

A Preliminary Study and Validation of Characters as the Basis for Merdeka Belajar Program in University Level

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at generating and validating items of characters relevant to Curriculum Merdeka Belajar. This research used focus group discussion and content validity ratio to determine the validity of the items. Fifty participants were involved to give their response in the questionnaire using g-form format. Results showed that there is a reduction over 32 items built from four different sources, namely, Unesa character Idaman Jelita, characters from the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, Pancasila student characters, and Student Rating Management System (Simkatmawa). It resulted in 21 items of characters which can be considered describing what students should have when they are in the Curriculum of Merdeka Belajar implementation. CVR score of less than 0.29 is rejected to be on the list of relevant characters.

Keywords: *Merdeka Belajar Program, A Preliminary Study dan Validation of Character*

1. INTRODUCTION

Character education is an integral part of the educational process that shapes the way individuals think and act responsibly [1]. In higher education, this ability directs the knowledge and skills possessed by students to become supporters in career development [1], in community relations [2], and skills in caring for the environment [3].

To realize the things above, the State University of Surabaya has three references that are used to build student character. The first is the character strengthening guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture which contain 18 character values. The second guideline is the character values listed in the Student Rating Management System (Simkatmawa) in 2020. This system supports the mental character of nationality which consists of eight character values. The last is the character value of Idaman Jelita which stands for faith, intelligent, independent, honest, caring, and tough [4]. In detail, the three guidelines show a wedge consisting of spiritual aspects, self-actualization, and defending the country.

In the era of society 5.0, these characters were tested, especially with the implementation of the Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka (MBKM) program. According to Yamin and Syahrir [5], independence learns to test innovative characters, social sensitivity, and independence when students face real-world problems. Zulfa Izza and Susilawati [6] state that independent learning requires a tough and innovative attitude to complete tasks related to time management. For Unesa, the above characters have high urgency because Unesa produces graduate teacher candidates who can educate and transmit positive characters to students.

To find out how far the character growth of Unesa students is, several studies were carried out. Suyanto et al. [7] stated that Unesa students have a positive perspective on the diversity of religions, races, and opinions, especially for those who take roles in organizations. Others, [4] involving 48 Unesa students from 18 Study Programs found that in general they have an understanding that the values of national character originating from Pancasila can be learned from entrepreneurial activities.

Unfortunately, the results of this study are still partial and do not describe the characters associated with the three value guidelines used at Unesa. Research needs to develop characters that are representative and relevant to the MBKM curriculum and can show the characteristics of Unesa students. Therefore, through this article, several steps were taken to formulate these characters and test their initial validity.

2. METHODS

This research employed three steps to determine what characters need to be implanted in the educational system of Universitas Negeri Surabaya (Unesa). These include reviewing the literature or documents, generating items or values, and validating them in terms of the appropriateness to the implemented curriculum of Merdeka Belajar.

2.1. Literature review and values generation

In terms of generating items, the research started with checking the values of characters from four different sources, namely Unesa characters, characters from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Pancasila students' personalities, and characters from higher education. From these documents, the research extracted 32 values or items

relevant to the expectation of curriculum Merdeka Belajar, in which students must be able to fulfill what they need autonomously and be responsible for what they have done [8].

The values or items were formatted in the google form and administered to 50 participants in the next stage. Those participants were chosen purposively by which they include head of units, head of departments, lecturers, and personnel of student organizations. It is considered that they play a crucial role in conducting policies and activities at the university level, especially those related to character building. The questionnaire was then rated on a two-point Likert Scale: (1) irrelevant and (2) relevant.

2.2. Content validity of the values

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to make sure that the extracted values meet the requirements of the curriculum. It means that the index of agreement and the experts' judgement can help characterize the degree of relevancy of the items [9]. The quantitative analysis dealt with the formula of content validity ratio (CVR). In contrast, the qualitative one was done through a focus group discussion with two invited experts from the psychology faculty of two different institutions, Ma Chung University and Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Indonesia. The formula to calculate CVR is as follows.

$$CVR = \frac{ne - (N/2)}{N/2} \text{ (Lawshe, 1975)}$$

ne = the number of participants who choose the value or item being relevant
N = total of participants involved in the survey

The calculation results were then compared to the Lawshe table (Zeraati & Alavi, 2014). For qualitative analysis, the experts give suggestions towards the items based on their knowledge and experiences. The changing of the amount of the items was determined using these analyses.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Generating items or character values

The character values collected are thirty-two values extracted from four sources, namely the *Unesa Idaman Jelita* character (Faith, Intelligent, Independent, Honest, Caring, and Tough), 18 characters from the Ministry of Education and Culture, *Simkatmawa* Character, and Pancasila Student Character. The thirty-two characters were chosen based on their completeness in shaping students' personalities who are ready to face conditions in which they are faced with the challenges of uncertainty. The characters and their definitions can be seen in table 3.1.

No.	Values	Definition
		right and wrong in accordance with the student's beliefs.
2	Intelligent	Attitudes that show the ability to understand certain concepts comprehensively and skillfully use them proportionally.
3	Independent	An attitude that shows the ability to stand alone and not always depend on others.
4	Honest	An attitude that shows the ability to say and act as it is.
5	Care	An attitude that shows the ability to pay attention and be involved in the circumstances and problems that exist in the surrounding environment.
6	Tough	An attitude that shows the ability to survive in various circumstances.
7	Defend the Country	An attitude that shows the ability to prioritize the interests of the nation and state based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.
8	Tolerance	An attitude that shows the ability to respect each other's differences between fellow human beings.
9	Discipline	Attitudes that show the ability to comply with applicable regulations.
10	Hard work	An attitude that shows the ability to act seriously by using all the power possessed to achieve the target.
11	Creative	An attitude that shows the ability to solve problems with new and adaptive ideas.
12	Democratic	An attitude that shows the ability to prioritize equal rights and obligations for the common good.
13	Curious	An attitude that shows the ability to find out information about a thing.
14	Spirit of nationality	An attitude that shows the ability to build the nation according to their field of expertise and is proud to use domestically created products.
15	Appreciating Achievements	An attitude that shows the ability to recognize and appreciate the achievements of oneself and others.
16	Communicative	Attitudes that show the ability to convey information effectively so that they can cooperate with others.

Table 3.1 Character Values and Definitions

No.	Values	Definition
1	Faith	An attitude that shows the ability to distinguish between

No.	Values	Definition
17	Love peace	An attitude that shows the ability to say and act that is not provocative and invites conflict.
18	Literacy	An attitude that shows a love of reading to develop self-potential and insight in critical reasoning.
19	Environmental care	An attitude that shows the ability not to damage the environment and actively participate in efforts to repair environmental damage.
20	Responsible	An attitude that shows the ability to accept the consequences for the words and actions that have been done.
21	Leadership	Attitudes that show managerial ability and actively participate in organizational activities.
22	Obey Ethical Norms	Attitudes that show the ability to say and act in accordance with the norms and rules that apply in society.
23	Anti-Corruption	An attitude that shows the ability not to abuse authority.
24	Anti-Narcotics	Attitudes that show the ability not to support the use of illegal drugs that can harm health and psychology.
25	Anti-radicalism	An attitude that shows the ability not to get involved and oppose any movement that endangers national unity because of ideological doctrines outside of Pancasila.
26	Anti-sexual harassment dan bullying	An attitude that demonstrates the ability to oppose sexual harassment and bullying that occurs on campus.
27	Critical	An attitude that shows the ability to analyze information completely and accurately and use it for problem solving.
28	Global Diversity	Attitudes that show the ability to maintain traditional values as self-identity to interact globally.
29	Collaboration	Attitudes that show the ability to work together in problem solving.
30	cultured	An attitude that shows the ability to uphold and preserve the nation's culture.
31	Adaptive	Attitudes that show the ability to easily adapt (self) to various circumstances.

No.	Values	Definition
32	Scientific	Attitudes that show the ability to do work according to a scientific approach.

3.2. Validation of Character Values

Furthermore, the above characters were reduced according to the results of the CVR analysis of 38 participants who gave their responses. The response was given related to the relevance of character values in the MBKM curriculum.

Table 3.2 CVR calculation on item or character value

No.	Items/Values	Relevant Answers	CVR
1	Faith	38	1,00
2	Intelligent	27	0,42
3	Independent	35	0,84
4	Honest	33	0,73
5	Care	30	0,57
6	Tough	20	0,05
7	Defend the Country	23	0,21
8	Tolerance	31	0,63
9	Discipline	28	0,47
10	Hard work	25	0,31
11	Creative	37	0,94
12	Democratic	26	0,37
13	Curious	30	0,58
14	Spirit of nationality	29	0,52
15	Appreciating Achievements	24	0,26
16	Communicative	27	0,42
17	Love peace	20	0,05
18	Literacy	25	0,32
19	Environmental care	26	0,37
20	Responsible	28	0,47
21	Leadership	32	0,68
22	Obey Ethical Norms	25	0,32
23	Anti-Corruption	30	0,58
24	Anti-Narcotics	34	0,79
25	Anti-radicalism	27	0,42
26	Anti-sexual harassment dan bullying	29	0,53
27	Critical	30	0,58
28	Global Diversity	28	0,47
29	Collaboration	30	0,58
30	cultured	33	0,74
31	Adaptive	28	0,47
32	Scientific	32	0,68

Reduction of character items in table 3.2 is done if the CVR value is less than 0.29. This value was obtained from the number of participants who answered relevant less than 25 people. Some of the reduced values include being tough, defending the country, working hard, appreciating achievements, and loving peace, so that the total character values are 27 character values. These values are then discussed through focus group discussions (FGD). Some of the inputs from the FGD are presented in table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Recommended FGD Results Character Values

Unesa Mission	Values
Organizing learner-centred education and learning by using an effective learning approach and optimizing the use of technology.	Independent and tough
Conducting research in educational sciences, natural sciences, socio-cultural sciences, arts, and/or sports, and the development of technology whose findings are beneficial for the development of science and the welfare of society.	critical thinking, innovative and adaptive
Disseminate science, technology, arts, culture and sports, as well as research results through community service activities that are oriented towards community empowerment and culture.	caring, collaboration, and tolerance
Realizing Unesa as an educational center, especially primary and secondary education as well as a scientific center based on the noble values of national culture.	initiative, capable, and love the homeland
Organizing an autonomous, accountable, and transparent university meeting that ensures quality and continuous quality improvement.	honest, assertive, and responsible

Through FGDs, experts gave recommendations that character values should be in line with Unesa's mission. This is a step to strengthen the character of Unesa students. Regarding MBKM, Unesa's mission is considered sufficient to accommodate the needs in the curriculum. Continuity in developing student skills to develop science from a quality aspect shows that Unesa as an educational institution is able to adapt to curriculum developments.

Based on the results of the CVR and FGD analysis, it was decided that there was a reduction in character items from thirty-two to 21 characters. Consideration of the reduction is done by looking at the similarity of the character domain or the presence of the same slice. In addition, the twenty-one characters can be categorized into five competencies, namely Personality, Social, Literacy, Leadership, and Citizenship. According to table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Categorization of MBKM supporting character values

Competencies	Items of characters
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Personality	Spiritual, responsible, honest, independent, and assertive
Social	Caring, adaptive, mutual cooperation, obedient to ethical norms, and communicative
Literacy	Think critically, intelligently, and scientifically
Leadership	Capable, creative and innovative, democratic, and initiative
Citizenship	Love for the homeland, anti-corruption, drugs, radicalism, sexual harassment and bullying, national spirit, global diversity,

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, there are thirty-two character values that can support Unesa students in learning activities in the MBKM Curriculum. These items were determined through CVR analysis with a minimum acceptance score of 0.29. In addition, the reduction process was also carried out through FGDs, which saw that characters must be in line with Unesa's mission.

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