

Exploring the Moral Values of *Mapalus* Culture for Digital Character Education in Primary School Children

Melky Malingkas^{1*}, Kosmas Sobon²

¹Program Studi Teologi, Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Seminari Pineleng, Indonesia

²Program Studi PGSD, Universitas Katolik De La Salle Manado, Indonesia

*Corresponding author : melkymalingkas1974@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has various local wisdoms that can be used as a basis for character and moral education for students. One of the most famous local wisdoms is that of the *Mapalus* culture in the province of North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to explain the moral value of *Mapalus* culture and provide an interpretation of the implications of *Mapalus* culture for the digital character education of children. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a hermeneutic approach. The hermeneutic approach is one of the qualitative research methods that understand and interpret the meaning in a work and writing so that it can be properly understood. The results show that the values of *Mapalus* culture have a positive impact on digital character education. The moral values of *Mapalus* culture that can be used for digital character education of children are cooperation, mutual respect, unity, family problem solving, responsibility, integrity and living in harmony. These moral values are very important and relevant for students when using digital media equipped with various platforms. *Mapalus* culture provides inspiration and guidance on how to use technological media properly, wisely, and responsibly.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the development of technological media has not been anticipated by schools, so that there are often various negative effects among children in cyberspace. Media technology and the internet are like double-edged knives. Digital media provides many conveniences for humans, but it can also have a negative impact. Various studies confirm that the existence of technology brings many problems (McGillivray, *et al.*, 2015). The EU Kids Online report shows that the majority of 9–17-year-olds across Europe use mobile devices and that they are the main way they access the internet every day (Smahel et al., 2020; O'Neill, 2018). For example, social media can encourage individualism (Alief, 2010). Individualism is considered an attitude that is concerned with personal needs without thinking about the needs of many people (Maula et al., 2023). Media technology is the cause of an individualized human being. People tend to focus more on promoting themselves for personal interests and self-image. This has an impact on the weak sense of solidarity, cooperation, *gotong royong* (Wellman et al., 2006). The claim is supported by Khundadze et al. (2017) that the problems of digital media for children aged 3-12 years are emotional disorders, language and cognitive delays, tics, stuttering, decreased attention and aggressive phobias (Pagani et al., 2010).

Children become emotional, defensive, combative, violent, and rebellious toward everyone when they feel disturbed while playing with gadgets.

Media technology makes an individual tend to focus more on playing with their *mobile phones* rather than interacting with others. He is more active in telling and showing all his favorites on social media than with the closest people. He spends his own time playing with the virtual world. This reality makes his social spirit slowly erode. He is more focused on work, making individuals able to forget their surroundings and not have attention and tolerance for others (Maula et al., 2023; Alma et al., 2023), to reduce their ability to communicate, socialize and cooperate (Wellman et, 2006). When the spirit of individualism emerges, cooperation, solidarity and cooperation will be eliminated. Digital media and the internet draw children into less direct communication and dialogue with family members and friends (Nie et al., 2022; Bassam, 2022). Uncontrolled digital behaviour can keep the near at arm's length and bring the distant closer. This assertion is reinforced by Sharma et al. (2023) that the negative impact of social media is to distance people who are close and vice versa. If children do not realize this, they will always feel lonely and lose something very important in themselves, such as aspects of togetherness, family relationships and social life (Ngafifi, 2014).

Irresponsible use of technological media leads to cyber-crimes such as fake news (hoaxes). Hoaxes are false or misleading news that has been around for a long time, but it has become more massive and rampant with the development of technological media (Putra & Paramita, 2023). The development of media technology and freedom in releasing news causes hoax news to spread quickly. This reality can shape public opinion for the sake of certain interests to attack each other, accuse, slander, create stereotypes, and claim that certain groups or religions are superior to others (Yusuf, 2022). The spread of *hoaxes* itself has threatened the principle of Unity in Diversity and destroyed the capacity building of Indonesian children (Saraswati et al., 2022). Twenge et al. (2017) found that children who spend a lot of time in front of digital media screens have significantly increased depression and are at risk for suicide. Similarly, the Central Bureau of Statistics states that 12.43% of the Indonesian population aged 5-12 years have accessed the internet using digital media (BPS, 2023). The findings of Livingstone et al. (2011) show that most children use smartphones daily. The amount of time children spend online with digital media has doubled to three hours per day. Van Bavel et al. (2024) found that in 2023 there will be nearly 5 billion active social media users worldwide, with the average user spending 2 hours 27 minutes per day on social media.

Inaccurately verified information through technological media can disrupt the practice of mutual aid, creating conflict and confusion among community members. The inability to separate fact from opinion can cause divisions within communities, hindering co-operation and collaboration. Technological media is often a means to spread extreme views and ideologies, which can deepen social and political polarisation in society. These ideological conflicts can disrupt solidarity and co-operation between community members. Technological media enable the rapid and widespread spread of hoaxes and disinformation, which can disrupt communication and trust among members of society. This can lead to uncertainty and apprehension of people to cooperate and work together.

Addiction to various technological media can interfere with time and energy that should be allocated to participating in mutual aid activities in the community. Individuals addicted to social media tend to be more glued to their screens (Rye, 2016) than interacting directly with

the community or contributing to communal activities. Digital media directly connected to the internet draws people away from family and friends (Nie et al., 2022). This means that uncontrolled digital behaviour can keep the near away and bring the far away closer. This description is in line with what was stated by Cahyono (2016) that the negative impact of social media is to keep people who are close and vice versa, and face-to-face interactions tend to decrease (Sharma et al., 2023). Screen technology can anaesthetize humans to submit to the screen and ignore others. If humans are not aware of this, then they will be lonely and lose something very important in themselves, namely togetherness, family relationships, and warm social (Ngafifi, 2014).

Other problems that can arise are distraction and lifestyle changes. Nowadays technological media give rise to human behavioural problems such as stress, fatigue, and *phubbing*, anxiety, and so on that are increasing every day (Sharma et al., 2023). Technological media, such as smart phones and video games, can be a source of distraction that interferes with time and attention that should be allocated to mutual aid activities. Changes to a more individualistic lifestyle can also reduce interest and involvement in communal activities. Technological advancements, which were originally intended to make life easier for humans, have resulted in a new atmosphere of "loneliness" and alienation, namely a fading sense of solidarity, togetherness, and friendship (Al, 2023; Ngafifi, 2014). This assertion was reaffirmed by Durkheim that technology is a collective consciousness that is even predicted to replace the position of religion in society (Martono, 2012).

The influence of digital media on the morals and character of elementary school students needs serious attention. Uncontrolled exposure to certain content can affect children's moral and character development. This phenomenon requires serious attention in early education because not all content available on the Internet is suitable for consumption, especially by elementary school children. Children can find, watch, and download inappropriate videos when they are free to play with gadgets. As a result, children can imitate what they see. Triana (Kominfo, 2016) found a case of a 12-year-old child in Yogyakarta who was a customer of an internet cafe and committed immorality until she became pregnant because she imitated the pornographic scenes she watched on the internet.

The various problems described above can only be solved together. Indonesia has a variety of local wisdom values that emphasise cooperation, gotong royong and solidarity to be used as a basis for solving digital problems in society. The values of local wisdom can be a strong foundation in overcoming technological media problems in Indonesian society. One of the local wisdom values found in the people of North Sulawesi, Indonesia is *Mapalus* culture. *Mapalus* means working together or a form of cooperation in completing work together (Salaki, 2014). The value of *Mapalus* culture in practice can clearly be seen from the four principles of its actualisation, namely deliberation and consensus, kinship, religion, and cooperation), as well as five aspects in the organisation of *Mapalus* life principles, namely: openness, mutual assistance, togetherness, group discipline, and usability results (Umbas, 2011). *Mapalus* is a value system of community life that is actualised in various aspects of human life as human nature as a working creature (Pangalila, 2021).

The local wisdom contained in *Mapalus* culture can teach the value of inclusivity and togetherness in building a strong community. By harnessing these values, communities can use technological media to strengthen social relationships and collaboration between community

members. *Mapalus* culture ensures that technology is used for the common good and fosters a spirit of togetherness and unity. Today's increasing individualism due to people's lifestyles that are always connected to digital media and the Internet, it is necessary to develop and internalize cultural values in the learning and education process of children in schools. Schools become an important formal education to preserve the cultural values of the community, especially the adaptive *Mapalus* culture, to adapt to global developments.

Based on some of the problems and research results above, this study will focus on examining the moral values that exist in *Mapalus* culture. The moral values contained in *Mapalus* culture become local cultural values that can unite the community in overcoming various problems from technological development. The values contained in the *Mapalus* culture provide guidance and direction for the correct, wise, and responsible use of digital media. This research aims to analyse and examine the values of the *Mapalus* culture and its implications for moral education and the digital character of students.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research with a hermeneutic approach. The hermeneutic method is a qualitative method to understand and interpret the meaning contained in a writing so that it can be understood properly (Widodo, 2012; Farah, 2019). The main object of this research is to examine the moral values in *Mapalus* culture which is one of the local wisdom values of North Sulawesi, Indonesia. To explain this topic, the researcher tries to reflect and interpret various references and research results related to the topic under study and make a sharp analysis of its implications for digitalisation issues.

DISCUSSION

Relation between Culture and Moral Values

Every individual lives and develops within a culture. One develops moral and other social concepts within one's culture through participation in and reflection on various interactions (Turiel, 1983; 1998a). In the context of moral development, cultural diversity plays an important role in shaping one's values and ethics. A deep understanding of the role of culture is key to understanding the diversity of values that exist in society. Culture is a social framework that provides norms, values, and rules that become the basis for individuals' understanding of what is considered good and right in society. Through culture, individuals learn about moral values that are accepted and internalized in daily life and form the basis for their moral decisions and behavior (Wainriby, 2006). The various value systems that govern human behavior stem from a system called the "cultural value system," which is "... the most abstract level of customs and habits of human life in a society. The cultural value system consists of the ideas that live in the minds of most of the citizens of a society about the things they should consider very valuable in life (Pangalila & Mantiri, 2020b).

Therefore, a deep understanding of culture helps individuals understand their social context, broaden their moral horizons, and develop the ability to interact ethically with others. Culture also plays an important role in shaping an individual's identity and influences how individuals perceive themselves in relation to the society around them. Through culture, individuals also learn about the values that are valued and upheld in their communities and the norms that govern social interactions. The impact of cultural diversity on the understanding of

different moral values also creates opportunities for constructive intercultural dialogue. Through intercultural interaction, individuals can exchange views, understand different points of view, and broaden their horizons about different moral values. Koenjtaraningrat (Budimansyah & Suryadi, 2008) says that to be productive, people must be equipped not only with the ability to master branches of expertise, skills in science and technology, but also with various values and attitudes as guidelines for their behavior and as a foundation for the mind to work.

Moral values of *Mapalus* culture

Mapalus culture is one form of local wisdom of North Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Mapalus* in a simple sense means a form of co-operation or *gotong royong* in doing a job (Pangalila, Mantiri, & Umar, 2019; Salaki, 2014; Nismawati & Nugroho, 2021). The term *Mapalus* itself is a combination of the words *ma* (mutual) and *palus* (pour, spill). So etymologically *Mapalus* means spilling or pouring on each other (Turang, 1983). The cultural value of *Mapalus* in practice can clearly be seen from the four principles of its implementation (kinship, deliberation and consensus, cooperation, and religion), and five principles in terms of managing *Mapalus* life (helping, openness, group discipline, togetherness, and usability). In facing the process of modernisation due to technological advances with the possibility of the humanisation process because of the industrialisation process, the principles contained in *Mapalus* can be an effective barrier (Pangalila et al., 2022:60).

Mapalus culture has a very basic philosophical meaning. *Mapalus* is a local spirit and local wisdom of the Minahasa people that is integrated into the three basic characteristics of the human person, namely touching hearts, teaching minds, and transforming lives. *Mapalus* is the basic essence and life activity of the Minahasa people, who are called with a basic and deep sincerity of conscience (touching hearts) with full awareness and responsibility of making human beings. *Mapalus* culture is also a local value rooted in the spirit of the community (teaching spirit) to revive and flourish each person and group in the community (transforming life). *Mapalus* means to help because someone who has been helped will give help (Nismawati & Nugroho, 2021; Uada et al., 2018; Kalangi, 1971).

This explanation is confirmed by Turang (1997:5) that *Mapalus* is a system of community life in various fields of life, as an actualisation of human nature as a creature of collective work, Godly, and obedient to the rules of the community value system. *Mapalus* is fundamentally a form of traditional cooperation that differs from modern forms of cooperation, e.g. business associations. *Mapalus* is not just a form of "cooperation" that *works* together for the sake of cooperation, but a whole life of "working togetherness" in the fields of economy, culture, organisation and management of joint work, society, religion, defence and security. A similar understanding was expressed by Umbas (2011) that the cultural value of *Mapalus* in practice can clearly be seen from the four principles of its actualisation, namely deliberation and consensus, kinship, religion, and cooperation), as well as five aspects in the orchestration of *Mapalus* life principles, namely: openness, mutual assistance, togetherness, group discipline, and usability results (Pangalila & Mantiri, 2020).

There are five principles contained in the *Mapalus* culture, namely: (a) the principle of religion; (b) the principle of kinship; (c) the principle of deliberation and consensus; (d) the principle of joint work; (e) the principle of unity and integrity (Pangalila & Mantiri, 2020a). Based on the above definitions, it can be concluded that *Mapalus* as a local cultural value of

the people of North Sulawesi places humans as social creatures who need each other. Through *Mapalus*, humans find the fullness of their existence as humans in their relationships with others (Pangalila et al., 2022).

Table 1. Moral dimension and the values of the *Mapalus* culture (Pangalila et al., 2019).

Local Wisdom	Dimensions	Values Description
<i>Mapalus Culture</i>	a) The principle of religious	a) Appreciating and respecting followers of other religions
	b) The principle of family	b) Engaging in dialogue with other religions
	c) The principle of deliberation and consensus	c) Helping to observe the major holidays of other religions.
	d) The principle of cooperation	d) Resolve problems in a family manner.
	e) The principle of unity and integrity	e) Help all citizens without exception.
		f) Creating security and harmony among residents
		g) To mix and socialize with all ethnic groups, religious, and languages.
		h) To responsibly maintain unity and integrity

Today, the concept of *Mapalus* for the people of North Sulawesi, especially Minahasa, has evolved with the times. Currently, *Mapalus* has been rooted as a cultural value of the community that is clearly visible in the social life of the community. Specifically, *Mapalus* culture can be seen through community activities regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, race, and language. For example: activities to protect each other's places of worship during major religious celebrations (Pangalila & Mantiri, 2020b).

***Mapalus* cultural values for the digital character education**

Digital citizenship can be defined as safe, respectful, and responsible norms of behaviour with respect to technology use (Ribble & Bailey, 2007; Ribble, 2012; Ribble and Shaaban, 2011). In other words, digital citizenship is a concept that makes every digital citizen use technology properly and responsibly. There are principles that must be built into digital citizenship, including respecting oneself and respecting others, educating oneself and educating others, and protecting oneself and protecting others.

The above explanation is relevant to the cultural value of *Mapalus*, which emphasises the importance of cooperation, kinship, and mutual assistance. The spirit of *Mapalus* culture criticises digital citizens who tend to be individualistic (Alief, 2010) and always distance themselves from the community (Cahyono, 2016). The moral values of *Mapalus* culture become the basis and guidelines for digital citizens to still have real social concern for others and engage with the lives of others. This means that technological media, the internet, and social media are not a barrier for everyone to socialise, solidarity and cooperation with others.

Another moral value of *Mapalus* culture is the shared responsibility of maintaining unity and integrity (Pangalila, 2022:112). Awareness of unity is necessary for digital citizens. Every digital citizen has an obligation to maintain unity and integrity in living together. This means that the cultural value of *Mapalus* provides a sharp criticism of the behaviour patterns of digital citizens that tend to pull people away from family and friends (Nie et al., 2022), social environment and always feel lonely (Ngafifi, 2014). This technological advancement has

brought profound changes to the lives of mankind with all its civilisations and cultures. This change also has a huge impact on the transformation of values and unity in society (Azzahra et al., 2021). *Mapalus* culture is very relevant and inspiring for digital citizens to maintain unity and live in solidarity with others.

Mapalus culture has the moral value of creating harmony among citizens together (Pangalila, 2022: 112). The moral value of *Mapalus* culture is like the motto of the Indonesian nation, *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, which means different but one. Strong *Mapalus* cultural behaviour can counteract various cybercrimes such as *hoaxes*. Digital media and the internet often bring extreme problems such as the behaviour of accusing each other, slandering, assuming that their religion or group is the most correct through social media and technological media (Putra & Paramita, 2023; Yusuf, 2022). This reality is confirmed by Saraswati et al., (2022) that the fact the spread of *hoaxes* itself has threatened the principle of unity in diversity and destroyed the capacity building of Indonesian children. The moral value of *Mapalus* culture is very relevant for digital citizens to always get along and socialise with others regardless of ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds (Pangalila & Mantiri, 2020). The cultural value of *Mapalus* is relevant to *Pancasila* as the foundation and ideology of the Indonesian nation. The third principle of *Pancasila* emphasises that the Indonesian state is based on the unity of Indonesia. The relevance is that digital issues that cause falsehoods, acts of intolerance, conflicts and disintegration in society must be resolved in a family manner and togetherness so that the conditions of unity and brotherhood among communities remain well created.

The next moral value possessed by *Mapalus* culture is the principle of kinship. Every problem faced must be resolved through kinship (Pangalila, 2022:112). The problem of digitalisation must be solved with a collaborative approach. When problems with technology use arise, family members must find solutions together. Family members discuss various ideas and strategies to overcome the problem. An action plan that involves contributions from each family member is needed. Families utilise time together to build digital skills. Parents invite children to learn together about online safety. Parents learn new technologies together with their children. This form of collaboration not only helps improve a family's digital skills, but also strengthens family bonds.

The *Mapalus* culture has a strong sense of family. *Mapalus* culture includes the value and importance of working together in society to solve various problems. Cybercrime involving students is not only the responsibility of schools and teachers, but a shared responsibility (Sobon et al., 2024). Parents need to work with schools, communities, and the government to build children's digital character (Akhwani & Tri, 2021). Parents ensure that the values taught at home are consistent with those taught at school. Parents can discuss with teachers about child development and strategies that can be used at home (Zhong & Zheng, 2023). Conversely, schools work with parents to monitor their children, for example, through WASPP groups. Lickona (1991) asserts that 'parents are the first moral teachers for children'. Schools must seek the support of parents and communities to reinforce the moral values taught by the school". Parents can inform teachers about their children's educational progress at home through meetings and reports (Athur et al., 2017). Parents can notify teachers so that their children's digital activities can also be monitored in the school environment.

An important element of *Mapalus* culture is the principle of kinship. Kinship culture requires open communication and dialogue within the community. The concept of digital

citizenship education needs to be integrated with the principle of kinship, which is one of the moral values of *Mapalus* culture, guided by an attitude of open communication and dialogue. Ribble and Bailey (2009) assert that one of the important elements of digital citizenship education is digital communication. This basic concept is relevant to Ribble's (2012) explanation that digital communication is very important in shaping children into good citizens. Open communication is a means for schools and parents to exchange information about children's digital character development without having to meet with the children. Schools work with parents to monitor children's use of digital media and its applications, for example through whatsapp groups or similar. People can communicate with teachers about children's educational progress at home through meetings and reports (Athur et al., 2017). People can provide notifications to teachers so that their children's digital activities can also be monitored in the school environment.

Conversely, a lack of teacher and parent engagement and communication with children opens vulnerabilities for online sexual offending (Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Whittle et al., 2013) and involvement in all types of bullying, including cyberbullying (Wang et al., 2009). This is an opportunity for teachers and parents to provide relevant mentoring, advice, and guidance. Teachers always work with parents to actively teach character values such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, and respect in a digital context. This can be done through discussions, stories, and concrete examples of ethical behaviour online. Evidence shows that many teachers and parents often let children play with digital media, games, and social media. Wardani & Ariza (2021) suggest that parents do not have enough time to accompany children in their use of digital media. Parents are more involved in other activities than maintaining and supervising children's digital activities.

Teachers and parents need to listen to children's experiences and stories about personal issues in the digital world. Parents also need to understand children's needs, interests, and ways of engaging with technological media. Koch et al. (2024) state that children's use of digital devices requires active mediation by people, such as explaining the risks and benefits of digital media and content. This assertion is reinforced by Carrie (2019), namely that 'open communication can convey feelings, thoughts, emotions and needs with others.' Through dialogue and open communication, parents motivate children to share their online stories and experiences, such as experiences with friends, events, and challenges in using digital media.

An important dimension of *Mapalus* culture is the principle of religion. Religious values have a strong relationship with students who experience cybercrime such as cyberbullying. Religious leaders work together with parents and schools to provide spiritual and religious services for students who are victims of cyber violence. Tumenggung (2019) asserts that *Mapalus* culture is the principle of helping each other based on cooperation to achieve a goal, especially a common interest. A similar statement was made by Nismawati & Nugroho (2021) *Mapalus* culture reflects an attitude of cooperation, mutual care, mutual belonging, mutual harmony, and mutual security in social life. *Mapalus* culture teaches how to shape people into real human beings. Religious principles can provide guidance on seeking emotional and spiritual support through prayer, meditation, or spiritual reflection. This can help students who are victims of cyberbullying to feel calmer and gain inner strength to deal with difficult situations. Religious values always provide strong moral guidance for students when using technology, social media, and the Internet. The values of compassion, forgiveness and honesty

are the principles for dealing with victims of cyberbullying. Religious principles often encourage a positive and optimistic outlook on life, which can help victims of cyberbullying to see a better future and not get buried in their negative experiences.

KESIMPULAN

The value of *Mapalus* culture is one of the local wisdoms of the people of North Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Mapalus* culture is very relevant for the digital character education of children. Some of the Mapalus cultural values that provide guidance and guidelines in the use of technological media are helping each other among fellow citizens, loving each other, working together in overcoming various digitalisation problems, maintaining unity and integrity from fake news (*hoax*), relating to technological media regardless of ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Moral education based on local wisdom is very important and needs to be internalised in the lives of Indonesian people. Character in the digital age is the responsibility of all parties, not just parents, but everyone: government, schools, teachers, communities, and peers. The results of the study provide a starting point for further research into the role of government, teachers, and society in efforts to build children's character in the digital age.

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