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## THE EDUCATION OF CHARACTER BASED ON LOCAL WISDOM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE GAYO COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL ACEH

### Abstract

It is believed that the spread of various social illnesses among the students is the result of a lack of attention to the character education of the students. Today, the practice of character education has been enriched by the emergence of the idea of articulating local wisdom as its basis. The revitalization of local wisdom in educational practice is motivated by the belief that modernity with all its supporting tools is not enough to guide human beings to achieve a meaningful life. The modern educational praxis that is currently developing widely and is oriented towards economic and political demands has marginalized local values and culture, so that schools also play a significant role in alienating students from their socio-cultural context. The idea of developing local wisdom-based education is based on the belief that every community has a strategy for living life according to its context. The Gayo people have strategies and local wisdom guiding their people in leading their lives. This qualitative study will answer the following questions: (1) What is the profile of the local wisdom of the Gayo community? (2) What aspects of the local wisdom of the Gayo community can be used as a basis for developing a character education model? The research specifically aims to describe the profile of the existence of local wisdom of the Gayo community in the current context; efforts to identify aspects of local wisdom of the current Gayo community that are considered relevant in developing character education; and formulating a conceptual model character education based on the local wisdom of the Gayo community.

**Keywords:** Character Education, Local Wisdom, Gayonese Community

### Abstrak

Merebaknya berbagai penyakit sosial pada kalangan pelajar dinyakini sebagai akibat minimnya perhatian pada pendidikan karakter peserta didik. Praksis pendidikan karakter dalam beberapa waktu terakhir telah diperkaya dengan munculnya gagasan untuk mengartikulasikan kearifan lokal sebagai landasannya. Revitalisasi kearifan lokal dalam praksis pendidikan dilatarbelakangi akan keyakinan bahwa modernitas dengan segala perangkat pendukungnya tidak cukup untuk menuntun manusia untuk menggapai kehidupan yang bermakna. Praksis pendidikan moderen yang berkembang luas saat ini dan yang berorientasi pada tuntutan ekonomi dan politik telah menempatkan nilai dan budaya lokal pada posisi perifer. Hal ini diperparah lagi adanya mainstream pendidikan di negara-negara berkembang sangat minim memberi ruang pada nilai dan budaya lokal, sehingga sekolah turut berperan terhadap alienasi peserta didik dari konteks sosio-kulturalnya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Gagasan pengembangan pendidikan berbasis kearifan lokal didasari oleh keyakinan bahwa setiap komunitas mempunyai strategi untuk menjalani kehidupan sesuai konteksnya. Masyarakat Gayo mempunyai strategi dan kearifan lokal yang mampu membawa masyarakatnya dalam menjalani kehidupannya. Kearifan lokal tersebut dinyakini bersumber dari nilai-nilai luhur budaya lokal. Untuk itu, studi kualitatif ini diharapkan dapat menjawab pertanyaan berikut: (1) Bagaimana profil kearifan lokal masyarakat Gayo? (2) Aspek-aspek kearifan lokal masyarakat Gayo apa saja yang dapat dijadikan sebagai landasan pengembangan model pendidikan karakter? Penelitian secara khusus bertujuan

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mendeskripsikan profil eksistensi kearifan lokal masyarakat Gayo dalam konteks kekinian; Mengidentifikasi aspek-aspek kearifan lokal masyarakat Gayo yang dipandang relevan dalam pengembangan pendidikan karakter; serta ingin merumuskan model konseptual implementasi pendidikan karakter berbasis kearifan lokal masyarakat Gayo.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Karakter, Kearifan Lokal, Masyarakat Gayo

## PENDAHULUAN

The praxis of character education in the last two decades has been enriched by the emergence of the idea of articulating local wisdom as its basis (Hidayati, N. A., Waluyo, H. J., Winarni, R., 2020), (Rukiyati Sugiyo, 2017), (Dhari, 2021). The revitalization of local wisdom in educational practice is motivated by the belief that modernity with all of its supporting tools is not sufficient to guide human beings to achieve a meaningful life. Modernity with its characteristics of rationalism, objectism and individualism which are divorced from spiritualism and wisdom has had a massive impact on the imbalance in human relations with each other and with nature. The mainstream of education in developing countries leaves very little space to local values and local culture, so that schools have contributed to the alienation of students from their socio-cultural context and the erosion of various aspects of local culture in everyday life.

The idea of developing local wisdom-based education is based on the belief that every community has a strategy for living according to its context (Timothy, 2005). Character education based on local wisdom is needed to develop moral qualities, personality and attitudes of human in togetherness (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2011). In formal education practice, the excessive emphasis on developing the cognitive aspects has marginalized the attention to the development of students' character dimensions.

In the context of education of Indonesia, the idea of developing local wisdom-based education has received relatively new attention. A number of experts have expressed the importance of a conception of education that truly represents the actual reality that develops in a pluralistic society. Strengthening aspirations to develop education based on local cultural treasures in Indonesia requires concrete steps, one of which can be taken through an inventory of local wisdom spread across various local communities before being integrated into an educational practice. Clarity regarding aspects of local wisdom that are considered important and relevant as a basis for developing character education is a determining factor in the success of implementing this policy in the future. In this regard, this study can explore in more depth the development of a character education model based on local wisdom found in the Gayo community. The research questions used as a reference in this research are: What are the pictures of the local wisdom of the Gayo community? What is the process of character education based on local wisdom of the Gayo community? The purpose of this study is to describe the profile of the existence of local wisdom of the Gayo community; Understand the character education process based on local wisdom of the Gayo community. The benefits of this research are twofolds. First, it can theoretically contribute to identifying alternative models for developing character education based on the contextual reality of pluralistic Indonesian society. Second, it contributes to the formulation of a theoretical model of character education that is based on original values of Indonesian (indigenization) without denying the importance of creative adaptation to character education concepts from outside. This research, practically, can be an input and consideration for related parties to formulate policies for developing character education based on living values in certain communities. It is hoped that the complexity of character education based on local wisdom in the Gayo community can provide information for stakeholders regarding planning, implementation, achievements and prospects for the development of character education based on local wisdom. Furthermore, the findings can be a trigger for other researchers to conduct research on local wisdom and efforts to revitalize it through educational institutions at various types and levels in Indonesia.

### Review of Character Education

The discussion of character has long been the subject of attention of psychologists, education experts and educators. The term character is often understood differently according to each individual's emphasis and approach (Koesoema, 2007). The term "character" is etymologically come from Greek word '*karasso*' meaning blue-print, basic format, prints like

those found in fingerprints. Character also means as "*instrument for marking and graving, impress, stamp, distinctive mark, distinctive nature*" (Kupperman, 1990). Character reflecting the set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable an individual to function as a competent moral agent. Having done some intensive review of various definitions, (Wilhelm, 2005) stated that "*character can be measured corresponding to the individual's observance of a behavioral standard or the individual's compliance to a set moral code.*" Adherence to the agreed moral values and making them the basis for thinking and acting is an indicator of character (Peterson, Christopher, 2004).

In Islamic education discourse, character is synonymous to *akhlak* (morals). *Akhlak* are the plural form of *khuluq* which means customs, manners, character, and religion. (Suwito, 1995) quotes Ibn Miskawaih in defining morals as a state of mind that encourages a person to carry out an action without the need for thought. The term *akhlak* refers to a mental condition that is institutionalized in a person or a psychological representation that causes a person to do or not do something easily. In other words, character or *akhlak* represent a person's identity which shows his submission to moral rules or standards and is manifested in actions. Based on the various aforementioned definitions, the term character reflects an ambiguous meaning. On the one hand, it reflects the inherent conditions which embedded in a person (given), but on the other hand, character also reflects the manifestation of one's will to empower the potential for good or bad within oneself or influences from outside that determine one's identity. In other words, character is the totality of a person's soul which displays the one side obtained from heredity and the other side obtained from education, life experience and the environment.

After discussing the nature of character, the following is an investigation into character education. There are various views regarding the issue of character education. (Creasy, 2008). For example, interprets character education as an effort to encourage students to grow and develop with competency in thinking and adhering to moral principles in their lives and having the courage to do what is 'right' even when faced with various challenges. The Team for Drafting Guidelines for the Implementation of Character Education at the Ministry of National Education of Indonesian identifies character education with values of education and moral education, which aims to maintain what is good and to see goodness implemented in everyday life wholeheartedly (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2011). From these statements, it is clear that character education is intended so that students have the knowledge, understanding and ability to practice good values and make it a habit in thinking as well as in acting. The character education is not just to teach what is right and what is wrong, but also instills habits so that students become aware of what is right and what is wrong, so they are able to feel good values and are used to doing them. The character education is not just directed to the transfer of knowledge regarding good values, but to make these values embedded and integrated into the totality of thoughts and actions. The internalization of values and determination to take actions that are considered correct are the manifestations of the success of character education in schools.

The widespread awareness of character education is also related to demands regarding the importance of character in achieving success (Peterson, Christopher, 2004). The efforts of educational institutions to develop students' creativity, discipline, independence, resilience and courage through various life tests are considered inadequate (Asmani, 2011). Strong character is a prerequisite for being a winner in the current situation and in the long run competition. This education is needed to develop not only smart but also good students (Lickona, 1991). To achieve these two things, character is absolutely necessary for students to be able to participate as part of a civilized community. It was developed to help students to achieve success at school and in life, as well as to protect the younger generation from the impacts of globalization and modernization.

### **Models of Character Education**

The articulation of character education, generally, is manifested in the following four models: religious, romantic, positivistic, and culturalist (Asmani, 2011). The religious-based education model is the earliest model of such a character education developed. The mission of this model is just to prepare people who are able to practice religious teachings and this is an important criterion in achieving a meaningful life. The values contained in the religion become

a guide and indicator for the formation of the character of a person or a society (Koesoema, 2007). In the development of the first model, the strengthening of religious institutions (especially church institutions in this context) has caused the development of character education to be more indoctrination-oriented. The dissatisfaction with religious interpretations has resulted in widespread opposition to all religions, including religious-based character education models. This view is still widespread in the countries that adhere to secularism.

One reaction to the indoctrinative, religious-based model of character education is the emergence of romantic character education model which is developed on the ideas of J.J. Rousseau who views children as individuals who have the ability to sort out values. In line with the tendency of romantic education, the theory of value clarification promoted by the initiators of liberalism education is increasingly widespread. In the perspective of the romantic model, educators must be neutral to provide as wide an opportunity as possible for students to make choices. Excessive glorification of individual freedom has resulted in a fragile awareness of the existence of collective authority and responsibility which is actually very necessary to ensure social harmony. Character in this model's view is the result of an individual's free choices.

Another variant of the character education model is crystallized in the positivism education model which integrates knowledge to an empirical nature. This model denies characters that are rooted in religious values. According to (Koesoema, 2007) the influence of positivism in education is reflected in the widespread view that education is a natural fact and humans always obey to the evolutionary laws of nature. In a positivist perspective, education is not directed at normative matters through the lens of faith or religious vision inherited from a particular religion, but it is directed at natural growth according to the individual's biological needs and the social demands that surround them. Nature is considered to determine the pattern of human personality. Environmental determination of individuals becomes stronger.

Apart from the aporementioned models, the character education is also developed by referring to cultural values or cultural models. In this perspective, many efforts to build character that are integrated as part of the educational process are based on socio-cultural values that have become institutionalized in the community. By referring to these values, it is hoped that the transformation of values and character formation will take place better and produce them as good citizens in a community who are actively involved in mobilizing the development of society toward a better direction.

### **Local Wisdom**

Wisdom is values that come originally from the agreement of a community to become a source of growth and development. Wisdom is always related to context and values, so it is impossible for someone to be considered wise if their attitudes and actions are contrary to the appropriate values (Sternberg, 2005). Wisdom is an accumulation of knowledge and policies that grow and develop in a community that represents its theological, cosmological and sociological perspectives (Bikers, 2000). They argue that local wisdom has been proven to function as a guide capable of providing enlightenment and sustainable management of life. Local wisdom is a steady truth in an area that consists of a combination of sacred values from God's word and the existing values. Local wisdom is formed as a cultural advantage of the community and it is a cultural product of the past which is continuously used as a guide to life for local people in the broadest sense. Thus, local wisdom refers to the formulation of a community's world-view regarding various phenomena and is a construction of experience that is developed over time.

The articulation of local wisdom manifests in various forms, including traditions, moral values and guides for life. Local wisdom is also available in wise words which are transmitted through oral tradition, although in very small amounts there is local wisdom which is transmitted through writing. (Al-Rasyidin Siregar, Batubara Parluhutan, 2009) concluded that there are at least five categories of local wisdom, namely: first, wisdom in the form of a view of life, belief or ideology expressed in words of wisdom (philosophy); secondly, wisdom in the form of social life attitudes, advice and *iktibar* expressed in the form of proverbs, wise words, poetry rhymes or folklore; third, wisdom in the form of ceremonies in the form of ceremonies; fourth, wisdom in the form of principles, norms and rules of society which form into a social system; and fifth, wisdom in the form of habits, daily behavior in social interactions.

## The Gayo Ethnic

Gayo is one of the original ethnic groups inhabiting the province of Aceh. The Gayo ethnic group is the second largest indigenous tribe in Aceh with approximately 400,000 speakers, spreading across various regions in Indonesia. Geographically, the Gayo tribe inhabits the Gayo plateau located at an altitude of 400-2,600 meters above sea level (asl), with temperatures ranging from 20°-30°C. Judging from the origins of the Gayo people (local people call themselves *urang* Gayo) they have a genealogical relationship with the Old Malay people (Paeni, 2003). The ancestors of the Gayo people came from the Old Malays who moved away from the coast to the inland due to the arrival of the Young Malays from Indo-China and Cambodia in 300 BC. They settled along the north and east coast of Aceh and along the Jambo Aye, *Peureulak* rivers. The Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai describes the lifestyle of a group of people who inhabit the highlands (believed to be the ancestors of the Gayo tribe) who have been able to develop farming patterns to meet their living needs (Bowen, John, 1991) Archaeological facts and radiocarbon analysis indicate that the ancestors of the Gayo people migrated from South China to the Malay peninsula, moved east of the island of Sumatra and continued their journey to the Gayo highlands around 2400 BC (Ketut Wiradnyana, 2011).

In an oral tradition (Gayo: *kekeberan*) it is said that the Kingdom of Linge, which was the first kingdom in Gayo, was founded by Genali who came from the land of Rum (Turkey today) around the X century AD (Melalatoa, 1982). According to this version, the King of Linge had established a relationship with the king of Johor through sending gifts and envoys. This good relationship then continued with Genali's marriage to the princess of the king of Johor named *Puteri Terus Mata* (Madjid, 2020). The entourage of the Johor royal princess, consisting of 30 people, finally lived in Gayo land and were given the titles *Cik*, *Kejurun*, *Reje* and *Penghulu*. With the increase in population, the kingdom of Linge was divided into small kingdoms, namely the Bukit kingdom (located around Lut Tawar lake), Serule, Syiah Utama, even expanding to the Karo area with the kingdom of Sibayak Lingga, and in West Sumatra with the Wi Apuk and Bedagai kingdoms (Syukri, 2007)

The invasion of the Sriwijaya kingdom in 986 AD caused Sultan Peureulak's younger brother, Malik Ishak, to settle with approximately 300 people and was given the right to establish an Islamic kingdom in Isaq, which was later named the Malik Ishaq Kingdom (Syukri, 2007). This event is seen as the beginning of the arrival of Islam in the highland of Gayo. In addition, there is a number of information regarding the influence of Islam in the past lives of the Gayo people's ancestors, including: the oath-taking of all royal officials by *Qadhi Malikul 'Adil* (Supreme Court) in the Linge kingdom was carried out under Syariah Law. The culture of seeking knowledge as demonstrated by the departure of Johansyah (the eldest son of Linge King) to Dayah Cot Kala, Peureulak under the tutelage of Sjèh Abdullah Kan'an proves that Islam has colored various aspects of people's lives (Madjid, 2020). Apart from that, the Linge kingdom has a flag (Gayo: *elem*) with the words *shahadah* written on it. Thus, religion and custom in Gayo society are two inseparable things. This is reflected in the Gayo *perimustike* (proverb), "*Kuet edet muperala Agama, rengang edet benasa nahma.*" This means that the strength of traditional practices causes the maintenance of religious teachings in social life, whereas if traditional values have been eroded this has implications for tarnishing one's good name (Melalatoa, 2006).

The study of the existence of the Gayo and Acehnese people began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Dutch colonial government. The writing of history and geographical descriptions of Gayo and Aceh was intended as part of efforts to paralyze armed resistance in the region. The Dutch colonialists had an interest in identifying factors that could be used to accelerate control of territories that had caused enormous material, financial, military and loss of life.

## METODE

### Research Design

This research belongs to a phenomenology as it attempts to explore the experience of implementing local wisdom-based character education among Gayonese senior citizens. This

study used this research because it is aimed at exploring experiences and sensory perception (hearing, seeing, feeling, thinking, and acting) of the researched phenomena .

### **Participants**

The research subjects were selected purposively. The subjects were ABC (75), chairman of the Regional Education Council (MPD) of Central Aceh Regency, MI (83) Member of the Ulama Consultative Council (MPU) of Central Aceh Regency, YS (75) Chairman of the Aceh State Traditional Council Gayo (MAANGO), and JM (45) a linguist and pragmatist experts on Gayonese. The data that has been collected is then classified, verified, reduced, interpreted and then analyzed qualitatively. Next, the researcher synchronized it with related sources which then made efforts to synchronize it with the idea of character education.

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected b interview and documentation. Data relating to evidence that becomes material for analysis to answer the research problems. In qualitative research, data collection is related to efforts to obtain detailed descriptions of situations, people, or interactions that occur, excerpts from participants' words regarding their thoughts and experiences, as well as excerpts from documents or recordings (Moleong, 1999). Due to the complexity of local wisdom issues, data collection was carried out through document studies, interviews and observations. Documents can be in the form of interview transcripts, reflective notes describing events and also photography results. Written materials regarding Gayonese culture are used as a reference for mapping and understanding the dynamics of Gayonese culture. Interviews were chosen as a data collection technique because researchers can do cross-check data so that confusion over questions or answers can be confirmed directly (Robert K. Yin, 2011). During the interview, the researcher wrote down contextual information through note-taking. With participants permission, the researchers also used a recorder and a camcorder to facilitate transcription.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this qualitative research has the characteristics of data collection and analysis as a simultaneous process (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). Writing memos or field notes carried out during and after data collection, using codes and utilizing literature to enrich perspectives on understanding and analyzing research problems. Data analysis is carried out continuously during and after the data collection process takes place. Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out based on the following three stages: reduction, presentation and verification of data. The description of the data obtained in observations, interviews and document analysis is reduced through selection, determining focus, simplifying and transcribing the data. The data presentation stage includes organizing activities, condensing information so that it can be used as a reference in decision making and necessary follow-up actions. This phase includes data organizing activities, making it easier to draw conclusions. Incomplete, ambiguous and contradictory data are verified at the data collection, reduction and presentation stages. Before arriving at the final conclusion, the researcher proposes a temporary conclusion functioning as an intermediate benchmark, because the final conclusion is formulated after the series of research activities have been completed (Koentjaraningrat, 2009)

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Profile of the Local Wisdom of Gayo Community**

Local wisdom is an accumulation of knowledge and policies that grow and develop in a certain community that summarizes its theological, cosmological and sociological perspectives. Local wisdom relies on institutionalized philosophy, values, ethics and behavior to manage resources (natural, human and cultural) sustainably which can be formulated as a formulation of a community's view of life regarding natural and social phenomena. In other words, local wisdom is the values, knowledge and skills contained in a society that are produced to build harmonious interactions with the environment that are transmitted and transformed from generation to generation, in detailed, specific and unique mode. The embodiment or manifestation of local wisdom can be in the form of knowledge, skills, intelligence, resources, social processes, ethical norms and customs. If it is analysed further, local wisdom includes: dimensions that are invisible (intangible) and things that are visible (tangible). Invisible wisdom

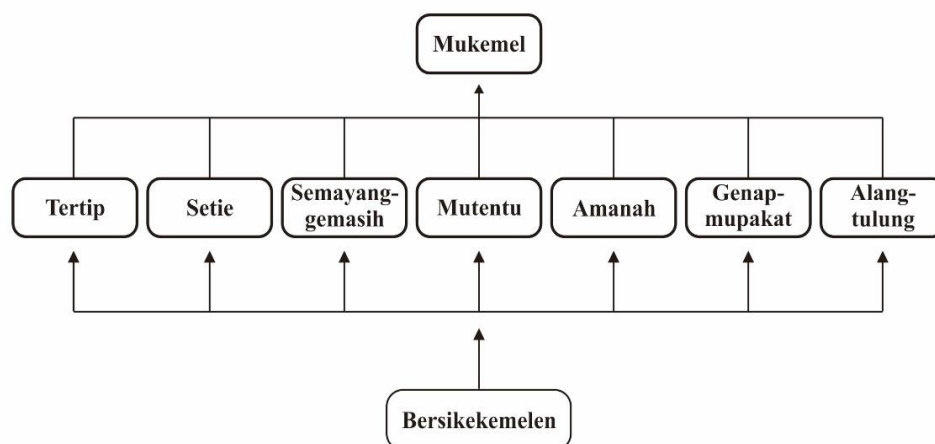
takes the form of noble ideas for building oneself, preparing a wiser life and having a noble character. On the other hand, visible local wisdom can take the form of objects, living equipment, artistic and artistic equipment, and material cultural symbols. More broadly, local wisdom includes: local norms (such as taboos and obligations), rituals and ceremonial traditions; folk songs, legends, myths and folklore; manuscript; ways local communities meet subsistence needs; traditional healing systems, etc.

Based on this explanation, this section provides a map of the local wisdom of the Gayo community which is carried out in various aspects and dimensions. Due to the breadth of its scope, the presentation is limited to the Gayo local wisdom in the cultural value system, social system and knowledge system.

1. Value System of Gayo

Cultural systems or cultural values are an abstraction of customs. The cultural value system consists of concepts regarding everything that is considered valuable and important by the citizens of a society, and functions as a guide to the life orientation of the society concerned (Koentjaraningrat, 2009) The Cultural values which originally comes from people's understanding of the natural and social environment. The cultural system summarizes a set of knowledge which includes views of life, beliefs, values, norms, rules, laws that belong to a society through a learning process which is then referred to in organizing, assessing and interpreting objects and events in various aspects of society's life (Melalatoa, 1997). In other words, a cultural system is a manifestation of the ideal conceptions of a community and functions to direct society's meaning of life. The cultural value system does not have a concrete form. The form of cultural ideas or cultural systems is abstract, it cannot be photographed or filmed, and can only be known and understood (by members of other cultures) after being studied in depth through intensive interviews, intensive observations or reading anthropological research reports regarding the society itself.

The Gayo cultural system has attracted the attention of a number of experts. One of the anthropologists who has formulated the concept of the Gayo cultural value system is M. Junus Melalatoa. He was born in Takengon and served as Professor of Anthropology at the University of Indonesia until he passed away in 2005. After conducting seminal research in the Gayo highlands for two decades, Melalatoa formulated the Gayo cultural value system into three categories: main values; supporting value; and driving value. *Mukemel* (having a proper social sense of self) is the main value in the construction of the Gayo cultural value system. To develop the value of *mukemel* requires the existence of a number of supporting values consisting of: *tertip* (orderly), *setie* (faithful), *semayang-gemasih* (love/caring), *mutentu* (reliable), *amanah* (trustworthy), *genap-mupakat* (democratic), and *alang-tulung* (mutually helpful). These supporting values are driven by competitive values (*bersikekemelen*) which function as driving values. (Melalatoa, 2003) depicted the Gayo cultural value in the chart below:



Picture 1. The Gayo Cultural System  
 Source: (Melalatoa, 2003), *Gayo: Etnografi Budaya Malu*

To obtain an overview of the various values, that are interconnected and influence each other, the following is a brief review of these values.

- a. *Mukemel* (having a proper social sense of self)  
*Mukemel* concerns to self-esteem or identity. (Bowen, 1993) interpret the word *mukemel* as a sense of politeness, a proper way to act, so he provides the meaning of *mukemel* is “*sense of propriety, the quality of knowing how to conduct oneself.*” The term *mukemel* comes from the word *kemel* which in Gayo means shame, preceded by the prefix *mu-* which means to be or feel, depending on the word it includes. So etymologically *mukemel* means feeling embarrassed or having a proper social sense of self. However, the word *mukemel*, in a broader sense, is interpreted as self-esteem or *iffah* in moral studies. *Mukemel* reflects the mental attitude of a person who is able to keep himself from falling into thoughts and actions that can cause him to lose self-esteem (Melalatoa, 2006). Behavior that does not maintain self-esteem is called *gere mukemel* (not having a proper social sense of self), and the person or perpetrator is called *jema gere mukemel* (someone who does not have a proper social sense of self). With this value in mind, a person will try to ensure that his actions and words are always guided by noble values originating from religious teachings and local wisdom that have been internalized in Gayo society (Melalatoa, 1983).
- b. *Tertip* (orderly)  
 In Gayo society, *tertip* (orderly) is related to being alert so that actions and treatment are carried out by paying attention to context. The importance of maintaining order and compliance with processes receives great attention in the social norms of Gayo society. A *perimustike* or Gayo proverb states, “*tertip bermejelis, umet bermulie*” which means that order in living together is a prerequisite for realizing glory. This expression emphasizes that in a diverse society; Whether viewed from the aspects of expertises, interests, tendencies, experience and age differences, rules are needed that can regulate the realization of social harmony
- c. *Setie* (faithful)  
 This character refers to an attitude of loyalty or commitment to what is believed to be right. This loyalty creates a tough person who will never give up easily in order to fight for the truth. The existence of this character can be traced through the *perimustike* (proverbs) which states: “*ike ate murai ate. Ungke terasa gule, ike ate gere murai ate, bawal terasa bangke.*” This traditional expression means that if the heart winning is success, no matter how difficult the challenge is, it is easily resolved, whereas if commitment is lost, even small problems can trigger bigger problems.
- d. *Semayang-Gemasih* (love/caring)  
*Semayang-gemasih* means affection. The term *semayang* comes from the word affection which in its use shows sincere affection. Initially, the term *semayang* was identified with the attitude of a mother who loves her child wholeheartedly. Meanwhile, the term *gemasih* reflects the personality of someone who likes to give or to share something (generous) (the opposite of stingy). The value of compassion is a manifestation of the divine nature that everyone must emulate to create harmony. The existence of the value of *semayang-gemasih* is an indicator of noble character that must be developed in every person. The affectionate character needs to be balanced with a fair attitude or the ability to be affectionate in a proportional manner. A *perimustike* states, “*kasih enti lanih, sayang enti lelang*” which means the importance of the ability to act on time and on target in manifesting an affection. Love without knowledge and wisdom can be destructive. In this case, for example, someone or a group of people gives power or authority to someone without considering its suitability or its appropriateness, thereby encouraging them to become an authoritarian and tyrannical figure.
- e. *Mutentu* (reliable)  
*Mutentu* is to guide someone to work in a planned, professional and proportional way. This character creates a sense of responsibility. The absolute character of his opponent is *lèngé* (careless, slow). In the past, Gayo society developed this value through reflection



and involvement in various activities in social life. This character can be internalized through a series of traditional ceremonies or rituals or what is usually called *sinte*. Through *sinte*, every member of society is required to participate according to their capacity and expertise.

f. *Amanah* (trustworthy)

*Amanah* is related to the conformity of words and actions. A person who is considered trustworthy if he/she is able to carry out his/her duties responsibly, upholds justice, sincere and honest, and is able to control his/her passions. There is a *perimustike* which shows the position of the trust value, namely: "*kukur i amat guk é, akang i amat tar bekasé, jema i amat leng é.*" (birds are identified by their sounds, deer are identified by their tracks, humans are identified by their words or promises). This expression illustrates that the value of trust is something that a person must have because it is the most important marker of his existence.

g. *Genap Mupakat* (democratic)

*Genap Mupakat* character is a Gayo cultural value related to the realization of social harmony. It is the embodiment of the principle of deliberation to find the best solution. The opposite of this even-mutual character is *cèré bèré* (divorce, dispersed). In the social life of the Gayo community, deliberation is an important thing in deciding questions about the livelihoods of many people.

h. *Alang Tulung* (mutually help)

*Alang Tulung* means mutually help. This character is reflected in the expression *alang-tulung berat bebantu* (mutually help each other) which emphasizes that everyone needs social interaction that enables the process of giving and receiving. The social system in Gayo society is tied to group solidarity or what is called *sara kekemelen* (the same feeling). This means that if someone in the group commits an inappropriate action that undermines dignity or honor, the impact of this bad action has a collective impact. This bond of togetherness is built not only based on blood ties (family) but also based on domicile. (Hurgronye, 1996) when explaining solidarity in Gayo society states, "... the sense of solidarity may be thicker in the *saudere* [kinship ties] in the Gayo land than in *gampong* [village] friends in Aceh. *Saudere* for the Gayo people, the defense or debt of one's own brother is also the defense or debt of one brother which must be borne by the other brother." The solidarity of the Gayo community which is based on the value of *alang-tulung* is reflected in the Gayo community's habit of feeling of very insulted if anyone in their family members becomes a beggar. The value of *alang-tulung* is still relatively stable even though in certain cases it has shifted.

i. *Bersikemelen*

The driving values underlying all the aforementioned are called *bersikemelen* (competitive values). Through this values, supporting values are further developed and lead to make the main value, *mukemel*, even stronger. This competitive value supports the social structure, spurs dynamics, and supports creativity in various aspects of life. The emphasis on the sustainable values is more on the dimensions of individual quality so that they will get optimal benefit to the community. This value becomes a motivator that directs a person to develop habits that are in accordance with applicable customs or cultural values. Ideally, being persistent emphasizes on the development of noble qualities of moral character. For example, this moral quality is reflected in the seriousness of seeking knowledge, concern for other people, steadfastness in noble principles, and so on. Being persistent is a value that is needed to reach achievements in various fields of life. This value can be identified with the command to compete to do the best (*fastabiqul khairat*). The practice of consistent values encourages dynamics in improving the quality of knowledge, religious practice and the ability to interact with each other. This value is supported by the value of *idung bertunung adi bermemulo* which means competing to get, create, give or realize the best in various aspects or dimensions of life.

It is very important to revitalize the Gayo cultural value system, which consists of the main values, supporting values and driving values. The cultural value system reflects the ideal profile that is expected so that when these values are able to be developed, they will

become the foundation for personal formation. Leaders or community figures who lose their *mukemel* character put them in a morally low position.

## 2. Knowledge System

A knowledge system reflects how a community understands and perceives various phenomena around it. The knowledge system provides information to community members in order to understand nature, they themselves, the environment and various events that have occurred, are currently occurring and will occur in the future. Included in this knowledge system is discussing the origins and existence of ancestors as well as natural events. In other words, a knowledge system is a perspective that develops within a community that attempts to explain the complexity of natural and social phenomena. The knowledge system in local communities can be manifested in folklore, folklores, stories, legends, saga, chronicle, or other names. In Gayo society, the knowledge system that explains various things can be found in the term *kekeberen* (folklore). *Kekeberen* comes from the word *keber* 'news' which means story, information or story. The Gayo community, which is rich in oral literature, has many traditions that develop among society. This *kekeberen* has good content for character building. As (Asdiana, 2021) state that In the past, this *kekeberen* (folklore) was often conveyed by grandparents, mothers or more senior people as a lullaby for children up to approaching their teenage. There are a number of very popular Gayo folklore that are widely known in the society. *Kekeberen Inen Mayak Pukes*, for example, tells the story of a princess who marries to a young man from a far away country. After the wedding procession, her mother advised her daughter to confirm her intention to start her new life. And for that reason, on the way to the groom's village, she was asked to her daughter not to look back. However, this trust was violated by her daughter. As a result of this violation, her daughter turned into a pile of stone. This site still exists today and is one of the tourist destinations visited in Takengon city, Central Aceh. This folk tale teaches us about the importance of keeping commitment that have been made. Moreover, there is also the tale of *Atu Belah* which narate the story of a mother's sacrifice and love for her children. This tale emphasizes the determination of a mother who was willing to sacrifice herself in order to provide food for her children. The mother's determination sparked the anger of her husband, who became emotional because of her son's carelessness so that logistics or food supplies collected over a long period of time were finally lost. The legend of *Atu Belah* emphasizes how a child should place his mother as someone who must be respected because of her devotion and sacrifices. Another tale is about the White Elephant's story. There are values of struggle and the need to be alert about people who hide their bad intentions beyond their smile and nice words. In this context, the tale describes Sengeda's sincere attitude towards his older brother, Meriah. His loyalty and efforts to obtain justice for the bad treatment upon his brother fruitful in which perpetrators of the crime also sentenced to death at the end.

Various legends that are available among community and are transmitted across generations in local communities are important to be reintroduced. *Kekeberen* conveyed through interesting storytelling is an important medium for opening and developing the younger generation's perspective in facing various problems. Through this *kekeberen*, it expected that there are various main values that can be instilled for the younger generation. In the White Elephant's tale, for example, there are the values of struggle and the need to be careful about people who hide their bad intentions. Apart from that, the legend also describes Sengeda's sincere attitude towards his older brother Meriah. His loyalty and efforts to obtain justice for the bad treatment his brother received finally succeeded in providing sanctions or punishment for the perpetrators of the crime.

## 3. Social Systems

Social systems or social institutions concerns with the rules applied in social interactions which aim to create harmony. Social institutions in people's lives actually cover many aspects. The social institutions that develop in society can include rules or norms related to how to place oneself in one's relationship with the social environment (Bowen, 1993). In simple terms, the social systems that exist in society, for example, governance institutions, education, institutions related to livelihoods, environmental management, and so on. In the following section, the dimensions of local wisdom of the Gayo community will be the focus of attention regarding the

government system or in Gayo language terms it is called *sarakopat* (a government system of village in Gayo).

*Sarakopat* is an element of government administration that existed in every village in the Gayo community in the past. *The Sarakopat consists of Reje (village head), Imem (religious official in village), Petue (elder or assistant to reje), Rayat (People or members of a village), in which Snouck Hourgronje calls this as a mini republic*. (Bowen, 1991) *Sarakopat* has a dual function as a traditional institution and at the same time as a government institution and this function is an active role (Syukri, 2007). The role roles and functions of *Sarakopat* are summarized in the following maxim: "reje musuket sipet, imem muperlu sunet, petue musidik sasat, rayat genap mupakat." Reje musuket sipet means that the king/leader is obliged to weigh or measure each issue correctly and properly before making a decision. Professional considerations must be made to produce wise decisions that do not harm the wider audience. The king or leader is required to uphold the mandate in every decision of a matter as per the mustike, "*Munimang enti angik, muyuket enti rancung*" meaning that the weighing must be precise and appropriate, neither more nor less. Furthermore, the "*imem muperlu sunet*" means that the tengku or ulama are obliged to guide the people based on the provisions of the Shari'ah. To be able to carry out this task, clerics or religious figures who are entrusted with carrying out this mandate are required to have knowledge of legal acts such as obligatory, circumcision, *jaiz*, *makruh* or *haram*. Imem plays a guiding role, guiding the practice of religious teachings relating to *amar makruf nahi munkar* or matters related to the beliefs and rules of the Islamic religion, all of which are called *muperlu-sunet*. The meaning of *Petue Musidik* is that *Petue* is obliged to investigate a problem or case so that he can provide appropriate advice and input to the leader in making decisions for the benefit of the people. *Petue* has the attitude of being thorough, sensitive, caring, responsive to things that are happening and developing in society, all of which are called *musidik-sasat*. *Petue* functions as a verifactor as well as a validator of information so that he can clarify problems and at the same time and can provide the best consideration to a village leader as the final decision maker. Lastly, *rayat genap mupakat* means, (people's representatives) are obliged to deliberate towards a unanimous consensus for the interests and welfare of the people. The social institutions of the Gayo community in *Sarakopat* have similarities with the Tuha Peut institutions on the coast of Aceh, Raja si Empat in the ethnic of Alas, Raja Maropat in Simalungun, Datuk Empat in Deli Malay, and Raja Na Opat in the south of Lake Toba (Perret, 2010).

*Sarakopat* as a traditional institution in the Gayo community has the task for accommodating and channeling the aspirations or opinions of the community in administering government, implementing development and community development. These four elements (reje, imem, petue and rayat) together or individually are obliged to create harmonious, democratic and objective relationships in resolving any problems in people's daily lives. *Sarakopat* is responsible for creating peace, harmony and good order in society.

### **The process of character education based on Gayo community**

The importance of understanding and reaccustoming the values of local wisdom is part of the efforts to build the identity or character of the Gayo community. The formation of an identity that is rooted in the noble values, found in the community is necessary so that the Gayo people do not lose their identity in the very fast cultural vortex. People who only partially understand local wisdom have a tendency to accept and adopt foreign culture without a significant filtering process. The values that come from outside are seen as better values, in fact it is not uncommon for culture or the values from outside to be imitated not in their essence but rather in aspects of their external appearance.

The process of forming awareness regarding the importance of local wisdom cannot be done briefly. Collaboration between various stakeholders is very necessary so that these values are truly able to form the awareness of all community members. Modeling and creating an atmosphere or climate that allows the development of awareness and willingness to learn is very necessary. Example is a determinant of the success of internalizing local wisdom. Example has a deeper and more lasting influence than teaching. Local wisdom which is summarized in concepts formulated in language that is not always easy to understand, but it requires real examples that facilitate the growing interest of the younger generation in understanding and

actualizing such a local wisdom. In the school context, for example, the example of educators in making local wisdom a daily practice will be more easily accepted and followed by students. Learning local wisdom is not limited to developing aspects of knowledge, but requires example and a learning process that involves emotions, reasons and experience.

Internalization within family is an important factor in the internalization of local wisdom-based character education. A family and community environment that adheres to local wisdom values plays an important role in fostering interest in learning local wisdom. Family and community environments applying local wisdom directly influence the formation of interest and attitudes towards traditions. The habits of speaking and acting and the body gestures used when interacting within the family are a reflection of shared values. Home is the first school, first class, and first playground for a child. Parents, grandparents and other family members are the first teachers for a child. Siblings and cousins are the child's first classmates and playmates. Home is the basis for education of the mind, heart, body and soul. The house lays the foundation of principles, values, morals and justice for a lifetime. The internalization of local wisdom that is practiced in the family is an important foundation in growing awareness and cultivating local wisdom. Within the family sphere, the internalization of local wisdom is carried out through the following things: First, giving *manat* (admonitions/messages). Based on the findings of this research, *manat* is given on several certain occasions, including through the tradition of *mangan murum* (eating together at the same time with the family members). This tradition is generally carried out by sitting cross-legged in a circle and facing each other on a mat. This tradition is an atmosphere where family members gather daily, before or after returning from their respective activities. According to the experience of several informants, including the author's own experience in the village when he was young, at least breakfast and dinner were always done together. If any members of the family were not present yet when meal time, the other members would wait for several times and even tried to look for the unpresence of the family members, ofcourse at that time we know that he/she is known to have not traveled far. Considering this opportunity to gather together is a bit difficult, apart from this *mangan murum*. Parents, especially fathers, often use this opportunity to give advice and ask for information or problems faced by other family members. The message conveyed in the *mangan murum* is often accompanied by the appointment of role models of people with character (success stories) in everyday life. This *manat* was also delivered at the family plenary meeting. On this occasion, parents conveyed messages of noble advice so that children have good character. Another occasion where this message is conveyed is when a child is about to go to *Muranto* (leaving homeland for education purposes).

The character education process which is implemented through three stages done in the following internalization of values. First, the value transformation stage, where parents verbally inform children of having good values as elaborated earlier, such as the attitude of *mukemel*, *mutentu*, *munahma*, *mupendirin*, *malem*, *mubetih*, *makal*, *muilmu*, *mutertip*, *muperasaen*, *numerala*, *genap mupakat*, *musara*. This stage is in line with the first component of Lickona's (1991) three components of character, namely moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action. Second, the value transaction stage. In this stage, two-way communication occurs between parents and children. At this stage parents do not only convey good advice but also provide role models. So that a moral attitude of knowing arises. Guidance and examples given from the previous generation (parents) to the next generation are found in many of the social and cultural institutions of the Gayo community. This has an important function to ensure that the local wisdom that exists in the Gayo community operates and this is one of the most important factors in internalizing the character of the people. -people involved in education as well as national leaders. The third stage is transinternalization, in which it is deeper than the previous two. If in the previous stages, physical parental factors still influence the formation of children's attitudes, in the third stage, the mental factors and parental personality are more dominant in internalizing these values. So whether or not the parents' presence by their side, the children will always embody this character in moral action.

## CONCLUSION

The Profile of local wisdom in Gayo society can be found in social and community life institutions such as value systems, social systems and knowledge systems. The value system is a substance contained in the deepest consciousness of the Gayo community whose existence needs to be revitalized on an ongoing basis. A cultural value system that summarizes the main values whose application and implementation can be found in social systems and knowledge systems. The existence of local wisdom can be used for character education, both within the scope of informal, non-formal education and even in formal educational institutions at various types and levels. The value system consisting of the values *mukemel*, *mutentu* (reliable), *tertip* (orderly), *setie* (faithful), *semayang-gemasih* (love/caring), *alang-tulung* (mutually helpful), *amanah* (trustworthy), *bersikekemelen* (competitiveness) needs to be explored and re-expressed so that it can be better understood and applied.

The character education process that has been taking place in the Gayo community is implemented through conveying messages (*manat*) related to the noble values of local wisdom. Conveying messages related to local wisdom that can still be found in family interactions is capital that needs to be optimized in maintaining and developing the local wisdom of the Gayo community. In addition, the existence of local wisdom values is applied in the social system and knowledge system which can still be found in the social system of the Gayo community, for example the *Sarakopat* whose existence has become stronger with the establishment of regional autonomy. On the other hand, the process of applying local wisdom in formal education, which has recently received attention and support from a number of parties, has become an opportunity for the revitalization and re-actualization of local wisdom as a basis for character education.

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