

Character Education Based on Hibualamo Culture for Developing the Creative Economy of Village Communities in North Halmahera

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Hibualamo—the traditional cultural system of the Tobelo people in North Halmahera—serves as a moral and educational framework for developing a sustainable creative economy in rural communities. Using a qualitative design and an ethno-ecological approach, the research collected data through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from artisans, elders, and cultural practitioners. Thematic analysis revealed four foundational values—domutu (vision and purpose), garaki (perseverance in work), bobita (solidarity and cooperation), and nonako (identity and pride)—that guide social behavior, entrepreneurship, and character formation. These values constitute a moral capital that strengthens cooperation, creativity, and ethical innovation within community-based enterprises. Despite challenges such as limited market access and technology, the study demonstrates that integrating cultural ethics into education and entrepreneurship fosters resilience and inclusive rural development. The Hibualamo model thus offers a culturally grounded paradigm linking morality, creativity, and sustainability in local economic transformation.

Keywords: Character education, Creative economy, Hibualamo culture, Sustainable rural development.

INTRODUCTION

Rural development has become one of Indonesia's national priorities as articulated in various government programs that emphasize the principle of "building from the periphery." This paradigm recognizes that sustainable economic transformation must begin at the village level, where community participation and cultural values remain strong. The Indonesian Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration has consistently emphasized the integration of education, entrepreneurship, and cultural empowerment as strategic pillars for inclusive growth (Muis, 2024). Within this framework, character education is not merely a moral agenda but a developmental foundation that shapes ethical, responsible, and creative human resources in rural societies.

Education, when anchored in local culture, becomes an instrument of cultural transmission and social innovation. Scholars such as Murwaningsih et al. (2020) and Novitasari & Walid (2024) argue that local wisdom can provide a moral compass for young generations, particularly in multicultural societies where national identity and global competitiveness must coexist. Integrating cultural values into educational practices nurtures empathy, honesty, and resilience—virtues that align with the principles of the creative economy, which values originality, cooperation, and sustainability.

In the context of North Halmahera, local culture serves as both an identity and a system of values that guides everyday life. The Hibualamo culture, originating from the Tobelo ethnic group, plays a central role in this moral framework. Literally meaning “the big house,” *Hibualamo* functions as a traditional communal space where collective decision-making, conflict resolution, and social rituals take place. Its octagonal structure with four symbolic doors represents the philosophical directions of life: east (perseverance), west (solidarity), north (vision), and south (identity). These values mirror a holistic worldview in which personal integrity, kinship, and devotion to the community are inseparable dimensions of human development (Manik, 2024).

However, while the cultural importance of Hibualamo remains widely recognized, its potential as an educational and economic model has not been fully explored. Most studies have treated Hibualamo as a heritage symbol or architectural phenomenon (Mumulati et al., 2023), rather than as a dynamic system of values applicable to modern education and entrepreneurship. Consequently, there is limited empirical research examining how Hibualamo values can inform character education and contribute to the growth of the creative economy in rural settings. This gap becomes particularly relevant in the era of decentralization, where villages are encouraged to leverage their cultural assets to foster innovation and sustainability (Mahrinasari et al., 2025).

The creative economy, as conceptualized by Howkins (2021), revolves around the capacity to transform ideas and cultural expressions into marketable products and services. For rural communities, the creative economy is not only an economic opportunity but also a means to preserve cultural heritage and strengthen social cohesion. By linking cultural identity with entrepreneurship, communities can achieve economic resilience while safeguarding their traditions. Therefore, an education system that integrates cultural values such as those of Hibualamo has the potential to cultivate creative mindsets grounded in ethics, cooperation, and respect for nature.

This study seeks to explore how Hibualamo cultural values can serve as the basis for developing character education models that, in turn, stimulate the creative economy among village communities in North Halmahera. By combining qualitative and ethnoecological approaches, the research aims to understand how cultural knowledge and social practices translate into creative behaviors and sustainable livelihoods. The central question guiding this study is: *How can character education based on Hibualamo culture foster the development of the creative economy in rural North Halmahera?*

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design with an ethno-ecological approach to explore the interconnections among cultural values, character education, and the creative economy within North Halmahera’s rural communities. This approach enabled a deep understanding of social meanings and lived experiences embedded in the Hibualamo cultural system of the Tobelo people. As Creswell and Báez (2021) note, qualitative inquiry emphasises interpretation and context rather than measurement, allowing exploration of symbolic and moral dimensions of community life. The ethno-ecological perspective, informed by Brondízio et al. (2021), was applied to analyse how local ecological knowledge shapes human–environment relations, revealing that Hibualamo traditions guide both moral education and creative practices grounded in ecological wisdom.

Fieldwork was carried out between May and November 2025 in several villages of North Halmahera Regency, Maluku Utara Province, representing coastal, lowland, and highland ecosystems inhabited by ethnic groups such as Tobelo, Galela, and Kao. The Hibualamo, or “great house,” functions as the centre of collective deliberation and moral education, embodying the social and ethical unity of these communities.

Participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge and participation in Hibualamo traditions and creative economic activities. The sample included 20 artisans, 10 village elders, and 4 cultural experts aged 35–70 years, balanced across gender and socio-economic backgrounds. Consistent with Patton’s (2015) criterion-based sampling, participants were chosen for their experiential relevance. Verbal consent and confidentiality procedures were applied to ensure ethical integrity.

Data collection combined in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews in Tobelo and Indonesian (45–90 minutes each) examined perceptions of Hibualamo values, character formation, and creativity. Observations documented social interactions, production processes, and rituals highlighting cooperation and shared responsibility. Document analysis covered cultural archives and policy texts to provide institutional context. Triangulation across methods strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Thematic analysis followed the six-phase framework of Kiger and Vaughn (2020). Data were coded inductively from interview transcripts and field notes to identify recurring patterns of cultural values, educational practices, and creative behaviour. Broader conceptual categories—such as “Cultural Values of Hibualamo,” “Character Education Practices,” and “Creative Economic Initiatives”—emerged from the analysis. Comparative interpretation across sites revealed shared ethical foundations and local variations, while attention to metaphors

and rituals uncovered embedded ecological and moral wisdom. Reflexivity, peer debriefing, and participant validation maintained analytical rigour and ensured cultural accuracy throughout the research process.

RESULTS

The fieldwork across the selected villages in North Halmahera revealed that Hibualamo culture continues to shape everyday social and economic life. Despite modern influences, villagers retain deep respect for communal values, intergenerational cooperation, and the symbolic meaning of the *big house* (*Hibualamo*). Interviews and observations indicated that traditional moral codes such as *o dora* (love and compassion), *o diai* (honesty), *o canga* (perseverance), and *o bobita* (solidarity) are not merely ceremonial expressions but functional norms guiding entrepreneurship, education, and cooperation.

Most artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs—particularly women engaged in weaving and craft production—reported that their work is both an expression of identity and a means of livelihood. As one craftswoman from Mamuya stated, “*Our weaving is not just for selling; it is our way of remembering who we are and teaching our children patience and care.*” This statement exemplifies the integration of moral and economic values, where creative production simultaneously fulfills cultural, educational, and economic functions.

Core Cultural Values of Hibualamo

The analysis identified four foundational values of the Hibualamo philosophy that directly inform character education and the creative economy. Each of these values corresponds symbolically to one of the four doors of the traditional Hibualamo house:

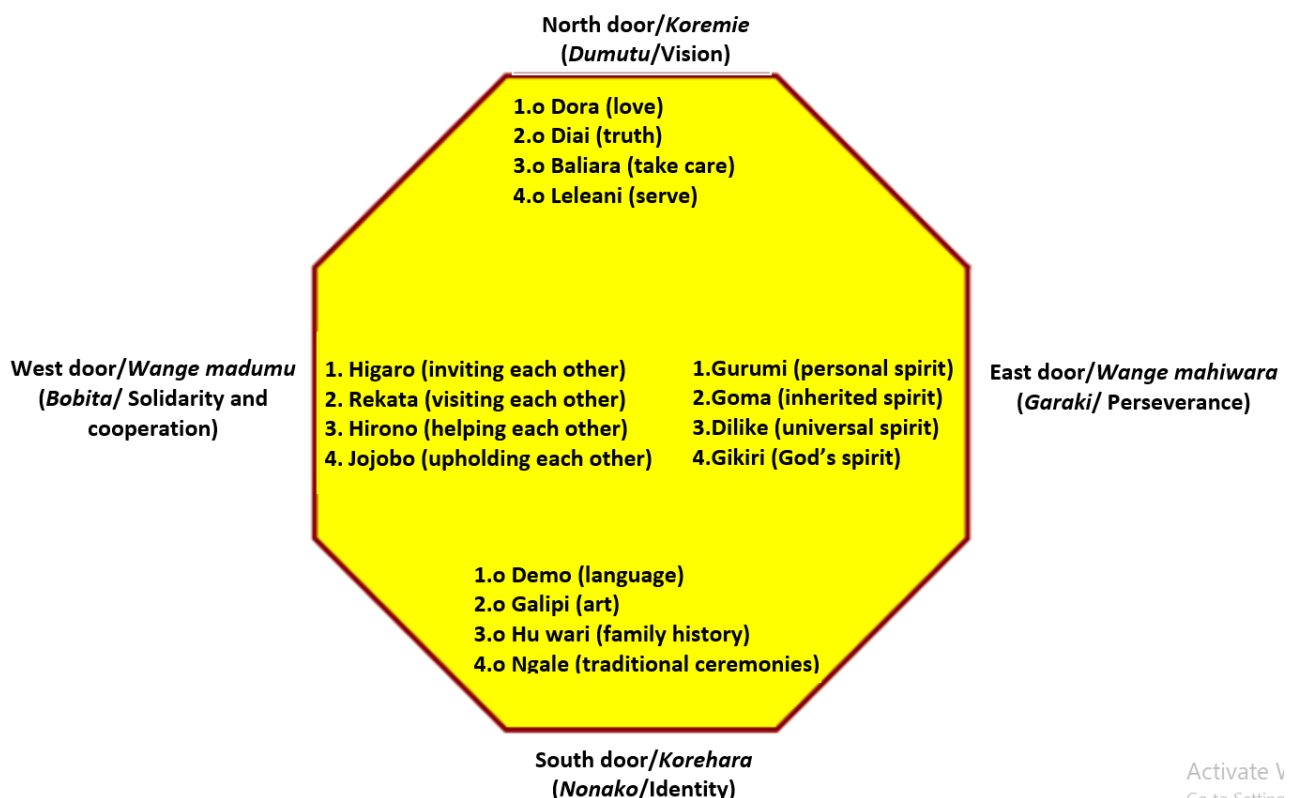


Figure 1. Hibualamo octagonal four-door cultural value model.

1. Domutu (Vision and Direction) – represented by the *north door*, emphasizes purpose, compassion, honesty, and service. It provides moral and spiritual direction for both personal life and community enterprise.
2. Garaki (Perseverance and Work Ethic) – represented by the *east door*, embodies diligence and divine motivation. It drives continuous effort in entrepreneurship and innovation.
3. Bobita (Solidarity and Cooperation) – symbolized by the *west door*, stresses kinship, trust, and collective work, reflecting strong social capital that sustains collaboration in creative industries.
4. Nonako (Identity and Cultural Pride) – linked to the *south door*, highlights the importance of maintaining language, art, and ancestry as sources of creative differentiation and authenticity.

These values collectively establish a moral framework that sustains creative activity in the villages. They form the cultural capital upon which community-based entrepreneurship depends.

Typology of Village Creative Economies

The study identified several typologies of creative economic activities based on both initiative and motivation. The typology was developed by analyzing 20 village-based enterprises documented through interviews and field observations.

Table 1. Typology of creative economy initiatives in North Halmahera

No	Type of Initiative	Description	Example
1	Self-initiated (Independent)	Initiatives led by individuals or families using personal skills and cultural resources.	<i>Teras Kabino Café</i> in Popilo Village
2	Village-Government Initiative	Supported by village funds to develop local tourism or cultural crafts	Beach tourism in Pitu Village
3	Regional-Government Initiative	Managed under regency programs	Hot springs in Mamuya
4	National Initiative	Supported by the central government focusing on community empowerment	Social Forestry Business Group in Talaga Paca village

These findings indicate that creative economic initiatives in North Halmahera operate at multiple governance levels, reflecting a dynamic interplay between cultural heritage, government policy, and individual innovation. The strongest and most sustainable initiatives are those that combine cultural identity with economic strategy, emphasizing authenticity and community benefit.

Table 2. Typology of creative economy by main purpose.

No	Purpose Category	Description	Example
1	Economic Income	Focused on generating household income through local crafts, agricultural processing, etc.	<i>Hobata Farm</i> in Lina Ino Village
2	Social Solidarity	Aimed at strengthening community bonds and mutual aid through creative spaces.	<i>Teras Kabino</i> in Popilo Village
3	Cultural Revitalization	Intended to preserve traditions through cultural festivals, dance, etc.	Gogaho studio in Mamuya Village

The typologies reveal that most enterprises remain small and informal, often relying on seasonal demand or tourism events. Market linkage remains limited, and many artisans depend on intermediaries or occasional government exhibitions to sell their products.

Challenges Faced by Rural Creative Enterprises

While the cultural and moral foundations for creativity are strong, villagers face numerous structural challenges that limit growth and commercialization:

1. **Limited Market Access:** There are few local institutions or cooperatives that can aggregate and promote products to larger markets.
2. **Lack of Technology and Tools:** Most artisans use manual methods and lack modern production equipment.
3. **Low Entrepreneurial Orientation:** Many producers view craft-making as supplementary rather than as a primary livelihood.
4. **Individualized Efforts:** Collaboration among artisans remains weak; collective marketing or shared branding is rare.
5. **Intergenerational Gaps:** Younger villagers often prefer non-traditional jobs, leading to a decline in cultural skill transmission.

Despite these barriers, there is growing awareness among local communities about the need to connect traditional knowledge with modern entrepreneurship. Some youth-led initiatives have begun experimenting with online marketing, eco-tourism, and creative workshops.

DISCUSSION

The Hibualamo system of the Tobelo people in North Halmahera illustrates how traditional wisdom sustains moral formation amid social transformation. As both architectural symbol and moral institution, the *great house* embodies the values of *domutu* (vision), *garaki* (perseverance), *bobita* (solidarity), and *nonako* (identity). These four symbolic doors represent the multidimensional virtues expected within the community.

Research on indigenous architecture highlights that such spaces transmit ethics through ritual and collective experience (Mumulati et al., 2023). Within Hibualamo gatherings, storytelling and deliberation act as moral

pedagogy, nurturing honesty, empathy, and cooperation through lived participation rather than formal instruction (Zulfiqar et al., 2020).

The Hibualamo philosophy resonates with contemporary character-education theory, integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Lickona et al., 2021). Cultural-heritage-based education fosters belonging and moral continuity; *domutu* shapes ethical purpose while *bobita* cultivates communal empathy—qualities often neglected in modern schooling. Studies on culturally responsive moral education confirm that local wisdom enhances moral reasoning and social engagement (Kim & Park, 2020). Thus, in Hibualamo, character is enacted through rituals and cooperation rather than taught abstractly.

Indigenous ethics also strengthen social resilience by fostering moral integrity under economic and ecological pressure (Adams et al., 2023). Values such as *o diai* (honesty) and *o canga* (perseverance) generate “moral resilience,” enabling adaptive solidarity. Architecturally, the four-door structure of the Hibualamo symbolizes harmony between individuality and community, illustrating a “pedagogy of place” where spatial order becomes ethical instruction (Setiadi et al., 2022).

Deliberative gatherings reflect Freire’s notion of dialogical learning, cultivating empathy, patience, and justice (Freire, 2018). These moral and participatory processes support “ethical local entrepreneurship” (Mahrinasari et al., 2025), where culture guides innovation. Overall, the Hibualamo represents a living moral ecology linking values, symbols, and collective action—an indigenous model of character education relevant to the twenty-first century.

Character Education and the Creative Economy

In the Hibualamo context, moral education extends into economic life, shaping creativity, cooperation, and community entrepreneurship. The vitality of rural creative economies depends not only on material resources but also on the moral and cultural capital that nurtures innovation (Santoso & Rahman, 2021). Core values such as *garaki* (perseverance), *o diai* (honesty), and *bobita* (solidarity) cultivate reliability and trust—the essential traits of what Han and Choi (2020) call “character-driven entrepreneurship,” where creativity is treated as a moral and social act rather than a mere economic pursuit.

Ethical character and local wisdom have been recognized across Southeast Asia as key drivers of sustainable innovation (Yusoff et al., 2023). In North Halmahera, principles of collective responsibility and reciprocity lower transactional risks and strengthen collaboration. Traditional crafts such as *saboi* and *sosiru* embody both cultural identity and livelihood, producing “dual value creation” by merging cultural preservation with economic benefit (Oktaviani & Nasrullah, 2023).

Character education bridges moral formation and entrepreneurship by embedding ethics within creative training. Informal learning through storytelling, apprenticeship, and ritual performance instills entrepreneurial discipline and empathy, reflecting indigenous pedagogies that integrate skill and morality (Nurhayati et al., 2020). This approach corresponds with UNESCO’s (2019) framework of Education for Sustainable Development, linking economic innovation to moral responsibility and cultural sustainability.

Moreover, Hibualamo’s deliberative culture (*musyawarah*) fosters creative communities grounded in solidarity and shared ethics. Such moral cohesion generates what Putra et al. (2023) describe as “social innovation capital,” enabling collective enterprises such as craft cooperatives, cultural tourism, and youth design groups (Nugroho & Sari, 2023). Character-based education enhances business ethics and productivity, as entrepreneurs grounded in honesty and perseverance earn public trust and sustain long-term viability (Mahrinasari et al., 2025).

By internalizing *nonako* (identity) and *bobita* (kinship), Hibualamo-based education ensures that modernization strengthens rather than erodes local culture. In this way, creativity becomes moralized and morality materialized, forming a sustainable, community-based economy rooted in ethical values and cultural continuity (Sharma & Lee, 2020).

The Hibualamo Model: Moral–Economic Integration

The Hibualamo framework demonstrates a moral–economic synthesis in which culture provides ethical foundations, education functions as a transformative mechanism, and the economy becomes the living expression of values. This integration reflects cultural syncretism in entrepreneurship, where tradition and innovation coexist harmoniously (Rahim & Daud, 2021). Core virtues such as *o diai* (honesty), *o dora* (compassion), *o canga* (perseverance), and *bobita* (solidarity) regulate trust and fairness within community enterprises. Local wisdom serves as “invisible social capital,” lowering transaction costs and promoting cooperation (Mahrinasari et al., 2025). Through storytelling and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), these values are reinforced, transforming culture into an active moral infrastructure that guides economic behavior—what Rao and Kothari (2020) describe as an “embedded moral economy.”

Character education operates as the central mechanism linking moral values to creative practice. Honesty, empathy, and perseverance form a moral habitus that supports innovation and ethical legitimacy (Lee et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2021). Within this framework, culture, education, and economy interact in a synergy comparable to

the Triple Helix of innovation (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017), yet grounded in community ethics. The model follows a vertical continuum from cultural values to character education, creative behavior, and finally to sustainable development—illustrating moral education as a bridge between identity and productivity (Kim & Park, 2020).

Economic activities embody these principles through authentic craftsmanship (*nonako*), collaboration (*bobita*), perseverance (*garaki*), and honesty (*o diai*), converting moral capital into economic resilience (Hassan et al., 2022). By embedding local wisdom into curricula and entrepreneurship training, the Hibualamo model fosters ethical innovation and cultural preservation, aligning with global sustainability goals (UNESCO, 2019). In this way, it offers a community-based paradigm for integrating morality, creativity, and economic growth within a culturally grounded system

Educational Transformation and Social Capital

Education within the Hibualamo tradition cultivates social capital that sustains creativity, cooperation, and resilience. Learning takes place through rituals, collective work, and intergenerational knowledge exchange, embodying UNESCO's (2019) notion of lifelong community-based education. Through *gotong royong* and communal gatherings, Hibualamo nurtures both bonding and bridging capital essential for social innovation. Character values such as *bobita* (solidarity) and *garaki* (perseverance) reinforce cooperative ethics that minimize conflict and strengthen collective creativity (Han & Choi, 2020). Moral education thus becomes a cultural investment that reproduces trust networks and shared norms across generations (Li & Wang, 2021).

The process of learning in Hibualamo is experiential and participatory, integrating storytelling, music, and craft as moral technologies that transmit both knowledge and ethics. This approach reflects transformative learning theory, where shared cultural reflection fosters moral growth and social awareness (Mezirow, 2018). Local pedagogies merge creativity with responsibility (Setiawan & Ratri, 2020), supporting the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (Suparman et al., 2024).

By strengthening collective efficacy—the shared belief in communal capacity (Bandura, 2018)—Hibualamo education enhances social resilience and cooperative problem-solving (Adams et al., 2023). Apprenticeship traditions pass on technical skill alongside moral integrity, ensuring continuity of creative competence and ethical consciousness (Hidayah & Fitriani, 2022). Trust (*bobita*) operates as social currency that fosters collaboration and innovation sharing (Yusoff et al., 2023), while reciprocity generates reputational capital within adaptive innovation networks (Nashir & Abdullah, 2020).

Ultimately, Hibualamo-based education contributes to SDGs 4, 8, and 11 by promoting ethical citizenship and sustainable livelihoods. Rooted in culture, this form of education strengthens creative-industry resilience and provides a foundation for community-centered innovation grounded in identity, solidarity, and mutual trust (Santoso & Rahman, 2021).

Global Relevance and Local Adaptation

The Hibualamo model exemplifies how local wisdom can intersect with global sustainability discourses by harmonizing moral education, cultural identity, and creative innovation. Its principles—deliberation, solidarity, honesty, and identity—reflect international calls for inclusive and culturally grounded development. According to UNESCO (2019) and OECD (2021), sustainable progress must integrate cultural heritage, and Hibualamo demonstrates this by linking ethical learning with creative entrepreneurship, showing how local knowledge directs modernization while preserving authenticity (Suparman et al., 2024). Cultural identity in this context enhances adaptability and innovation within the digital economy (Mahrinasari et al., 2025).

Reflecting the concept of *glocalization* (Robertson, 1995), Hibualamo communities reinterpret global values through local ethics such as *o diai* (honesty) and *bobita* (solidarity). This synthesis of tradition and modern enterprise generates “ethical modernities” that balance competitiveness with cultural integrity (Rahim & Daud, 2021). Eco-cultural tourism and cooperative design initiatives illustrate this contextual modernization (Nugroho & Sari, 2023).

Cultural resilience emerges through adaptive identity—the capacity to evolve without losing ethical roots (Adger et al., 2022). The Hibualamo ethos of learning and collective deliberation enables communities to navigate globalization creatively, transforming local identity into valuable cultural capital within global creative markets (Santos & Oliveira, 2020).

Aligned with decolonial and indigenous education movements, Hibualamo pedagogy strengthens ethical awareness while balancing global citizenship with local responsibility (Smith, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). By promoting fair production and collective ownership, it provides a replicable framework for inclusive growth and international collaboration in culture-based creative industries (UNCTAD, 2022; Hassan et al., 2022).

Toward Sustainable Rural Development

The integration of character education rooted in Hibualamo cultural values offers a transformative framework for sustainable rural development that unites ethics, creativity, and community resilience. Its guiding virtues—*domutu* (vision), *garaki* (perseverance), *bobita* (cooperation), and *nonako* (identity)—form the moral foundation for collective progress, replacing material-centered paradigms with ethical sustainability grounded in empathy, honesty, and cultural continuity (Hidayah & Fitriani, 2022). By embedding moral education in local governance, the Hibualamo model ensures transparent decision-making, fair resource distribution, and ecological balance, advancing the aims of SDGs 4, 8, and 11 (Sachs et al., 2022).

Social capital and institutional synergy are central to this transformation. Moral capital—trust, mutual responsibility, and deliberation—underpins inclusive participation and accountability (Lee et al., 2021). Cooperation among local governments, schools, and cultural councils turns rural initiatives into coordinated moral ecosystems. Partnerships between artisans and universities foster design innovation while preserving traditional motifs, creating ethical markets that sustain both livelihoods and heritage (Nugroho & Sari, 2023).

A culture-based creative economy further strengthens sustainability by linking entrepreneurship with local ethics. Honesty and solidarity discourage exploitative practices and cultivate trust, enhancing market resilience (Sharma et al., 2021). Supported by digital tools and fair-trade collaboration, local industries gain global visibility while maintaining authenticity (Hassan et al., 2022).

Hibualamo also nurtures eco-cultural resilience by embedding ecological ethics such as *o baliara* (care for life) within moral education. This alignment with biocultural conservation principles (Gavin et al., 2018) fosters environmental stewardship and adaptive capacity to climate and economic change (Adger et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the Hibualamo system envisions modernization guided by cultural ethics—what Escobar (2018) terms “autonomous design,” where development grows from within communities. Here, sustainability becomes a lived moral practice of learning, cooperation, and care, rooted in ancestral wisdom and oriented toward a just and enduring future.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that Hibualamo culture continues to guide social, moral, and economic life in North Halmahera. Its core values—*domutu* (vision), *garaki* (perseverance), *bobita* (solidarity), and *nonako* (identity)—function as a moral framework linking tradition, education, and entrepreneurship. Despite structural barriers such as limited market access and technology, Hibualamo fosters creativity, cooperation, and ethical entrepreneurship. Character education rooted in these values transforms cultural heritage into economic strength, promoting sustainable rural development where modernization aligns with cultural ethics and collective well-being.

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