THE ROLE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN FORMING ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Character education refers to an approach to learning that aims to help students develop moral and ethical values, such as honesty, responsibility and empathy. The integration of these values in the curriculum and school activities along with the active support of teachers, families and communities are the main efforts for character education to build individuals who are highly ethical and responsible in every aspect of their lives. In this study, the literature research method was used. From the results, it is evident that teachers who have undergone specialised training in character education play an important role as living examples of these values. In addition, a safe and supportive school environment greatly contributes to the ethical formation of students. Another opinion states that the active participation of parents and the community also strengthens the implementation of moral values in schools through their daily behaviour. This finding proves the synergy relationship between the collaborative participation of the main institutions, namely school, family and the wider community, can empower students with strong character, have good morals and be perfectly responsible.

Keywords: *Role; Character Education; Ethical; Responsible Students*

A. Introduction

Education is not only a means of imparting knowledge and skills, but also a means of personality formation. In the era of globalisation, the challenges facing the younger generation are increasingly complex. This condition not only requires them to have intellectual abilities, but also requires them to have high moral, ethical and responsible qualities. However, reality shows that many students are experiencing a moral and ethical crisis which is reflected in various negative behaviours such as lack of respect, increased bullying, and academic dishonesty.

Character education is a proposal to overcome these problems. Character education aims to shape and strengthen students' moral, ethical and social values and guide them to become responsible individuals who contribute positively to society. Character education is not a new concept (Hasanah & Ningrum, 2023). Classical to modern theories from figures such as Aristotle and John Dewey to Thomas Licona have emphasised the importance of character development in education (Andriani & Supriyadi, 2021).

Character education is an important aspect that cannot be ignored. With the rapid development of technology and globalisation, the challenges facing individuals and society are becoming increasingly complex. Not only technical skills or academic knowledge are required, but also critical thinking ability, empathy, social responsibility and strong ethics. Character education aims to instil values such as honesty, discipline, hard work and respect from an early age, thus forming individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and morally mature (Lestari & Aryanti, 2024).

In addition, character education also plays an important role in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. By promoting virtue and positive behaviour, character education helps reduce problems such as bullying, discrimination and injustice in schools (Asyari et al., 2023). This not only impacts individual students, but also the dynamics of the classroom and school community as a whole. In this way, students think not only about themselves, but also the impact of their actions on others and their environment. Therefore, integrating character education into the modern education curriculum is essential to produce a generation that is not only competent, but also ethical and responsible (Purba, 2024).

But although the concept of character education has been widely adopted by countries and educational institutions, its implementation still faces various challenges. Lack of in-depth understanding of character education, limited resources, and resistance from many parties are obstacles in achieving this ideal goal of education (Suardi, 2023).

Well, the issue of student ethics and responsibility is one of the biggest challenges facing education today. Many cases in schools reflect a moral crisis, such as increasing incidents of bullying, cheating on exams, plagiarism, disrespect for teachers and classmates, and other antisocial behaviours (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024). They show that we still have deficiencies in character education and moral education, and we must persevere. This situation not only damages the learning environment but also

hinders students' personal development. If ethics and responsibility are not taught from an early age, students may grow up to be intellectually superior individuals who lack integrity and empathy (Suardi, 2023).

In addition, students' lack of responsibility is also a concern. Indifference to academic studies, non-participation in social and community activities, and undisciplined behaviour indicate that character education needs to be strengthened immediately. Lack of responsibility not only impacts academic performance but can also have serious consequences in the future, including a reduced ability to work effectively as a team and a lack of commitment to social responsibility (Ahamer, 2021). It is therefore important for schools, teachers and parents to work together to instil moral values and responsibility through holistic and sustainable education for students to grow into more responsible and highly ethical individuals. Therefore, comprehensive research is needed to explore how character education can effectively develop ethical and responsible students (Shaw, 2023).

Character issues in schools have become an increasingly prominent issue in recent years. Many schools face challenges in shaping students' positive character traits such as honesty, responsibility and respect. One of the main contributing factors is the negative influence of social media and the internet, which can easily affect students' mindset and behaviour. In addition, the lack of parental involvement in their children's character education is also an obstacle for schools in instilling good moral values.

On the other hand, an education system that focuses too much on academic achievement often ignores the importance of student character development. This leads to many students who are academically intelligent but lack emotional and social intelligence. As a result, various behavioural problems such as bullying, academic cheating and lack of empathy are becoming increasingly common in the school environment. Therefore, it is important for schools to develop a comprehensive character education programme that involves the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents and the surrounding community, in an effort to shape a young generation that is not only intelligent but also noble.

This research aims to examine the role of character education through a literature review to assess best practices, identify existing challenges and provide recommendations for improving the implementation of character education. By better understanding the role of character education, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to help students develop moral values and a sense of responsibility so that they can better face future challenges. And also do not forget about the theories related to character education.

B. Method

This research adopts the literature research method. Desk research or commonly referred to as literature review is a research method that collects, evaluates, and analyses pre-existing papers with the aim of answering specific research questions or exploring information related to a topic. This approach is useful for understanding recent

developments in a field, identifying research gaps, and connecting new research with existing research (Alaslan, 2022); (Suyitno, 2021).

Documentary research methods are essential in any field of research as they not only allow researchers to understand the background and context of their research, but also help avoid duplication of work and identify areas that require further exploration (Adlini et al., 2022).

C. Finding and Discussion
Definition and Concept of Character Education

Character education is a learning process designed to help individuals develop moral values, attitudes and behaviours that society considers important. This kind of education focuses not only on academic achievement but also on building a whole and moral person. It includes efforts to teach responsibility, honesty, hard work, empathy and respect at school and at home. Character education helps form an ethical and moral foundation that guides individuals in making good and positive decisions in everyday life (Shinta, 2024); .

The core content of character education includes several important aspects. The first is moral values such as honesty, integrity and fairness that form the basis of an individual's thinking and behaviour. This is followed by social and emotional abilities, which include the ability to control emotions, empathy, and social skills that enable individuals to interact well with others (Hendri, 2022). The third is personal and social responsibility, which encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions and make positive contributions to society. These elements are interrelated and support each other, and together form a good and complete character (Wandari & Rohana, 2023).

The implementation of character education requires full cooperation between teachers, parents and the community. In schools, character education can be implemented through a curriculum that integrates moral values, extracurricular activities and the role models of school staff. Parents also play an important role by teaching these values at home and modelling good behaviour (Akbar, 2024). In addition, partnerships with communities and civic organisations can enhance character education through activities and programmes that encourage active participation and moral development in children. Character education is therefore a shared responsibility that requires collective commitment to develop individuals who are not only intellectually gifted but also have strong character (Minas & Charles, 2020).

Over the years, character education has been the main focus of various educational theories developed by education and psychology experts. One of the well-known theories is the stages of moral development theory proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg (Dutmer, 2024). Kohlberg argued that an individual's moral development goes through a series of progressive stages, from the most basic stage of moral understanding orientated towards punishment and obedience, to the highest stage where individuals make moral decisions based on universal ethical principles. According to this theory, character education focuses on providing experiences and discussions that challenge children to think about and

analyse complex moral situations, thus enabling them to develop to a higher moral stage (Zozulya, 2022).

In addition, Albert Bandura's social learning theory also makes an important contribution to character education. Bandura emphasises the importance of observation and imitation in learning, where children and adolescents develop their own character and moral values by observing and imitating the behaviour of adults or peers around them. Therefore, the theory suggests that teachers, parents and communities can be positive role models by modelling ethical behaviours that they want to instil in their children, including values such as hard work, honesty and empathy (Zdravkova, 2020).

In addition, the holistic character education theory proposed by Thomas Licona emphasises the importance of character education, including cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects. According to Licona, character education should integrate the intellectual understanding of moral values (cognitive), the skill of feeling and living those values (emotional), and the ability to act in accordance with those values in daily life (behavioural) (Afiah & Fadhliyah, 2022). According to this theory, the approach to character education should be comprehensive, involving various methods such as direct teaching, ethical discussions, social-emotional skills training, as well as activities and programmes that allow children to practice and reinforce the learned values in various contexts of their lives (Aryadiningrat et al., 2023).

In addition to the theories mentioned, there are many other theories that make important contributions to character education. For example, the humanistic learning theory proposed by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow emphasises the importance of developing one's potential and achieving self-actualisation. According to this theory, character education should focus on learning experiences that are relevant to students' real lives and recognise their need to feel valued and understood. This humanistic approach emphasises the importance of creating a supportive learning environment where students can safely explore ethical values and develop their personal identity in a meaningful and authentic way (Trihartono & Anshori, 2021).

Lev Vygotsky's social development theory also provides an important dimension to character education. Vygotsky emphasised the role of social interaction in children's cognitive and moral development. According to this theory, children's moral values and character develop through interaction with adults and peers in a rich social context. This means that collaboration and dialogue between students as well as between students and teachers can be an effective means of internalising ethical values and developing social skills. Vygotsky also developed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which states that with the help and guidance of others, children can reach a higher level of moral development than they can achieve independently (Retnosari, 2021); (Sartika et al., 2024).

Finally, the ethical theory of care popularised by Carol Gilligan, focuses on the importance of empathy, relationships and caring responsibilities in moral development. Gilligan argues that character education should prioritise the development of the ability to care and take responsibility for the needs and welfare of others (Ismartin et al., 2023). This

challenges traditional approaches, which may place more emphasis on justice and order, recognising the importance of interpersonal relationships and attention to individual context, by adding a dimension of service. The application of this theory in character education could involve activities that encourage students to feel and understand others' points of view, as well as opportunities to take an active role in acts of care and support in the community (Lubis, 2024).

As our understanding of character education continues to evolve, these theories provide a rich conceptual and practical foundation for developing comprehensive and effective approaches to moral education and character building for all people.

Ethics in Education

Ethics is a philosophical discipline that considers the concepts of right and wrong and provides a systematic defence for them. More specifically, ethics focuses on the moral principles that guide the actions of people or groups in all situations. Ethics is often used as a reference in making decisions that are fair, responsible, and in accordance with certain moral values as well as discussing what constitutes a good or bad action and the ideal behaviour of individuals in modern society (Tubagus et al., 2023); (Aslan & Shiong, 2023). Hence, the ethical horizon is wide open not only to personal activities but also to professional matters such as public enforcement and other areas of the world of work or politics in general, from the large scale to the personal scale solely between one person (Lubis, 2024).

Valuing ethics is vital to students' lives as it shapes their character and personality from an early age. Through understanding and applying its principles, students will be able to make responsible decisions in various aspects of life such as relationships with their peers, teachers, and family (Ramadita et al., 2022). In addition, ethics also educates students to navigate complex moral situations so as to encourage individual development towards personal integrity, noble character and social responsibility as positive contributors to the environment around them. Students who uphold ethical values tend to be better equipped to handle life's challenges wisely while maintaining quality personal relationships and making a positive impact on their own world (Komarodin & Rofiq, 2023).

Character and ethics education are inseparably linked, as they complement each other to form ethical and responsible individuals. In character education, the focus is on developing positive traits such as honesty, responsibility, empathy and respect. Ethics, on the other hand, provides a theoretical foundation in explaining moral principles as the basis of human behaviour and choices between them (Faizal, 2022). In other words, these words show that through character learning, students will be taught about how to carefully act on ethical values so that they can be applied in practical daily activities, not only about the importance of honesty or toughness but also the materialisation during the simulation situation later for the students themselves (Stenmark, 2022).

When character education is combined with ethics, the result is students who not only understand moral concepts but can also apply these values in everyday life. For

example, an understanding of the perspectives of fairness and empathy can help them to be wise and kind to their peers and members of other communities (Agustin & Muhammad, 2020). Character education based on ethical principles also supports the improvement of analytical skills in children when solving moral dilemmas in the learning environment, creating a positive and mutually-supportive classroom atmosphere for both students and teachers. This is of course very important because it makes each individual citizen responsible for his or her own actions to the people around him or her to be more qualified than just passing academic exams (Mas'ula et al., 2022)."

Responsibility in Education

Responsibility is the ability and obligation to recognise, manage and take responsibility for one's actions, decisions and the consequences of those actions. It includes the understanding that everyone has a role and must fulfil the expectations that come with that role, whether in personal, professional or social life. Responsibility involves a commitment to honour commitments, respect the rights of others and act in accordance with applicable ethical and legal rules. By taking responsibility, one must also be prepared to accept the good or bad consequences of one's actions and endeavour to correct one's mistakes if necessary (Nenda, 2023).

Taking responsibility brings several significant benefits to individuals and society. On a personal level, responsibility can help one develop into a more independent, disciplined and trustworthy person. This increases self-confidence and self-esteem as individuals know that they can be trusted. In society, responsibility plays a role in maintaining a harmonious social order (Susdarwono, 2022). For example, if every member of society acts responsibly, it creates a safe, fair and inclusive environment. Responsibility also includes awareness of the impact of one's actions on others and the environment, thus encouraging sustainable and ethical behaviour. Responsibility is therefore a key element in the formation of responsible individuals and a well-functioning society (Peterson et al., 2021).

Character education plays an important role in fostering a sense of responsibility in individuals, especially children and adolescents. Through character education, values such as honesty, discipline, empathy and hard work are systematically taught and integrated into the school curriculum (Nurdiana et al., 2023); (Astuti et al., 2023). This educational process helps students understand the importance of responsibility in all aspects of life, whether academic, social or personal. Teachers and educators serve as role models by providing real and consistent examples of how to apply responsibility in daily life. Through regular exposure to these values, students will begin to internalise the concept of responsibility and see it as part of their character (Rismawati & Wardana, 2023).

The implementation of character education also involves various practical activities that encourage students to take direct responsibility. For example, group assignments, community service projects and extracurricular activities are some effective ways to fulfil teaching responsibilities. When students take charge of a project or activity, they understand the importance of their role and how their actions impact the overall outcome

(Mhlanga, 2023). Character education also emphasises reflection and self-evaluation, inviting students to reflect on their actions and learn from their mistakes. Therefore, through character education, learners not only understand the concept of responsibility in theory, but also practice it in real life, ultimately shaping them into responsible and independent individuals (Furqon & Nurdyansyah, 2020).

The Role of Character Education in Shaping Student Ethics

Character education plays a very important role in shaping students' morals. Through character education, moral values such as honesty, integrity, justice and respect are taught and internalised to students. This kind of education not only focuses on academic achievement, but also emphasises the formation of a good personality. By exposing students to various moral and ethical situations in an educational setting, they can think critically and reflectively about their actions and their impact on themselves and others. This helps students develop strong moral guidelines and a good perspective to handle various situations in life (Purg, 2021).

To instil strong morals, schools can implement character education in various ways, including by integrating moral values into the regular curriculum, special programmes and extracurricular activities. For example, learning about the importance of honesty can be incorporated into language learning by discussing stories that contain morals (Kirsch, 2023). In addition, activities such as ethical debates, role plays and community service projects allow students to practise and evaluate ethical values in a real-world setting. Teachers and school staff act as role models who demonstrate ethical behaviour on a daily basis so that students can see first-hand how these values are applied in real life (Slunjski, 2022).

The impact of character education on students' moral formation can be felt over a long period of time. Students with internalised moral values tend to be responsible, trustworthy and high-integrity individuals. They are more likely to make morally correct decisions in various situations and ensure that their actions are consistent with the moral principles they have learnt. This not only benefits them personally but also makes a positive contribution to society. As these students grow into moral citizens, they can play an active role in creating a just, harmonious and sustainable environment. Thus, character education not only shapes individual behaviour but also helps build a better society (Carroll, 2020).

It can be seen that character education has a very important role in shaping students' morals. By teaching moral values such as honesty, integrity, fairness and respect, students are equipped to face life situations with strong moral guidelines. Its implementation in the formal curriculum and school activities such as ethics debates and community service projects allow students to practice and internalise these ethical values (Haski-Leventhal, 2020).

In the long run, learners who receive good character education tend to be responsible, trustworthy and honest individuals. They are able to make morally correct decisions that not only benefit themselves but also have a positive impact on society.

Therefore, character education not only helps shape individual behaviour but also helps build a more just, harmonious and sustainable society (Gomes & Marques, 2023).

The Role of Character Education in Shaping Student Responsibility

Character education plays a fundamental role in shaping students' sense of responsibility. Through character education, values such as discipline, honesty and respect are taught and internalised to students. This process helps students understand the importance of responsibility in all actions, both in academic contexts and in everyday life. By educating students to take responsibility for their duties and responsibilities, educators help students develop a mindset that values hard work and perseverance (Gomes & Marques, 2023).

Implement character education in the curriculum and school activities to provide students with various opportunities to practise responsibility. For example, in group projects, students are taught to take their seats and complete tasks on time. Extracurricular activities such as student organisations, clubs or sports teams also allow students to exercise leadership and take responsibility for team members and the activities they undertake. With the guidance and support of teachers and mentors, students learn to face the consequences of their actions and take the necessary steps to correct their mistakes (Adiba & Latip, 2021).

The long-term impact of successful character education is that students grow into responsible and reliable individuals. They are likely to become caring citizens who are committed to making positive contributions to their communities. The responsibility they learn in school becomes an important foundation for their adult lives, influencing the way they work, interact with others and participate in society. Thus, character education not only shapes individual behaviour but also lays the foundation for a more responsible and sustainable society (Aldina et al., 2023).

Supporting and inhibiting factors for character education

The effectiveness of character education is influenced by various internal factors of individual students. An important intrinsic factor is students' intrinsic motivation. Students who have a strong desire to learn and develop tend to be more able to internalise the character values taught. In addition, students' cognitive and emotional abilities also play an important role (Meutia et al., 2024). Students who can understand and respond well to ethical situations are more likely to apply character values in daily life. The ability to reflect on behaviour and self-control are also key intrinsic factors that support the success of character education (Rosdiana & Supriyadi, 2023).

On the other hand, external factors also have a significant influence on the effectiveness of character education. The family environment is one of the most influential external factors. Parental role models, parenting styles and communication within the family play an important role in shaping children's character (Sartika et al., 2024). In addition, a supportive school environment, where teachers and staff demonstrate ethical behaviour and provide a safe and inclusive learning environment, is also a determining

factor for the success of character education. The social context and community in which students interact on a daily basis, such as peer and community activities, also influence how students internalise character values outside the academic environment (Hilppö & Stevens, 2020).

The curriculum framework and educational methods applied by schools are also important external factors. A curriculum that is systematically and thoroughly integrated with character education provides many opportunities for students to practice ethical values in various subjects and activities. Professional programmes such as social skills training, ethics debates and community service projects complement theoretical learning with practical experience (Onaga & Odimegwu, 2022). Teachers who are trained in teaching and instilling character values can be effective role models, thereby increasing students' acceptance and understanding of character education (Yanti, 2021).

Overcoming barriers to implementing character education requires holistic strategies and the involvement of various stakeholders. One key strategy is to ensure that character values are thoroughly integrated into the school curriculum. This can be achieved by modifying the curriculum to include character education in every subject rather than as a separate subject. In addition, teachers need to receive adequate training in teaching and integrating character values into the teaching process. Workshops, seminars and continuous training programmes are essential for teachers to have the skills they need to be role models for their students (Budiyanto, 2023); (Lidyawati et al., 2023).

Another strategy is to involve parents and communities in the character education process. Parents need to understand the importance of character education and how they can support it at home. Schools can organise regular meetings with parents to discuss student progress and provide advice on strengthening character values at home. In addition, partnerships with local communities (such as civic organisations, places of worship and non-profit organisations) can provide additional spaces for students to practice character values in a diverse environment. Community service programmes, field trips and extracurricular activities that involve the community enrich students' experiences and encourage the application of character values in real-life situations (Lidyawati et al., 2023).

In summary, overcoming barriers to implementing character education requires a comprehensive collaborative approach. The integration of character values into the school curriculum and continuous training of teachers are important steps to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of character education in the teaching and learning process. In addition, the involvement of parents and communities will improve and expand the learning environment so that character values can be more thoroughly applied in students' daily lives. Thus, character education can help shape students' integrity, ethics and responsibility in the future.

E. Conclusion

Character education, integrated into the school curriculum, has a significant impact on students' moral and ethical development. Consistently teaching values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy across subjects, as well as providing support from trained teachers, plays a significant role in shaping students' ethical behavior. Additionally, family and community involvement in character education reinforces the values taught in schools and encourages students to apply moral principles in their daily lives. The study also shows that effective character education not only improves academic achievement but also builds responsible and ethical individuals, making positive contributions to society as a whole.

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