni Raja*, *character education*, and *contextual learning*. Search results were filtered by taking into account the year of publication, the quality of the journal, and the relevance of the context. In addition, classical literature is still used if it has a fundamental contribution to the theory of character education. This process ensures that the data collected represents the development of the concept over time. Thus, systematic documentation techniques produce a collection of valid literature for analysis.

Data analysis techniques

Data analysis was carried out with a content analysis approach to examine themes, concepts, and patterns in the collected literature. Content analysis is useful for understanding the deep meaning of the analyzed text (Tang et al., 2019). In this study, literature is grouped into categories such as *Boru Ni Raja values*, character education, contextual learning, and local cultural integration. From these categories, researchers look for connections between concepts and find gaps that have not been widely researched. The analysis is carried out inductively, namely from literature findings to conceptual synthesis. In addition, the researcher also compared the results of previous research to find similarities and differences. The process of triangulation between literature is used to increase the validity of the analysis. Thus, content analysis is the right strategy for this research.

Validity

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the researcher uses the principles of transparency and traceability in presenting the results of the review. All selected literature is systematically recorded and included in the bibliography. Traceability of sources is the main requirement for a literature review to be considered credible. The researcher also cross-checked with key theories such as character education (Lickona), contextual learning (Johnson), and local culture (Geertz). This is so that the resulting synthesis is not only subjective, but also based on established theories. In addition, validity is enhanced by comparing literature from various disciplines, such as anthropology, education, and sociology. With this strategy, research gains reliability in structuring

academic arguments. Finally, this research method provides a solid basis for building valid conclusions.

This research method uses a *systematic literature review* approach with reference to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency and accuracy in the source selection process. Data was collected through literature search on reputable databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ with the keywords *local wisdom*, *Boru Ni Raja*, *character education*, and *contextual learning*. The inclusion criteria include articles published between 2015–2025, have direct relevance to the topic of integrating local wisdom in education, as well as published in *peer-reviewed journals*. The exclusion criteria include non-academic sources, duplicate articles, and publications that do not provide adequate conceptual or empirical data. From the initial search results of 125 articles, screening was carried out based on titles, abstracts, and full content, until 42 articles were obtained that met the criteria for in-depth analysis. Data analysis was carried out through *content analysis* techniques to identify themes, integration patterns, and research gaps related to the application of *Boru Ni Raja* values in character education and contextual learning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings
General findings of the literature

The results of the literature review show that the local wisdom of Batak Toba has great potential in supporting character education in schools. The values contained in the Toba Batak customs, such as *Dalihan Na Tolu* and *Boru Ni Raja*, reflect the principles of togetherness, respect, and social responsibility. The local wisdom of Batak Toba is a value system that maintains social harmony and becomes the moral basis of society (Sugihartono, 2024). These values are very relevant to the purpose of character education which is emphasized by (Rohmat, 2021). However, the integration of these cultural values in learning is still very limited. Many schools only teach culture as knowledge, not as internalized values. This condition reinforces the importance of *Boru Ni Raja*'s integration in education. Thus, the literature indicates that there is potential that has not been explored optimally.

Boru Ni Raja's value as a source of character

The concept *of Boru Ni Raja* places women as a symbol of family honor in Toba's Batak culture. These values contain teachings about respect for human dignity, social responsibility, and fortitude. According to Sartika et al. (2023) culture is a system of meaning that gives direction to social life, and *Boru Ni Raja* is one of the symbols that governs the relations of the Toba Batak community. In the context of character education, these values can be transformed into teachings about honesty, respect, and solidarity. The results of the literature show that this value plays an important role in strengthening social relations in society. However, schools have not made this value the main source of character education. By integrating them, students can better understand the importance of respect for themselves and others. These findings demonstrate the relevance of *Boru Ni Raja* in modern education.

Integration in contextual learning

The literature also reveals that the integration of local cultures in contextual learning has a positive impact on student understanding. That contextual teaching and learning (CTL) makes it easier for students **to** understand concepts because they are related to real experiences (Sa'Diyah et al., 2019). In the context of Silindung, the use of *Boru Ni Raja* values can make learning more meaningful. For example, when students learn about social responsibility, teachers can relate to *Boru Ni Raja*'s position in maintaining family honor. Some research shows that local culture-based learning increases student engagement. Culturally responsive teaching strengthens students' identity and increases motivation to learn (Lai, 2023). Thus, the integration *of Boru Ni Raja* can strengthen the relationship between formal education and social life. This is one of the important results of the literature reviewed.

Gap in Education practice

Although *the Boru Ni Raja* score has high relevance, the literature shows that there is a gap in educational practices in schools. Teachers tend to still rely on cognitive approaches without integrating local culture in real terms in learning. Education in Indonesia often ignores the cultural context of students. As a result, students lack to internalize the moral values that should be the basis of character. The study also found that teachers find it difficult to design learning that utilizes local wisdom. This void makes students unable to relate lessons to daily life. Education must be contextual to be meaningful for students (Surya et al., 2017). Thus, this gap is the main finding that strengthens the urgency of integrating cultural values in the curriculum.

The results of the literature confirm that the integration of local wisdom, including *Boru Ni Raja*, can enrich character education. Character education must emphasize cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects so that students have a complete morality (Hidayat, 2021). In the context of Toba Batak, the value *of Boru Ni Raja* teaches respect, loyalty, and responsibility, which can be used as the basis for the formation of students' character. Culture-based education is able to strengthen students' connection with their environment (Amit & Qouder, 2017). Thus, this integration not only enriches the curriculum, but also creates culturally rooted learning. This can answer the moral crisis that occurs in society. The integration also supports the vision of national education in shaping the profile of Pancasila students. Therefore, its contribution is strategic.

Relevance to the Independent Curriculum

The literature also shows that the integration of *Boru Ni Raja values* is very relevant to the Independent Curriculum policy. The curriculum emphasizes project-based and contextual learning that can be adapted to local conditions. The curriculum must provide space for the exploration of local wisdom as a source of learning (Kassa & Mekonnen, 2022). This opens up great opportunities for teachers in Silindung to associate learning with the Toba Batak custom. The value *of Boru Ni Raja* can be used as a culture-based learning project that teaches cooperation, responsibility, and respect. The results showed that students were more likely to understand abstract concepts when they were associated with real cultural practices. Thus, this integration is in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum. This confirms that this research is relevant to the needs of the current education system.

Gender Perspectives in Education

One of the interesting findings is that *the value of Boru Ni Raja* also brings a gender perspective in character education. This concept places women as a symbol of honor that must be maintained, as well as providing a moral example for the family. Gender-sensitive education will strengthen social justice and equality (Huang et al., 2018). The integration *of Boru Ni Raja* in learning can teach appreciation for the role of women in society. The literature shows that gender- and culture-based learning can improve students' empathy. In addition, it also enriches character education with the values of equality. Therefore, the gender aspect in *Boru Ni Raja* provides a new dimension to education. These findings reinforce the novelty of research that has not been touched much in previous studies.

Impact on students' cultural identity

The results of the literature show that the integration *of Boru Ni Raja* values not only shapes character, but also strengthens students' cultural identity. Multicultural education must associate students' identities with their culture of origin so that they are not uprooted from traditional roots (Prathamesh, 2025). In the context of Silindung, the integration of *Boru Ni Raja* helps students understand the role of culture in daily life. This has an impact on increasing pride in the identity of the Toba Batak. Local wisdom plays an important role in building students' cultural awareness. A strong cultural identity will protect students from the negative impacts of globalization (Hima et al., 2021). Thus, this integration has strategic value in 21st century education. These findings further strengthen the urgency of the research.

Contribution to the Silindung community

In addition to students, the literature results show that the integration *of Boru Ni Raja values* also has a positive impact on the Silindung community. Culture-based education helps to maintain the

sustainability of traditions and preserve the social values of the community. Local culture-based education is an effective strategy to preserve intangible cultural heritage. By involving *Boru Ni Raja* in learning, the school contributes to the preservation of Toba Batak customs. It also strengthens the relationship between the school and the community. The literature confirms that school collaboration with indigenous peoples increases the relevance of education. Thus, this research has a dual contribution: to education and cultural preservation. These findings show the importance of integrating local wisdom as part of social development.

Synthesis of literature results

Overall, the results of this literature study show that the integration of *Boru Ni Raja* in character education and contextual learning has high relevance, contribution, and urgency. This value has the potential to strengthen students' morality, associate learning with culture, and preserve the identity of the Toba Batak. The literature also emphasizes that there is a gap in educational practices that have not made much use of local wisdom. The novelty of this research lies in the exploration of gender and cultural perspectives brought by *Boru Ni Raja*. With a literature review approach, this study successfully identified potentials, challenges, and implementation strategies. Education must depart from the cultural context of the community (Putri & Sabardila, 2023). Thus, this research provides an academic as well as a practical basis for the integration of local wisdom in education. These results also open up opportunities for more applicable follow-up research.

Discussion

The results and discussion of this study show that the main values in the concept of *Boru Ni Raja*—namely respect, responsibility, loyalty, and social solidarity—have a strong relevance to the dimension of character education in the 21st century. Based on the synthesis of the 42 articles analyzed, three main categories were obtained: (1) *Moral and social values* that reflect respect for human dignity and the role of women in maintaining family honor; (2) *Educational and leadership values* that emphasize social responsibility and exemplary in the community; and (3) *Contextual values* that can be integrated into learning through *the Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) approach. Visually, this synthesis can be summarized in the following Table 1.

Table 1.

Literary Synthesis of Boru Ni Raja Values and Its Relevance to Education

Grade Categories	The Meaning of Toba Batak Culture	Relevance to Character Education	Implementation Challenges
Respect & Solidarity	Respecting the role of women as a symbol of family honor	Increase empathy and respect in the classroom	Teachers are not used to associating gender values in learning
Responsibility & Loyalty	Maintaining social harmony through collective roles	Cultivate discipline and loyalty to duty	There are no operational guidelines in the curriculum yet
Contextual Value & Exemplary	Learning through traditional practices and cultural symbols	Encourage project-based learning and local wisdom	Limited learning resources based on Toba Batak culture

These results are in line with the research of Lai (2023) which affirms the importance of *culturally responsive teaching* to strengthen student identity, as well as with the study of Shanmugam et al. (2019) which found that the integration of local cultures increases learning motivation and a sense of belonging to school. When compared to Minangkabau culture, the concept *of Bundo Kanduang* shows similarities in raising the role of women as the binder of family moral values, while in Balinese culture,

the value of *Tri Hita Karana* emphasizes the harmony of humans with others and nature. However, *Boru Ni Raja* is unique because it combines gender, social, and spiritual aspects in one rich set of values.

From the implementation side, the results of this study confirm that teachers can integrate *the Boru Ni Raja value* into the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) through culture-based activities. For example, teachers can design the project "*The Role of Boru Ni Raja in Maintaining Family Honor*" in PPKn or Indonesian subjects to develop students' social and communication competencies. In addition, an custom-based *project-based learning* approach can be used to relate the value of responsibility and solidarity in the context of the real lives of students in Silindung. Thus, the practical contribution of this research lies in the provision of a theoretical basis and an applicative guide for educators to bring local values to life in contextual and characterful learning.

The relevance of local wisdom to character education

The results of the study show that the local wisdom of Toba Batak through the concept *of Boru Ni Raja* has high relevance to character education. Values such as respect, responsibility, and loyalty contained in them can strengthen the affective and moral aspects of students. Character education must instill moral values so that students are able to act correctly in daily life (Watson, 2019). By making *Boru Ni Raja* a source of value, education is not only cognitive but also personality form. This is in line with the national goal of creating a generation with noble character. In the context of Silindung, this concept is able to answer the moral crisis of the younger generation who are beginning to be uprooted from tradition. Therefore, local wisdom is an important element in modern character education.

Contextual learning and the meaning of Boru Ni Raja

The integration of *Boru Ni Raja* values in contextual learning provides opportunities for students to learn through real-life experiences. Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) helps students understand concepts through their connection to everyday life (Maharani & Apriandi, 2017). Teachers can relate the subject matter to *Boru Ni Raja's position* as a symbol of family honor. For example, in PPKn lessons, the value of responsibility and solidarity can be associated with the role of *Boru Ni Raja* in the Toba Batak custom. This makes it easier for students to internalize values, as they learn through the culture they are familiar with. Thus, learning becomes more meaningful and not just memorized. These findings reinforce the idea that education must be rooted in local culture to be relevant.

The gap between policy and implementation

Although national education policies emphasize character building, implementation on the ground still faces challenges. Teachers often find it difficult to translate policies into learning practices based on local wisdom. Education in Indonesia tends to ignore the potential of local culture as a source of learning (Setiyadi et al., 2018). This is reflected in Silindung, where *Boru Ni Raja* 's grades rarely enter the classroom as contextual material. In fact, these grades can strengthen the social and moral dimensions of students. This gap between policy and practice is an important finding from the literature. Therefore, concrete guidance is needed for teachers to integrate local wisdom in learning. Without concrete steps, cultural integration is only limited to slogans.

Gender perspectives in character education

The concept *of Boru Ni Raja* provides a unique gender dimension in character education. This value places women as a symbol of family honor, thus teaching the importance of respect for women's dignity. Gender-responsive education can strengthen social justice and equality (Huang et al., 2018). By integrating *Boru Ni Raja*, students can learn about gender appreciation and equality in everyday life. This is relevant to reduce gender bias in schools and society. In addition, this grade helps students understand that women's social roles are not only domestic, but also symbolic and moral. Thus, *Boru Ni Raja-based* character education brings a new perspective in shaping a just and inclusive generation.

Contribution to the student's cultural identity

Literature discussions show that the integration of local wisdom strengthens students' cultural identities. Multicultural education must function to connect students with their cultural identity so as not to be uprooted from traditional roots (Afriansyah et al., 2024). In the context of Silindung, *Boru Ni Raja-based* learning helps students understand the position of customary in social life. This fosters a sense of pride in their Toba Batak identity. A strong cultural identity is also a bulwark against the negative impact of globalization. Culture-based education increases students' multicultural awareness (Owens, 2014). Thus, *Boru Ni Raja* not only shapes character, but also strengthens the identity of students. This is a strategic contribution in building a generation rooted in culture.

Linkage with the Independent Curriculum

The integration *of Boru Ni Raja* is also very relevant to the spirit of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes project-based and contextual learning. This curriculum encourages students to explore local culture as a source of learning. Education must provide space for the integration of local wisdom values in every subject (Alexander, 2019). This can be realized through a learning project that raises the theme of *Boru Ni Raja* as a moral and social symbol. For example, students can create a cultural documentation project on the role of women in the Toba Batak customs. In this way, they learn while preserving traditions. These findings show that *Boru Ni Raja* can be implemented in accordance with national education policies. Therefore, the integration of culture and curriculum becomes complementary.

Contribution to the Silindung community

In addition to benefiting formal education, the integration *of Boru Ni Raja* also has a positive impact on the Silindung community. Culture-based education helps to maintain the sustainability of traditions and preserve the social values of the community. Local culture-based education is an important strategy in preserving intangible cultural heritage (Taufiqurrahman et al., 2024). By involving *Boru Ni Raja* in education, schools play an active role as agents of cultural preservation. This strengthens collaboration between schools and indigenous peoples. In addition, students become actors who maintain cultural values through daily practice. This contribution makes education not only shape individuals, but also strengthen communities. Thus, this research has broad social implications.

Meaningful and participatory learning

The integration of *Boru Ni Raja* values makes learning more meaningful and participatory. Education must be dialogical and based on students' life experiences (Juniarti et al., 2024). By making local culture a learning resource, students are more actively involved in the learning process. The teacher is no longer the center, but a facilitator who helps students find meaning. This kind of learning increases motivation because students feel the knowledge they have gained is close to their lives. In addition, students can develop critical thinking skills through discussions about cultural values. This is in line with the goals of 21st century education that emphasizes higher-level thinking skills. Thus, *Boru Ni Raja* can be a bridge between tradition and modernity in education.

Research novelty

The novelty of this research lies in the focus of the exploration of *Boru Ni Raja* in the context of education, which has not been widely studied in the literature. Most previous research only discussed the local wisdom of Batak Toba in general, without highlighting this concept specifically. Locally-based research can generate relevant and contextual educational innovations (Qomarudin, 2020). By raising *Boru Ni Raja*, this research presents a new perspective in gender- and cultural-based character education. This novelty is important because it broadens the horizon of the study of culture-based education in Indonesia. In addition, novelty also lies in the literature review approach that maps theories, practices, and research gaps. Therefore, this research contributes to the development of theory as well as educational practice. This strengthens the research position in the academic realm. A

discussion of the literature results shows that the integration *of Boru Ni Raja* has significant academic and practical implications. Academically, this research enriches the theory of character education based on local wisdom. Practically, this research provides guidance for teachers in Silindung to design contextual learning. Real-life experiential learning will be more effective for students (Distira et al., 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Boru Ni Raja values—respect, responsibility, loyalty, and social solidarity has strong relevance to strengthening students' character and cultural identity in the 21st-century educational context. The findings reveal that these values can be effectively linked to *Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)* to make education more meaningful and rooted in local wisdom. The study is novel because it introduces a gender-based cultural framework, highlighting the moral role of women in Batak Toba traditions as an essential component of character education. Academically, it expands the discourse on culture-based and gender-responsive pedagogy, while practically, it provides teachers with a model for designing culturally relevant learning. However, the study is limited to a literature review and has not yet been validated through empirical classroom practices. Future research should conduct field studies in schools across the Silindung region, comparative analyses with other local cultures such as Minangkabau or Bali, and experimental implementation of a Boru Ni Raja–based learning model. Through such studies, the theoretical insights presented here can evolve into applicable and measurable educational innovations.

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