

# STRENGTHENING THE CHARACTER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH THE *SEKAPO* PROGRAM BASED ON DEEP LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine and describe the strengthening of the character of elementary school students through the *Sekapo* Program, which means "Show a good attitude," based on deep learning at SDN 21 Kota Bima, by emphasizing the integration of local cultural values into daily learning practices. This research uses a qualitative case-study design, conducted at SDN 21, Bima City. Data collection techniques include learning observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of school documents. Data analysis was carried out using Cresswell's interactive model, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions, and was tested for validity through source triangulation. The results of the study show that the *Sekapo* Program, based on deep learning, has strong potential as a contextual, meaningful model for strengthening students' character. The main findings indicate improvements in students' affective attitudes and social-emotional competence, strengthening the habituation of positive behavior and the formation of a value-oriented school culture. The integration of deep learning with local cultural values encourages the internalization of character in a more reflective and applicable manner, so that character education is not separate from the academic learning process.

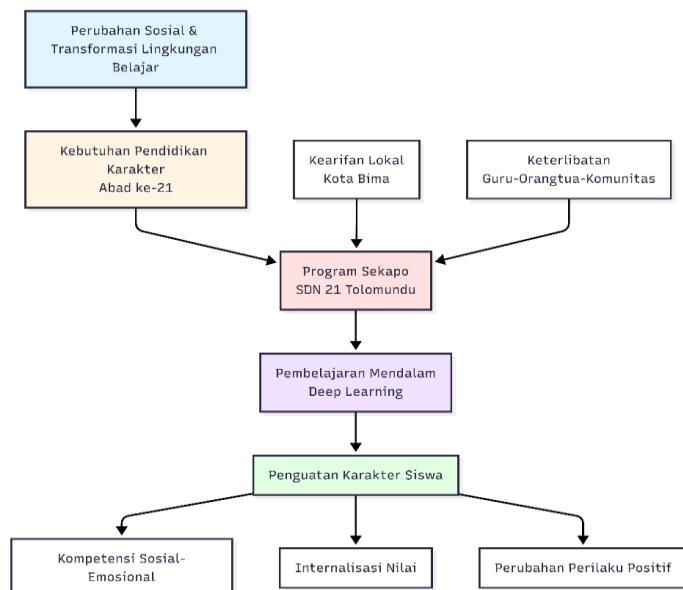
**Keywords:** Character Strengthening, Sekapo Program, Deep Learning

## INTRODUCTION

Social change and the transformation of the learning environment have made character formation one of the main agendas of primary education, especially since schools are now expected not only to transmit cognitive knowledge but also to shape students' social, moral, and emotional competencies. (Hadi et al., 2025). Recent systematic literature reviews show a thematic consensus that effective character education practices integrate value-based approaches, teacher roles, school environments, and community involvement; however, their implementation often faces operational obstacles, such as teacher readiness and immature character assessment systems. (Rika Yuni Ambarsari, Harbono, Restituta Amelia Respatiningrum, 2025).

SDN 21 Tolomundu, as a contextual and representative research location in Bima City, has shown several school practices that are relevant to strengthening school habits and culture;

for example, routine activities such as “*Sekapo*” or “Monday which means Show a good attitude,” which combines ceremonies, discipline habituation, and strengthening the value of togetherness through repetitive activities that are part of the school culture (Farahnas, 2021). The presence of traces of activities and documentation of character activities on the school’s official website confirms that SDN 21 has a social and administrative infrastructure that enables in-depth qualitative research to explore how contextual programs (such as *Sekapo*) are implemented and experienced by teachers, parents, and students. Contexts such as these provide an empirical basis for understanding meaningful and sustainable character-building processes, while offering a model that other schools with similar socio-cultural characteristics can adapt. (Suwahyu, 2025).



**Figure 1.**

Conceptually, the program “Monday Kapahu Rawi ma taho or in short *Sekapo*, which means Show good attitude,” referred to here can be understood as a school-community initiative to standardize character habituation through a series of weekly/daily activities (rituals, habituation, small projects, and value ecosystems). This kind of approach is in line with the school character literature, which emphasizes that character building is most effective when it is embedded in a consistent routine, so that the value of being part of the school culture is not just a matter of formal curriculum content (Bavarian et al., 2016). *Sekapo* is not designed as an “extra” program separate from academic learning, but rather as an organic intertwining that blends into all school activities from the way teachers greet students in the morning, to the way

students resolve conflicts on the playground, to the way the school community celebrates collective achievement (Kaspar & Massey, 2023). In other words, Sekapo has the potential to be an intervention package that encapsulates school culture, informal learning activities, and component family involvement necessary for character education to achieve value internalization, not just mechanistic adherence to rules (Eliza, 2024).

The choice of the pedagogical foundation of “deep learning” (deep learning in the pedagogical sense: joyful, meaningful, mindful learning that prioritizes six holistic competencies) provides a practical direction for Sekapo: learning is designed to touch the affective, cognitive, and social aspects of children so that value behavior becomes an integrated learning outcome, not just normative knowledge. (Feri et al., 2025). The literature on the implementation of deep learning in primary education underscores that this model is not just the use of technology, but rather the engineering of learning experiences that encourage reflection, contextual projects, and emotional engagement across all elements critical to character formation, such as responsibility, empathy, and discipline.

At the local cultural level, integrating local wisdom and ethnopedagogy is key to ensuring character education remains relevant to children and their communities. Ethnopedagogical case studies in the Indonesian context show that strengthening values through local cultural practices significantly increases awareness of values, a sense of community belonging, and character internalization from an early age. (Sakti et al., 2024). Since Bima City has a distinctive local cultural footprint including traditional value systems, communal rituals, and rich local historical narratives, research on Sekapo that adopts deep learning must also investigate how local values such as cooperation values, local manners, educational ritual customs, the philosophy of “Maja Labo Dahu” which emphasizes shame and fear of doing wrong, are incorporated into school habituation practices in order for the program to be authentic and accepted by the community.

The theoretical and practical gaps still evident in the literature, especially regarding how teachers articulate deep learning into everyday character activities and how parents become real partners in strengthening values, underscore the need to place field actors as the primary source of data (Suwahyu, 2025). A qualitative approach will allow for an in-depth exploration of the meanings of teachers, students, and parents’ experiences; the habituation mechanism; as well as the obstacles and adaptation opportunities for Sekapo at SDN 21. Qualitative research can capture subtle nuances in pedagogical interactions, power dynamics in teacher-student relations,

the process of value negotiation between schools and families, and adaptive strategies developed by actors to address implementation constraints.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This research presents conceptual novelty by integrating deep learning with character education as a pedagogical unit, rather than treating them as two separate approaches. Deep learning is not only positioned as a strategy to enhance academic understanding but also as a primary medium for character building through meaningful, reflective, and contextual learning experiences. This integration allows character values not to stop at the normative cognitive or moral level, but to be internalized through emotional involvement, personal reflection, and students' social practices in the learning process. With this approach, character education becomes inherent to learning design, thereby integrating academic goals and character-building goals simultaneously and authentically.

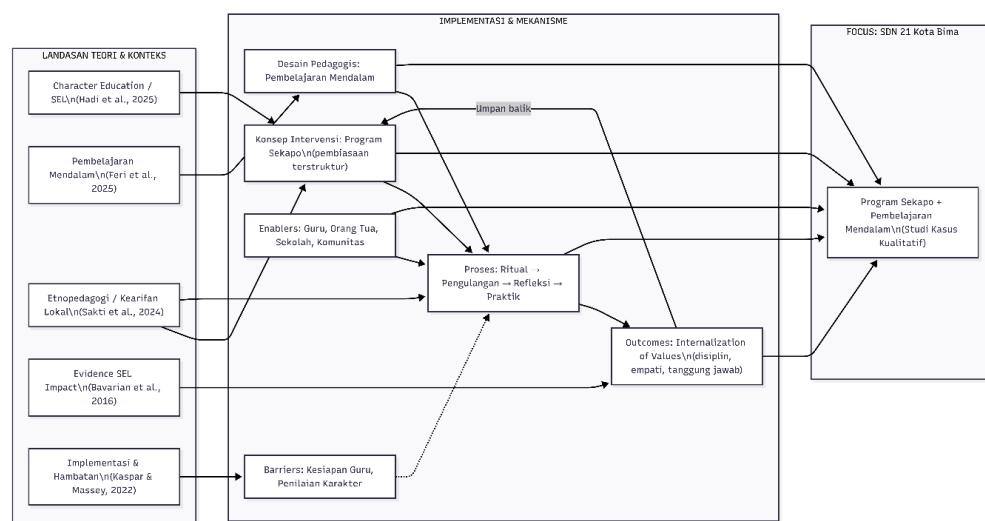


Figure 2. Theoretical Source

Theoretical sources and empirical evidence underlying the intervention: *Character Education / SEL* (Hadi et al., 2025), Deep Learning Theory (Feri et al., 2025), Ethnopedagogy (Sakti et al., 2024), SEL impact evidence (Bavarian et al., 2016), and studies on implementation barriers (Kaspar & Massey, 2023). These components supply arguments, design elements, and attention to local context. However, in the previous theories and research that serve as the basis for this study, no specific program to habituate elementary school students to strengthen their character and support virtuous personalities and moral values that uphold religious values is found. A series of processes that are expected to change behavior into the internalization of values: starting from ritual or habituation, consistency through repetition, development of

meaning through reflection, and then implemented into real practice. The expected medium/long-term results are the formation of values that are part of students' character, as manifested in an attitude of discipline, empathy, and responsibility.

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand social phenomena from the perspectives of subjects directly involved in their own lives. The qualitative approach allows researchers to be present in participants' natural environments, interact with them, and interpret the meanings they construct through language, symbols, and everyday life experiences. As affirmed by (John Creswell, 2014) The core of qualitative research is not the measurement of variables but an in-depth understanding of the subjective meanings and social constructs possessed by individuals or groups. This researcher uses data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation.

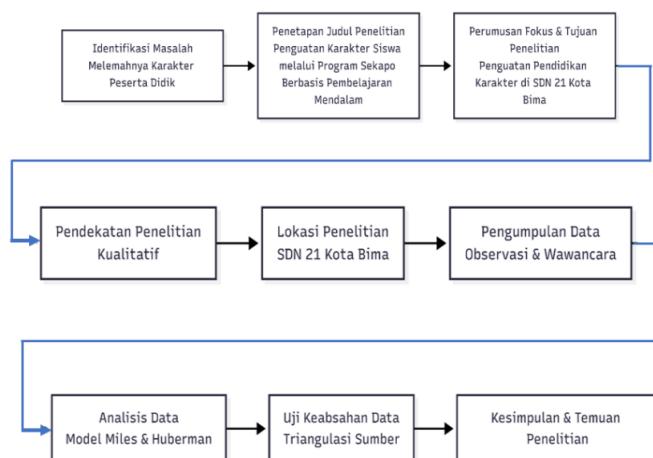


Figure 3. Research Flow

The research flow begins with the researcher's efforts to identify the problem's context, namely, the tendency to weaken students' character. Based on this context, the researcher determined the title of the research "Strengthening the Character of Elementary School Students through the *Sekapo* Program Based on Deep Learning at SDN 21 Bima City". The next stage is to formulate the focus and objectives of research directed at strengthening student-based character education at SDN 21 Bima City. After the research focus was determined, the research was carried out using a qualitative approach in SDN 21, Bima City. Data analysis was carried out using the model (Sugiyono, 2015), which includes the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation

by comparing and cross-checking data from multiple sources, particularly observation and interview results, to validate the research findings.

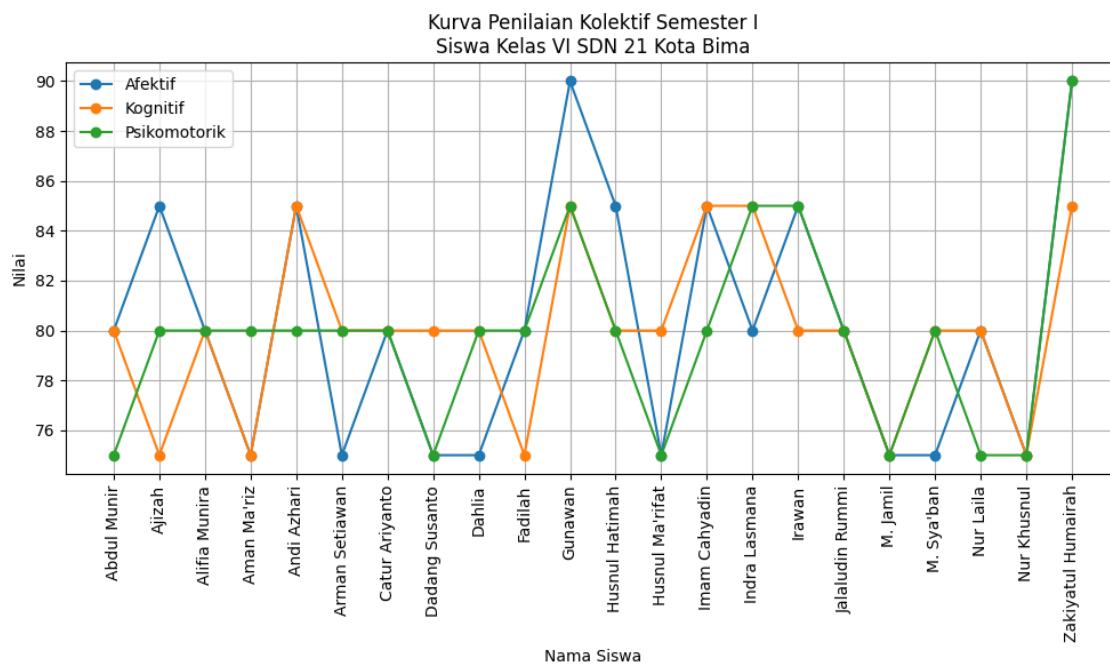
## RESULT

### 1. The Importance of Character Education

Strengthening character at the elementary school level is a fundamental investment in education because the early childhood phase of elementary school is a critical period for the formation of habits, social-emotional skills, and sustainable moral values. Research and literature reviews on school-based programs show that systematic character interventions, including programs that incorporate value practices into school curricula and culture, have the potential to improve social behavior, build empathy, and reduce student behavior problems. This has direct implications for the quality of the learning climate and students' readiness to participate in the next academic year. These findings are consistent with international studies of school-based programs for character development and social-emotional learning that affirm the role of schools as the main arena for the formation of children's social competence and character. (Bavarian et al., 2016).

The virtue of character strengthening becomes more evident when schools do not just make it a normative discourse, but integrate it into a school culture that lives and functions in real life. Thus, character education is not positioned as an additional subject, but as a spirit that animates the entire educational process and forms the school's collective identity sustainably. (Sarkadi et al., 2022).

In the local context of SDN 21 Bima City, character strengthening through the Sekapo program, based on deep learning, has its own advantages because it relies on students' social and cultural reality. This approach allows character values not to exist as abstract concepts, but rather as living practices rooted in students' daily experiences, family environment, and local community culture. The integration of local values into school programs has been shown to increase the relevance of learning, strengthen the sense of belonging to those values, and bridge the continuity between education in schools and character building at home and in the community (Ikhsan Maulana & . Thus, the Sekapo program not only functions as a pedagogical instrument but also as a medium for the inheritance of contextual and meaningful cultural and moral values; this is reflected in the assessment of 3 apek, namely, Affective, Cognitive, and Psychomotor, below.



**Figure 4. Student Correction Curve**

The collective assessment curve shows that the learning environment at SDN 21 Bima City currently maintains a balance among the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects of students. The consistency of affective and psychomotor values indicates that attitudinal habits and skill practices have been developed relatively evenly, which is an important form of capital for character-strengthening programs. The more pronounced variation in the cognitive domain indicates differences in instructional needs among students, a signal that the deep learning offered by Sekapo needs to be tailored to bridge these disparities without neglecting character building. The presence of students excelling in several domains provides evidence that effective pedagogical interventions can internalize values and skills; therefore, follow-up evaluation steps, such as Sekapo's pre-post test, teacher interviews, and classroom observations, are important to link individual achievements directly to the elements of the Sekapo program's implementation. In other words, this curve is not only a reflection of current achievements but also a strong baseline for measuring the impact of deep learning-based character-building programs at SDN 21.

## 2. Cultural Character Education in Schools

Culture-based character education at the primary school level offers a contextual and meaningful approach because it connects the moral values taught in schools with the practices of daily life and the cultural heritage of the communities in which the child grows

up. This kind of integration strengthens the material's relevance to students, making the process of internalizing values more natural and sustainable. (Wigelsworth et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, the policy of strengthening character education and Pancasila student profiles encourages schools to adopt culturally sensitive strategies, such as using local traditions and wisdom values as learning media, to align with the national agenda and educational sustainability practices. (Maisaroh & Untari, 2024). In addition, the educational literature shows that culture-based programs that use deep learning and project-based learning approaches provide opportunities for students to experience, reflect on, and apply character values in real-life situations, making attitude transformation more likely than with purely ceremonial or textual instructional methods. (Feri et al., 2025).

The practical implementation of cultural character education requires synergy among curriculum design, teacher capacity, and community involvement; schools need to translate local values into measurable, observable learning activities, while teacher training programs and evaluation monitoring mechanisms should be in place to ensure consistency of practice. A systematic and evaluative review of character education programs and SEL emphasized the importance of teacher training, school leadership, and policy support as determinants of success, while noting common challenges, including variations in implementation quality and the need to adapt character assessment instruments. (Agus Mursidi, 2025). In practice, contextual studies in Indonesia illustrate various models of integrating local wisdom, ranging from strengthening cultural rituals and local stories to community projects that increase student engagement and the social legitimacy of programs, while also demanding prudence in maintaining cultural sensitivity and equal access for all students. (Wigelsworth et al., 2022).

The virtue of cultural character education is also seen in its synergistic relationship with holistic learning goals: when local values are actualized through real projects, deep learning, and social reflection, students not only develop in the affective realm but also show increased learning motivation, critical thinking skills, and collaborative skills that are the main capital in facing the demands of the 21st century (Shi et al., 2022). In the context of SDN 21 Bima City, the Sekapo program, which combines deep learning with local wisdom, has the potential to produce holistic changes: strengthening cultural identity, fostering character development, and improving the quality of learning. However, the

realization of these benefits depends on the quality of planning and the readiness of human resources (teachers and school leaders) to capture the dynamics of complex processes and outcomes.

### 3. Strategies for the Implementation of Cultural Character Education in Schools

The implementation of culture-based character education strategies in schools must start from a systemic design that combines school policies, contextual curriculum, teacher capacity, and precise assessment and monitoring mechanisms so that local values are not just teaching materials, but are embodied in daily habituation practices and meaningful school activities; meta-literature and evidence-based studies confirm that *the whole-school* approach integrated with SEL (*social-emotional learning*) programs tend to result in more lasting behavioral changes when supported by teacher training, school leadership, and valid assessment tools. Natural context of implementation at SDN 21 Bima City, (Romero-Ariza et al., 2025) Relevant operational strategies include: (1) translating the value of local wisdom into meaningful learning plans and community-based projects so that students experience those values firsthand; (2) strengthening teacher capacity through deep-learning pedagogical training and contextual learning design so that deep learning methods can facilitate the internalization of values in a reflective and applicative manner; and (3) the development of character assessment instruments (performative rubrics, structured observations, and digital assessments when necessary) to monitor students' affective, social-emotional, and behavioral development regularly—these practices are supported by evidence from studies that explore the integration of local wisdom in character education, the effectiveness of PjBL (*project-based learning*) for character formation, and the need for teacher training as a driver of change. (Andi Abdurrahman Manggaberani & Nur Hidayanto Pancoro Setyo Putro, 2023).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that strengthening the character of elementary school students through the Sekapo Program, based on deep learning, has a strong empirical and theoretical foundation, supported by both school data and previous research findings. (Mulya et al., 2023). The collective assessment data of grade VI students at SDN 21 Bima City show that students' affective, cognitive, and psychomotor achievements fall into the good and relatively balanced category, making them a valid baseline for the systematic implementation of

character interventions. (Rahmawati et al., 2024). This initial condition aligns with findings from international studies indicating that schools with a stable learning climate and adequate social-emotional achievement are conducive to implementing character education grounded in deep learning and school culture (Lawson et al., 2019). Thus, the Sekapo Program does not operate in a vacuum but draws on existing socio-pedagogical capital and is ready to be strengthened through a more reflective and meaningful learning design.

From a quantitative perspective, students' affective, cognitive, and psychomotor assessment curves show a relatively parallel pattern, indicating a continuum among knowledge mastery, skill practice, and attitude formation. (Murcahyanto & Mohzana, 2023). This pattern reinforces the argument that effective character education does not stand alone, but is intertwined with the overall quality of learning. (Nasaruddin et al., 2024). The literature on character education and social-emotional learning (SEL) confirms that interventions that integrate the cognitive and affective dimensions through meaningful learning tend to produce more sustainable behavioral changes than normative or ceremonial approaches alone. Therefore, the quantitative data obtained can be understood as an initial foothold to measure the impact of the Sekapo Program more comprehensively through a pre-post design that assesses changes in student character after the program is implemented. (Fitrah et al., 2025).

Qualitative findings synthesized from research narratives and literature review show that the primary mechanism of character strengthening in the Sekapo Program lies in the process of internalizing values through habituation, example, and reflection, which are integrated into deep learning. (Ikhsan Maulana, Ihwan, 2025). Deep learning allows students not only to understand the concept of grades conceptually but also to relate them to life experiences, local cultural contexts, and everyday social interactions at school. This is in line with the view that contextual character education grounded in local culture is more effective in building students' moral meaning and identity, as the values learned feel close and relevant to their reality. (Marnayana et al., 2024). In the context of SDN 21 Bima City, the integration of local cultural values through the Sekapo Program serves as a bridge between the universal values of character education and the local wisdom of the Bima community.

The identified research outputs include improving students' affective attitudes and social-emotional competence, as reflected in the development of responsibility, discipline, empathy, and the ability to work together across various learning activities. In addition, the Sekapo

program strengthens the habituation of positive behavior through teacher exemplars, school routines, and continuous reflection, encouraging students to internalize values into concrete actions. This process of habituation is not instantaneous, but is formed through consistent repetition and the support of the school's culture, so that character values slowly become part of the student's identity and habits.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the deep-learning-based Sekapo Program has significant potential to be developed as a model for strengthening the character of elementary school students, one that is not only contextual and reflective but also sustainable in the long term. This program allows the character education process to take place naturally through meaningful learning experiences, where students not only recognize values as normative concepts but also live them through learning practices integrated with cultural contexts, social interactions, and daily routines at school. In this framework, deep learning serves as a pedagogical medium that bridges the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions, so that character education is not separate from the academic learning process but is integrated into the dynamics of learning in the classroom.

This research makes an important empirical contribution to developing a character education model grounded in local culture in Indonesia, particularly in the context of basic education. The Sekapo program demonstrates that local cultural values can be productively integrated into deep learning designs without losing their relevance to the demands of the national curriculum and 21st-century competencies. Thus, this research not only enriches the practice of character education at the school level but also expands the scientific literature on the integration of deep learning and character education from a contextual pedagogical perspective.

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