



Ethnopedagogical Learning Management Based on Banten Culture: An Innovation for Strengthening Early Childhood Character through the Integration of Digital Portfolios

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Abstract

The limited integration of local cultural values into early childhood education management has raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of character development programs in increasingly globalized societies. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of an ethnopedagogical learning management model based on Banten local culture integrated with digital portfolios in strengthening early childhood character. A quantitative approach employing a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group was utilized. The study involved 130 children aged 4–6 years from several kindergartens in Banten Province, Indonesia, who were assigned to experimental and control groups. The intervention was implemented through a structured learning management model that incorporated local cultural values into planning, implementation, assessment, and stakeholder collaboration processes, while digital portfolios were used to document and monitor children's developmental progress. Data were collected using validated observation instruments measuring three dimensions of character development: discipline, empathy, and independence. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality and homogeneity tests, independent sample t-tests, and N-Gain analysis. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$). The experimental group achieved a high effectiveness category with an average N-Gain score of 0.75, compared to 0.32 in the control group. The results indicate that the integration of ethnopedagogical principles and digital portfolio systems contributes not only to improved character development but also to more culturally responsive and sustainable educational management practices. The study highlights the potential of culture-based learning management as a strategic approach for strengthening children's character while preserving local cultural identity in the digital era.

Introduction

Character development in early childhood has become one of the central concerns in contemporary education due to the increasing complexity of social, cultural, and technological transformations occurring worldwide. The rapid expansion of globalization has created unprecedented opportunities for cultural exchange; however, it has also generated challenges

related to the preservation of local identity and cultural values among younger generations (Zulkarnain, 2024; Fauzan, 2025; Bihari, 2023; Mariyono et al., 2025). Early childhood represents a critical developmental stage during which children construct foundational cognitive, social, emotional, and moral competencies through interactions with their surrounding environment (Kaizar & Alordiah, 2023; Limone & Toto, 2022; Yildiz, 2025). Experiences gained during this period significantly influence future behavioral patterns, social relationships, and ethical decision-making processes. Consequently, educational institutions are increasingly expected to provide learning environments that not only promote academic achievement but also foster character development grounded in meaningful cultural contexts (Anisah, 2023; Wang'ombe, 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2025).

Despite the growing recognition of character education as an essential objective of schooling, many early childhood education programs continue to prioritize cognitive development while allocating limited attention to the systematic cultivation of moral and social values (Obizue et al., 2024; Shih, 2024). Such an imbalance may reduce opportunities for children to develop discipline, empathy, responsibility, and independence through authentic social experiences (Koh, 2025). Furthermore, the predominance of standardized educational practices often marginalizes local cultural knowledge and traditions that could serve as valuable resources for character formation (Purwaningsih & Ridha, 2024). As a result, children may experience a weakening connection to their cultural heritage and local identity, which are important foundations for developing self-awareness and social belonging (Zheng & Guo, 2024; Brown et al., 2025; Kelmendi & Pajaziti-Drançolli, 2025; Muallem, 2025).

The integration of cultural values into educational practices has been increasingly advocated as an effective strategy for promoting holistic child development. Research on culturally responsive education suggests that children learn more effectively when instructional experiences are connected to their cultural backgrounds, community traditions, and everyday realities (Berlian & Huda, 2022; Fitrianto & Farisi, 2025). Learning environments that recognize and value local culture contribute to stronger student engagement, enhanced motivation, and more meaningful educational experiences (Peng & Abd Rahman, 2024). In this context, local wisdom functions not merely as cultural content but also as a pedagogical resource capable of shaping children's attitudes, behaviors, and social interactions. Therefore, educational systems must develop innovative approaches that integrate cultural heritage into learning management processes to ensure that character education remains relevant and sustainable in contemporary society (Mialkovska et al., 2023; Rohman, 2024).

Within the Indonesian educational context, local wisdom represents an important source of values that can strengthen children's character development while preserving cultural identity. Indonesia's rich cultural diversity provides numerous opportunities for schools to incorporate indigenous knowledge, traditions, customs, and social values into classroom activities (Shawmi et al., 2025; Hidayati & Nihayah, 2025; Subandi et al., 2025). In the Province of Banten, for example, local cultural values emphasize religiosity, mutual cooperation, respect, perseverance, social solidarity, and communal responsibility, all of which are closely aligned with the goals of character education. These values possess significant pedagogical potential because they reflect behavioral norms that have been cultivated and transmitted across generations. However, despite their relevance, such cultural resources are often underutilized within formal early childhood education settings due to the absence of systematic strategies for integrating them into learning management practices (He et al., 2026; Alvarez & Galman, 2025; Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2024).

The concept of ethnopedagogy has emerged as an educational approach that seeks to bridge this gap by positioning local wisdom as both a philosophical foundation and a practical framework for teaching and learning (Fleer, 2021; Milandari et al., 2026; Sakti et al., 2024). Ethnopedagogical approaches emphasize the importance of connecting educational experiences with local cultural realities, enabling children to develop knowledge and values through culturally meaningful interactions. Through ethnopedagogy, learning activities become more contextual, participatory, and socially relevant because children engage directly with cultural narratives, traditional practices, and community-based values (Fatmawati & Kayati, 2026). Such experiences can facilitate deeper internalization of character values compared to conventional instructional methods that rely primarily on abstract explanations or teacher-centered approaches (Durdyeva et al., 2025). Nevertheless, translating ethnopedagogical principles into effective classroom management remains a challenge for many educators, particularly in relation to planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes (Hendratno et al., 2025).

The challenge of integrating local cultural values into educational practice becomes even more significant in the digital era. Educational institutions are increasingly required to adopt innovative technologies that support learning effectiveness, assessment quality, and stakeholder collaboration (Hendratno et al., 2025). Digital technologies offer opportunities to document children's developmental progress more comprehensively while facilitating communication between teachers, parents, and educational administrators. Among various technological innovations, digital portfolio systems have gained attention as tools for capturing children's learning experiences, behavioral development, and character growth through multimedia documentation. Unlike traditional assessment methods that often focus on academic outcomes, digital portfolios enable continuous observation of children's social and emotional development, thereby providing richer information regarding character formation processes.

The integration of ethnopedagogical values with digital assessment systems presents a promising direction for contemporary early childhood education management. Effective learning management encompasses strategic planning, organized implementation, continuous monitoring, and systematic evaluation aimed at achieving educational objectives efficiently. When cultural values are incorporated into these managerial functions, schools can create learning environments that consistently reinforce desirable behaviors and social norms. Furthermore, digital documentation mechanisms enhance transparency and accountability by enabling parents and educators to collaboratively monitor children's developmental progress. Such collaboration is particularly important because character development occurs not only within schools but also across family and community contexts.

Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of local wisdom and character education, many investigations have primarily focused on conceptual discussions rather than empirically examining the effectiveness of integrated management models in early childhood settings. Consequently, there remains a need for further scholarly attention to how ethnopedagogical principles can be systematically embedded within educational management processes and supported by digital technologies. Addressing this issue is particularly important given the increasing international emphasis on cultural competence, global citizenship, and identity preservation as essential components of twenty-first-century education. Educational reforms across Southeast Asia have similarly recognized the importance of balancing modernization with the preservation of local cultural values to ensure sustainable human development.

In addition, recent developments in educational leadership and school management highlight the growing importance of technology-supported systems for improving instructional quality and organizational effectiveness. The combination of culturally responsive educational practices and digital innovations may therefore provide a comprehensive solution for addressing contemporary challenges in character education. By fostering discipline, empathy, and independence through culturally grounded learning experiences, educational institutions can contribute to the development of children who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible and culturally aware. Such efforts are essential for preparing future generations capable of navigating global challenges while maintaining strong connections to their local identities and cultural heritage. Therefore, the exploration of ethnopedagogical learning management integrated with digital portfolio systems represents a highly relevant and significant area of inquiry within contemporary early childhood education.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach utilizing a quasi-experimental design to examine the effectiveness of an ethnopedagogical learning management model based on Banten local culture integrated with digital portfolios in strengthening early childhood character. A quantitative approach was selected because it allows objective measurement of changes in children's character development through statistical analysis and facilitates comparison between groups receiving different educational treatments. Specifically, the study adopted a Non-equivalent Control Group Design, a commonly used quasi-experimental model in educational research where random assignment of participants is not feasible due to administrative and ethical considerations within school settings.

The design involved two groups: an experimental group and a control group. Both groups were administered a pre-test prior to the intervention to determine their initial character levels and a post-test following the intervention to measure developmental changes. The experimental group received the ethnopedagogical learning management intervention integrated with digital portfolios, whereas the control group continued to participate in conventional learning management practices commonly implemented in early childhood education institutions. The use of pre-test and post-test measurements enabled the researchers to identify the magnitude of character improvement and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing outcomes between the two groups.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in several kindergarten institutions located in Banten Province, Indonesia. The selection of Banten as the research setting was based on its rich cultural heritage and strong local wisdom values, which provide an appropriate context for implementing ethnopedagogical learning practices. The participants consisted of early childhood learners aged between four and six years who were enrolled in formal kindergarten programs.

The population included all children attending selected kindergartens in the province. From this population, a total of 130 children were selected as research participants. The participants were distributed equally between the experimental group and the control group, with 65 children assigned to each group. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participating schools based on predetermined criteria. These criteria included institutional readiness to implement culture-based learning, teacher willingness to participate in the intervention program, availability of technological facilities to support digital portfolio implementation, and parental consent for children's participation in the study.

Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the intervention required schools that possessed sufficient capacity to implement ethnopedagogical learning activities systematically. Furthermore, the selected schools shared relatively similar characteristics in terms of student demographics, curriculum implementation, and educational resources, thereby minimizing potential confounding factors that could influence the research findings.

Research Variables

The study consisted of one independent variable and three dependent variables. The independent variable was the ethnopedagogical learning management model based on Banten local culture integrated with digital portfolios. This model incorporated local cultural values into the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of classroom learning while simultaneously utilizing digital portfolio technology to document children's developmental progress.

The dependent variables comprised three dimensions of character development: discipline, empathy, and independence. Discipline referred to children's ability to follow rules, maintain responsibility, and demonstrate self-regulation during classroom activities. Empathy referred to children's capacity to understand, appreciate, and respond positively to the emotions and needs of others. Independence referred to children's ability to perform tasks, make simple decisions, and solve problems with minimal adult assistance. These three dimensions were selected because they represent essential components of early childhood character development and are closely aligned with the cultural values embedded within Banten local wisdom.

Intervention Procedures

The intervention was implemented over a period of twelve instructional sessions. The ethnopedagogical learning management model was developed based on four primary management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. During the planning stage, teachers collaboratively identified local cultural values relevant to early childhood character development, including religiosity, mutual cooperation, social responsibility, respect, perseverance, and community harmony. These values were subsequently translated into learning objectives, classroom activities, and assessment indicators.

During the implementation stage, teachers integrated local cultural elements into daily learning experiences. Various instructional strategies were employed, including storytelling based on local folklore, traditional games, role-playing activities, collaborative projects, cultural performances, and group problem-solving activities. These learning experiences were designed to provide children with opportunities to practice positive behaviors directly within meaningful cultural contexts.

A distinctive feature of the intervention was the integration of digital portfolios. Teachers systematically documented children's learning activities, behavioral achievements, social interactions, and character development through photographs, videos, anecdotal records, and observational notes. These records were compiled into individual digital portfolios that could be reviewed regularly by both teachers and parents. The portfolio system served as a continuous monitoring tool and facilitated collaborative evaluation of children's developmental progress.

Meanwhile, the control group continued using conventional classroom management approaches that emphasized routine instructional activities without structured integration of local cultural values or digital portfolio documentation.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using structured observation sheets specifically designed to assess children's character development. The observation instrument consisted of indicators measuring discipline, empathy, and independence based on national standards of early childhood development. Each indicator was operationalized into observable behavioral statements that could be consistently assessed by trained observers during classroom activities.

The discipline dimension included indicators such as punctuality, compliance with classroom rules, responsibility for personal belongings, and task completion. The empathy dimension included indicators related to helping behavior, emotional sensitivity, cooperation, sharing, and respect for peers. The independence dimension included indicators such as self-confidence, decision-making ability, problem-solving behavior, and the capacity to complete activities without excessive assistance.

To complement observational data, digital portfolio records were also utilized as supporting evidence for documenting children's developmental trajectories throughout the intervention period. The combination of direct observation and digital documentation enhanced the comprehensiveness and credibility of the assessment process.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Prior to data collection, the research instrument underwent rigorous validity and reliability testing to ensure its quality and suitability for measuring children's character development. Content validity was examined using Aiken's V coefficient. The validation process involved a panel of experts consisting of specialists in early childhood education, educational management, character education, and ethnopedagogy. Each expert evaluated the relevance, clarity, representativeness, and appropriateness of the instrument items.

Items with Aiken's V coefficients exceeding the accepted threshold were retained for use in the study, while items requiring revision were modified according to expert recommendations. Following content validation, inter-rater reliability testing was conducted to assess consistency among observers. Several trained observers independently assessed identical classroom situations, and reliability coefficients were calculated to determine agreement levels. The results indicated satisfactory reliability, demonstrating that the instrument could consistently measure character-related behaviors across different observers.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in three sequential stages. The first stage involved administering pre-test observations to establish baseline character profiles for all participants. During this phase, trained observers assessed children's discipline, empathy, and independence using the validated observation instrument.

The second stage consisted of implementing the intervention program over twelve instructional sessions. Throughout this period, observational data and digital portfolio evidence were continuously collected and documented. Teachers received guidance to ensure consistent implementation of the ethnopedagogical learning management model across all intervention sessions.

The final stage involved administering post-test observations following completion of the intervention. The same observation procedures and assessment criteria used during the pre-test were applied to ensure measurement consistency and comparability between the two assessment periods.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using statistical software. Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analyses were conducted to verify that the data met the assumptions required for parametric statistical procedures. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to examine data normality, while Levene's Test was employed to assess homogeneity of variance between groups.

Following the satisfaction of statistical assumptions, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participants' pre-test and post-test scores, including means, standard deviations, minimum values, and maximum values. To determine whether significant differences existed between the experimental and control groups, an Independent Sample t-Test was conducted. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

In addition to significance testing, the effectiveness of the intervention was measured using the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) formula. The N-Gain analysis assessed the extent of character improvement achieved by each group based on differences between pre-test and post-test scores. The resulting gain scores were categorized into low, moderate, and high effectiveness levels. Furthermore, effect size analysis using Cohen's *d* was conducted to determine the practical magnitude of the intervention's impact. This analysis provided additional evidence regarding the strength and educational significance of the ethnopedagogical learning management model in enhancing children's character development.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the effectiveness of the ethnopedagogical learning management model based on Banten local culture integrated with digital portfolios in strengthening early childhood character. The findings are organized into several subsections, including preliminary statistical testing, implementation of the intervention model, descriptive statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, effect size analysis, and detailed findings for each character dimension comprising discipline, empathy, and independence. In addition, visual representations and statistical tables are presented to provide comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of the intervention.

Table 1. Results of Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Statistical Test	Statistic Value	Sig. Value	Interpretation
Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test	0.073	0.200	Normally Distributed
Levene's Test	1.214	0.273	Homogeneous Variance

Source: Processed research data (2026)

The results in Table 1 show that the pre-test data met the assumptions for parametric analysis. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test produced a significance value of 0.200 (0.005), indicating normal data distribution, while Levene's Test yielded a significance value of 0.273 (0.005), confirming homogeneity of variance between groups. These results demonstrate that the experimental and control groups had comparable baseline conditions before the intervention. The mean pre-test scores were 42.06 for the experimental group and 42.36 for the control group, both categorized as being at the “Beginning to Develop” stage of character development, indicating relatively low initial levels of discipline, empathy, and independence.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Results of Children's Character Development

Character Variable	Group	N	Mean Pre-test	Mean Post-test	N-Gain Score	Effectiveness Category
Discipline	Experimental	65	42.50	88.20	0.79	High
	Control	65	43.10	62.40	0.34	Moderate
Empathy	Experimental	65	38.40	85.60	0.77	High
	Control	65	39.20	58.50	0.31	Moderate
Independence	Experimental	65	45.30	82.40	0.68	High
	Control	65	44.80	61.20	0.30	Moderate
Total Average	Experimental	65	42.06	85.40	0.75	High
	Control	65	42.36	60.70	0.32	Moderate

Source: Processed research data (2026)

Table 2 reveals substantial differences between the experimental and control groups after the implementation of the intervention. The experimental group achieved a post-test average score of 85.40 with an N-Gain value of 0.75 categorized as highly effective. Meanwhile, the control group only achieved an average score of 60.70 with an N-Gain value of 0.32 categorized as moderately effective. Among the three character dimensions, discipline demonstrated the highest improvement with an N-Gain score of 0.79. Empathy followed closely with an N-Gain score of 0.77, while independence achieved an N-Gain score of 0.68. These findings indicate that the integration of local cultural values into classroom management significantly contributed to strengthening children's behavioral development. The comparison of character dimension scores between groups is visually illustrated in Figure 1.

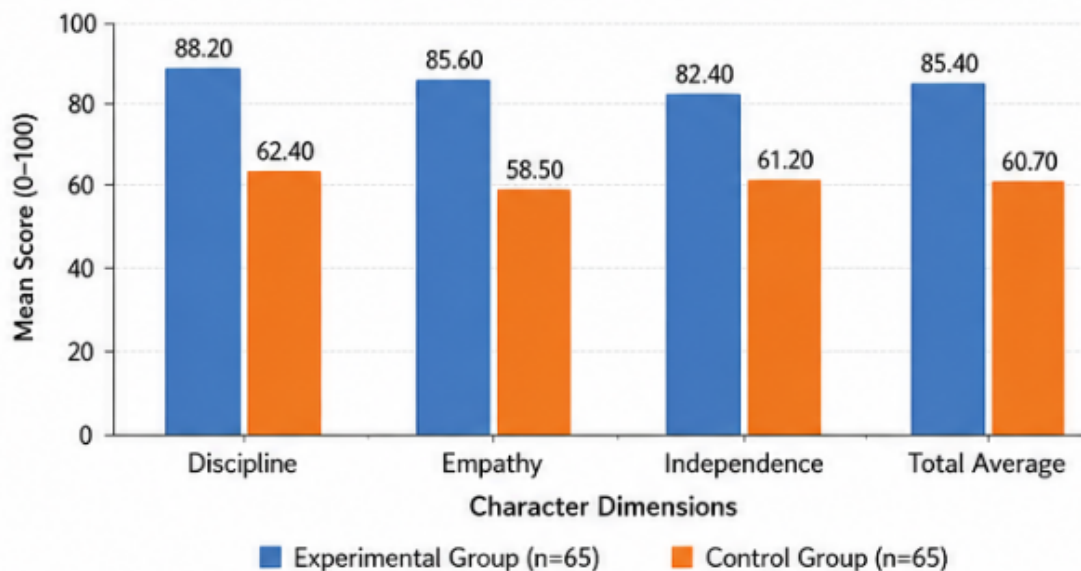


Figure 1. Comparison of Character Dimension Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups

Source: Processed research data (2026)

Figure 1. clearly demonstrates that the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group across all character dimensions. The largest difference appeared in the discipline

dimension, suggesting that culturally integrated learning management effectively promoted children's self-regulation and responsibility.

Table 3. Independent Sample T-Test Results

Variable	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Character Development	12.45	0.000	Significant Difference

Source: Processed research data (2026)

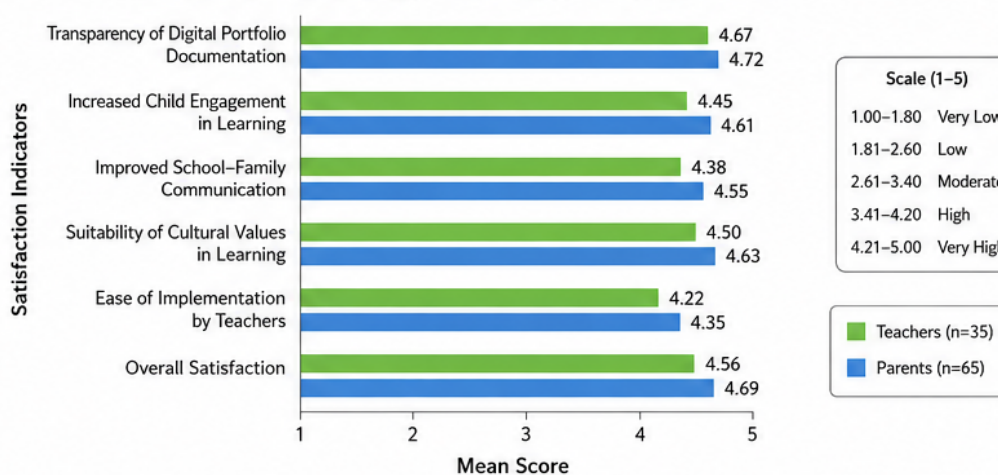
The Independent Sample T-Test produced a t-value of 12.45 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of children's character development. These findings confirm that the ethnopedagogical learning management model based on Banten local culture was significantly more effective than conventional learning management approaches in improving early childhood character.

Table 4. Effect Size Analysis

Statistical Measure	Value	Interpretation
Cohen's d	1.85	Large Effect
Eta Squared	0.54	Strong Influence

Source: Processed research data (2026)

The large effect size demonstrates that the ethnopedagogical learning management model not only produced statistically significant improvements but also generated substantial practical impacts on children's character development. The Eta Squared value of 0.54 further indicates that approximately 54% of the variance in character improvement was influenced by the intervention model.



Source: Processed research data (2026)

Figure 2. Satisfaction Indicator Scores of Teachers and Parents Toward the Ethnopedagogical Learning Management Model

Source: Processed research data (2026)

Figure 2. indicates that the highest satisfaction level was related to the transparency of digital portfolio documentation, followed by increased child engagement and improved school-family

communication. These findings suggest that the integration of technology and local cultural values generated positive perceptions among educational stakeholders.

Implications of Ethnopedagogical Learning Management for Early Childhood Education Management

The findings of this study suggest that character development in early childhood should no longer be viewed solely as a pedagogical outcome but as a management outcome that reflects the effectiveness of organizational processes within educational institutions. For decades, discussions on character education have largely concentrated on curriculum content, instructional strategies, and classroom activities. Such perspectives, although important, tend to underestimate the role of educational management in creating conditions that enable character formation to occur consistently and sustainably. The present study indicates that the successful strengthening of discipline, empathy, and independence was not merely the result of specific learning activities but emerged from a coherent management system that aligned planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation with local cultural values.

This observation has important implications for educational management theory and practice. First, it suggests that culture should be recognized as a strategic organizational resource rather than as an additional curricular component. Many educational institutions continue to treat local culture as supplementary content that is introduced occasionally through ceremonies, special events, or thematic lessons. Such approaches often produce fragmented learning experiences and limit the potential contribution of culture to children's developmental outcomes (Mincu, 2022; Chardonens, 2025). In contrast, the present findings indicate that when cultural values are embedded systematically into management processes, they become part of the institutional culture itself. As a result, values are reinforced not only through instruction but also through routines, interactions, expectations, and organizational norms experienced by children on a daily basis.

From a managerial perspective, the findings also challenge the dominance of standardized management approaches that prioritize administrative efficiency without sufficient consideration of contextual relevance. Educational institutions increasingly operate within accountability-driven environments where success is measured through standardized indicators and performance benchmarks (Turner & David, 2025; Niu & Zhao, 2026). While accountability remains necessary, excessive emphasis on standardization may weaken the connection between educational practices and local realities. The findings suggest that effective management requires balancing organizational efficiency with cultural responsiveness. Educational leaders must therefore develop management strategies that maintain institutional quality while simultaneously preserving and utilizing local wisdom as a source of educational value.

Another important implication concerns organizational leadership. The implementation of ethnopedagogical learning management requires leaders who possess not only managerial competence but also cultural competence (Siregar et al., 2025; Mohd Hashim et al., 2026). School leaders must be capable of identifying relevant cultural resources, facilitating teacher engagement with local traditions, and establishing organizational structures that support culture-based learning. In this context, leadership functions as a process of cultural stewardship through which educational institutions become agents of cultural continuity. Such a role is increasingly important in contemporary societies where globalization, technological change, and social mobility continuously reshape children's cultural experiences.

The findings further indicate that educational management should be understood as an ecological process involving multiple stakeholders. Character development cannot be sustained through classroom interventions alone because children's behavioral formation occurs across interconnected environments, including schools, families, and communities. The integration of digital portfolios within the management model demonstrates how technological tools can facilitate communication and coordination among these stakeholders. Rather than functioning merely as assessment instruments, digital portfolios become managerial tools that support transparency, accountability, and collaborative decision-making. This strengthens the capacity of educational institutions to create consistent developmental support across different social contexts.

The significance of the present findings lies in their demonstration that educational management can simultaneously serve developmental and cultural purposes. Effective management is not only concerned with improving institutional performance but also with preserving social values that contribute to children's long-term identity formation. The ethnopedagogical learning management model illustrates how local wisdom, organizational management, and digital innovation can be integrated into a coherent framework capable of addressing contemporary educational challenges. Such an approach provides an important direction for the future development of early childhood education management, particularly in culturally diverse societies seeking to balance modernization with cultural sustainability.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the ethnopedagogical learning management model based on Banten local culture integrated with digital portfolios constitutes an effective management approach for strengthening early childhood character development, particularly in fostering discipline, empathy, and independence. Beyond improving developmental outcomes, the findings demonstrate that local cultural values can function as strategic organizational resources when systematically embedded within educational planning, implementation, assessment, and stakeholder collaboration processes. The integration of digital portfolios further enhances management effectiveness by supporting continuous monitoring, evidence-based evaluation, and stronger school–family partnerships. These findings suggest that effective early childhood education management should move beyond administrative and academic orientations toward a more culturally responsive and holistic framework that aligns character formation with local identity preservation. Consequently, the study contributes to the growing discourse on culture-based educational management by demonstrating that the synergy between ethnopedagogy, organizational management, and digital innovation can provide a sustainable pathway for developing children's character while maintaining cultural relevance in an increasingly globalized and technology-driven society.

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