

STRENGTHENING CHARACTER THROUGH THE BIKARANG TRADITION: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY OF CIVIC EDUCATION

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INFO ARTIKEL

Keywords:

Bikarang Tradition;

Character Values;

Civic Education;

Local Wisdom;

Socio-Cultural.

Kata Kunci:

Tradisi Bikarang;

Nilai Karakter;

Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan;

Kearifan Lokal;

Sosial Kultural.

Citation:

Sulkipani, Sundawa, D., Widya, L., & Sulhadi. (n.d.). Strengthening Character Through the Bikarang Tradition: A Socio-cultural Study of Civic Education. *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan*, 23(2), 353-368. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jk.23.2.69487.353-368>

Article History:

Submitted: 03-10-2025

Revised: 28-06-2026

Accepted: 07-08-2026

Published: 30-09-2026

ABSTRACT

The bikarang tradition contains citizenship values that are relevant to character development in the context of Civic Education. However, studies examining this tradition from a sociocultural citizenship perspective remain limited. This study aims to analyze the character values within the bikarang tradition and their implications for Civic Education. Qualitative research using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The bikarang tradition fosters three character values: environmental stewardship, mutual cooperation, and self-reliance. These values are reflected in environmentally responsible fishing practices, collective participation, and the management of local resources. The findings indicate that the bikarang tradition reinforces ecological responsibility and collective citizenship and remains relevant in the digital age. This study demonstrates that local traditions can serve as a meaningful learning resource for strengthening sociocultural citizenship and character development. Further research is needed to examine how local traditions are integrated into Civic Education in various cultural contexts.

ABSTRAK

Tradisi *bikarang* memuat nilai-nilai kewarganegaraan yang relevan dengan pengembangan karakter dalam konteks Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan. Kajian yang menelaah tradisi ini dari perspektif kewarganegaraan sosiokultural masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menganalisis nilai-nilai karakter yang terkandung dalam tradisi *bikarang* serta implikasinya terhadap Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan. Penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dengan model interaktif. Tradisi *bikarang* menumbuhkan tiga nilai karakter: kepedulian terhadap lingkungan, semangat gotong royong, dan kemandirian. Nilai-nilai tersebut tercermin dalam praktik penangkapan ikan yang bertanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan, partisipasi kolektif, dan pengelolaan sumber daya lokal. Temuan mengindikasikan *bikarang* memperkuat tanggung jawab ekologis serta kewarganegaraan kolektif yang relevan di era digital. Penelitian menunjukkan tradisi lokal dapat menjadi sumber belajar yang bermakna untuk memperkuat kewarganegaraan sosiokultural dan pengembangan karakter. Perlu penelitian lanjutan untuk mengkaji bagaimana tradisi lokal diintegrasikan ke dalam Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan di berbagai konteks budaya.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24114/jk.23.2.69487.353-368>

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Available on <https://jurnal.unimed.ac.id/2012/index.php/jk>

INTRODUCTION

Communities that inhabit a particular region generally possess traditions that become part of their cultural identity and social life. Traditions are inherited cultural practices that encompass moral, social, and collective values and are maintained across generations (Adi, 2020; Afriansyah & Sukmayadi, 2022; Ansori, 2018). In many communities, traditions are not merely ceremonial activities, but also function as a medium for transmitting values, strengthening solidarity, and shaping social behavior (Hariyanto & Sihombing, 2019). Through traditions, communities preserve their relationship with nature, maintain social cohesion, and reinforce local identity amid social change (Kasih et al., 2024).

Indonesia's geographical condition as an archipelagic country with vast rivers and bodies of water has influenced the socio-cultural patterns of its people, especially communities living around rivers and wetlands (Febriani & Hafsar, 2020; Waani, 2016). One form of community adaptation that developed in response to this environmental condition is the tradition of communal fishing. In South Sumatra, this practice is known as *bekarang*, which refers to collective fishing activities using simple, environmentally friendly tools (Dhita et al., 2019). In Sungai Medang Village, Prabumulih, the tradition is locally referred to as *bikarang*. Besides meeting economic needs, the *bikarang* tradition also reflects values of togetherness, *gotong royong*, social responsibility, and environmental awareness within community life (Muntaha et al., 2023).

However, the continuity of local traditions currently faces various social challenges. The development of digital technology has gradually shifted patterns of social interaction. Digital life tends to encourage more individualistic behavior and reduce direct communal engagement, particularly among younger generations. Recent studies have shown that the rapid expansion of digital media has transformed patterns of social interaction by reducing face-to-face engagement and weakening community social capital when online interaction increasingly replaces direct participation in community life (Addeo et al., 2023; Merisalo & Makkonen, 2022; Ragnedda et al., 2022). These changes are no longer confined to urban areas but have also reached rural and peri-urban communities, where digital technologies increasingly shape everyday social relationships and civic participation. In this situation, local traditions become increasingly important as socio-cultural spaces that maintain collective awareness and social solidarity. Traditions such as *bikarang* may serve as a form of socio-cultural reinforcement amid the growing tendency of digital individualism in contemporary society.

Studies on character education have emphasized that character formation involves moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action that are reflected in everyday behavior (Lickona, 2013, 2018), which enables a person to have moral maturity that can provide an understanding of the good and bad, right and wrong of a situation (Bohlin, 2005). Character values are also closely related to social responsibility, environmental awareness, cooperation, and civic virtue within community life (El Faisal et al., 2023; Pratomo & Sundawa, 2021). In fact, the integration of cultural values and local traditions in formal and non-formal education is emphasized as an important means of strengthening the character of the younger generation (Arifin et al., 2025). In the context of Civic Education, socio-cultural dimensions are important because citizenship is not only about legal status and political participation but also about citizens' ability to maintain social harmony, cultural identity, and collective responsibility in public life. Several studies have discussed local traditions and character education, yet most of them treat tradition primarily as cultural heritage or local wisdom.

Several studies have discussed local traditions and character education, yet most of them primarily position tradition as cultural heritage or local wisdom. Comparatively little attention has been paid to fishing traditions, which differ from many artistic or ceremonial traditions in that they simultaneously involve collective social interaction and direct engagement with a vulnerable natural ecosystem. Through the practice of *gotong royong* in managing shared river resources, the *bikarang* tradition provides a unique socio-cultural setting in which civic responsibility, environmental stewardship, and ecological citizenship are experienced in everyday community life. Consequently, research that specifically examines fishing traditions as a medium for strengthening socio-cultural citizenship and ecological responsibility in Civic Education remains limited.

This study departs from the view that local traditions contain civic values that are relevant to contemporary social life. Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss *bikarang* as a socio-cultural activity, this research positions the tradition within the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education. Therefore, this study aims to identify the character values contained in the *bikarang* tradition and to analyze their relevance to strengthening socio-cultural citizenship within community life. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of local wisdom-based Civic Education, particularly in strengthening character formation, ecological awareness, and collective social responsibility among citizens.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a naturalistic design to understand the character values embedded in the *bikarang* tradition within its actual social context (Sugiyono, 2013). The research was conducted in Sungai Medang Village, Cambai District, Prabumulih City, South Sumatra, an area where the *bikarang* tradition is still practiced by the local Belida community. Field research was carried out from April 5 to April 20, 2023.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and understanding of the *bikarang* tradition. The study involved four community members who actively participated in the tradition and were considered capable of providing in-depth information related to the values and implementation of *bikarang* (Table 1). In qualitative research, the adequacy of informants is determined by the depth and consistency of the information obtained rather than by the number of informants. During data collection, the information provided by the informants exhibited recurring patterns and similar explanations, indicating that the data had reached sufficient depth for analysis. Although the number of informants was limited, they were selected because of their active involvement and long-term experience in the *bikarang* tradition. The consistency of information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation indicated sufficient depth and credibility of the data for this study.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

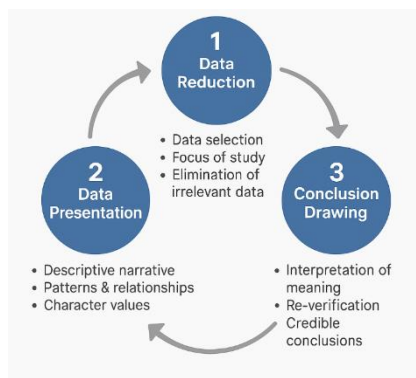
No	Informant	Age	Occupation	Role in the <i>Bikarang</i> Tradition
1.	JM	47	Farmer	Community participant involved in <i>bikarang</i> activities
2.	NM	65	Farmer	Community participant involved in <i>bikarang</i> activities
3.	NW	60	Farmer	Community participant involved in <i>bikarang</i> activities
4.	YT	70	Farmer	Local cultural informant with knowledge of the history and implementation of the <i>bikarang</i> tradition

Source: Research Results (2023)

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted by directly observing the implementation of the *bikarang* tradition, including community interactions, the use of fishing tools, and collective activities carried out before, during, and after the event. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the informants' experiences, perspectives, and understanding regarding the character values reflected in the tradition. Documentation techniques were used to support field findings through photographs, village records, and related documents.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument in collecting and interpreting the data. To ensure data credibility, triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was based on the interactive model of Miles & Huberman, (1994). which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and categorizing information relevant to the research focus. The data were then systematically presented in a descriptive format to identify patterns and relationships among the findings. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified through repeated examination of field data to maintain consistency and validity in interpreting the character values contained in the *bikarang* tradition (Fig. 1)

Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis



Source: Adaptation of Miles & Huberman, (1994)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, three main character values were identified in the *bikarang* tradition: environmental awareness, gotong royong, and independence. These values are reflected in the stages of preparation, implementation, and post-activity practices carried out collectively by the community. The findings also show that the *bikarang* tradition contains socio-cultural values that remain relevant to the development of Civic Education, particularly in strengthening ecological awareness, social responsibility, and collective participation within community life.

1. Top Three Main Character Values

a. Environmental Awareness Character

Environmental awareness emerged as one of the strongest character values in the *bikarang* tradition. Environmental awareness refers to attitudes and actions aimed at preventing environmental damage and preserving natural ecosystems (Irfianti et al., 2016). In the *bikarang* tradition, this value is evident in the timing of fishing activities and the equipment used.

Bikarang is generally carried out during the dry season, when the river water level naturally decreases. Under these conditions, residents can catch fish more easily without damaging the river ecosystem or overexploiting fish resources. The activity is also not conducted continuously throughout the year, allowing fish populations to remain sustainable (Muzayanah et al., 2022). Paying attention to the proper timing of fishing activities is important to maintain fish populations and aquatic biodiversity (Nurani et al., 2021).

The findings show that the community continues to use traditional fishing tools such as *tangkol*, *sarkap*, and *tanggok*, which are considered environmentally friendly (Rafiek & Effendi, 2022). These tools are considered safer for the river ecosystem because they do not damage aquatic habitats or threaten fish populations. Community members also strongly oppose the use of *bius*, explosives, and electric shocks in fishing because these methods are harmful to the environment and to human safety.

One informant explained:

“The tools used for fishing are usually *tanggok*, *tangkol*, or *sarkap*. People are not allowed to use *bius* or electric shocks because they can damage the river and kill all the fish.” (JM)

Another informant also stated that traditional fishing equipment is easier to obtain and safer for long-term use because it helps preserve fish availability for future generations.

The use of environmentally friendly fishing tools such as *tanggok*, *tangkol*, or *sarkap* (Fig. 2) reflects ecological responsibility within community life (Amus et al., 2025), not only preserves fish resources but is also safe and harmless to human health as consumers (Brewon et al., 2022). Traditional fishing equipment is considered safer because it is made from natural materials and used manually without causing environmental pollution (Dhita et al., 2019). On the contrary, destructive fishing practices such as *bius*, explosives, and electric shocks threaten environmental sustainability and endanger human health (Dirawan & Suarhawan, 2022; Latuconsina, 2010; Mustasim et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2010). Therefore, the use of environmentally friendly fishing methods represents an effort to preserve fish resources and maintain ecological balance for future generations (Kiptiah et al., 2025; Sumardi et al., 2014).

Figure 2. Friendly Fishing Tools



Source: Research Results (2023)

The information from the interview was reinforced by findings from the observation, which showed that the community catches fish using safe, environmentally friendly equipment (fig. 3).

Figure 3. Bikarang’s Participants Catching Fish Using Tangkol (Left) and Tanggok (Right)



Source: Research Results (2023)

Figure 3 shows residents using safe and environmentally friendly tools to catch fish. The river's water flow is very low, making it easier for residents to catch fish. The use of dangerous tools to catch fish is very harmful to both the health of residents who consume the fish and the survival of increasingly threatened fish species. The use of poison, referred to by local residents as *bius*, will kill all fish in the river. Not only will fish ready for harvest die, but also small fish that should be released will die. This action will disrupt fish growth. In addition, fish obtained through poisoning will be harmful to health.

The regulation of the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Number 18 of 2021 concerning the Placement of Fishing Gear and Fishing Aids in the Fisheries Management Area of the Republic of Indonesia and the High Seas as well as the Arrangement of Fishing Gear emphasizes that the government is focused on strategic efforts in sustainable fisheries development by preserving the fisheries ecosystem using environmentally friendly fishing gear technology as a concrete measure to improve the habitat, including the number and types of fish in Indonesia (Sukandar, 2015).

The community's adherence to the avoidance of destructive fishing practices reflects not only environmental awareness but also civic responsibility for the sustainability of natural resources (Mahmudi et al., 2024). From the perspective of Civic Education, this practice can be understood as a form of ecological citizenship, namely, citizens' awareness and responsibility in maintaining environmental sustainability through everyday social practices. The findings of this study indicate that ecological values are formed not only through formal education but also through local traditions still practiced collectively within society. This condition strengthens the socio-cultural dimension of Civic Education, particularly in developing environmental responsibility and collective awareness among citizens.

In the context of Civic Education, the findings indicate that environmental awareness is not limited to individual behavior but also encompasses civic responsibility for the preservation of natural resources. The community's commitment to avoiding destructive fishing practices reflects a form of ecological citizenship expressed through everyday social practices. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that environmental responsibility is an important dimension of citizenship in contemporary society (Basit & Sundawa, 2022; Lubis & Rasyid, 2023; Purwanti, 2017). However, this study also shows that ecological awareness can grow through local traditions that are continuously practiced and socially maintained within community life.

From the perspective of Lickona's character education framework, the environmental practices observed in the *bikarang* tradition illustrate the continuity

between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Community members understand the ecological consequences of destructive fishing methods, develop a shared sense of responsibility for preserving aquatic resources, and consistently translate this awareness into environmentally responsible behavior by rejecting practices such as fish poisoning. This progression demonstrates that environmental character is strengthened not only through cognitive understanding but also through collective commitment and sustained civic action within everyday community life.

b. Character of Gotong Royong

Bikarang involves a large number of people to facilitate the activity itself. Before *bikarang* is carried out, the river where the fish are caught must first be cleared of dense branches or dead wood in the river. This makes *bikarang* safer and easier to carry out. As NM stated, before *bikarang*, residents work together to clear the river of large dead branches that would obstruct the flow. If these dead branches are not removed, they will cause disruption and could also be dangerous if they accidentally hit the feet or other parts of the body.

In line with NM's opinion, YT also said that *gotong royong* in *bikarang* is very necessary because it concerns the public interest. YT further explained that *bikarang* needs to be communicated to the community so that they are aware of the activity. Therefore, information about the *bikarang* is conveyed through direct invitations from designated individuals known as "dijagoan," but it is currently shared only among residents. This information is usually conveyed two days before the *bikarang* is held so that the community has time to prepare, including preparing equipment and other logistics.

Gotong Royong in *bikarang* is not only during preparation but also during and after the *bikarang*. During the event, the community will help one another if obstacles arise. For example, if a resident forgets to bring certain equipment while other residents are not using theirs, those who are not using theirs will lend it. As JM stated, if someone forgets to bring a fishing tool, residents who have the tool and are not currently using it will lend it to them. Then, if someone encounters an obstacle because the tool they are using is not working properly, others will help.

After the *fishing* activity is complete, the participants return home with their respective catches. The fish they have caught will then be cleaned or sold, according to their individual needs. This stage also involves *gotong royong*, because the fish caught are usually in large quantities. Residents who do not participate in fishing usually help their neighbors who do by cleaning the fish, and family members who do not participate are usually assigned to sell the catch.

As explained by NW, the fish catch is usually large and must be cleaned immediately so that the next processing stage can be carried out while the fish is still fresh. Neighbors who do not participate in *bikarang* on their own initiative will help "sort" the fish. If the fish are dead, they will no longer be fresh, which will affect their taste. However, if residents want to sell the fish immediately while they are still fresh, family members who do not participate in *bikarang* will sell them. Neighbors who helped clean the fish will be given some fish as a token of gratitude. This activity occurs naturally when the *bikarang* season arrives, as a form of *gotong royong* in the community.

Gotong royong is a form of cooperation among individuals or groups to work together (Suganda M & Sulkipani, 2021) on issues of common interest (Mulyani et al., 2020). Based on the research findings, it can be seen that in the *bikarang* tradition, *gotong royong* is evident

before, during, and after the *bikarang* is carried out. Before the *bikarang* is carried out, residents hold a *gotong royong* to clear the area of large dead trees or bushes that could obstruct it. This is important to ensure that residents are safe and can smoothly participate in the *bikarang* tradition. Next, regarding where the information about the *bikarang* will be held, it will be conveyed two days before the event. In the early days of this tradition, a *bijago* was assigned to convey the announcement to the community by going around the village.

However, nowadays, information about *bikarang* is conveyed only through word of mouth among residents or through social media announcements. Cooperation among residents in conveying this information is very important. On their own initiative, residents convey this information to their neighbors so that it is widely known by the community. Through *gotong royong*, effective collaboration will be established (Prasetyo Utomo, 2018), enabling the community to be aware of and prepared to participate in the *bikarang* tradition.

These findings also reveal an important dynamic regarding the role of digital technology in sustaining local traditions. Although this study initially highlights digital individualism as one of the contemporary challenges to collective social life, the empirical findings demonstrate that digital media have also been appropriated by the community to coordinate participation and disseminate information about the *bikarang* tradition. Rather than weakening social cohesion, digital platforms function as complementary civic spaces that facilitate communication while preserving face-to-face collective practices. This finding suggests that the influence of digital technology on civic life is not inherently detrimental; instead, its impact depends on how communities utilize digital platforms to reinforce collective identity, participation, and social responsibility.

Then, the character of *gotong royong* during the *bikarang* activity can be identified by residents helping one another. When they see *bikarang* participants experiencing difficulties in using tools to catch fish, for example, tools that do not work properly, or when they forget to bring certain tools that are needed, other participants who are not using those tools will lend them. This mutual assistance is an important aspect of the value of *gotong royong* (Linda Furwanti et al., 2020).

Next, once the *bikarang* is complete, the participating residents will return home with their catch. The catch is usually in large quantities. Residents who will sell it fresh will do so immediately, a practice carried out by family members who did not participate in the *bikarang*. Then, if it is to be stored or sold in processed form, the residents will immediately clean the fish. *Gotong royong*, as seen here, means that neighbors who did not participate in the *bikarang* will help clean the fish. Personally, this is done out of a sense of kinship; there is no need to ask for help cleaning the fish. This is done so that the large number of fish caught can be cleaned quickly and easily. In return, the neighbors who help will be given fish as a token of gratitude. This form of cooperation is a noble value of mutual assistance (Rejeki, 2020), derived from the community's culture and local wisdom (Febrian et al., 2023; Muntaha et al., 2023; Noe et al., 2026).

The practice of helping one another before, during, and after the *bikarang* activity demonstrates that the tradition functions as a socio-cultural space that strengthens social solidarity within the community. In the context of Civic Education, this value reflects civic virtue through participation, cooperation, and concern for others in public life (Hambali et al., 2025). The collective interaction developed through the *bikarang* tradition also becomes increasingly important amid the growing tendency toward individualistic social interaction in contemporary digital society. Therefore, local traditions such as

bikarang remain relevant as a medium for strengthening socio-cultural citizenship within community life.

Similarly, the value of *gotong royong* reflects the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Community members recognize the importance of cooperation in maintaining the *bikarang* tradition, develop mutual trust and solidarity through shared experiences, and express these values through active participation before, during, and after the fishing activities. These findings indicate that the *bikarang* tradition provides opportunities for civic character to develop through direct participation in collective social practices rather than through individual learning alone.

c. Independent Character

In addition to personal consumption, residents also sell their catch, either fresh or processed, such as smoked fish or salted fish (Fig. 4). Residents who decide to consume the fish themselves will process it as creatively as possible so that it will last longer, thereby ensuring a supply of animal protein for their families. As YT stated, they usually "clean" the fish to be smoked and salted, then store it so it can be easily cooked whenever they want. In addition, these processed fish are also distributed to other families who do not participate in *fishing*, because there is a lot of fish, and if anyone wants to buy it, they will also sell it.

Similar to YT, NM also said that the results obtained can meet the family's economic needs. NM further explained that there is too much fish to eat ourselves, so we usually sell it, so that the proceeds can be used to buy other necessities. It is quite helpful because we no longer need to buy fish to cook, as we already have processed fish stored for a long period of time. The shelf life of this processed fish is quite long, up to six months if processed correctly. For example, smoked fish is smoked using the right method, or salted fish is sun-dried properly. The community is greatly helped by the presence of *bikarang*, as the catch has high economic value.

Figure 4. Processed Fish Catches in the Form of Smoked Fish (Left) and Salted Fish (Right)



Source: Research Results, 2023

Based on the research findings, the independent character also dominates the *bikarang* tradition. Independence is an attitude and behavior that involves not relying on others to solve problems easily. Independent character refers to an individual's ability to adapt, overcome problems, and take initiative effectively (Puspitaningrum et al., 2024). In this context, the community has a high level of capability and initiative in utilizing natural resources to meet their animal protein needs through processed fish reserves that are good for health. In addition, *bikarang* activities contribute to residents' economic independence, as the catch has high economic value. Income from selling fish can help meet residents'

daily needs (Maradou et al., 2017). This character of independence is crucial amid the development of life, marked by increasingly complex socio-economic problems. The community must have skills or concrete efforts to generate income. As in the *bikarang* tradition, the community can strive and generate income through fishing activities.

The findings show that independence in the *bikarang* tradition does not develop through individual competition but grows alongside collective awareness and social cooperation within the community. This pattern distinguishes community-based independence from the increasingly individualistic orientation found in modern society. In the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education, independence is closely related to citizens' ability to manage resources responsibly while remaining actively involved in collective social life.

The value of independence identified in this study also reflects Lickona's character formation process. Community members understand the importance of being economically self-reliant, develop confidence in managing local resources responsibly, and demonstrate this understanding through independent efforts that continue to support family welfare without neglecting collective responsibility. This finding suggests that independence within the *bikarang* tradition is not synonymous with individualism but develops alongside social responsibility and community solidarity.

2. The Relevance of the *Bikarang* Tradition and the Socio-Cultural Domain in Civic Education

In the context of Civic Education, tradition within society can be regarded as a strategic socio-cultural medium. Tradition functions not merely as cultural heritage but also as a pedagogical resource that transmits values, norms, and ethical orientations essential for the development of responsible citizenship. When integrated into the learning process, traditions provide students with authentic experiences that are closely connected to their social environment (Ghasempoor et al., 2012; Mouritsen, 2018).

The socio-cultural dimension of Civic Education emphasizes character formation through social and cultural interaction. Traditions serve as a means of internalizing democratic values, fostering tolerance, and cultivating communal solidarity, all of which have long been embedded in societal life. By engaging with local traditions, learners are encouraged to recognize their roles both as individuals and as members of a collective, thus bridging personal interests with communal responsibilities (Magill et al., 2024; Mouritsen, 2018).

Accordingly, the incorporation of tradition into Civic Education represents a bridge between abstract civic theories and lived social practices. This integration underscores that education is not confined to the transfer of knowledge but also entails a process of cultural socialization. Ultimately, traditions embedded in Civic Education help strengthen national identity, nurture collective awareness, and foster a sense of responsibility in the practice of citizenship (Ghasempoor et al., 2012; Magill et al., 2024).

Substantively, the character values integrated into *bikarang* activities are highly relevant to the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education. This aligns with the essence of socio-cultural life, which significantly influences civic education, as values, practices, and cultural diversity shape the curriculum, perspectives, and citizens' identity (Moura et al., 2013). The value of caring for the environment identified in the *bikarang* tradition is in line with the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education, as it fosters citizens' awareness of the importance of preserving the aquatic.

Furthermore, *gotong royong* in *bikarang* shows the close connection between tradition and the strengthening of civic culture. The cooperation that arises from preparing the location, disseminating information, and helping each other during and after the activity reflects the values of solidarity and social cohesion. In the socio-cultural domain of civic education, this practice demonstrates how citizen participation in local traditions can serve as a means of community-based democratic education. Thus, traditions in society are not only meaningful as rituals but also capable of strengthening the spirit of *gotong royong* (Prayogi et al., 2025), which functions not only as a moral value but also as a participatory culture that fosters collective awareness among citizens in social life.

Finally, the value of independence built through *bikarang* activities confirms that local traditions can strengthen citizens' ability to face economic and social challenges. The independent approach to meeting food needs and earning additional income from fishing demonstrates the socio-economic resilience of a culture-based community. In civics, this is relevant because independence is a characteristic of resilient citizens who can make decisions and are not entirely dependent on outside parties. Therefore, the socio-cultural domain of civics is enriched through the practice of *bikarang*, which serves as a vehicle for contextual character education grounded in societal realities. Based on the above description, it can be understood that traditions in a community are strategic instruments in providing effective teaching materials to strengthen the character of citizens (Purba et al., 2025), with a basis in social activities and behavior in community life, in order to realize ecological citizenship (Mufidah et al., 2025).

Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss the *bikarang* tradition as a cultural activity or local wisdom, this study positions the tradition within the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education. The findings demonstrate that the *bikarang* tradition embodies values of ecological responsibility, collective participation, and social solidarity that remain relevant to contemporary citizenship. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating local traditions into Civic Education to strengthen character formation and socio-cultural citizenship among younger generations.

The findings extend previous studies that predominantly describe the *bikarang* tradition as a form of local wisdom or cultural heritage. This study demonstrates that the tradition also serves as a sociocultural mechanism to strengthen citizenship values through environmental responsibility, collective participation, and community-based independence. Moreover, the findings indicate that local traditions remain adaptive to contemporary social change, in which digital technology is not merely associated with individualism but can also sustain collective civic practices. These findings contribute to Civic Education by broadening the understanding of how local cultural traditions can strengthen socio-cultural citizenship and character formation within contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the *bikarang* tradition contains important character values, namely, environmental awareness, *gotong royong*, and independence, which are practiced collectively within community life. These values are reflected in environmentally friendly fishing practices, social cooperation among residents, and community responsibility for managing natural resources and meeting household needs. The *bikarang* tradition, therefore, not only functions as a cultural activity but also as a socio-cultural practice that strengthens solidarity, collective participation, and ecological responsibility within society. In the context of Civic Education, this study shows that local traditions can serve as a medium for strengthening socio-cultural citizenship by fostering

civic values rooted in community life. Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss bikarang as local wisdom or cultural heritage, this study positions the tradition within the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education, particularly to strengthen ecological citizenship and collective social awareness amid the growing tendency toward digital individualism in contemporary society. Therefore, integrating local traditions into Civic Education is important for supporting character formation and strengthening social responsibility among younger generations.

DECLARATIONS

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2. Authors Contributions

Conceptualization: SL; Methodology: SL; Validation: DS, LW, and SH; Formal Analysis: SL; Investigation: SL and DS; Resources: LW; Data Curation: SL; Writing Original Draft Preparation: SL; Writing for Review and Editing: SL, DS, LW, and SH; Supervision: LW and SH; Project Administration: SH. All authors have read and agree to the final published version of the manuscript.

3. Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no competing interests to declare relevant to this article's content..

4. Generative AI and AI-Assisted in the Writing Process

ChatGPT was used only to improve language clarity and readability. It was not used for research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or scientific decision-making. The author is fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and content of this manuscript.

5. Data Availability Statement

Research data supporting the study findings are available upon request to the corresponding author.

6. Funding

This research received no external funding.

7. Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the residents of Sungai Medang Village, Prabumulih City, for their willingness to participate as respondents in this research, as well as to all parties who have provided support and assistance, enabling this study to be successfully completed.

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