

*Research Article*

# Implementation of Local Wisdom Based Learning to Enhance Students' Social Awareness and Learning Culture at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara Jeneponto

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**Abstract:** This study aims to: (1) describe the implementation of local wisdom-based learning in the teaching process of Grade VII B at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara Jeneponto; (2) determine the improvement of students' social awareness after the implementation of local wisdom-based learning; and (3) identify the enhancement of students' learning culture through the application of this learning model. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects were 25 seventh-grade students, focusing on two main variables: social awareness and learning culture. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and documentation, and analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative techniques. The findings indicate that the integration of Jeneponto cultural values *Tabe' Karaeng, Sipakatau, Sipakalabbiri, Sipakainga, Siri' na Pacce, Akbulo Sibatang, and empo sipayangari* was implemented effectively and became more optimal in Cycle II after improvements were made through Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and the use of more contextual local cases. Students' social awareness increased from an average of 63.13% in Cycle I (categorized as Fair) to 80.42% in Cycle II (categorized as High). Similarly, students' learning culture improved from 69.69% (Fair) in Cycle I to 82.66% (High) in Cycle II, meeting the classical mastery criteria. The study concludes that integrating local wisdom into classroom instruction not only strengthens students' understanding of social studies content but is also effective in shaping their social character and learning habits. This model is recommended for development in other subjects and educational levels.

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary education increasingly emphasizes the holistic development of learners, extending beyond academic achievement to encompass social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and adaptive learning capacities aligned with both local and global dynamics (Elpisah et al., 2024). In this context, students are expected to demonstrate critical thinking, empathy toward their social environment, and appreciation of local wisdom as integral components of meaningful learning. Educational approaches that integrate social and cultural values are therefore considered essential in fostering contextual learning experiences that remain relevant in an era of globalization (Baharia et al., 2025; Nasution et al., 2016).

At the national level, Indonesia's educational reform through the *Kurikulum Merdeka* underscores the importance of integrating social and cultural values within learning processes. This policy aims to strengthen students' social and cultural competencies as part of a broader

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character education agenda grounded in local values. Such an orientation reflects a growing recognition that education should not only produce academically competent individuals but also cultivate learners with strong character, social awareness, and cultural identity. In the midst of rapid globalization and technological advancement, educational systems are increasingly challenged to balance global competencies with the preservation of local identity and social cohesion (Handayani et al., 2023). Curricula that are overly centralized and detached from local contexts often render learning abstract and disconnected from students' lived realities, resulting in limited emotional and social engagement.

Within this framework, social awareness emerges as a crucial educational dimension that must be nurtured through grounded and reflective learning processes. Socially aware students are able to perceive themselves as members of a community, demonstrate empathy, and practice tolerance and responsibility in everyday interactions (Fitri et al., 2024). Parallel to this, learning culture represents the internalization of values and attitudes cultivated through educational experiences, including discipline, curiosity, and lifelong learning commitment. Together, social awareness and learning culture constitute foundational elements for shaping learners who are not only academically capable but also socially resilient and culturally meaningful (Demirhan, 2024; Säljö, 2023).

Empirically, this issue is particularly evident in the local context of Kelara District, Jeneponto Regency, where a gap persists between classroom instruction and the surrounding social and cultural realities. Learning practices that rely heavily on textual materials without integrating local wisdom often hinder students' ability to connect acquired knowledge with their everyday experiences. The incorporation of Bugis local wisdom into learning activities holds the potential to enrich students' understanding of their cultural identity while bridging theoretical knowledge with social and cultural realities embedded in their community.

Preliminary observations conducted in class VII B at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara reveal that students' social awareness and learning culture remain underdeveloped. Approximately 40% of students exhibited low engagement in group work, 50% demonstrated limited participation in classroom discussions, and 30% were reluctant to assist peers facing learning difficulties. Moreover, indicators of learning culture such as task discipline, initiative in seeking additional learning resources, and active classroom involvement were relatively weak, with only 65% of students submitting assignments on time and merely 40% showing initiative to explore supplementary materials. Classroom interactions were predominantly teacher-centered, with minimal opportunities for students to relate learning content to their social and cultural environment. These conditions indicate an urgent need for more contextual and participatory learning strategies.

The selection of class VII B as the research focus is theoretically grounded in developmental psychology. At this stage, students transition from concrete operational to formal operational thinking as proposed by Jean Piaget, where abstract reasoning begins to emerge but remains closely tied to concrete experiences. As the first year of junior high school, grade VII represents a critical period for cultivating learning culture through experiential and contextual approaches rooted in students' immediate environment. Additionally, according to Erik Erikson's theory of Identity versus Role Confusion, early adolescence is marked by identity exploration and the development of social responsibility and empathy. Learning approaches grounded in local wisdom can therefore reinforce cultural identity while simultaneously fostering social awareness and learning culture during this critical developmental phase.

One pedagogical approach considered relevant to addressing these challenges is local wisdom-based learning, which utilizes cultural values, social norms, and community practices as authentic learning resources (Nurhadianto, 2024). This approach positions knowledge as emerging not only from textbooks but also from students' direct engagement with their social and cultural environment, thereby promoting cultural pride and active learning participation (Aulia et al., 2024). Theoretically, local wisdom-based learning aligns with constructivist perspectives that view knowledge as actively constructed through personal experience and interaction with the environment. It is also consistent with contextual teaching and learning principles, which emphasize the relevance of instructional content to students' real-life contexts to enhance meaning and applicability (Johnson, 2002).

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of local wisdom-based learning in fostering social awareness and cultural appreciation. Nurhadianto (2024) reported that integrating local cultural values into civic education enhances empathy, social engagement, and national identity. Similar findings were presented by L et al. (2024), who highlighted the role of local wisdom in social studies learning at the primary level in promoting tolerance and contextual learning experiences. Arman Abu Bakar et al. (2024) further developed the

PACCE model grounded in Bugis local wisdom, proving its effectiveness in strengthening students' social awareness and character development. Additionally, Andi et al. (2023) emphasized the integration of community history and traditional values in history education to cultivate cultural appreciation and critical thinking skills, while Aulia et al. (2024) demonstrated that embedding local wisdom in elementary social studies learning reinforces cultural character and deepens students' social understanding.

Despite these contributions, existing research remains limited in several respects. Most studies focus on specific subjects such as social studies or history and are predominantly conducted at elementary or senior high school levels. Furthermore, many adopt thematic approaches without examining concrete classroom-based implementations through action-oriented research designs. Importantly, prior research often treats social awareness and learning culture as a single construct, rather than as distinct yet interrelated variables with unique characteristics and indicators. Addressing this empirical gap, the present study examines social awareness and learning culture simultaneously but as analytically distinct dimensions within the context of junior high school learning.

Given these theoretical and empirical considerations, this study aims to implement local wisdom-based learning as a contextual and meaningful strategy to enhance students' social awareness and learning culture. Specifically, the research seeks to describe the implementation of local wisdom-based learning in class VII B at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara, Jeneponto, and to examine its impact on improving students' social awareness and learning culture. Through this focus, the study contributes to the growing body of empirical evidence on culturally grounded pedagogy while offering practical insights for character-based and context-sensitive learning practices in secondary education.

## 2. Literature review

### Local Wisdom-Based Learning in Social Studies Education

Local wisdom-based learning has been widely recognized as a pedagogical approach that contextualizes school knowledge through local cultural values, social norms, and community practices, thereby enhancing the relevance and meaningfulness of learning experiences. Prior studies emphasize that integrating local wisdom into instruction not only supports cognitive development but also strengthens character formation, social awareness, and students' sense of cultural identity (Novitasari & Walid, 2024; Nurhadianto, 2024). Within social studies education, this approach enables learners to connect abstract concepts such as social interaction, cooperation, and social roles with lived social realities embedded in their communities. Empirical evidence suggests that local wisdom-based learning contributes positively to students' motivation, engagement, and social sensitivity across subject domains. In science education, local wisdom integration facilitates the linkage between scientific knowledge and socially relevant issues, supporting sustainability-oriented learning (Erman & Wakhidah, 2024). Similarly, in physical education and civic learning contexts, the incorporation of local cultural elements has been shown to enhance learning motivation while preserving cultural traditions (Adrizal et al., 2024; Nurhadianto, 2024). These findings collectively position local wisdom not merely as cultural content, but as a pedagogical mechanism that bridges school curricula with students' socio-cultural environments.

### Pedagogical Values of Jeneponto Local Wisdom

In the context of Jeneponto Regency, local wisdom represents a repertoire of social values that can function as pedagogical foundations for developing students' social skills and contextualizing social studies concepts. These values provide culturally grounded behavioral indicators that can be operationalized in classroom practices to foster social awareness and learning culture.

- a. *Sipakatau* emphasizes respect for human dignity and supports civil communication and constructive classroom discourse.
- b. *Sipakainga* promotes constructive mutual reminders, which are relevant for reflective learning and peer feedback practices.
- c. *Tabe' Karaeng* reflects norms of politeness and respect, fostering a respectful and ethical classroom climate.
- d. *A'bulo Sibatang* represents unity and mutual support, strengthening collaboration and shared responsibility in group learning.
- e. *Empo Sipitanggarri* highlights deliberation and dialogue, contributing to the development of negotiation and conflict-resolution skills.

- f. *Sipakalabbiri* underscores respect regardless of social status, reinforcing inclusivity and egalitarian interaction in schools.
- g. *Siri' na Pacce* integrates integrity and empathy, supporting academic discipline, responsibility, and social concern.
- h. *Appalette Bola/Balla* exemplifies collective action and solidarity, offering concrete illustrations of social cooperation in social studies learning.
- i. *Akkaruntigi*, as a symbolic cultural tradition, provides meaningful contexts for discussing acculturation, social change, and cultural preservation.

Collectively, these values serve as culturally embedded learning resources that translate abstract social studies concepts into tangible social practices, enabling students to internalize social norms through contextual experience.

### **Social Awareness as an Educational Outcome**

Social awareness is conceptualized in the literature as a multidimensional competence encompassing empathy, social understanding, and adaptive interaction within social environments. It involves recognizing others' emotions and needs, understanding social roles and responsibilities, and engaging constructively in social relationships (Nurhidayat et al., 2023; Abute, 2019). From a social intelligence perspective, social awareness also includes the ability to interpret social dynamics and respond appropriately across diverse contexts (Sarnoto & Ulfa, 2021). Research further indicates that social awareness can be developed through educational environments that emphasize inclusive values, collaborative interaction, and meaningful social participation. Indicators such as adaptability, group integration, respect for diversity, empathy, and leadership engagement are frequently used to assess students' social awareness in educational settings (Kadhafi, 2024; Fitri et al., 2024). These indicators align closely with the values embedded in Jenepono local wisdom, suggesting a strong theoretical linkage between culturally grounded pedagogy and the development of students' social awareness.

### **Learning Culture and Contextual Pedagogy**

Learning culture refers to the shared values, norms, and habitual practices that shape how students engage with learning tasks, manage responsibilities, and interact within educational environments. Studies emphasize that learning culture is culturally situated, shaped by collective expectations and beliefs about learning held by students, teachers, and communities (Cortazzi & Jin, 2013; Yuan & Xie, 2013). A positive learning culture is typically reflected in disciplined study habits, active participation, responsibility for learning tasks, and sustained curiosity. Both internal factors, such as motivation, readiness, and learning skills, and external factors, such as family support, school climate, peer relationships, and educational policies, interact to form students' learning culture (Reneland-Forsman, 2017; Suwarni, 2022). Contextual learning approaches, including local wisdom-based learning, are therefore strategically positioned to strengthen learning culture by aligning instructional practices with students' cultural backgrounds and social experiences.

## **3. Research Method**

### **Research Design and Approach**

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design aimed at improving students' social awareness and learning culture through the implementation of local wisdom-based learning. Classroom action research was selected because it allows for systematic and reflective interventions directly within the learning process, enabling observable improvements in students' attitudes and behaviors. The research followed the cyclical model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages, which facilitated continuous improvement of instructional practices based on empirical classroom findings. The study was conducted at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara, located in Jenepono Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research took place during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from August to October 2025. The selection of this site was based on preliminary observations indicating low levels of social awareness and learning culture among students, as well as the school's strong potential for integrating local cultural values into classroom instruction.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 20 students enrolled in class VII B at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara. This class was purposively selected based on initial diagnostic observations that revealed limited participation in group discussions, low collaboration, weak discipline in completing academic tasks, and minimal learning initiative. These characteristics made the

class an appropriate setting for implementing and evaluating a local wisdom-based pedagogical intervention.

### Research Variables and Focus

The study focused on two main variables: social awareness and learning culture. Social awareness was examined in terms of students' ability to adapt socially, interact effectively, demonstrate empathy and tolerance, integrate into social groups, and engage in social issues. Learning culture was analyzed through indicators such as discipline, active participation in learning activities, independent learning initiative, learning preparation, and time management. These variables were assessed to determine changes following the implementation of local wisdom-based learning.

### Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through systematic observation and documentation throughout the research cycles. Observation was conducted continuously during the implementation of the learning intervention using structured observation sheets to record students' participation, collaboration, interaction patterns, and responses to learning tasks. This method allowed the researcher to capture behavioral changes related to both social awareness and learning culture in real time. Documentation, including photographs, videos, and written records of learning activities, was used to support observational data and provide a comprehensive description of the learning process and students' engagement during the intervention.

### Intervention Procedure

The intervention was implemented following the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) action research cycle. During the planning stage, lesson plans integrating local wisdom values were designed, along with the preparation of observation instruments and supporting learning materials. The action stage involved the implementation of local wisdom-based learning activities, including group discussions, culturally grounded case studies, and local culture-based projects. Throughout this stage, students were actively engaged in collaborative and contextual learning experiences. The observation stage focused on monitoring students' behavioral changes, participation levels, and social interactions during learning activities. Finally, the reflection stage involved evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention, identifying challenges encountered during implementation, and determining necessary improvements for subsequent cycles.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the qualitative data analysis procedures proposed by Sugiyono (2022), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant observational and documentation data related to social awareness and learning culture. Data were then presented descriptively in the form of percentages, averages, and categorical interpretations to illustrate changes before and after the intervention. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by verifying patterns and trends observed in students' social awareness and learning culture throughout the research cycles.

### Indicators of Success

The success of the intervention was determined based on predefined achievement indicators for both variables. Social awareness was considered successfully improved if students reached at least the "High" category (70–89%) on indicators such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Similarly, learning culture was deemed successful if students achieved at least the "High" category (70–89%) on indicators including discipline, active engagement, and independent learning initiative. Based on Arikunto's (2020) classification, the study was considered successful if the class achieved an average improvement of at least 75% and met the "High" category for both social awareness and learning culture at the class level.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Results

#### Improvement of Students' Social Awareness through Local Wisdom-Based Learning

This section presents the results of students' social awareness across Cycle I and Cycle II following the implementation of local wisdom-based learning in class VII B.

**Table 1.** Average Scores of Students' Social Awareness across Research Cycles

Cycle	Meeting I	Meeting II	Average	Category	Status
Cycle I	58.75%	67.50%	63.13%	Moderate	Not Mastered (<75%)
Cycle II	73.33%	87.50%	80.42%	High	Mastered ( $\geq 75\%$ )

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The results indicate a substantial improvement in students' social awareness from Cycle I to Cycle II. In Cycle I, the average score remained at a moderate level and did not reach the mastery criterion, suggesting that students were still in the early stages of understanding and practicing social values. After pedagogical refinements in Cycle II, students' social awareness increased significantly, achieving a high category and meeting the mastery threshold. This improvement reflects students' increased ability to cooperate, show empathy, and participate actively in social interactions during learning activities.

#### Improvement of Students' Learning Culture through Local Wisdom-Based Learning

This subsection reports the changes in students' learning culture across Cycle I and Cycle II as a result of implementing local wisdom-based learning strategies.

**Table 2.** Average Scores of Students' Learning Culture across Research Cycles

Cycle	Meeting I	Meeting II	Average	Category	Status
Cycle I	67.50%	71.88%	69.69%	Moderate	Not Mastered (<75%)
Cycle II	78.44%	86.88%	82.66%	High	Mastered ( $\geq 75\%$ )

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

The findings demonstrate an improvement in students' learning culture from Cycle I to Cycle II. During Cycle I, learning culture indicators such as discipline, initiative, and active participation were still developing and had not yet met the mastery criterion. In Cycle II, the average score increased to the high category, indicating that students had developed more consistent learning habits, greater responsibility, and stronger engagement in classroom activities. These results suggest that the local wisdom-based approach positively influenced students' learning behaviors.

#### Discussion

##### *The Role of Local Wisdom-Based Learning in Enhancing Students' Social Awareness*

The improvement in students' social awareness from Cycle I to Cycle II can be attributed to the increasingly structured and reflective integration of local wisdom-based learning. In Cycle I, cultural values such as *Sipakatau*, *Tabe' Karaeng*, *Sipakainga*, *Sipakalabbiri*, and *Siri' na Pace* were primarily introduced at a conceptual level. As a result, students' social awareness developed only at an initial stage, characterized by limited confidence, passive participation, and uneven engagement in group activities. This condition explains why social awareness had not yet reached the mastery criterion during the first cycle.

Significant progress in Cycle II was driven by pedagogical refinements, including more intensive teacher feedback, equitable role distribution, and the use of locally grounded social cases closely related to students' lived experiences. These strategies activated not only students' cognitive understanding but also their affective and social dimensions, encouraging empathy, cooperation, and responsibility within learning groups. This finding is consistent with contextual learning theory, which emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when connected to learners' socio-cultural realities. Empirical support for this result is provided by Irmawati et al. (2025) and Ulfa et al. (2025), who demonstrated that the integration of local wisdom in classroom instruction strengthens students' social awareness by functioning as familiar behavioral guidelines that shape interaction patterns.

Moreover, the effectiveness of local wisdom-based learning in this study aligns with the findings of Bakar et al. (2024), who reported that culturally grounded pedagogical models significantly enhance cooperative attitudes, empathy, and social responsibility among students. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that the impact of local wisdom is strongly mediated by pedagogical strategy. While Cycle I showed limited gains due to superficial integration of cultural values, Cycle II achieved substantial improvement when those values were operationalized through problem-solving activities, collaborative tasks, and guided reflection. This supports the argument of R. Harahap et al. (2025) that local cultural values become powerful pedagogical instruments only when embedded systematically within learning processes rather than treated as supplementary content.

### ***The Contribution of Local Wisdom-Based Learning to the Development of Students' Learning Culture***

The improvement in students' learning culture from Cycle I to Cycle II indicates that local wisdom-based learning plays a crucial role in shaping positive learning habits when implemented consistently. In Cycle I, learning culture indicators such as discipline and readiness were present at a basic level, but independent learning initiative and responsibility were not yet consistently demonstrated. This finding suggests that initial exposure to cultural values alone is insufficient to transform students' learning behaviors.

In Cycle II, the reinforcement of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) integrated with local cultural contexts significantly enhanced students' engagement and self-regulation. Learning activities grounded in culturally relevant problems encouraged students to perceive learning as a meaningful social experience rather than a routine academic task. Cultural values such as *Tabe' Karaeng* contributed to improved discipline and respect for classroom norms, while *Sipakatau* fostered respectful interaction and collaboration. At the same time, *Siri' na Pacce* strengthened students' moral responsibility, motivating them to complete tasks more conscientiously and manage their learning time more effectively.

These findings are consistent with Maharani et al. (2024), who reported that community- and culture-based learning approaches enhance students' self-regulation and learning management skills. Similarly, Nurjanah et al. (2025) emphasized that sustained internalization of local cultural values strengthens discipline and responsibility in learning, particularly when supported by active and reflective instructional strategies. The present study reinforces these findings by showing that learning culture development requires continuity and pedagogical consistency. In Cycle I, when cultural values were not yet integrated into time management, task allocation, and reflective activities, learning culture remained below mastery. Conversely, in Cycle II, when local wisdom was positioned as the foundation of instructional design, students demonstrated measurable improvements in discipline, initiative, and engagement.

Overall, these results confirm that local wisdom-based learning not only reinforces cultural identity but also functions as an effective pedagogical approach for cultivating disciplined, independent, and responsible learning behaviors. This positions local wisdom-based learning as a context-sensitive strategy capable of improving both the social and academic dimensions of students' learning experiences in junior high school settings.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study concludes that the implementation of local wisdom-based learning is effective in enhancing students' social awareness and learning culture in class VII B at UPT SMP Negeri 4 Kelara. A consistent improvement was observed from Cycle I to Cycle II, where students' social awareness progressed from a moderate to a high level, reflected in better adaptability, stronger social integration within groups, and increased confidence and social responsibility. In parallel, students' learning culture also improved significantly and reached classical mastery, particularly in learning preparation, active participation, learning schedule management, and task completion. These findings indicate that learning grounded in local cultural values fosters meaningful and sustainable development of students' social behavior and learning habits.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the view that local wisdom can function as an effective pedagogical foundation for integrating cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning. The findings contribute to the development of contextual learning and character education by demonstrating that local cultural values are not merely instructional content but can serve as operational frameworks for cultivating social awareness and learning culture. Practically, the results highlight the importance of institutional support in providing contextual learning resources and strengthening positive school culture, as well as the role of teachers in designing varied, reflective, and culturally responsive instructional strategies. Through such approaches, learning extends beyond academic achievement to encompass character formation and the development of students' learning ethos.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single class and on two attitudinal variables, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the instruments used have not fully captured the longitudinal dynamics of students' attitudes. Future research is therefore encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples across different school levels and contexts, incorporate additional variables such as learning motivation

or academic achievement, and develop more comprehensive measurement instruments. Employing more varied research designs may further enrich understanding of the effectiveness of local wisdom-based learning in improving educational quality in a broader context.

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