



Character Education through Local Cultural Programs: Assessing the Impact of the "Tujuh Poé Atikan" Program

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Abstract

Character education has become a key focus in the development of Indonesia's education system, particularly in addressing the challenges of globalization and shifting societal values. This study focuses on analyzing the impact of implementing the "Tujuh Poé Atikan" program on the development of student character. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study method. Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The results show that the "Tujuh Poé Atikan" program makes a significant contribution to the formation of student character, encompassing nationalism, global awareness, tolerance, creativity, religiosity, respect, and independence. This study concludes that the "Tujuh Poé Atikan" program is a practical, holistic approach to character development, integrating local, national, and global values into the educational process. These findings provide recommendations for the development of character education policies in other regions as part of the effort to create intellectually and morally excellent generations.

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Introduction

Education not only serves as a means of intellectual development but also as a vehicle for shaping character and social, cultural, and religious identity (Hanafiah et al., 2024). In the context of education in Indonesia, efforts to integrate local and spiritual values have become increasingly urgent amid globalization trends that tend to erode traditional values. Amid these dynamics, Purwakarta Regency in West Java introduced the *Tujuh Poé Atikan Pendidikan Purwakarta Istimewa* program as an innovation to develop education rooted in local wisdom and Islamic values. This program is designed to instill noble Sundanese cultural values combined with Islamic teachings into students' daily lives through the formal education system.

The *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program was first introduced in 2015 by then-Regent of Purwakarta, Dedi Mulyadi, through Purwakarta Regent Regulation No. 69 of 2015 concerning Character Education. Its goal is to integrate cultural and religious values into the regional education system. Each day of the week in Purwakarta schools is assigned a specific theme emphasizing cultural, religious, and social ethical values. For instance, Mondays focus on instilling nationalism, while Fridays are dedicated to religious and spiritual activities. This approach aims to create students with a balanced character, harmonizing local culture, religious values, and the demands of modernization.

However, despite these positive efforts, the implementation of the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program raises several critical questions. One of the key issues is how local cultural and Islamic values are harmoniously integrated into the formal education system, given their differing characteristics. Sundanese culture tends to emphasize local wisdom and adaptation to social environments, while Islam possesses universal aspects that are often perceived as separate from local cultural contexts (Raislah, 2023). This study aims to explore how these two sets of values are integrated in education and how students respond to and internalize them.

Moreover, the challenges posed by globalization and rapid technological advancements also play a significant role (Kurniati, 2025). Students in Purwakarta, like their peers elsewhere, are exposed to global information streams that can shape their perceptions of culture and religion. On the one hand, globalization has the potential to erode local cultural identities; on the other hand, programs like *Tujuh Poé Atikan* can serve as a stronghold against the overwhelming tide of change. This research will analyze how *Tujuh Poé Atikan* adapts to social and technological

changes and how the program remains relevant in shaping students' character in the modern era.

Theoretical review

The *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program integrates educational theories and principles related to character education, local wisdom, and religious studies. This theoretical review outlines the foundational concepts and frameworks that support the implementation and analysis of the program.

Character Education

Character education aims to cultivate ethical and moral values in students, shaping their behavior and decision-making processes. According to Lickona, character education encompasses three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). These elements are essential for creating individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded (Cetin, 2021). The *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program incorporates character education by thematically structuring each day to emphasize specific values, such as nationalism, religious devotion, and social ethics.

Integration of Local Wisdom

Local wisdom refers to the values, practices, and traditions rooted in a specific culture that guide individuals in their interactions with their social and natural environments (Komalasari & Saripudin, 2018). According to Geertz (1973), local wisdom is a form of symbolic knowledge that represents the worldview of a community. The program's emphasis on Sundanese cultural values aligns with the concept of local wisdom as a basis for education (Sari, 2020). By incorporating Sundanese traditions and philosophies, such as *silih asih* (mutual love), *silih asah* (mutual learning), and *silih asuh* (mutual care), the program seeks to preserve and transmit these values to future generations.

Religious Education

Religious education is a process of internalizing spiritual and moral principles derived from faith traditions (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). It aims to develop students' understanding of their religious identity while fostering tolerance and ethical behavior. As part of *Tujuh Poé Atikan*, religious education is integrated into daily activities, particularly on Fridays, to emphasize Islamic teachings. This approach

aligns with the holistic view of education in Islam, which incorporates spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions (Al-Attas, 1993).

Cultural-Religious Synthesis

The *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program represents a synthesis of cultural and religious values within the educational framework. This aligns with Clifford Geertz's concept of *cultural system*, where religion and culture mutually influence one another to shape a community's identity. The program harmonizes universal Islamic principles with localized Sundanese cultural practices, creating a distinctive educational model that reflects the unique context of Purwakarta.

Globalization and Identity Formation

In the era of globalization, students are exposed to diverse cultural influences that can challenge their local and religious identities (Zhou & Wong, 2014). Giddens (1991) highlights the importance of maintaining a sense of self in a rapidly changing world. The *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program seeks to counteract the homogenizing effects of globalization by reinforcing local and religious values. By emphasizing themes that resonate with students' cultural and spiritual heritage, the program helps them navigate modernity without losing their roots.

Educational Policy and Implementation

The program's foundation in Purwakarta Regent Regulation No. 69 of 2015 provides a policy framework for integrating character education with local and religious values. Policy-driven education models like this rely on practical implementation and stakeholder involvement. Sustainable educational reform requires collaboration among educators, policymakers, and the community. The program's success depends on its ability to adapt to local needs while maintaining fidelity to its core objectives (Noddings, 2016).

This theoretical review provides a comprehensive understanding of the principles underlying the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program. By combining character education, local wisdom, and religious values, the program offers a holistic approach to addressing the challenges of modern education while preserving cultural and spiritual identity.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach, drawing on a sociocultural perspective within the context of Islamic education. The type of research conducted is a case study. The research subjects include students, teachers, school principals, and parents. Data collection techniques involve observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The data analysis process employs a thematic analysis approach, which involves iterative data reading, coding, theme development, and interpretation of the findings. Data validity and credibility are ensured through data triangulation and member checks.

Results

Respondent Profile

This study involved students, teachers, school principals, and parents from various schools in Purwakarta Regency, selected based on their geographic location, including urban, suburban, and rural areas where the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program has been implemented. The details are as follows:

- 1) Students: A total of 60 students participated, consisting of 20 elementary school students, 20 middle school students, and 20 high school students.
- 2) Teachers: A total of 24 teachers participated, comprising eight elementary school teachers, eight middle school teachers, and eight high school teachers. The teachers were selected based on their experience in implementing the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program.
- 3) School Principals: A total of 6 school principals were involved, including two elementary school principals, two middle school principals, and two high school principals, all of whom had experience with the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program.
- 4) Parents: A total of 6 parents participated.

Respondent Characteristics

- 1) Students: The majority of the student respondents were aged between 10 and 16 years.
- 2) Teachers: Most teachers had more than 5 years of teaching experience and were experienced in implementing the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program.

- 3) School Principals: The principals had educational backgrounds that supported the application of a local culture-based program and significant experience in executing the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program.
- 4) Parents: The parents actively monitored their children's development at home.

Implementation of the Tujuh Poé Atikan Program

Observations revealed that all schools had implemented the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program with different activities for each day:

- 1) Monday (*Ajeng Nusantara/Nationalism*)

This day emphasizes strengthening students' sense of nationalism. All lessons delivered to students are integrated with patriotic values, potential, and the historical phases experienced by Indonesia. Observations showed that on Mondays, students participated in a flag-raising ceremony, wore scout uniforms, and engaged in activities aligned with nationalistic values.

Figure 1. Flag Ceremony



- 2) Tuesday (*Mapag Buana/Global Perspective*)

This day focuses on broadening students' understanding of the international world and preparing their competencies to face the challenges of modern times. Observations indicated that on Tuesdays, students learn extensively about global insights integrated into the learning process.

Figure 2. Developing Literacy



3) Wednesday (*Maneuh di Sunda/Rooted in Sundanese Culture*)

This day emphasizes the transformation and internalization of Sundanese values in daily life. For example, students are required to wear *pangsi* and *kebaya* as symbols of cultured and civilized Sundanese people. Observations showed that every Wednesday, students consistently wore *pangsi* and *kebaya* at school, embodying the values of a cultured and civilized Sundanese identity.

Figure 3. Students in *Pangsi* and *Kebaya* Attire



4) Thursday (*Nyanding Wawangi/Creativity*)

This day focuses on educating students to develop an artistic and aesthetic sense, as well as a cultured spirit. In practice, students are encouraged to be more creative and develop social sensitivity. They are taught to respect one another and spread love and kindness among themselves.

Figure 4. Student Creativity Performance



5) Friday (*Nyucikeun Diri/Purifying the Heart*)

This day focuses on instilling spiritual values in students and drawing them closer to God. It aims to nurture the purity of the heart, soul, and mind, ensuring they remain aligned with closeness to the Almighty. Observations showed that every Friday, students are taught and accustomed to performing religious rituals, such as reading the Qur'an, reciting the Asma'ul Husna, practicing shalat dhuha, and engaging in pengajian of classical Islamic texts that cover topics including creed, ethics, and Islamic worship jurisprudence. For students of other faiths, their ritual practices are adjusted to their respective beliefs, as seen in SMP Negeri 1 Purwakarta, where the school provides religious teachers for Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism.

Figure 5. *Shalat Dhuha* Worship Activity



6) Saturday and Sunday (*Betah di Imah/Comfortable at Home*)

This day focuses on nurturing students' character by fostering a close relationship between children and their parents, promoting obedience and respect. Students are encouraged to help their parents at home and spend quality time interacting with their families. Observations showed that students are actively engaged in family interactions. They help with household

tasks, such as female students assisting their mothers with cooking, male students helping their fathers water the plants, and so on.

Figure 6. Students' Activities at Home



Discussion

The Impact of the Implementation of the Tujuh Poé Atikan Program on Student Character Development

The implementation of the Tujuh Poé Atikan program reflects various student characteristics through daily activities focused on instilling noble values. Below are the characteristics reflected from each day in the program and their impact on student character development:

1) Monday (Ajeg Nusantara/Nationalism)

The Ajeg Nusantara program embodies the character of nationalism. This is evident in activities such as flag-raising ceremonies, wearing scout uniforms, and lessons that incorporate patriotic values and Indonesia's historical events.

Impact: Students involved in nationalist activities develop a strong sense of love for their country and pride in being part of the Indonesian nation. This fosters a generation that is invested in the country's progress and takes pride in its national identity.

2) Tuesday (Mapag Buana/Global Awareness)

The Mapag Buana program embodies a global awareness. Through this program, students learn about international perspectives integrated into their lessons, reflecting efforts to build competencies that prepare them for global challenges.

Impact: By fostering global awareness, students are encouraged to understand broader world challenges, enhance skills, and acquire relevant knowledge on an international level. This equips them to compete healthily in the era of globalization.

3) Wednesday (Maneuh di Sunda/Rooted in Sundanese Culture)

The Maneuh di Sunda program embodies the character of local culture. By wearing traditional attire such as *pangsi* and *kebaya*, students are encouraged to appreciate and preserve Sundanese culture, instilling pride in their cultural identity.

Impact: Preserving local culture is essential to maintaining national identity. This activity teaches students to take pride in their cultural heritage, appreciate the diversity of cultures in Indonesia, and respect their ancestral legacies.

4) Thursday (Nyanding Wawangi/Creativity)

The Nyanding Wawangi program embodies the character of creativity and social responsibility. Through activities that emphasize art, aesthetics, and social sensitivity, students are encouraged to develop their artistic talents, creativity, and empathy toward others. Additionally, through social characteristics manifested in mutual respect and spreading affection, the values of togetherness and solidarity are nurtured.

Impact: Enhancing creativity through art and aesthetics helps students develop imagination and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, socially integrated activities that emphasize unity strengthen empathy and solidarity, which are crucial for building a harmonious society.

5) Friday (Nyucikeun Diri/Purifying the Heart)

The Juma'ah Nyucikeun Diri program presents the character of religiosity and tolerance. Spiritual values are instilled through religious activities such as reading the Qur'an, praying together, performing *shalat dhuha*, and studying classical Islamic texts. This activity helps students draw closer to God and maintain the purity of their hearts, souls, and minds. Additionally, the provision of religious teachers for different faiths demonstrates respect for diversity and tolerance at school.

Impact: Religious activities teach students to prioritize spirituality and cultivate a pure heart, thereby contributing to the development of high moral

standards. The tolerance promoted by offering religious education for various beliefs also strengthens interfaith harmony within the school environment.

6) Saturday and Sunday (Betah di Imah/Comfortable at Home)

The Betah di Imah program embodies the character of filial piety. Through activities such as helping with household chores (developing self-reliance) and spending quality time with their family, students learn the values of respect and obedience to their parents. Active interaction with family members reflects efforts to strengthen familial bonds and take responsibility in daily life.

Impact: Intense interaction with family teaches students to value the role of parents and creates strong family bonds. This activity fosters a sense of responsibility and emotional closeness among family members, while also instilling the value of respect for parents.

The *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program holistically integrates character values into students' lives, including nationalism, global awareness, local culture, creativity, religiosity, tolerance, independence, and family affection. This program shapes students into well-rounded individuals who balance spirituality, culture, social engagement, and intellectual growth.

Supporting Factors for Program Implementation

1) Government Policy Support

The strong policy framework established by the Purwakarta District Government serves as a foundational pillar in ensuring the successful implementation of the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* program. Through Peraturan Bupati Nomor 69 Tahun 2015 tentang Pendidikan Karakter, the government not only provides legal reinforcement but also sets clear guidelines, standards, and expected outcomes for character education across schools. This regulation establishes a unified direction for all educational institutions, enabling consistent implementation while providing schools with an official mandate to integrate character values into their curriculum and school culture. Additionally, the government's ongoing monitoring, periodic evaluation, and allocation of resources further enhance the program's sustainability and legitimacy at the district level.

2) Role of Teachers

Teachers act as the frontline implementers of the program, translating policy into meaningful daily practices. Their roles extend beyond teaching academic content to becoming role models, mentors, and facilitators of character development. In the context of *Tujuh Poé Atikan*, teachers integrate value-based learning into routine school activities, thematic days, and project-based experiences. Their ability to contextualize character values into classroom interactions, co-curricular initiatives, and school-wide events significantly influences the program's effectiveness. Moreover, teachers who demonstrate commitment and creativity tend to foster a more engaging and transformative learning environment, helping students internalize these values in practical ways.

3) Student Enthusiasm

A notable strength in the program's implementation is the high enthusiasm shown by students. Many learners actively participate in thematic daily activities, such as cultural appreciation, environmental stewardship, reading sessions, and reflection tasks. This enthusiasm indicates that students perceive the activities as meaningful, enjoyable, and relevant to their personal growth. Their willingness to engage becomes a crucial motivational factor that encourages teachers to maintain consistency and enrich program activities. In addition, the active participation of students contributes to a favorable school climate where character values are not just taught but lived and experienced collectively.

4) Parental Support

Parents play a complementary and equally crucial role in reinforcing the success of the program. Their active involvement—seen through participation in school events, responsiveness to home-based tasks, and encouragement of value-oriented habits—reflects a strong partnership between school and family. This supportive engagement shows that parents recognize the importance of character education and are willing to collaborate with schools to build consistent value formation between home and school environments. Such alignment strengthens the continuity of students' character development, ensuring that the values learned at school are practiced in daily life.

Challenges in Program Implementation

1) Limited Facilities

Despite the program's strengths, some schools still face constraints related to infrastructure and learning resources. Facilities such as art studios, cultural performance equipment, libraries, and green learning spaces may not be fully available or adequately maintained. These limitations hinder the experiential aspects of the program, particularly activities that require creative expression, practical engagement, or outdoor learning. Schools in rural or under-resourced areas tend to experience these challenges more acutely, which can potentially affect the uniformity of program outcomes across the district.

2) Variations in Implementation

A significant challenge arises from the uneven implementation intensity among schools. Differences in leadership commitment, teacher readiness, school culture, and resource availability result in varying degrees of program effectiveness. Some schools excel with innovative approaches and consistent activities, while others may implement the program superficially or inconsistently. This inconsistency can dilute the overall impact of the district-wide policy and create disparities in student experiences and outcomes related to character development.

3) Lack of Teacher Training

Although teachers play a central role, not all educators possess adequate training or pedagogical preparation to carry out character-based programs effectively. Some teachers still require capacity building in areas such as value-oriented lesson design, creative facilitation, classroom management for thematic days, and assessment of character outcomes. Without sufficient professional development, teachers may struggle to translate the program's objectives into engaging practices, potentially leading to reduced program quality or reliance on routine, less meaningful activities. Continuous teacher training is therefore essential to strengthen implementation fidelity and ensure that the program evolves to meet contemporary educational demands.

Conclusion

The implementation of the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* Program in Purwakarta Regency demonstrates a transformative approach to character education that extends beyond routine school activities. More than merely a set of thematic daily practices, this program has become a structured ecosystem of value internalization, one that engages students cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally. Each day is intentionally crafted to nurture a distinct character trait, allowing values such as nationalism, global literacy, cultural rootedness, creativity, religiosity, tolerance, independence, and familial affection to be gradually absorbed through lived experience rather than abstract instruction.

The impacts observed among students are not superficial; they reflect more profound shifts in attitudes, awareness, and habits. Strengthened patriotism and pride in local identity show that students are not only learning about their cultural heritage but also developing an emotional attachment to it. The increased understanding of global issues suggests that the program equips students with the capacity to navigate an interconnected world while maintaining their cultural grounding. Likewise, creativity-oriented days stimulate innovation and problem-solving, essential skills for future competitiveness.

The religiosity and tolerance dimensions foster moral sensitivity, empathy, and social cohesion, qualities increasingly crucial in a diverse society. Weekend practices that emphasize family engagement further solidify character formation within the home environment, reinforcing respect, responsibility, and emotional bonds with parents. This connection between school-based and family-based character education strengthens the continuity of value development.

Overall, the *Tujuh Poé Atikan* Program has proven effective in shaping students into holistic individuals who are spiritually mature, socially responsible, and intellectually adaptive. Its success lies in its integration of local wisdom with contemporary educational needs, offering a model of character education that is culturally resonant yet universally relevant. With its balanced blend of tradition and modernity, the program not only prepares students to face the complexities of globalization but also positions itself as a replicable and innovative framework that other regions can adopt in strengthening student character formation.

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