

Developing *Ma'kombongan*-Based Democracy Teaching Materials to Enhance University Students' Political Morality

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ABSTRACT

Democracy education in higher education should develop not only students' civic knowledge but also their political morality. However, democracy teaching materials often remain theoretical and are insufficiently connected to students' sociocultural contexts. This study developed *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials to support the political morality of university students in the Torajan context. This study employed a research and development design using the ADDIE model. The participants were 30 undergraduate students enrolled in a Civic Education course at UKI Toraja. Data were collected through needs-analysis questionnaires, expert validation sheets, practicality questionnaires, observation, interviews, and a political morality scale covering social responsibility, honesty and integrity, concern for public issues, and participation in democratic discussions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t test. The teaching materials received an expert validation mean score of 4.66, indicating a high level of validity, and a practicality mean score of 4.55, indicating that the materials were very practical for classroom use. Students' political morality mean score increased from 3.05 in the pretest to 4.21 in the posttest. The paired-samples t test showed a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores, $t(29) = 10.45$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size. The findings suggest that *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials have the potential to support students' political morality by connecting democratic concepts with local cultural values. Because this study used a one-group pretest–posttest design, the results should be interpreted as preliminary evidence. Future studies should involve control groups, larger samples, and longer interventions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia faces major challenges in preparing a young generation that is not only intellectually competent but also possesses strong moral integrity and political awareness. Amid the rapid development of modern democracy and globalization, there has been a decline in political morality among young people, as reflected in low political literacy, apathetic attitudes toward public issues, and

unethical political behavior (Nani, 2022). In this study, political morality refers to ethical values that guide individual behavior in democratic and public life, including social responsibility, honesty and integrity, concern for public issues, and participation in democratic discussions. These dimensions are essential in shaping responsible and democratic citizens.

Civic education plays a strategic role in strengthening students' political morality because it is designed not only to develop civic knowledge but also democratic character and moral responsibility (Anderson, 2023; López 2024). According to Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, civic education should encourage the formation of participatory, responsible, and justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer, 2022). Similarly, Amy Gutmann emphasizes that democratic education should prepare learners to actively participate in democratic life and public decision-making (Gutmann & Thompson, 2009). Recent studies also affirm that democratic education should promote ethical reflection, dialogue, and democratic participation rather than merely transferring political knowledge. Despite its strategic role, however, civic education has not yet fully achieved its intended outcomes.

However, empirical evidence indicates that students' political participation is moderate and selective: the majority participate through political discussions (70%) and voting (62%), while formal participation such as party membership remains very low (15%). Multi-layered interventions are needed, encompassing political education and the enhancement of institutional credibility, to promote more inclusive democratic participation among students (Mubeen, 2025). This challenge is not unique to Indonesia. A similar condition is found in various countries, where civic education programs have been shown to be effective only in increasing political knowledge, but fail to bring about significant changes in political attitudes and behavior (Mulder, 2023). These findings indicate that conventional approaches to democratic education have fundamental limitations in fostering the moral and democratic engagement of learners.

One of the main causes of this issue is the limitation of democracy teaching materials currently used in universities. Existing teaching materials tend to be theoretical and primarily oriented toward conceptual understanding of political systems, democratic institutions, and constitutional principles—an approach referred to by experts as the "just-the-facts" approach in civic education (Hillygus & Holbein, 2023). This approach is considered inadequate because preparing young people to engage in democracy requires far more than rote memorization of facts and figures. Schools and universities should serve as laboratories of democracy, where civic intentions are converted into concrete civic behaviors through the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities that support civic mindedness (Hillygus & Holbein, 2023). Most teaching materials have also failed to connect democracy learning with students' socio-cultural realities. This condition reflects a lack of contextualization in democratic education, causing students to understand democracy merely as a formal political system rather than as a moral practice in everyday life.

The importance of contextual and culturally responsive learning has been emphasized in the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) proposed by Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay, which states that learning becomes more meaningful when connected to students' cultural backgrounds and social experiences (Chang & Viesca, 2022). CRP has been recognized for more than two decades as a promising approach to transforming the learning experience, and scholars continue to urge innovation in its implementation so that its transformative potential can be optimally fulfilled. Cross-disciplinary research also demonstrates that contextually designed local culture-based curricula are capable of enhancing student engagement and fostering deeper moral awareness (Sakti, Endraswara, & Rohman, 2024). Research on civic education programs in Lusaka, Zambia, for example, explicitly recommends the need for more tailored approaches to local challenges and specific cultural contexts in order for civic education programs to increase political participation in a more meaningful way (Kamboni, Magasu, Simui, & Muleya, 2025). In the Indonesian context, particularly among the Torajan community, this culturally grounded approach finds a strong foundation in the local wisdom of Ma'kombongan.

In the context of Torajan society, one local cultural value with strong potential to support democratic education is Ma'kombongan (Situru', Tangkeallo, Borean, Palebangan, & Slamet, 2022). This value reflects

respect for personal and communal honor, honesty, social responsibility, and adherence to social norms. In Torajan society, a person is considered Ma'kombongan when they are able to maintain the dignity and reputation of their family through honest, courteous, and moral behavior. Compared to other forms of local wisdom, Ma'kombongan is highly relevant to democratic education because it emphasizes moral accountability, integrity, and responsibility in social and public life. Therefore, this value holds strong theoretical and pedagogical relevance as a foundation for strengthening students' political morality.

The integration of local wisdom into moral and character education has been proven effective across various contexts in Indonesia. Research on the value of *maja labo dahu* in Bima demonstrates that the internalization of local cultural values contributes to more than two-thirds of students' moral reasoning abilities, while also showing that morality cannot be fully understood within a purely universal rational framework but must instead be viewed as a social construct embedded within cultural value systems (Nurmaya, Ramli, Atmoko, & Akbar, 2025). Similarly, research on the value of *peumalèe* in Aceh shows that local wisdom can be effectively integrated into both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum to build meaningful moral experiences for learners (Abubakar, 2022; Abubakar et al., 2022). At a broader level, research on Malay folklore also demonstrates that the local wisdom of the Nusantara contains aesthetic, humanist, and ethical values that are highly relevant as character-building teaching materials for the younger generation (Youpika, Sumiyadi, Permadi, Sunendar, & Yandryati, 2024). This consistent pattern affirms that local wisdom whether in Aceh, Bima, or Toraja — holds strong pedagogical potential as a foundation for moral and character education.

The integration of local wisdom into democratic education is also aligned with constructivist theory, particularly Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978). John Dewey also viewed democracy as a way of life, meaning that democratic education should provide reflective and participatory experiences to foster moral responsibility and ethical citizenship (Bellmann, 2019; Moore, 1916; Schmidt & Allsup, 2019). Furthermore, Piaget's cognitive theory explains that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment (Oogarah 2025; Pakpahan 2022). Thus, integrating Ma'kombongan values into democracy teaching materials can help students understand democracy not only conceptually but also morally and culturally.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating local cultural values into civic and character education. Research on *siri' na pacce* in South Sulawesi, for example, has shown its effectiveness in strengthening students' moral responsibility and public awareness (Ekawati et al., 2022; Syamsunardi, 2022). Other recent studies also indicate that local wisdom-based civic education can strengthen civic disposition, cultural awareness, and national identity. However, previous studies generally focused only on integrating specific cultural values into civic education without systematically developing democracy teaching materials based on local wisdom. In addition, empirical studies specifically examining the role of Ma'kombongan values as a pedagogical foundation for improving students' political morality remain limited. Therefore, there is still a theoretical and practical research gap related to the development of Ma'kombongan-based democracy teaching materials in higher education contexts.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to develop, validate, and examine the effectiveness of Ma'kombongan-based democracy teaching materials in improving the political morality of students at UKI Toraja. This study is expected to produce valid, practical, and effective teaching materials while contributing to the development of local wisdom- and culture-based civic education in higher education institutions.

2. METHODS

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) design aimed at developing and testing the effectiveness of Ma'kombongan-based democracy teaching materials in improving the political morality of students at UKI Toraja. According to Sugiyono (2015), Research and Development is a research method

used to produce educational products and to test their validity, practicality, and effectiveness. This study adopts the ADDIE development model, which consists of five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The analysis stage involved a needs assessment conducted through student questionnaires and classroom observations of democracy learning. The design stage involved structuring the content and learning framework of the Ma'kombongan-based teaching materials. The development stage encompassed the preparation of teaching materials and expert validation, while the implementation stage was carried out through product trials with UKI Toraja students. The evaluation stage was conducted to assess the validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the developed teaching materials.

The effectiveness test employed a one-group pretest-posttest design involving 30 UKI Toraja students selected through purposive sampling. Participants were undergraduate students enrolled in the Civic Education course who were actively engaged in the democracy learning process throughout the study.

The product validation process involved three expert validators consisting of a civic education expert, a language expert, and a learning expert. The validators assessed the teaching materials based on content appropriateness, language clarity, material presentation, cultural relevance, and the quality of the learning design. In addition, a practicality test was conducted through questionnaires administered to lecturers and students following the implementation of the teaching materials, in order to evaluate ease of use, readability, learning activities, and the overall usefulness of the materials.

The research instruments included a needs analysis questionnaire, expert validation sheets, a practicality questionnaire, a political morality scale, interview guidelines, and observation sheets. The political morality instrument was developed based on four dimensions: social responsibility, honesty and integrity, concern for public issues, and participation in democratic discussions. All instruments used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Instrument validity was assessed through expert judgment, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The political morality instrument obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.86, indicating high reliability. Prior to the paired sample t-test, the data were first subjected to a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results showed significance values greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed and met the assumptions for further parametric testing.

Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics, percentage conversion, and category criteria to determine the levels of product validity and practicality. The effectiveness of the teaching materials was analyzed using a paired sample t-test with the assistance of SPSS, in order to identify differences in students' political morality scores before and after the intervention.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Needs Analysis for the Development of Teaching Materials

The needs analysis was conducted to identify the learning conditions of the Democracy Education course at UKI Toraja, particularly regarding the extent to which students understand democracy in contextual and moral dimensions. Data were collected through the distribution of needs-analysis questionnaires to 30 students and classroom learning observations.

The results of the analysis indicated that students require democracy teaching materials capable of encouraging political moral reflection and increasing active participation in democratic discussions. One proposed solution was to bridge the perspective of modern democracy with local democratic values. The local values that exist within Torajan society are referred to as *Ma'kombongan*. The results of the needs-analysis questionnaire are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Student Needs-Analysis Questionnaire on Democracy Teaching Materials

Assessed Aspect	Statement Indicators	Mean Score (1-5)	Category
Material Needs	Democracy materials are still general without local context	4.40	Strongly Agree
	Democracy materials integrated with Torajan culture (<i>Ma'kombongan</i>) are needed	4.55	Strongly Agree
Relevance of Local Values	<i>Ma'kombongan</i> values are rarely used in learning activities	4.30	Agree
	Students want to understand moral democracy through local wisdom values	4.60	Strongly Agree
Learning Methods	Lecturers more frequently use lecture-based methods	4.15	Agree
	Students expect discussion-based learning and local case studies	4.45	Strongly Agree
Learning Media and Resources	Existing textbooks have not integrated local culture	4.35	Strongly Agree
	Students need contextual teaching materials based on Torajan values	4.50	Strongly Agree
Improvement of Political Morality	Learning activities have not sufficiently trained social responsibility and integrity	4.25	Agree
	Students want to learn moral and ethical democratic practices	4.55	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean Score		4.41	Strongly Agree

Based on the questionnaire results administered to UKI Toraja students, the overall mean score obtained was 4.41, categorized as very high. These findings indicate that students need democracy teaching materials that are more contextual and integrated with the local cultural values of *Ma'kombongan*. Students perceived that the democracy learning they had received so far was overly theoretical and primarily oriented toward general democratic concepts without connecting them to the socio-cultural realities of Torajan society.

Students also considered *Ma'kombongan* values important to integrate into democracy learning because they embody values of honor, honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. These values were regarded as relevant for strengthening students' political morality so that democracy is understood not merely as a political system but also as a moral practice in social life.

In addition, students expected more active and participatory learning methods, such as discussions, case studies, traditional deliberation simulations, and social reflection activities. They hoped that democracy learning would not focus solely on theory but would also provide learning experiences closely related to everyday life. The use of local culture-based teaching materials was considered capable of helping students understand democracy in a more concrete and meaningful manner.

Interview results with Civic Education lecturers also indicated that local culture-based teaching materials are needed to support more reflective and contextual learning. Lecturers believed that integrating *Ma'kombongan* values could help build students' moral awareness and political ethics. Therefore, the development of *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials was considered important for supporting democracy learning that is more relevant to the socio-cultural context of UKI Toraja students.

3.1.2 Design and Development of Teaching Materials

The product developed in this study takes the form of *Ma'kombongan*-based Democracy Education teaching materials, designed to integrate democratic concepts with Torajan local wisdom values in order to improve students' political morality. The materials were compiled in both print and digital formats, consisting of an introductory section, a content section, and a closing section. The introductory section

contains instructions for use, learning outcomes, and a concept map, while the content section includes learning materials, learning activities, moral reflection, and learning evaluation.

The teaching materials consist of six chapters: (1) the nature of democracy and political ethics, (2) Ma'kombongan as a deliberative culture of Torajan society, (3) democratic values in Ma'kombongan, (4) the challenges of modern democracy and the political moral crisis, (5) the implementation of Ma'kombongan-based democracy in social life, and (6) reflection and contextual democracy projects. Each chapter is designed to help students understand democratic concepts while simultaneously internalizing political moral values through local cultural practices.

The learning objectives in the teaching materials are directed toward developing students' cognitive abilities, affective dispositions, and social skills. Students are expected to be able to understand the concepts of democracy and political morality, identify democratic values within Ma'kombongan culture, demonstrate honest, responsible, and tolerant attitudes in democratic discussions, and apply the principles of deliberation in resolving social problems.

Learning activities employ active, reflective, and collaborative approaches, such as group discussions, case studies, Ma'kombongan forum simulations, local cultural observations, and presentations. One of the main activities is a traditional deliberation simulation, in which students resolve social conflicts through a process of dialogue and consensus based on the values of honor, social responsibility, and integrity embedded in Ma'kombongan.

Assessment is conducted authentically, covering aspects of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Knowledge assessment is carried out through essay tests and case analyses, attitude assessment through observation of participation, honesty, and tolerance during discussions, while skills assessment is conducted through presentations, simulations, and democratic learning projects.

An example of a Ma'kombongan-based learning task is a social conflict analysis project within a community. Students are asked to identify a social problem, then design a solution using the Ma'kombongan deliberative approach and present their findings in the form of a group report. Through this task, students are trained to develop political morality, critical thinking skills, social responsibility, and democratic ethics in community life. Thus, these teaching materials serve not only as a theoretical learning resource but also as a means of fostering democratic character and political morality grounded in local culture.

The development of the teaching materials underwent an expert validation process as an effort to assess the feasibility of the developed materials. Validation was carried out by three validators consisting of a civic education expert, a language expert, and a learning expert. The validation results indicate that all aspects received high scores, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Expert Validation Results of the Ma'kombongan Value-Based Democracy Teaching Materials

Aspect Assessed	Mean Score (1-5)	Category
Content Appropriateness	4.70	Valid
Language and Readability	4.66	Valid
Alignment with Local Values	4.75	Valid
Learning Design	4.50	Valid
Overall Mean	4.66	Valid

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results (2025).

Statistical analysis and reliability data based on processing using SPSS 26 yielded the following descriptive statistics.

Table 3. Teaching Material Feasibility Validation

Aspect	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage (%)	Category
Content Appropriateness	4.76	0.23	95.2	Valid
Language and Readability	4.66	0.29	93.2	Valid
Alignment with Local Values	4.75	0.26	95.0	Valid
Learning Design	4.50	0.31	90.0	Valid
Overall Mean	4.66	0.27	93.4	Valid

Furthermore, the reliability test results (Cronbach's Alpha) yielded a value of $\alpha = 0.86$, indicating a high level of consistency in assessment among validators. This reinforces the conclusion that the developed teaching materials are reliable and suitable for use in democracy learning in higher education.

The findings indicate that the development of Ma'kombongan value-based democracy teaching materials for UKI Toraja students demonstrates a very high level of feasibility, with an overall mean score of 4.66 falling within the "very valid" category. The teaching materials are assessed as relevant, communicative, and contextual, as they successfully combine democratic theory with the local wisdom values of Torajan society. In terms of content feasibility (score 4.76), the materials not only teach democratic concepts normatively but also emphasize the relationship between democracy, morality, and local socio-cultural values. The Ma'kombongan values of self-esteem, honesty, and social responsibility serve as an ethical foundation for understanding moral democracy. Students are invited to reflect on the importance of maintaining the dignity of themselves and their community in sociopolitical participation both on campus and in society.

In terms of language and readability (score 4.66), the use of simple and communicative language, along with the incorporation of local Torajan terms, makes the teaching materials easy to understand and engaging for students. Contextual language creates an emotional closeness with students, making the learning process more reflective and meaningful. Meanwhile, the aspect of alignment with Ma'kombongan local values (score 4.75) indicates that Torajan cultural values are integrated substantively rather than merely symbolically. Through case studies such as traditional deliberation at the Tongkonan, students are trained to appreciate differing opinions, uphold self-dignity, and apply the principles of courteous and ethical democracy. Local cultural values serve as a moral source that inspires all learning activities, so that democracy is understood as a way of life rooted in one's own culture.

In terms of learning design (score 4.50), the activity structure within the teaching materials is consistent with the principles of active and reflective learning. Several experts recommended strengthening project-based learning and deliberative simulations so that the application of Ma'kombongan values becomes more tangible. Activities such as discussion forums, campus election simulations, and social action reflections are considered effective in shaping students' democratic character. Overall, the validation results indicate that the Ma'kombongan value-based democracy teaching materials are not only academically valid but also culturally relevant. The integration of democratic theory and Torajan local values makes learning more meaningful, cultivates moral awareness, and strengthens students' identity as campus citizens of character and integrity.

The implications of this study for learning in higher education are highly significant. The Ma'kombongan-based approach contributes to the formation of students' political morality, in line with John Dewey's view that democracy is a way of life emphasizing participation, responsibility, and respect for the moral values of society. By understanding democracy through the Ma'kombongan perspective, students come to realize that politics is not merely a contest for power, but an ethical space for preserving the dignity of oneself and one's community. This is also consistent with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which emphasizes that learning is most effective when connected to the social and cultural context of learners. *Ma'kombongan* values function as cultural scaffolding that helps students build a new understanding of democracy based on their local experiences. Thus, the findings of this study not only enrich the model of Civic Education learning in higher education but also serve as a concrete example of the application of local wisdom-based democratic education that is capable of shaping the political morality of a civilized young Torajan generation.

3.1.3 Effectiveness of the Ma'kombongan-Based Democracy Teaching Materials

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Ma'kombongan value-based democracy teaching materials in improving the political morality of students at UKI Toraja. The trial was conducted using a one-group pretest-posttest design involving 30 students as research subjects. This design was used to determine changes in students' political morality levels before and after the use of the teaching materials.

Prior to the use of the teaching materials, students were given a pretest to measure their initial level of political morality. After participating in learning using the Ma'kombongan-based democracy teaching materials, students were given a posttest using the same instrument. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 26 through a paired sample t-test to determine the significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores.

Before conducting the paired sample t-test, the data were first subjected to a normality test using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The normality test results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Normality Test Results of Political Morality Scores

Variable	Statistic	Sig.	Conclusion
Pretest	0.962	0.312	Normal
Posttest	0.971	0.428	Normal

The significance values of both variables were greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed and met the assumptions required for the paired sample t-test.

Table 5. Changes in Students' Political Morality Before and After the Intervention

Political Morality Indicator	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Mean Difference
Social Responsibility	3.10	4.32	+1.22
Honesty and Integrity	3.08	4.28	+1.20
Concern for Public Issues	3.10	4.18	+1.08
Participation in Democratic Discussions	2.50	4.00	+1.50
Overall Mean	3.05	4.21	+1.16

The findings indicate that all political morality indicators improved following the use of the Ma'kombongan-based democracy teaching materials. The greatest improvement was observed in the indicator of participation in democratic discussions (+1.50), suggesting that the teaching materials were effective in enhancing students' active engagement in academic dialogue and democratic deliberation processes.

Table 6. Results of the Paired Sample t-Test on Political Morality Scores

Variable	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Political Morality	3.05	4.21	0.54	1.16	10.45	29	0.000	1.91

The results of the paired sample t-test indicate a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest scores ($p < 0.05$). A Cohen's d value of 1.91 reflects a large effect size, leading to the conclusion that the Ma'kombongan-based democracy teaching materials are effective in improving the political morality of students at UKI Toraja.

3.1.4 Practicality of the Ma'kombongan-Based Democracy Teaching Materials

The practicality of the teaching materials was tested to determine ease of use, clarity of content, and the feasibility of implementation in learning. The practicality test was conducted through questionnaires administered to lecturers and students following the use of the teaching materials.

Table 7. Practicality Test Results of the Ma'kombongan-Based Democracy Teaching Materials

Respondent	Mean	Percentage (%)	Category
Lecturers	4.58	91.60	Very Practical
Students	4.52	90.40	Very Practical
Overall Mean	4.55	91.00	Very Practical

The practicality test results indicate that the *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials fall within the "very practical" category, with an overall mean of 4.55, or 91.00%. Both lecturers and students assessed the materials as easy to use, with content that is easy to understand, and learning activities such as discussions, case studies, and deliberation simulations that are effective in increasing student participation in democracy learning.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that *Ma'kombongan* value-based democracy learning has a positive influence on improving the political morality of students at UKI Toraja. Prior to the intervention, students tended to understand democracy only as a formal and procedural concept. However, after participating in learning using the *Ma'kombongan*-based teaching materials, students began to understand democracy as a life value connected to honor, honesty, social responsibility, and respect for others.

The results of the needs analysis indicate that students require democracy teaching materials that are more contextual and relevant to local culture. A mean needs score of 4.41 reflects students' highly positive perception of the integration of *Ma'kombongan* values in democracy learning. Students assessed that democracy learning had thus far been overly theoretical and insufficiently connected to their socio-cultural reality. This finding is consistent with the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when connected to the cultural background of learners.

The developed teaching materials obtained a validation score of 4.66, falling within the "very valid" category. The aspect of alignment with local values received the highest score of 4.75, indicating that *Ma'kombongan* values are relevant as a moral foundation in democratic education. These values reflect the principles of honor, honesty, and social responsibility, which are aligned with democratic ethics. In addition, the practicality test results yielded a mean score of 4.55, or 91.00%, within the "very practical" category. Both lecturers and students assessed the materials as easy to use, easy to understand, and capable of increasing student participation through activities such as discussions, case studies, and traditional deliberation simulations.

The effectiveness of the teaching materials is reflected in the improvement across all political morality indicators. The mean political morality score increased from 3.05 on the pretest to 4.21 on the posttest, with a mean difference of 1.16. The greatest improvement was observed in the indicator of participation in democratic discussions (+1.50). The paired sample t-test yielded a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) with a Cohen's d value of 1.91, falling within the large effect category. These results demonstrate that the *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials are effective in improving students' political morality.

The increase in student participation in democratic discussions indicates that students not only understand democracy cognitively but are also capable of practicing it socially. This finding supports John Dewey's view that democracy is a way of life built through active participation and social experience. Furthermore, the findings are also consistent with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which holds that learning is more effective when connected to the social and cultural context of learners. *Ma'kombongan* values function as cultural scaffolding that helps students construct an understanding of democracy based on their own cultural experiences.

This study also supports the ethnopedagogical approach, which positions local culture as a source of values in learning. *Ma'kombongan* values have been shown to strengthen social responsibility, honesty, integrity, and concern for public issues. These findings are consistent with previous research on local

wisdom-based civic education, which has demonstrated its capacity to strengthen the democratic character and political morality of younger generations.

The novelty of this study lies in the development and testing of *Ma'kombongan* value-based democracy teaching materials specifically directed at improving students' political morality. Unlike previous studies that generally only integrated local cultural values into character education in a broad sense, this study positions *Ma'kombongan* as a pedagogical and moral foundation for democratic education in higher education. This study also connects Torajan local cultural values with dimensions of political morality, including social responsibility, honesty and integrity, concern for public issues, and participation in democratic discussions.

Although this study yielded positive results, it has a limitation in that it employed a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group, meaning that improvements in students' political morality may have been influenced by factors beyond the use of the teaching materials. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ an experimental design with a control group and a larger sample size.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials are valid, practical, and effective in improving the political morality of students at UKI Toraja. The integration of local cultural values in democracy learning not only strengthens students' conceptual understanding but also shapes democratic character grounded in social responsibility, integrity, and ethical participation in community life.

4. CONCLUSION

This study developed *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials designed to support university students' political morality by integrating democratic concepts with Torajan local wisdom. The main findings show that the teaching materials were judged valid by experts, with a mean validation score of 4.66, and very practical for classroom use, with a mean practicality score of 4.55. Students' political morality scores also increased from 3.05 in the pretest to 4.21 in the posttest, with a significant difference, $t(29) = 10.45$, $p < .001$, indicating that the materials have the potential to strengthen social responsibility, honesty and integrity, concern for public issues, and participation in democratic discussions. However, this study was limited by its one-group pretest-posttest design, the absence of a control group, the relatively small sample size, and its implementation in a single university context, which limits the strength of causal claims and the generalizability of the findings. Future research should employ quasi-experimental or experimental designs involving control groups, larger and more diverse samples, longer intervention periods, and more rigorous validation of the political morality instrument to examine the sustained impact of *Ma'kombongan*-based democracy teaching materials on students' democratic attitudes and civic behavior.

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