The Role of Education in Building Student Character

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Education has a strategic role in shaping the character of students as the nation's future generation (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017). This article aims to analyze the role of education in building student character and identify effective implementation strategies. The method used is library research by analyzing various literature related to character education. The results show that character education not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also instills moral, ethical, and social values that become the foundation of personality. The main components in character formation include the role of teachers as role models, conducive school environment, curriculum integration, and involvement of parents and community. Characters such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social care must be instilled from an early age through integrated learning. Character education provides significant benefits in forming positive personality, improving learning quality, preparing social life, fostering responsibility and independence, preventing negative behavior, and forming a generation of integrity. Effective implementation strategies include integration in learning, exemplary and habituation, school culture development, stakeholder involvement, and continuous evaluation. In conclusion, education functions as the main foundation in creating a generation with character, integrity, and ready to face life challenges in the global era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in the development of a nation that not only functions as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a container for character and personality formation (Yunarti, 2014). In the era of globalization and rapid development of information technology, challenges in the world of education are increasingly complex and multidimensional (Svari & Arlinayanti, 2024). Students are not only required to have intellectual intelligence but must also have moral integrity, good social attitudes, and the ability to adapt to the changing times (Aisyah, 2024).

Strong character becomes the main foundation in creating a civilized, ethical society capable of contributing positively to the nation (Muis et al., 2024). Fundamental values such as honesty, responsibility, hard work, discipline, tolerance, mutual cooperation, and social care must be instilled from an early age through a systematic and sustainable educational process (Lickona, 2009). In this context, formal educational institutions have a strategic role as the driving force in integrating character education into all aspects of learning (Islam, 2017).

Character education is a conscious and planned effort to realize the learning process that enables students to develop their potential optimally, not only in cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects (Naro et al., 2023). According to Lickona (2009), character education is a deliberate effort to help someone understand, care about, and act based on core ethical values. This shows that character education is comprehensive and involves three dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Affandi et al., 2022).

Although the importance of character education has been widely recognized, its implementation in Indonesia still faces various obstacles and challenges (Koesoema, 2011). Various cases of behavioral deviations among students such as student brawls, bullying, academic dishonesty, technology misuse, drugs, and other moral degradation are indicators that character education has not been fully implemented effectively (Rizai & Nakhma, 2022). This phenomenon reflects a gap between ideality and reality in the practice of character education in schools.

Empirical data shows that cases of violence and disciplinary violations in educational environments are still relatively high, indicating weak internalization of character values in students (KPAI, 2025). This problem requires serious attention and systematic efforts from all education stakeholders to formulate more effective strategies in implementing character education (Gunawan & Najicha, 2022). In addition, educational orientation that still tends to focus on cognitive aspects and academic achievement often neglects character development that should run in balance (Koesoema, 2011).

Based on the background and problems outlined above, this research aims to: (1) comprehensively analyze the role of education in building student character; (2) identify key components that contribute to character formation in the school environment; (3) explain the importance of character education for student development; and (4) formulate effective and sustainable character education implementation strategies.

The results of this research are expected to provide benefits both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the scientific treasury of character education and become a reference for further research. Practically, this research is expected to provide input to: (1) teachers and education personnel in implementing character education more effectively; (2) school principals in developing policies and school culture that support character formation; (3) education policymakers in formulating regulations that support the strengthening of character education; and (4) parents and the community in supporting character education programs at school.

2. METHODS

This research uses the library research method which is qualitative research with a descriptive-analytical approach (Creswell, 2012). Library research is research conducted by collecting, reading, recording, and processing research materials from various literature sources without conducting field research. This method was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives which aim to analyze and synthesize various concepts, theories, and findings of previous research on the role of education in building student character.

Data sources in this research consist of secondary data obtained from various scientific literature including: (1) textbooks on character education; (2) national and international scientific journals that have been published; (3) government policy documents related to character education; (4) research results and scientific articles relevant to the discussion topic; and (5) other credible library sources that can be academically accounted for.

Data collection was carried out through documentation studies with the following steps: (1) identifying and inventorying literature relevant to the research theme through libraries, online journal databases, and institutional repositories; (2) selecting the literature found based on criteria of relevance, source credibility, and publication currency; (3) reading and carefully examining all selected literature; (4) recording important information, concepts, theories, and findings related to the research topic ; and (5) classifying data based on discussion sub-themes to facilitate the analysis process.

Data analysis was performed using the content analysis method which is descriptive-qualitative in nature (Miles et al., 2013). The analysis process was carried out through several stages: (1) data reduction, which is the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data from various literature that has been collected; (2) data presentation, which is organizing the reduced data in the form of narratives, tables, or charts to facilitate understanding; (3) data interpretation, which is giving meaning to the data presented based on the theoretical framework and research context; (4) synthesis, which is integrating various concepts and findings from various sources to produce comprehensive understanding; and (5) drawing conclusions, which is formulating conclusions based on the results of data analysis and synthesis that has been carried out.

To ensure the validity and credibility of data, this research applies several principles: (1) source triangulation, which is using various different literature sources to obtain a comprehensive perspective ; (2) member checking, which is comparing and confirming concepts from various sources to ensure consistency and accuracy of information; (3) peer debriefing, which is discussing findings and interpretations with competent colleagues in the field of character education; and (4) using credible sources that have gone through peer review to ensure academic validity.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Concepts and Foundations of Character Education

Character education can be defined as a conscious and planned effort to instill, develop, and actualize character values in students so that they are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions (Lickona, 1999). According to (Lickona, 1999), character education is a deliberate effort to help someone understand, care about, and act based on core ethical values. This definition emphasizes that character education is comprehensive and involves three main dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Koesoema, 2011).

The moral knowing dimension includes moral awareness, knowledge of moral values, perspective determination, moral thinking, decision making, and personal knowledge (Novianti & Sunaryati, 2024). The moral feeling dimension includes conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving goodness, self-control, and humility. Meanwhile, the moral action dimension includes competence, desire, and habits of doing good (Hayati et al., 2019). These three dimensions must be developed in a balanced and integrated manner so that character education can run effectively.

Philosophically, character education is rooted in educational philosophy that emphasizes the importance of forming a whole human being (Koesoema, 2011). In the Indonesian context, character education is based on Pancasila as the state foundation and the nation's life philosophy which contains noble values. The five principles in Pancasila reflect character values that must be possessed by every Indonesian citizen, namely: religiosity, humanism, nationalism, democracy, and social justice (Gunawan & Najicha, 2022).

In addition, character education is also based on religious values and national culture that have been rooted in Indonesian society. Values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation to reach consensus, tolerance, and harmony are local wisdom that must be integrated into character education. This philosophical foundation provides direction and orientation for the development of character education that is in accordance with the identity and culture of the Indonesian nation.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2017) has formulated 18 character values that need to be developed in education, namely: (1) religious, (2) honest, (3) tolerance,

(4) discipline, (5) hard work, (6) creative, (7) independent, (8) democratic, (9) curiosity, (10) national spirit, (11) love of country, (12) appreciate achievement, (13) friendly/communicative, (14) love peace, (15) love reading, (16) environmental care, (17) social care, and (18) responsibility. These values are derived from four main sources: Pancasila, religion, culture, and national education goals (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023).

Each character value has behavioral indicators that can be observed and measured in students' daily lives. For example, religious values are shown by attitudes and behaviors that are obedient in carrying out religious teachings, tolerant of the implementation of worship of other religions, and living in harmony with followers of other religions (Lickona, 1991). Honesty values are manifested in behavior that makes oneself a person who can always be trusted in words, actions, and work (Koesoema, 2011). A clear understanding of these behavioral indicators makes it easier for teachers to observe and assess the development of student character.

The Role of Educational Components in Character Formation

Teachers have a central and strategic role in forming student character because they not only function as transfer of knowledge but also as transfer of values. As role models, teachers become figures who are observed, imitated, and used as examples by students in daily behavior (Lickona, 1999). Teacher exemplary includes aspects of personality, professional competence, social competence, and pedagogical competence integrated in every interaction with students.

Teachers who show high integrity, consistency between words and deeds, discipline in carrying out tasks, honesty in assessment, fairness in treating students, and care for student development will have a strong positive influence on character formation. Research shows that teacher exemplary is more effective in forming character compared to verbal learning because students tend to be easier to imitate what they see than what they hear (Koesoema, 2011).

In addition to being role models, teachers also act as facilitators who create learning conditions that support character development. This includes the selection of interactive and participatory learning methods, the use of inspirational learning media, the creation of a democratic classroom atmosphere that respects diversity, and the provision of positive reinforcement for behavior that reflects character values. Teachers also play a role in providing guidance and counseling to students who experience behavioral problems so they can develop in a more positive direction (Gunawan & Najicha, 2022).

The school environment has a significant influence on student character formation because school is where students spend most of their time after family (Hikmawati et al., 2022). A conducive, safe, comfortable, and supportive school environment will facilitate the growth and development of positive character in students. Conversely, an unconducive school environment can hinder and even damage character formation.

School culture is one important aspect of the school environment that plays a role in character formation. School culture includes values, norms, habits, traditions, and symbols practiced and believed by all school members (Lickona, 1999). Schools that have positive cultures such as a culture of discipline, cleanliness culture, literacy culture, greeting-greeting-smiling-polite-courteous (5S) culture, and religious culture will form student character indirectly through the process of habituation and value internalization.

Creating a positive school culture can be done through various programs, including: (a) routine activities such as flag ceremonies, prayer together, religious activities, and cleaning pickets; (b) spontaneous activities such as greeting teachers and friends, disposing of trash in its place, and reprimanding behavior that is not in accordance with character values; (c) programmed activities such as commemorating national and religious holidays, social service, and educational visits; and (d) creating an educative school physical environment through the installation of motivational posters, wise words, and student work displays.

The curriculum has a strategic role as a guide in implementing character education in schools (Arief & Rusman, 2019). Integration of character education in the curriculum can be done through three

approaches: (a) integration in subjects, where character values are integrated in syllabus, lesson plans, learning materials, and the learning process of each subject); (b) through self-development programs that include extracurricular activities and counseling guidance; and (c) through the development of school culture as previously explained.

Integration of character education in subjects is done by identifying character values relevant to the basic competencies of each subject, then integrating them into indicators, learning materials, learning activities, and assessment (Agung, 2011). For example, in Mathematics subjects, values such as honesty (in doing questions and exams), hard work and never give up (in solving difficult questions), and careful and thorough (in making calculations) can be instilled.

Extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to develop and express themselves according to the needs, talents, and interests of each student while developing character values. Through Scouting activities, for example, students can develop leadership character, responsibility, discipline, and love of nature. Through student council activities, students can develop democratic character, responsibility, and leadership (Gunawan & Najicha, 2022). Through sports activities, students can develop sportsmanship character, teamwork, and never give up.

Character education cannot only rely on the role of schools but requires synergy with family and community (Koesoema, 2011). The family is the first and foremost educational environment for children which greatly determines the formation of basic character. Parenting patterns, communication in the family, parental exemplary, and values adopted in the family have a very large influence on children's character.

Parental involvement in character education can be done in various ways: (a) intensive communication between school and parents about student character development; (b) parenting programs to increase parental capacity in educating children's character; (c) parental participation in school activities that support character education; and (d) consistency between values taught at school and values practiced at home.

The community also has an important role in supporting character education (Gunawan & Najicha, 2022). A conducive community environment, positive cultural values, and active participation of community leaders in education will strengthen student character formation. Conversely, an unconducive community environment can become an obstacle and even damage the character that has been formed at school and family.

The Importance of Character Education for Students

Character education has a fundamental role in forming positive personality and self-identity of students (Lickona, 2009). Strong character provides a foundation for students to recognize their identity, understand the values they hold, and develop a positive self-concept. Students who have good character will have high self-confidence, self-respect, and the ability to make appropriate moral decisions.

The formation of positive personality through character education involves a process of value internalization that takes place gradually and continuously (Handayani et al., 2023). Through the learning process, habituation, exemplary, and social interaction, character values that are initially external will be internalized into part of the student's personality. Positive personality formed from an early age will be a very valuable basic capital in facing various life challenges in the future.

There is a close relationship between character and student academic achievement. Students who have positive character such as discipline, responsibility, hard work, never give up, and honesty tend to have better academic achievement. The character of discipline makes students able to manage their study time well, complete assignments on time, and be consistent in learning. The character of responsibility makes students serious in undergoing the learning process and completing every task given (Koesoema, 2011).

The character of hard work and never giving up makes students not easily give up when facing difficulties in learning and continue to try until they successfully understand the material being studied

(Mauliza et al., 2023). The character of honesty prevents students from cheating behavior such as cheating which actually harms their own learning process. Thus, character education is not only beneficial for the development of affective aspects but also has a positive impact on students' cognitive aspects.

Character education equips students with various life skills that are needed in community life (Umamah, 2018). Characters such as good communication, ability to work together, empathy, tolerance, and conflict resolution are very important social skills in interacting with others. In the era of globalization and multicultural society, the ability to appreciate differences, be tolerant, and work together with people from different backgrounds becomes very essential.

Character education also develops emotional skills such as the ability to control emotions, manage stress, think positively, and have resilience in facing difficulties (Herwin et al., 2025). These skills are very important for mental health and psychological well-being of students. In addition, characters such as creative, independent, and high curiosity will equip students with the ability to continue learning and adapting to change.

Character education plays an important role in fostering responsibility and independence of students. Responsibility is a character that makes someone able to fulfill obligations, complete tasks well, and be ready to bear the consequences of every decision and action taken. Through various activities at school, students are trained to be responsible for the tasks given, the roles held in the organization, and the behavior displayed in daily life(Lickona, 2009).

Independence is a character that makes students able to think, act, and make decisions independently without always depending on others (Nurazizah, 2021). Independent students have initiative, self-confidence, are able to solve problems on their own, and are not easily influenced by negative pressure from the environment. Independence and responsibility are characters that are needed in facing life challenges in the 21st century which demands the ability to continue learning, adapting, and innovating.

One of the important benefits of character education is its function as preventive against various forms of negative behavior and juvenile delinquency (Rafsanjani et al., 2025). Students who have strong character with a good understanding of moral values will have an internal fortress that protects them from negative environmental influences. They are able to distinguish good and bad behavior, understand the consequences of every action, and have the courage to refuse invitations to do things that contradict the values they hold.

Character education is effective in preventing various forms of negative behavior such as bullying, brawls, drug abuse, deviant sexual behavior, violence, and dishonesty. The character of empathy and social care can prevent bullying behavior because students can feel the suffering of others. The character of loving peace and tolerance can prevent brawls and conflicts between groups. Religious character and responsibility can prevent drug abuse and deviant sexual behavior.

The long-term goal of character education is to produce a generation with integrity, noble character, and able to make positive contributions to society and the nation. Integrity is consistency between values believed, words, and deeds in all situations and conditions. People with integrity are honest, trustworthy, consistent, and committed to good values even in difficult situations (Lickona, 1999).

A generation with integrity and noble character is a generation that will become leaders, professionals, and responsible citizens in the future. They will become agents of change who bring progress to the nation while adhering firmly to moral and ethical values. In the context of Indonesia which is facing various challenges such as corruption, intolerance, and moral degradation, forming a generation of integrity through character education becomes very crucial and strategic.

Character Education Implementation Strategies

The first and main strategy in implementing character education is to integrate it into the learning process in the classroom. This integration is done by identifying character values relevant to each basic competency in the subject, then incorporating them into the syllabus, lesson plans, learning materials, learning methods, learning media, and assessment. Teachers need to be creative in designing learning activities that not only develop cognitive aspects but also develop character values (Lickona, 2009).

Effective learning methods for character education include: problem-based learning that trains students to think critically and be responsible in solving problems; cooperative learning that develops characters of cooperation, tolerance, and communication; project-based learning that develops creative, independent, and responsible characters; and value-based learning that explicitly discusses moral dilemmas and invites students to take moral positions.

Exemplary is the most effective strategy in character education because students are easier to imitate what they see than what they hear (Munawwaroh, 2019). Therefore, all school components, especially teachers and principals, must be good role models for students. Teachers must display behavior consistent with character values taught, such as arriving on time (discipline), being honest in assessment (honesty), being fair in treating students (justice), and caring about student difficulties (empathy).

The principal as the school leader must also be a role model in terms of integrity, democratic leadership, commitment to quality, and dedication to education. All school staff including education personnel must also provide exemplary because they also interact with students. Consistent exemplary from all school components will create an atmosphere that supports student character formation.

Habituation is a very important strategy in character education because character is basically a habit formed through repetition of behavior. Schools need to design various habituation programs carried out consistently and continuously so that behaviors that reflect character values become student habits. Habituation programs can be in the form of routine activities such as praying before and after learning, reading the Quran or holy books, flag ceremonies, cleaning pickets, and literacy activities (Anggraeni et al., 2021).

Habituation can also be done through spontaneous activities such as greeting teachers and friends with greetings, disposing of trash in its place, helping friends in difficulty, and reprimanding behavior that is not in accordance with character values. Conditioning the school's physical environment is also important to support habituation, for example by providing adequate trash cans, creating beautiful gardens, installing motivational posters and wise words, and creating clean and comfortable classrooms.

Positive reinforcement and rewards are effective strategies to strengthen behavior that reflects character values. When students display good behavior, teachers need to provide reinforcement in the form of praise, appreciation, or rewards so that the behavior continues to be repeated and becomes a habit. Reinforcement can be given in verbal form (direct praise), non-verbal (smiles, thumbs up), or symbolic (achievement stars, appreciation certificates) (Nida et al., 2025).

Schools can develop a reward system for students who show good character, for example through the selection of monthly exemplary students, awarding certificates of appreciation at the end of the semester, or a character point system that can be exchanged for prizes. However, it should be noted that this extrinsic reward must gradually be replaced with intrinsic motivation so that students behave well not because they expect rewards but because of awareness and belief in the values they hold.

The development of positive school culture is a systemic strategy that involves all school components. A conducive school culture will create an atmosphere that supports the growth and development of student character naturally. The principal as the leader has a key role in developing school culture through establishing a clear school vision-mission about character education, supportive school policies, adequate resource provision, and providing exemplary.

School culture development can be done through several ways: (a) formulating character values that become the focus of development at school; (b) socializing these values to all school members continuously; (c) integrating these values in all school programs and activities; (d) creating physical symbols that remind of these values such as slogans, posters, and displays; and (e) building a system that supports the practice of these values consistently.

The involvement of parents and community is an important strategy because character education cannot only rely on schools. There needs to be synergy and consistency between values taught at school and values practiced at home and in the community environment. Schools need to build intensive communication with parents through various ways such as regular meetings, parenting classes, connecting books, online communication groups, and reports on student character development.

Parenting programs can help increase parents' understanding and skills in educating children's character at home. Schools can also involve parents in various school activities such as social service activities, commemorating big days, and extracurricular activities. The involvement of community leaders and community organizations can also strengthen character education, for example through cooperation in community service programs, internships, or educational visits.

Evaluation is an important component in implementing character education to determine the success of programs and make continuous improvements. Character education evaluation differs from academic evaluation because what is evaluated is changes in attitudes and behavior that cannot be measured by written tests. Evaluation methods that can be used include: observation of student behavior in various situations, self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher journals, anecdotal records, and character portfolios (Berkowitz, 2022).

Evaluation is carried out continuously and integrated in the daily learning process, not only at the end of the semester. Evaluation results are not stated in the form of numbers or scores but in the form of qualitative descriptions that describe student character development. Monitoring also needs to be done regularly by school principals and supervisors to ensure that character education programs are implemented properly by teachers and receive support from all school components.

Challenges And Solutions In Character Education Implementation

Although the importance of character education has been widely recognized, its implementation in the field still faces various challenges and obstacles. The first challenge is the still strong orientation of education on cognitive aspects and achievement of academic grades, so character education is often neglected or considered as a complement. The second challenge is the limited understanding and competence of teachers in integrating character education into learning.

The third challenge is inconsistency between values taught at school and the reality that exists in society. Students often see practices that contradict character values in the social environment, mass media, and in the behavior of adults around them. The fourth challenge is limited system support, both in terms of policies, infrastructure, and adequate time allocation for character education.

The fifth challenge is the negative influence of social media and digital technology which can negatively affect student character if not used wisely. The sixth challenge is the lack of synergy and consistency between schools, families, and communities in educating character. The seventh challenge is difficulty in measuring and evaluating character development because character is abstract and not easy to measure objectively.

To overcome these various challenges, strategic efforts from various parties are needed. First, there needs to be a paradigm shift in education from merely oriented to cognitive aspects to holistic education that is balanced between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Second, there needs to be capacity building for teachers through training, workshops, and mentoring on strategies and techniques for implementing character education.

Third, close partnerships need to be developed between schools, families, and communities to create a synergistic character education ecosystem. Fourth, there needs to be strong policy support from the government both at the central and regional levels in the form of regulations, budget allocations,

and provision of adequate infrastructure. Fifth, learning media and learning resources that support character education need to be developed.

Sixth, there needs to be efforts to integrate digital literacy education so that students can use technology wisely and responsibly. Seventh, valid and reliable evaluation instruments need to be developed to measure student character development comprehensively. Eighth, there needs to be commitment and consistency from all school components in implementing character education continuously.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of literature review and discussion that have been outlined, several important points can be concluded as follows. First, education has a very strategic and fundamental role in shaping the character of students as the nation's future generation. Character education is not just a transfer of knowledge about moral values but involves a comprehensive process that integrates moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Second, there are several key components that play a role in student character formation, namely: the role of teachers as role models and facilitators, conducive school environment and culture, integration of character education in the curriculum, and synergy between schools, families, and communities. These four components must work synergistically and consistently so that character education can run effectively.

Third, character education provides very significant benefits for student development, including: forming positive personality and self-identity, improving learning quality and academic achievement, preparing life skills, fostering responsibility and independence, preventing negative behavior and juvenile delinquency, and forming a generation with integrity and noble character.

Fourth, effective implementation of character education requires comprehensive strategies including: integration in the learning process, exemplary and modeling, habituation and conditioning, reinforcement and rewards, school culture development, involvement of parents and community, and continuous evaluation and monitoring.

Fifth, although still facing various challenges in its implementation, character education remains a priority that must be pursued because it is the main foundation in creating a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has strong character, noble personality, and ready to face life challenges in the global era. The success of character education will determine a better future for the nation that is more civilized, dignified, and competitive on the global stage.

Based on the conclusions above, several recommendations can be made as follows. First, for teachers and education personnel, it is hoped that they will continue to improve competence in implementing character education creatively and innovatively through various effective learning methods and strategies. Teachers must also be consistent in being good role models for students in every attitude and behavior.

Second, for school principals, it is hoped that they will provide full support for the implementation of character education through the development of supportive school policies, adequate resource allocation, creation of positive school culture, and conducting supervision and monitoring regularly. Principals also need to build close partnerships with parents and the community.

Third, for education policymakers at the central and regional levels, it is hoped that they will continue to strengthen regulations and policies that support the strengthening of character education, provide adequate budgets, develop comprehensive character education evaluation systems, and conduct monitoring and evaluation of character education implementation regularly.

Fourth, for parents, it is hoped that they will be actively involved in supporting their children's character education at home by providing good exemplary, creating democratic parenting patterns, building intensive communication with schools, and creating a family environment that is conducive to children's character formation.

Fifth, for future researchers, it is hoped that they will conduct further research on: the effectiveness of various character education implementation strategies, factors that influence the success of character education, development of character education evaluation models and instruments, and best practices of character education in various countries that can be adapted in Indonesia.

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