

THE INFLUENCE OF KATOBA VALUE INTERNALIZATION ON CHILD CHARACTER FORMATION THROUGH FAMILY EDUCATION IN THE MUNA COMMUNITY

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Submitted: 25/07/2026

Revised: 17/08/2026

Accepted: 29/08/2026

Published: 07/09/2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of the internalization of Katoba values on children's character development through family education in the Muna community. The research employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory research design with a cross-sectional survey. The study population consisted of parents who had children aged 13–15 years and whose children had participated in the Katoba tradition in Muna Regency. A total of 200 respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings indicate that respondents reported a high level of agreement regarding the internalization of Katoba values, the implementation of family education, and children's character development. These findings suggest that the Katoba tradition continues to serve as a strategic medium for transmitting religious, moral, social, disciplinary, and responsibility values within the Muna community. Family education plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the internalization of these values, enabling them to be consistently practiced in children's daily lives. This study contributes to the development of a local wisdom-based character education model by positioning family education as the mechanism through which the internalization of cultural values strengthens children's character development. The findings are expected to provide a valuable reference for policymakers and educators in designing character education programs that integrate local cultural values within the Indonesian educational context.

Keywords

Character Development, Family Education, Internalization of Katoba Values, Local Wisdom.



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INTRODUCTION

The character formation of the Muna community does not occur solely through formal education but also through family education and cultural practices, one of which is the Katoba tradition. Katoba serves as a medium for communicating and transmitting religious and moral values, obedience, respect for parents and elders, and social responsibility (Hadirman, 2016). These values are not expected to remain confined to the implementation of the tradition but to continue through parental role modeling, communication, habituation, and supervision within the family. This is consistent with the view that the family constitutes the first educational environment for instilling values, attitudes, and behaviors in children (Dradjat, 1995); (Amanda, 2022). However, the presence of character values within a tradition does not necessarily guarantee their consistent internalization in children's behavior, particularly amid globalization, advances in information technology, and changes in social interactions that pose challenges to the internalization of moral, religious, and social values among younger generations (Fachrurradhi et al., 2025); (Witasari et al., 2025); (Nurhidayati et al., 2024); (Indriani et al., 2025).

The Muna community was selected because it provides a relevant sociocultural context for examining the relationship between local wisdom, family education, and child character formation through the Katoba tradition. In addition to its cultural dimension, Katoba contains religious and moral messages that are transmitted to younger generations and reinforced through family education, particularly through parental role modeling, communication, habituation, and supervision (Hadirman, 2016). Parenting practices play an important role in instilling moral and religious values in children (Prihatini et al., 2022), while the educational responsibility of the family is essential for shaping children's attitudes and behaviors (Amanda, 2022). Nevertheless, research on character education has tended to examine families, schools, religious institutions, or cultural traditions separately. Therefore, a research gap remains concerning how the internalization of values derived from local traditions can be strengthened through family education and be associated with child character formation in an integrated manner within the Muna community.

Based on the researchers' initial observations, Katoba in the Muna community is understood not merely as a customary tradition but also as a space for transmitting values to children through advice, behavioral guidance, and the reinforcement of religious and social values. These values are expected to continue within family life through parental role modeling, habituation, communication, and supervision, thereby providing a foundation for quantitative research on the

relationships among Katoba value internalization, family education, and child character formation.

Conceptually, character formation does not occur instantaneously but results from the internalization of values through repeated processes within the family environment and the broader cultural context of the community. Value internalization is understood as a process of transforming values until they become part of an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Alam, 2016). This process is more effective when supported by role modeling, habituation, and consistent interaction within the family environment (Surana, 2017). From this perspective, this study views Katoba Value Internalization as a source of values transmitted to children, while Family Education functions as the primary mechanism for transforming these values into actual behaviors reflected in Child Character Formation. Therefore, the relationships among these three constructs need to be empirically examined to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of local wisdom to strengthening character education within the Muna community.

Studies on character education, value internalization, family education, and local wisdom have developed considerably in recent years. Nevertheless, these studies have tended to examine each concept separately. For example, Alam (2016) explains that value internalization is an educational process aimed at instilling religious values until they become part of an individual's patterns of thinking and behavior. Similarly, Surana (2017) emphasizes that the success of value internalization is largely determined by habituation, role modeling, and a supportive social environment. These two studies provide a conceptual foundation for understanding value internalization as an important mechanism in character formation; however, they do not relate this process to local wisdom as a primary source of values transmitted within the family.

Other studies have focused more extensively on character education in formal educational settings and family education. Nugraheni and Firmansyah (2021) demonstrate that character education requires synergy among role modeling, habituation, and educational culture to ensure that moral values develop sustainably (Nugraheni & Firmansyah, 2021). Meanwhile, Prihatini et al. (2022) found that parenting practices play a highly significant role in instilling religious and moral values in children through communication, habituation, and consistent supervision within the family environment (Prihatini et al., 2022). These findings indicate that the family is the first educational environment and serves as a primary medium for transforming values into behavior; however, they do not explain how local cultural values are internalized within this process.

On the other hand, research on Katoba as a tradition of the Muna community has predominantly been conducted from cultural and communication perspectives. Hadirman (2016) explains that Katoba is a traditional communication medium that functions to transmit moral, social, religious, and cultural values to younger generations through advice and cultural symbols passed down from one generation to another (Hadirman, 2016). This finding indicates that Katoba has considerable potential as an instrument of character education based on local wisdom. Furthermore, Walhadi, Putra, and Neli (2025) emphasize that the integration of Islamic religious education based on local wisdom can strengthen children's character formation through a process of value internalization that takes place contextually within community life (Walhadi et al., 2025); (Amin et al., 2025); (Azizah et al., 2025); (Asmauna & Rahmi, 2024). These studies reinforce the view that local cultural values contribute to character formation; however, they have not developed an empirical model examining the relationships among cultural value internalization, family education, and child character simultaneously.

Based on these studies, a research gap remains that warrants further attention. Most previous studies have focused on exploring cultural values, character education, or family education separately and have been predominantly qualitative in approach. To date, no study has been identified that integrates Katoba Value Internalization, Family Education, and Child Character Formation into a single empirical model using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. Furthermore, no study has developed Katoba Value Internalization as a construct that can be operationalized into quantitative indicators, allowing the relationships among the variables to be empirically tested.

Addressing this gap, this study offers novelty through the development of an empirical model of child character formation based on Katoba value internalization, with family education serving as a mediating variable in the Muna community. The study not only examines the direct effect of Katoba value internalization on child character formation but also analyzes the effect of Katoba value internalization on family education, the effect of family education on child character formation, and the mediating role of family education in the relationship between Katoba value internalization and child character formation. In addition, this study operationalizes the Katoba Value Internalization construct into measurable indicators that can be empirically assessed using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. This contributes to the development of local wisdom-based character education by positioning Katoba as a source of

values and family education as a mechanism for strengthening the internalization of these values. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the relationships among Katoba value internalization, family education, and child character formation and to examine the mediating role of family education in the process of transforming cultural values into children's character within the Muna community.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among the variables formulated in the research model (Karimuddin et al., 2022). The research design adopted was a cross-sectional survey, in which data were collected during a specific period to obtain an empirical description of the effect of Katoba value internalization on child character formation through family education in the Muna community. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables hypotheses to be objectively tested based on numerical data and allows both direct and indirect relationships among variables to be examined through multivariate statistical analysis.

The study was conducted in Muna Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province, which was purposively selected because the community continues to maintain the Katoba tradition as a form of local wisdom-based education in the process of child character formation. The tradition contains religious, moral, and social values that have been transmitted across generations, making it a relevant context for examining the process of value internalization within the family environment. The study population consisted of all parents who had children aged 13–15 years (equivalent to junior secondary school level) and whose children had participated in the Katoba tradition. These criteria were established because parents are directly involved in the family education process, while children within this age range are considered capable of demonstrating behaviors that reflect the internalization of values in their daily lives.

The sample was determined using purposive sampling, a sampling technique based on specific criteria aligned with the objectives of the study. The respondent criteria included: (1) residing in Muna Regency; (2) having a child aged 13–15 years; (3) having a child who had participated in the Katoba tradition; and (4) being willing to participate as a research respondent. Considering the requirements for Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis and the characteristics of the research model, which comprised three latent constructs, the

sample size was determined at 200 respondents. This sample size was considered adequate to produce stable parameter estimates and enable optimal testing of the structural model.

The research variables consisted of Katoba Value Internalization as the exogenous variable (X), Family Education as the mediating variable (M), and Child Character Formation as the endogenous variable (Y). Katoba Value Internalization was defined as the process of instilling, internalizing, and practicing the religious, moral, and social values contained in the Katoba tradition so that they become guidelines for thinking and behaving in everyday life. Family Education refers to the educational process carried out by parents through role modeling, habituation, communication, supervision, and advice to shape children's behavior. Meanwhile, Child Character Formation refers to the development of positive behaviors in children, reflected in religious attitudes, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and social concern based on parental observations.

The research instrument consisted of a structured closed-ended questionnaire developed based on a synthesis of theories concerning value internalization, family education, character formation, and the substantive values of Katoba identified in previous studies. All indicators were developed and adapted to the sociocultural characteristics of the Muna community to ensure their conceptual alignment with the objectives of the study. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The instrument consisted of 45 statement items, comprising 15 indicators for Katoba Value Internalization, 15 indicators for Family Education, and 15 indicators for Child Character Formation. All three variables were treated as first-order reflective constructs, meaning that all indicators directly reflected their respective latent constructs.

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Number of Indicators	Scale
Katoba Value Internalization (X)	15	Likert 1–5
Family Education (M)	15	Likert 1–5
Child Character Formation (Y)	15	Likert 1–5
Total	45	Likert 1–5

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 with the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. The analysis began with data screening to assess data completeness, followed by a descriptive analysis of respondent characteristics. Subsequently, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated by examining outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha to establish convergent validity and construct reliability. After the measurement model met the required criteria, the structural model

(inner model) was evaluated by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 Predict, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) to assess the quality of the research model. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure at a 5% significance level by examining path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. In addition to testing the direct effects among variables, this study also analyzed the mediating role of Family Education in the relationship between Katoba Value Internalization and Child Character Formation by examining the indirect effect.

Based on the conceptual framework developed in this study, four research hypotheses were formulated and empirically tested using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. The hypotheses were formulated based on the causal relationships among the variables identified through theoretical perspectives and previous studies, thereby establishing a systematic relationship among the research questions, research objectives, conceptual model, and analytical technique. The research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- H1: Katoba Value Internalization has a positive and significant effect on Family Education in the Muna community.
- H2: Family Education has a positive and significant effect on Child Character Formation in the Muna community.
- H3: Katoba Value Internalization has a positive and significant effect on Child Character Formation in the Muna community.
- H4: Family Education significantly mediates the effect of Katoba Value Internalization on Child Character Formation in the Muna community.

The four hypotheses were subsequently tested through analyses of direct and indirect effects using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4 at a 5% significance level. The hypothesis testing results were used to explain the strength of the relationships among the variables and to examine the mediating role of Family Education in strengthening the effect of Katoba Value Internalization on Child Character Formation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 200 parents in Muna Regency who met the research criteria, namely having children aged 13–15 years and whose children had participated in the Katoba tradition. The characteristics of the respondents were analyzed based on gender, age, educational attainment,

occupation, subdistrict of residence, and the age of their children.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	68	34.0
	Female	132	66.0
Age	<35 years	63	31.5
	35–44 years	39	19.5
	45–54 years	49	24.5
	≥55 years	49	24.5
Education	Elementary School	43	21.5
	Junior High School	33	16.5
	Senior High School	36	18.0
	Diploma	30	15.0
	Bachelor's Degree	26	13.0
	Postgraduate Degree	32	16.0
Occupation	Farmer	26	13.0
	Fisher	31	15.5
	Civil Servant (ASN)	41	20.5
	Entrepreneur	34	17.0
	Trader	35	17.5
	Other	33	16.5
Subdistrict	Katobu	35	17.5
	Batalaiworu	30	15.0
	Duruka	25	12.5
	Tongkuno	25	12.5
	Lohia	20	10.0
	Napabalano	20	10.0
	Kontunaga	15	7.5
	Kabangka	15	7.5
	Other subdistricts	15	7.5
Child's Age	13 years	72	36.0
	14 years	69	34.5
	15 years	59	29.5

Based on Table 2, the majority of respondents were female (66.0%), while male respondents accounted for 34.0%. This indicates that mothers have a high level of involvement in child-rearing and education within the family environment, thereby providing a relevant perspective on the internalization of Katoba values.

In terms of age, respondents were predominantly under 35 years old (31.5%), followed by those aged 45–54 years and ≥55 years, each accounting for 24.5%, while respondents aged 35–44 years accounted for 19.5%. This age variation indicates that the study involved parents from different age groups, thereby providing diverse perspectives on the implementation of family education.

The respondents' educational backgrounds were relatively diverse, with the largest proportion being elementary school graduates (21.5%), followed by senior high school graduates (18.0%), junior high school graduates (16.5%), postgraduate degree holders (16.0%), diploma holders (15.0%), and bachelor's degree holders (13.0%). This diversity in educational backgrounds indicates that the Katoba tradition is practiced by community members with varying levels of educational attainment.

In terms of occupation, respondents were distributed across various professions, with the largest proportion consisting of civil servants (ASN) (20.5%), followed by traders (17.5%), entrepreneurs (17.0%), other occupations (16.5%), fishers (15.5%), and farmers (13.0%). Geographically, respondents came from nine subdistrict groups, with the largest distribution from Katobu (17.5%), followed by Batalaiworu (15.0%), while the remaining subdistricts were proportionally distributed. Meanwhile, the children's ages were relatively evenly distributed, namely 13 years (36.0%), 14 years (34.5%), and 15 years (29.5%), which was consistent with the research criteria.

Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of the research variables, namely Katoba Value Internalization (X), Family Education (M), and Child Character Formation (Y).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Katoba Value Internalization (X)	4.147	0.771	2	5
Family Education (M)	4.150	0.752	2	5
Child Character Formation (Y)	4.146	0.765	2	5

Based on Table 3, all variables had mean values above 4.14 on the 1–5 Likert scale. This indicates that, in general, respondents provided high ratings for the process of Katoba value internalization, family education practices, and child character formation.

Family Education had the highest mean value (Mean = 4.150), followed by Katoba Value Internalization (Mean = 4.147) and Child Character Formation (Mean = 4.146). The standard deviations for all variables were below 1.0, indicating that respondents' responses were relatively homogeneous and that the data did not exhibit substantial dispersion. In addition, the minimum value of 2 and the maximum value of 5 indicate that there were no responses outside the range of

the measurement scale used.

Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Testing Plan

This study employs the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach to examine the causal relationships among Katoba Value Internalization, Family Education, and Child Character Formation. SEM-PLS was selected because of its ability to analyze simultaneous relationships among latent variables and accommodate mediation models with reflective indicators.

The conceptual model of the study positions Katoba Value Internalization as the exogenous variable (X), Family Education as the mediating variable (M), and Child Character Formation as the endogenous variable (Y). This model enables the examination of both direct and indirect effects through the mediating mechanism of family education.

Hypothesis testing is planned to be conducted in two main stages. The first stage involves evaluating the measurement model (outer model) to assess convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability using indicators such as outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. The second stage involves evaluating the structural model (inner model) to examine the relationships among variables based on path coefficients, the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and statistical significance using the bootstrapping procedure.

Based on this model, the study tests four hypotheses: (H1) Katoba Value Internalization has a positive effect on Family Education; (H2) Family Education has a positive effect on Child Character Formation; (H3) Katoba Value Internalization has a positive effect on Child Character Formation; and (H4) Family Education mediates the effect of Katoba Value Internalization on Child Character Formation. The hypothesis testing results will provide the basis for explaining the empirical relationships among the variables in the context of preserving Katoba cultural values within the Muna community.

Discussion

Katoba Value Internalization as the Foundation of Child Character Formation

The descriptive statistical results show that the variables of Katoba Value Internalization, Family Education, and Child Character Formation obtained high mean values. This finding indicates that the Muna community continues to regard Katoba as an important part of the moral education and character formation of younger generations. The values embedded in the tradition are not

merely understood as cultural rituals but are also internalized as behavioral guidelines transmitted through family life. Thus, Katoba serves an educational function through a continuous process of value internalization.

Theoretically, value internalization is a process of transforming values from cognitive understanding into personal appreciation and implementation in everyday behavior through habituation, role modeling, reinforcement, and reflection (Alam, 2016); (Surana, 2017). In the context of this study, Katoba serves as a medium that brings together religious values, social norms, and the cultural identity of the Muna community. The high perceptions of respondents regarding Katoba value internalization indicate that local traditions continue to possess transformative capacity in shaping children's moral orientations amid social change. This is consistent with the view that character education cannot be developed solely through formal learning but requires consistent value internalization within social and cultural environments. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect for parents, social concern, and adherence to religious teachings are more likely to become embedded when introduced through lived cultural experiences rather than merely through the delivery of theoretical material (Muhsinin, 2013); (Gunawan et al., 2019).

From the perspective of Islamic education, value internalization takes place through role modeling (*uswah*), habituation (*ta'dib*), advice (*mau'idzah*), and continuous supervision, particularly within the family environment (Drajat, 1995); (Muhtarudin & Muhsin, 2019). Katoba brings these processes together through the involvement of parents, customary leaders, and religious leaders in transmitting values to children. Hadirman (2016) explains that Katoba is a traditional communication medium of the Muna community that contains moral, ethical, and religious messages transmitted across generations (Hadirman, 2016). Therefore, the continuity of Katoba is not only related to cultural preservation but also to the sustainability of character education based on local values.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that character formation becomes more effective when moral values are instilled through continuous habituation and role modeling (Aji, 2025); (Nuryanto et al., 2026); (Rosnelly et al., 2023); (Tarmizi et al., 2026). Alfath (2020), Hanifah et al. (2024), and Amal Hidayat Ahmad (2023) also demonstrate that character formation is influenced by the consistency of value internalization through role modeling and educational culture. Meanwhile, Walhadi et al. (2025) show that the integration of local wisdom and religious education can strengthen children's character (Walhadi et al., 2025), while Khoiriyah et al.

(2025) emphasize that local traditions can serve as a medium for character education when integrated with religious values and community social practices (Khoiriyah et al., 2025). Thus, this study extends previous findings by demonstrating that Katoba functions not only as a mechanism for cultural preservation but also as a source of character education strengthened through the family environment. The high perception of Katoba value internalization demonstrates the continuity of the tradition's educational function in instilling religious, moral, and social values in children and strengthening culture-based character education within the Muna community.

Family Education as a Mediator of the Relationship between Katoba Value Internalization and Child Character Formation

In addition to demonstrating a high level of Katoba value internalization, the findings indicate that Family Education obtained the highest mean value among the variables. This finding suggests that the family remains the first and primary educational environment for child character formation in the Muna community. In this context, Katoba is not understood as an educational process that ends with the performance of a customary ritual but as a starting point that can strengthen family education. The values conveyed through Katoba acquire greater meaning when continued through parenting practices, communication, role modeling, habituation, and parental supervision in everyday life. Thus, the family functions as a space for actualizing the cultural and religious values introduced through Katoba.

Conceptually, the family has a primary responsibility for transforming moral, religious, and social values into children's lives. Dradjat (2018) positions the family as the foundation of Islamic education because it constitutes the first environment in which children become acquainted with norms, morality, and responsibility (Dradjat, 2018), while Sukatin et al. (2019) emphasize that family education is not limited to intellectual development but also encompasses the comprehensive formation of personality and character (Sukatin, Auliah et al., 2019). From the perspective of value internalization, the family serves as a space for habituation that transforms an understanding of values into actual behavior through role modeling, advice, habituation of religious practices, discipline building, and supervision. This process is consistent with Alam (2016) and Surana (2017), who emphasize that value internalization requires continuous social interaction for values to develop into an individual's moral awareness (Alam, 2016); (Surana, 2017).

The findings of this study are also consistent with character education theory, which positions habituation in everyday life as an important process in character formation. Wuryandani

et al. (2014) demonstrate that consistent habituation can develop discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social concern into integral components of an individual's character (Wuryandani et al., 2014). In the Muna community, this process is reinforced by the values transmitted through Katoba, enabling family education to function simultaneously as a medium of childrearing and the intergenerational preservation of cultural values. This finding is further supported by Prihatini et al. (2022), who demonstrate the importance of parenting practices in instilling moral and religious values (Prihatini et al., 2022), as well as Amanda (2022), who emphasizes that educational responsibility encompasses the development of children's attitudes, habits, and moral responsibility (Amanda, 2022). Nurazizah et al. (2021) and Hakim and Darajat (2023) also emphasize the importance of alignment between the values taught and the social environment in which children grow and develop (Nurazizah et al., 2021); (Hakim & Darajat, 2023).

The continuity of character education also requires sustained involvement from the educational environment through the habituation of values in everyday life (Putra et al., 2026); (Rofik et al., 2025). Fitriyah et al. (2024) demonstrate that educator role modeling is an important factor in shaping students' behavior (Fitriyah et al., 2024). This principle is relevant in the family context because parents serve as figures who directly connect Katoba values with children's behavior. At the same time, social change, modernization, and technological development may affect the continuity of cultural value transmission if the educational function of the family is not strengthened (Bassar et al., 2021); (Furqon, 2020). Therefore, strengthening family education serves two functions simultaneously: supporting children's character formation and maintaining the continuity of local wisdom in community life.

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that the relationship between Katoba value internalization and child character formation occurs not only directly but also through a continuous family education process. The family serves as a mechanism for actualizing Katoba values through parenting practices, habituation, role modeling, and children's everyday behavior. This perspective extends previous studies that have tended to position local traditions as a medium for character education without explaining the mechanism that bridges value transmission and character formation. Therefore, family education can be understood as a mediating mechanism that strengthens the relationship between Katoba value internalization and child character formation in the Muna community.

The Contribution of the Study to the Development of Local Wisdom-Based Character Education

The findings show that Katoba Value Internalization, Family Education, and Child Character Formation received high levels of perception among the Muna community. This finding indicates that Katoba continues to function as a medium for transmitting moral and religious values. The novelty of this study lies in positioning Family Education as a mechanism that bridges the relationship between the internalization of cultural values and Child Character Formation. From this perspective, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how local traditions can contribute to children's behavioral development through educational processes taking place within the family.

Previous studies have predominantly examined character education in school and Islamic boarding school contexts. Alfath (2020), Naufal (2023), Hanifah et al. (2024), and Amal Hidayat Ahmad (2023) demonstrate that character formation is influenced by institutional culture, role modeling, habituation, discipline, and structured educational activities (Alfath, 2020); (Naufal, 2023); (Hanifah et al., 2024); (Amal Hidayat Ahmad, 2023). This study extends this perspective by positioning the family as an important actor in the transmission of cultural values. Katoba is understood not merely as a customary activity but as a source of values that is reinforced through parent-child interactions. This complements the findings of Prihatini et al. (2022), Amanda (2022), and Sukatin et al. (2019) regarding the position of the family as the first educational environment for the development of children's morality, responsibility, and personality (Prihatini et al., 2022); (Amanda, 2022); (Sukatin, Auliah et al., 2019).

The findings also strengthen existing scholarship on value internalization in Islamic education. Internalization occurs through habituation, role modeling, experience, and continuous reinforcement, allowing values to develop into integral components of individual character (Alam, 2016). The success of this process is determined by the ability to transform values into actual behavior (Surana, 2017); (Gunawan et al., 2019); (Fadhil, 2019). In this study, Katoba provides a sociocultural space for this process through interactions within the family and community. Thus, this study extends the understanding of value internalization by positioning local wisdom as a context that can strengthen the transformation of values into character.

This contribution is also related to studies of multicultural and local wisdom-based education. Local culture can serve as a learning resource for strengthening identity, tolerance, and national character when integrated into education (Furqon, 2020); (Usman, 2017); (Nasution &

Albina, 2024). Walhadi et al. (2025) demonstrate that the integration of local cultural values and religious education can strengthen children's character (Walhadi et al., 2025), while Makmur et al. (2025) and Makmur et al. (2026) demonstrate the importance of applying Islamic values in strengthening discipline, responsibility, and motivation (Makmur et al., 2025); (Makmur et al., 2026). This study enriches these findings by demonstrating that Katoba can serve as a source of character education rooted in family and community life.

Theoretically, this study contributes through a model that connects cultural value internalization, family education, and child character formation within a single empirical framework. Character formation is understood as a gradual process in which cultural values are internalized, reinforced through family education, and subsequently manifested in children's behavior. Practically, these findings provide a basis for local governments, customary leaders, religious leaders, and educational institutions to develop character education involving families and local wisdom. Strengthening Katoba through educational activities, parental guidance, and school–community collaboration has the potential to support character formation while maintaining the continuity of Muna culture. Thus, this study contributes to the development of local wisdom-based character education by integrating the Katoba tradition as a source of values and family education as a mechanism for reinforcing these values in the formation of children's character.

Theoretical Implications, Practical Implications, and Research Contributions

The findings of this study have theoretical implications for the development of local wisdom-based character education by extending attention from the role of schools and educational institutions to the mechanisms of value transmission that take place within families. The results indicate that Child Character Formation is associated with the successful integration of local cultural values, family education, and everyday practices. Thus, character education should not be understood solely as a process occurring through formal learning but also as a sociocultural process reinforced by the family environment.

Conceptually, the internalization of cultural values does not occur instantaneously or end with ceremonial activities. Values contribute to character formation when reinforced through habituation, role modeling, experience, and continuous interaction. In the context of the Muna community, Katoba serves as the starting point for transmitting religious, moral, and social values, while the family constitutes the primary space for actualizing these values in everyday life. This finding reinforces the views of Alam (2016), Surana (2017), and Gunawan et al. (2019) that

transforming values into character requires consistent internalization and a supportive environment. It also strengthens Dradjat's (1995) view of the family as the first educational environment by demonstrating that the effectiveness of family education is further enhanced when supported by a cultural value system that remains embedded in community life.

From a practical perspective, this study provides implications for local governments, educational institutions, customary leaders, and religious leaders to establish collaboration in developing local wisdom-based character education. Katoba values can be integrated into family education programs, religious education, and formal education through parental guidance, locally grounded teaching materials, character education training, and collaboration between schools and customary institutions. Such an approach not only strengthens children's character but also maintains the continuity of cultural values amid social change. In this context, the preservation of Katoba should not be limited to ceremonial aspects and cultural identity but should also be directed toward strengthening its educational function. This is consistent with Walhadi, who emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural values, education, and community participation in character formation among younger generations (Walhadi et al., 2025).

The main contribution of this study lies in the development of an empirical model that connects Katoba Value Internalization, Family Education, and Child Character Formation within a single structural framework. Unlike studies that only examine the effect of local culture on character or position the family merely as an educational environment, this study explains the mechanism underlying this relationship by positioning Family Education as a mediating variable. Thus, the study not only identifies factors associated with character formation but also explains how cultural values are transformed into children's behavior through educational processes within the family.

The novelty of this study can be formulated in three aspects. First, the study develops a quantitative model integrating Katoba value internalization, family education, and child character formation. Second, the study positions family education as a mediating variable to explain the mechanism through which cultural values are transformed into character. Third, the study empirically examines the Katoba tradition using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach in the context of the Muna community. Thus, this study enriches the literature on local wisdom-based character education while opening opportunities for the development of similar models in other cultural communities.

The findings confirm that strengthening children's character requires synergy among local culture, family, and education. Katoba provides the foundation of values, while family education ensures that these values continue to be internalized until they are reflected in children's behavior. This perspective highlights the importance of positioning local wisdom as a living source of education and the family as the primary mechanism for sustaining the character formation of younger generations.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Katoba value internalization plays a strategic role in Child Character Formation through the strengthening of Family Education within the Muna community. The high perceptions of Katoba value internalization, family education, and child character formation indicate that the Katoba tradition remains effective as a medium for transmitting religious, moral, and social values, as well as discipline, responsibility, and respect for parents, while family education serves as the primary space for ensuring that these values continue to be internalized and manifested in everyday life. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of local wisdom-based character education by integrating Katoba values, family education, and child character formation within a single conceptual framework. Practically, these findings can serve as a reference for local governments, educational institutions, customary leaders, religious leaders, and families in developing character education that integrates local culture with family education. However, because this study employed a cross-sectional survey design within the Muna community, future research should expand the geographical scope, conduct comprehensive SEM-PLS empirical testing, and compare local wisdom-based educational practices across different cultural communities in Indonesia to develop a more comprehensive character education model.

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