







Character building training model for young people to strengthen religious moderation



Authors:

Munawir K.¹ 
 Makmur Makmur² 
 Muhammad N.A. Rasyid³ 
 Wahyuddin Naro⁴ 
 Syahrudin Usman⁴ 
 Hadi Pajarianto⁵ 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Gowa, Indonesia

²Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo, Palopo, Indonesia

³Department of English and Literature, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

⁴Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

⁵Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palopo, Palopo, Indonesia

Corresponding author:

Munawir K.,
 munawir.k@uin-alauddin.ac.id

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Student character survey in Indonesia in 2021, on average, produced lower index numbers compared to last year's index results. This research aims to explore the policies and content of Character Building Training (CBT), and the impact of the programme on student character. This research was qualitative, involving informants: 60 students and 8 lecturers, who were selected using purposive and snowball techniques, so that if the data were saturated, collecting the data was considered sufficient. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews carried out from June to September 2022. Data analysis was carried out manually using the Discovering Cultural Themes model by carrying out data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification. The research results show that CBT is implemented through a cycle of CBT campaign, capacity building, and institutionalisation with a nurturing, learning, mentoring, and consulting approach. The content includes attitudes and values, skills, knowledge and moderate integrative insight, as well as amplifying tolerant, open, critical, caring, and creative behaviour, respecting differences, and polite and commendable behaviour. The CBT programme has amplified some aspects: religious character, discipline, politeness, caring for the environment, and patriotism. The greatest and dominant strengthening was in religious character and love of the country. The implication and contribution of this research is the continuation of character education for young people as an instrument to substantiate religious moderation.

Contribution: This research is important theoretically and practically to contribute to the formation of character building in young people in Islamic tertiary institutions. Currently, character education is the main vision of Islamic tertiary institutions in Indonesia, which is associated with religious moderation as one of the priorities in the national medium-term development plan.

Keywords: character; building; training; young; Islamic university; religious moderation.

Introduction

The theme of character building in Indonesia is very important, and this study has two main objectives, namely the policies and content of Character Building Training (CBT), and the impact of CBT on student character. In general, character is related to a person's habits, attitudes and morality (Susilawati et al. 2022a). The ups and downs of a nation's civilisation are largely determined by the moral character and performance of its people. Moral character is related to attitudes such as honesty, tolerance, mutual respect, and other positive attitudes. Meanwhile, performance character is all aspects of an individual's identity, including ways of thinking, attitudes and skills that are internalised and become the individual's habits in carrying out work. In the Indonesian context, the problem of deviant behaviour is still a central issue that must be resolved among millennial youth through education (Zulela et al. 2022). The target of this issue is for the younger generation to have character which is in accordance with the moral and ethical values that apply in society (Santika 2020), with stages of instilling knowledge, confirming feelings, and rationalising actions that will become a person's character (Munawwaroh 2019).

A survey by the Research and Development Center for Religion and Religious Education in Indonesia found that the Student Character Index or Indonesia Indeks Karakter Peserta Didik (IKPD) at the Secondary Education Level in 2019 was 70.70. This value is a composite number of 58 indicators and 22 aspects and components which are grouped into the dimensions of religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation and integrity from 34 provinces in Indonesia.

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If you look at this overall score, the IKPD in Indonesia is in the 'high' category, even though it is not yet in the 'very high' category (Puslitbang 2021). Invigorating this index is supported by religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity. In general, Indonesia still has many cases like brawls between students, promiscuity, narcotics, as well as cases of bullying.

Other problems can be seen from the phenomenon of students' lack of polite behaviour when interacting with the campus community, a decline in academic honesty and responsibility, demonstrations that end in chaos and fights between students, a lack of maintenance and even destruction of learning facilities by students, high levels of unemployment among students, students not creative in looking for work, and the lack of students creating their own jobs after graduating. This problem is still a national problem and needs to be resolved wisely by every university (Oviana & Rijal 2021).

Seeing this, the government made character education a national priority with the birth of the Strengthening Character Education policy (Ariestina 2019), which includes a long process of empowerment movement, namely (*empowering*) the potential of students, the humanisation process (*humanising*), and the civilisation process (*civilising*) (Surya 2017), of Indonesian people who have strong and commendable character (Permana et al. 2021). Thus, educational institutions are a very prominent instrument as a medium for socialising acculturation and enculturation in the context of forming national and state character (Supa'at 2014). Educational institutions at every level must internalise the intensifying of character education. Of course, character education is relevant to both the cultural and religious values that develop in Indonesia.

National character development has become an important national issue in several countries, including Indonesia. Why is that? Because, character is related to the process of coaching and improving behaviour as well as noble values which must certainly be imbued with the values of Pancasila (Harmawati & Abdulkarim 2016), such as mutual cooperation, critical thinking, politeness, and independence. Character development is also an effort to overcome moral decline, national disintegration, and the fading of cultural values (Mutmainah & Dewi 2021). Character is a set of attitudes or traits that can be formed through various activities, such as the process of interaction in social life and/or the process of communication and interaction with family and the environment (Sondakh et al. 2022; Susilawati, Aprilianti & Asbari 2022b). Character will greatly determine how a nation is formed and moves dynamically corresponding to social developments, both internal and external.

In Indonesia, character education is also related to local wisdom whose value can be universal (Pajarianto, Pribadi & Sari 2022a; Pajarianto, Pribadi & Galugu 2023). In Luwu

community as the locus of this research, there are the terms *Pattuppui ri ade'E*, *Mupasanre'i ri syara'E* which are translated as relying on customs, and relying on religious law (Pajarianto 2022b). This local wisdom becomes a patron in developing culture, including informing the character of the Luwu community. Likewise, other communities in Indonesia have local wisdom which originates from the nobility of their culture.

Several research results at State Islamic Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia show massive interest in the theme of national character. Research at PTKIN in Aceh shows that the character education cycle is implemented with complete synergy between the formulation of vision and mission, curriculum, rules, policies, provision of facilities, and comprehensive evaluation (Oviana & Rijal 2021). Meanwhile, studies at PTKIN in Sumatra and Cirebon on character development were carried out through Ma'had with strict implementation of ethical codes for lecturers, students and employees (Neliwati & Dahlan 2022). Studies at other universities also show that the character education strategy is through habituation, example, advice, rewards and punishment (Amri 2021). This policy is also adopted by several public universities in order to instil moderate character in Muslim and non-Muslim students (Pajarianto & Muhaemin 2020). These previous researches only focussed on the implementation cycle of character education in higher education, not touching on the impact of character education on religious character, discipline, politeness, caring for the environment, and love of the country. This character value is very substantial to know and is the main indicator in character education. This character is internalised starting from preparation, core activities, and the educational process which successfully improve the character of students (Marini et al. 2019).

Several research results show that a person's character, especially religiosity, is directly related to the success of religious moderation, such as tolerance (Hook et al. 2017; Krumrei-Mancuso 2018; Leary et al. 2017; Rodriguez et al. 2017; Zhang et al. 2018). From these results, it can be concluded that the successful implementation of character education will reinforce religious moderation (Muhtifah et al. 2021). It is highly beneficial for young people to create their character so that in social life they will become a pioneer and guide for national unity, instead of feeling self-righteous, easily disbelieving other people, and finding it difficult to be in dialogue with other religions, even ending up in social division. At several State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) in eastern Indonesia, CBT is carried out which is oriented towards developing religious character, discipline, politeness, caring for the environment, and love for the country.

This study will complement several previous researches related to character education in higher education by focussing on input, process, and output. The study focusses on two problems that will be discussed as the main objectives. They are: 'What are the policies and content of Character Building Training?' and 'What is the impact of Character

Building Training on student character?' Based on the results of previous researches, this study will focus on CBT policies and content, and the impact of the programme on student character. The university that is the focus of this research has a programme called CBT which is intended to combine parenting, learning, mentoring, and consulting. This study is an effort to accelerate the achievement of a leading vision in scientific integration characterised by local wisdom.

Methods

This research applied a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research has three main components that are observed. Firstly, the place or research locus is at PTKIN, State Islamic Institute (IAIN), Palopo. Secondly, the actor is playing a certain role. In the context of this research, the actors who are the object of research are all components involved in the CBT programme. Thirdly, the activity (Tannenbaum 1980) was carried out by actors in ongoing social situations.

Determining the data source was carried out by using *purposive sampling*, based on certain characteristics (inclusion criteria) which were closely related to previously known characteristics based on the research objectives. The informants for this research were 60 students and 8 lecturers. Researchers conducted interviews with lecturers, and observed student behaviour based on character indicators using observation sheets.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation carried out from June to September 2022 in the city of Palopo. The observation used was participant observation. Researchers used observation guidelines to record these activities. To maintain the validity of observations, the author used field notes (Bogdan & Biklen 1997) or commonly called a field notebook. Field notes were used to record various events related to the implementation of CBT.

Data analysis was carried out manually using the Discovering Cultural Themes model. It is to understand the typical symptoms of the previous analysis. This analysis collected various themes, cultural focuses, values and cultural symbols that existed in each domain (Spradley 2016). The use of cultural and social analysis was most appropriate for evaluation and control, because an understanding of national society was one of the components on which the entire cooperation process could rely. Data were analysed through three stages, namely, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification.

Result and discussion

Character building training: Policy and content

Character education has become a seedbed for noble religious and cultural values in Indonesia, through the State Islamic Universities (PTKIN) as an official government institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion. Technically, the implementation of character education in

organisations within the Ministry of Religion has been amplified by *Minister of Religion Regulation Number 2 of 2020* concerning Implementation of Character Education Strengthening (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter [PPK]) which states that PPK in the Religious Education through formal channels is carried out at the levels of early childhood, primary, secondary and higher education independently, in an integrated manner in intra-curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. In the context of this research locus, implementing the vision of IAIN Palopo as a tertiary institution that integrates science and local wisdom will be a necessary process. The value and norm system in community culture can be optimised to support the process of continuously reinforcing character education (Hermino & Arifin 2020).

If we look closely, various government policies to implement character strengthening programmes are carried out across ministries. Policies regarding character education include *Law Number 20 of 2003* concerning the National Education System; *Republic of Indonesia Law Number 12 of 2012* concerning Higher Education; *Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017* concerning Strengthening Character Education; *Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 7272 of 2019* concerning Guidelines for Implementing Religious Moderation in Islamic Education; and *Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 1595 of 2021* concerning Guidelines for Implementing Ma'had Al-Jami'ah in State Islamic Universities. The context for the existence of this policy is the Nawa Cita mandate contained in point 8, namely mental revolution (Ismail, Suhana & Zakiah 2020). Apart from that, graduates of national educational institutions are required to be able to compete internationally. The implication is that there is urgency for every domestic educational institution, especially universities, to graduate Indonesian human resources of comparable quality to foreign countries. The quality of human resources in Indonesia has become a central issue within educational institutions for the last few decades.

Seeing these internal and external developments, IAIN Palopo as an Islamic higher education institution has carried out a transformation, including formulating a vision and mission that can represent the strength of this institution as an organisation that maintains Islamic values and local culture, as well as carrying out scientific integration unlike other universities. This response is then institutionalised into a CBT programme that students must take part in.

Figure 1 shows how the CBT flow is formed, starting from various government policies to approving character. The first process begins with a central government policy that mainstreams character education which is factually capable of invigorating students' character (Gunawan & Gunawan 2019; Purwanto, Mukharrom & Rahmah 2021). This policy then becomes the vision of an institution that wants to integrate science and local wisdom. In several studies, local wisdom is a noble value that confirms the character of students and society in general (Pajarianto 2018, 2022a,

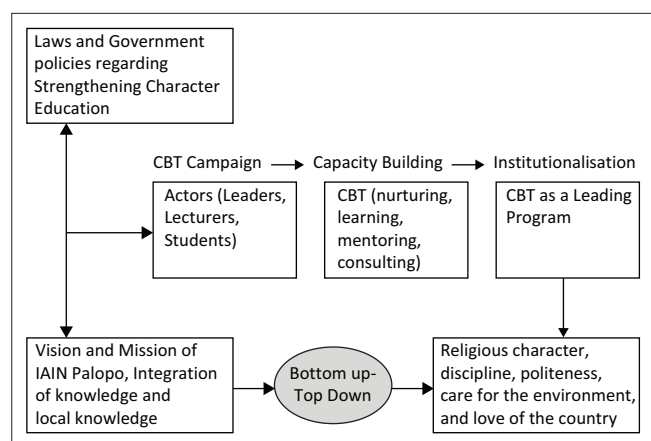
2022b; Pajarianto, Pribadi & Sari 2022b; Pajarianto & Junaidi 2020; Pajarianto & Muhaemin 2020). This character contains moderate values which are characteristic of the implementation of Islamic values in Indonesia.

In the second stage, it involves actors including leaders, lecturers and students in socialising and mainstreaming CBT. The involvement of all parties in character education is highly crucial to ensure the sustainability and success of this programme as the main pillar of character learning in higher education (Pradana et al. 2020). The third stage is building capacity which is carried out by nurturing, learning, mentoring, and consulting which is essential to reinforce student character (Gayatri 2020; Sulastra & Handayani 2020). In the fourth stage, CBT is institutionalised as one of IAIN Palopo's leading programmes.

Character Building Training programme is a policy at PTKIN which we consider to be useful for developing student character. This activity is mandatory for students to participate in. This policy applies to this day even though there are modifications to the form of training with the aim of moulding Islamic character for students. The aim of this CBT programme is for students to have Islamic character. We hope that students will not only be intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and spiritually intelligent (AP, MH, NS, interview; 2022).

In the fifth stage, an evaluation is carried out on the enculturation of student characters which are expected to grow and be developed in CBT activities, including religiosity, discipline, politeness, caring for the environment and love of the country. This character is a differentiation between IAIN Palopo and other universities that have the same programme and educational level. The process of implementing CBT is carried out both *bottom up* and *top down* which complement each other. The centralised CBT programme is supported by statutory regulations, but technically it still takes into account the socio-religious characteristics of each environment.

Technically, the Ministry of Religion has released *Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 7272 of*



CBT, Character Building Training.

FIGURE 1: Character Building Training model flow in character formation.

2019 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Religious Moderation in Islamic Education (Kemenag 2019), described in the form of technical policies at the level of Islamic educational institutions. The content of the CBT material has been prepared based on the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI). Learning outcomes include attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, moderate and integrative insight. The content and learning outcomes are presented in Table 1.

From Table 1, it can be concluded that in terms of attitudes and values the learning outcomes of the CBT programme are tolerant, open, critical, caring, creative, respecting differences, and behaving politely and commendably, which are pertinent in the 21st century (Zubaidah 2018). The five main domains of 21st century skills are digital literacy, intensive thinking, effective communication, high productivity, and spiritual and moral values (Osman, Hiong & Vebrianto 2013). Griffin and Care (2014) classify 21st century skills and attitudes as ways to think (knowledge, critical and creative thinking), ways to learn (literacy and soft skills), and ways to learn with others (personal, social, and civic responsibilities). The learning outcomes have also cultivated the insight into integrative religious moderation.

Thus, CBT is a crucial programme in higher education institutions in Indonesia, because it is related to character education which indubitably determines the future of a nation. Through policies from the central government and as expounded by universities, this programme has been running in accordance with the characteristics of each environment. This is a good practice developed by universities, but there is still a lot of work that must be completed to ensure that the process of cultivating character values is ongoing and sustainable. Apart from that, there is an urgent need for policies that are more comprehensive and rely on local wisdom to answer the challenges of an increasingly complex era, starting from issues that threaten the integrity and future of the nation to global competition. This policy will be the basis for formulating more concrete steps so that the cultivation of the main values for the formation of national character can be carried out effectively and comprehensively.

TABLE 1: Learning outcomes of character building training.

Number	Learning outcomes	Description
1.	Attitudes and values	These attitudes and values are reflected in the practice and implementation of the knowledge they have learned in the form of daily attitudes and behaviour, for example be tolerant, open, critical, caring, creative, respect differences, and behave politely and commendably.
2.	Skills	Having the skills to be a congregational prayer leader, lead congregational prayers, read the Qur'an fluently and eloquently, take care of corps, read the yellow book and understand it, and can lead worship practices in daily life. Apart from being skilled in the religious field, they are skilled in the fields of language, arts and social affairs.
3.	Knowledge	Having mastery of science and knowledge and religion (Islam) according to the specified competencies, such as mastery and understanding of <i>tajwid</i> , <i>fiqh</i> , <i>tafsir</i> , creed, morals, Sufism, and so on.
4.	Moderate and integrative insight	Having moderate insight into religious thought and behaviour (i.e. tolerance, non-violence, openness or local wisdom, and national commitment) while also having the competence to apply knowledge and skills in an integral (integrated) manner.

Source: Ma'had al-Jami' Curriculum IAIN Palopo, 2021.

Character building training: Impact on students

The CBT character education programme aims to ensure that students have good character. There are at least five characters that we always teach students while they are taking part in the CBT programme. Firstly, religious character, by teaching students to carry out activities of a religious nature, for example praying the Dhuha prayer together, even though before the pandemic we taught them to always pray at night. Secondly, politeness in behaviour that reflects noble morals. Thirdly, discipline. Students must not arrive late. Fourthly, caring about the environment. We teach students to always care for the environment. We teach students to always care about the environment. The indicator is that students must not litter, neatly arrange shoes, sandals and the Islamic boarding school garden. Finally, the last character is substantiating national values with love of the country.

Figure 2 shows that 51 people (85%) have high religiosity while 15 people (15%) are in the moderate category. In the discipline aspect, as many as 50 people (83%) are in the high category, 8 people (13%) are in the medium category, and 2 people (4%) are in the low category. Meanwhile, in the politeness aspect, there are 37 people (62%) in the high category, 18 people (30%) in the medium category, and 5 people (8%) in the low category. Regarding the character of caring for the environment, 45 people (75%) are in the high category, 13 people (22%) are in the medium category, and 2 people (4%) are in the low category. Meanwhile, regarding the character of patriotism, 58 people (96%) are in the high category, and 20 people (4%) are in the medium category.

In these data, religiosity and love of country are the characters with the most dominant values. This is supported by the results of other researches also, where Muslim student respondents in this study have high level of religiosity, 58.7% and 41.3% have low religiosity. Meanwhile, based on gender, women tend to have high religiosity when compared to men, with a percentage of 61.1% compared to 46.9%, respectively (Suryadi & Hayat 2021). Likewise, strengthening various literacy supported by adequate religiosity has succeeded in campaigning for friendly, polite and tolerant Islamic values (Kurniawati & Maemonah 2021).

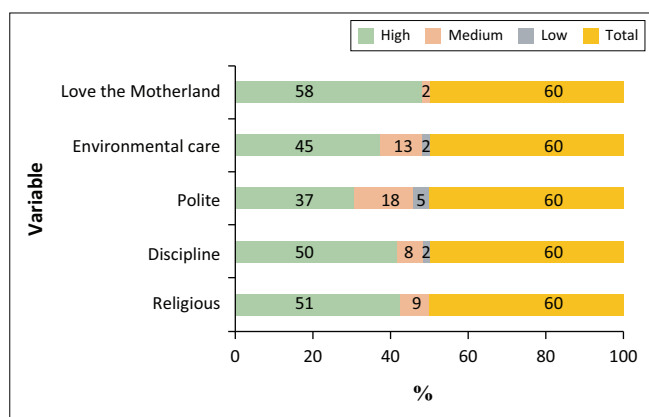


FIGURE 2: Results of observing the characters of Character Building Training participating students.

Apart from that, these data concur with the results of in-depth interviews conducted with lecturers and students regarding the impact of CBT on character development. The results of the interview are presented in Table 2.

From Table 2, it can be inferred that lecturers and students provide reinforcement of previous data that CBT has positive impacts on reinforcing student character which is implemented concretely in life on campus. Regarding religious character, students are more diligent in praying in congregation, reading the Qur'an, and actively participating in voicing religious moderation. Likewise, the discipline aspect has amplified with indicators of increasing the percentage of attendance at lessons, stopping activities during prayer time, and fulfilling guidance appointments with lecturers. In terms of politeness, students say hello when they meet a lecturer or start a conversation, and dress neatly. Meanwhile, reinforcing the character of caring for the environment means that students actively carry out social service activities by cleaning the surrounding environment and throwing rubbish in its place. In the aspect of the character of patriotism, students sing the national anthem, respect the flag, recognise Pancasila as the basis of the country, and invigorate moderate Islam which is the jargon of the Ministry of Religion.

Besides, the CBT programme also internalises attitudes and values originating from local wisdom. Firstly, *sipakatau* [mutual respect]. This attitude forms the tolerance that the young generation in Indonesia which is multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural, must have. Secondly, *sipakalebbi* [treating people well]. This is the intelligence of the younger generation in placing humanity in a high position after the relationship with God. Next, *sipakainge* [reminding each other] is part of the critical attitude of the younger generation which must be instilled through CBT

TABLE 2: Findings on character strengthening of Character Building Training participants.

Number	Character	Findings	Data source
1.	Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of congregational prayers has increased Read the Qur'an regularly Deposit memorisation Active in voicing religious moderation 	Informants 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 18, 46
2.	Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of student attendance increased Stop activities during the call to prayer at the mosque Fulfil guidance appointments with lecturers 	Informants 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 52, 53, 54
3.	Polite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say hello before speaking Students are more polite in speaking Dress neatly and politely when studying 	Informants 1, 3, 10, 14, 20, 56
4.	Environmental care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work together to clean the environment Cleaning places of worship Throw away rubbish in its place 	Informants 23, 25, 27, 30, 50, 60
5.	Love the Motherland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singing the national anthem Salute the national flag Recognising Pancasila as the basis of the state Actively voicing moderate Islam Caring for diversity 	Informants 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 24, 59, 57, 55, 51

activities. These three attitudes are a consequential part of the appeal of CBT at PTKIN. This result is reinforced by the results of other researches which believe in the strength of educational institutions as centres of excellence in preparing superior characters. This belief encourages everyone to be ready to face global challenges, and Indonesia will become a very strong nation in all fields in 2045 or 100 years after independence (Rokhman, Hum & Syaifudin 2014). Also, the culture developed in educational institutions is able to provide reinforcement for self-development (Defitrika & Mahmudah 2021), and because cultural values will always be attached to humans whenever and wherever they are (Ferdiawan & Putra 2013).

Thus, CBT can redouble the character of students in higher education. In this case, the content of CBT material includes *ruhaniah*, *aqliah* (spiritual) and physical aspects. These three characteristics are a reflection of integration of religious knowledge, general knowledge, skills and national insight (moderation) as per the vision of IAIN Palopo. The CBT programme implements integration of various kinds of knowledge and skills from theoretical (in-class) and practical (daily life) aspects. This means that CBT is carried out in an integrated, interconnected and mutually supportive manner. This needs to be continued, optimised, deepened and even expanded so that it intensifies national character in education. For this reason, from now on it is necessary to implement the Character Education Strengthening Movement by paying attention to the principles of continuity and sustainability.

Conclusion

Character education is a national policy included in statutory regulations and described in the vision and mission of higher education. The implementation cycle refers to a CBT campaign, capacity building, and institutionalisation involving leaders, lecturers, and students with a nurturing, learning, mentoring, and consulting approach. Meanwhile, the content includes moderate integrative attitudes and values, skills, knowledge and insight, as well as reinforcing tolerant, open, critical, caring, creative behaviour, respecting differences, and polite and commendable behaviour. Besides, values originating from local wisdom such as the characteristics of *sipakatau* [mutual respect], *sipakalebbi* [treating people well], and *sipakainge* [reminding each other] are novelty from this research. Data analysis shows that CBT has reinforced religious character, discipline, politeness, caring for the environment and love of the country. The greatest and dominant strengthening is religious character and love of the country.

This research has limitations because it is carried out on small and limited loci. However, it can be adapted to loci that have the same characteristics. The researcher recommends that further studies be continued at a wider locus, so that they can offer complete recommendations for the sustainability of character education which is very significant for a nation.

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Competing interests

The author(s) declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

M.K. is the research coordinator who is responsible for conducting research. M.M. is in charge of doing analysis and administration, M.N.A.R. is in charge of visualising and reading scripts, W.N. is in charge of curating data, S.U. is in charge of formal analysis and supervision, and H.P. is in charge of visualising using software.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors, and the publisher.

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