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EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' MORAL VALUES IN SCHOOLS

Yusrina Gultom¹; Anhar²;

University Islam Country Sheikh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan¹²

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail: yusrina@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of education in strengthening students' character and moral development in schools. Character education is an essential aspect of the learning process because it not only focuses on academic achievement but also on shaping students' ethical awareness, social responsibility, and positive behavior. In the modern era, students face various moral challenges influenced by technological development, social media, and changing social values. Therefore, education is expected to play a strategic role in guiding students to develop strong character and ethical behavior. This research employed a qualitative approach using a library research method. Data were collected from various sources, including books, academic journals, and relevant educational literature. The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes related to character education, teacher roles, school environment, and family influence. The findings show that education has a significant role in shaping students' character through the integration of moral values in learning activities. Teachers act as role models, while schools provide environments that support the practice of ethical behavior. Family support is also essential in strengthening value consistency in students' daily lives. However, challenges such as limited curriculum time, lack of teacher training, and negative influences from technology still exist. The study concludes that character education requires collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, and society to effectively build students with strong moral values and responsible behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as one of the most important instruments for shaping individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior in society. Beyond its academic function, education plays a central role in developing students' character, moral values, and social responsibility. In modern educational systems, schools are not only responsible for transmitting knowledge but also for nurturing ethical behavior and positive personality development among students. Therefore, character education has become an essential component of the teaching and learning process in many countries (Lickona, 2013).

In recent years, moral and behavioral challenges among students have become a serious concern in the field of education. Issues such as dishonesty, bullying, lack of discipline, disrespect toward teachers, and low social responsibility are increasingly reported in various school environments. These problems indicate that cognitive learning alone is not sufficient to ensure the development of students' good character. As a result, there is a growing need to strengthen values-based education that emphasizes ethics, morality, and social behavior in schools (Koesoema, 2018).

Character education refers to a systematic effort to develop students' moral understanding, ethical awareness, and positive behavior through structured educational activities. It includes the cultivation of values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and respect for others. These values are essential for preparing students to become responsible citizens who can contribute positively to society. Schools, therefore, play a strategic role in integrating character education into both academic and non-academic activities (Berkowitz & Bier, 2015).

Teachers have a crucial role in the success of character education implementation. As educators and role models, teachers influence students not only through instruction but also through behavior and interaction. Students often imitate the attitudes and actions of their teachers, making the teacher's personality an important factor in shaping students' moral development. Effective teaching practices, therefore, should include both intellectual and moral guidance to ensure holistic student development (Santrock, 2017).

In addition to teachers, the school environment also plays an important role in shaping students' character. A positive school climate that emphasizes discipline, respect, and cooperation can support the internalization of moral values among students. School programs such as religious activities, social services, extracurricular organizations, and collaborative projects provide opportunities for students to practice ethical behavior in real-life situations. These experiences help students develop stronger social awareness and moral responsibility (Ryan & Bohlin, 2013).

Family background is another important factor influencing students' character development. Parents are the first educators in a child's life and play a key role in introducing values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect. When there is consistency between values taught at home and those taught at school, students are more likely to develop stable and positive character traits. Therefore, cooperation between parents and schools is essential in supporting effective character education (Brooks, 2011).

In the context of globalization and technological advancement, students are increasingly exposed to various influences that can affect their behavior and values. The rapid development of digital media and social networks has created both opportunities and challenges for character development. While technology can support learning and communication, it can also expose students to negative content, cyberbullying, and unethical behavior. Therefore, students need strong moral guidance to navigate digital environments responsibly (Bates, 2019).

Values-based education is considered an effective approach to addressing these challenges. By integrating moral and ethical values into classroom instruction, schools can help students develop critical thinking skills and moral reasoning abilities. This approach encourages students to reflect on ethical issues and make responsible decisions in their daily lives. As a result, values-based education contributes not only to academic success but also to the development of well-rounded individuals (Nucci, 2014).

Previous studies have shown that educational practices that incorporate moral and character values have a positive impact on students' behavior and social development. Students who are exposed to consistent value-based learning tend to demonstrate higher levels of empathy, discipline, and responsibility. These findings highlight the importance of integrating character education into the formal curriculum as a long-term strategy for improving educational outcomes (Arthur, 2014).

However, the implementation of character education still faces several challenges in practice. Some schools experience difficulties in integrating moral values into academic subjects due to limited time, lack of teacher training, and insufficient learning resources. In addition, variations in students' backgrounds and environmental influences can affect the consistency of character development outcomes. These challenges require continuous improvement in educational strategies and policies.

Furthermore, modern educational systems are increasingly emphasizing competency-based learning, which sometimes places greater focus on academic achievement than moral development. This imbalance may lead to the neglect of character education in some contexts. Therefore, it is important to ensure that both cognitive and affective domains are equally prioritized in the learning process.

Given these conditions, strengthening students' character through education becomes an urgent necessity. Schools must develop integrated approaches that combine academic learning with moral and ethical development. This includes the use of interactive teaching methods, experiential learning, and school-wide programs that promote positive behavior and social values.

Collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community is also essential in supporting character education. A consistent and supportive environment across different social contexts can significantly enhance students' moral development. When students receive the same values from school, home, and society, they are more likely to internalize and practice those values in their daily lives.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore the role of education in shaping students' character and moral behavior in schools. The study focuses on understanding how educational practices contribute to the development of ethical awareness, social responsibility, and positive behavior among students in the context of modern education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore how education contributes to shaping students' character and moral behavior in schools. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, particularly related to values, attitudes, and behavioral development in educational settings (Creswell, 2018). This approach is suitable for examining how character education is implemented and experienced within the school environment.

The research design used in this study was a library research method. Library research involves collecting and analyzing data from various written sources such as books, academic journals, research articles, and relevant educational literature. This method enables the researcher to synthesize existing knowledge and identify key themes related to character education and moral development in schools (Moleong, 2017).

The main sources of data in this study were secondary data obtained from scholarly publications. These sources included international and national journals, books on educational theory, and previous research studies focusing on character education, moral development, and values-based education. The selection of literature was based on relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research topic.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques by systematically reviewing and selecting relevant literature. The researcher identified key concepts, theories, and findings related to character education and categorized them based on themes such as teacher roles, school environment, family influence, and learning strategies. This process helped in building a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

The data analysis technique used in this study was content analysis. Content analysis involves examining written materials to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the research problem. Through this method, the researcher interpreted and synthesized information from various sources to draw conclusions about the role of education in shaping students' character (Bungin, 2017).

To ensure the validity of the data, source triangulation was applied by comparing information from different authors and publications. This technique helps improve the credibility of findings by ensuring that conclusions are supported by multiple reliable sources. Only literature that is academically recognized and relevant to the topic was included in the analysis.

Finally, the results of the analysis were organized and interpreted descriptively to explain how educational practices influence students' character development. The findings were presented in a narrative form based on themes identified during the analysis process. This method provides a comprehensive overview of how education contributes to shaping students' moral values and behavior in school contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and moral behavior in schools. Based on the analysis of various literature sources, it is evident that character education is consistently emphasized as an essential component of the learning process. Schools are not only responsible for improving students' cognitive abilities but also for developing their moral values, social attitudes, and ethical awareness (Lickona, 2013).

One of the main findings shows that the integration of character education into school curricula significantly contributes to students' behavioral development. Educational practices that include moral instruction, value-based discussions, and ethical reflection help students understand the importance of honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect. These values are gradually internalized through continuous exposure in both academic and non-academic activities (Berkowitz & Bier, 2015).

The role of teachers is identified as a key factor in the success of character education. Teachers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral role models for students. Literature shows that students tend to imitate teachers' behavior, attitudes, and communication styles. Therefore, teachers who demonstrate positive moral behavior can significantly influence students' ethical development and social conduct (Santrock, 2017).

In addition, the school environment plays an important role in reinforcing character education. A positive and disciplined school climate encourages students to practice good behavior in daily interactions. Activities such as group work, school ceremonies, extracurricular programs, and community service projects provide opportunities for students to apply moral values in real-life situations. These experiences help strengthen students' social responsibility and empathy toward others (Ryan & Bohlin, 2013).

The study also highlights the importance of family involvement in supporting students' character development. Literature shows that students who receive consistent moral guidance from their families tend to demonstrate stronger ethical behavior at school. Parents serve as the first educators who introduce values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility. Therefore, collaboration between school and family is essential in ensuring the effectiveness of character education (Brooks, 2011).

Furthermore, technological development has both positive and negative impacts on students' character formation. On one hand, digital learning tools and online educational content can support value-based education. On the other hand, exposure to negative content, cyberbullying, and inappropriate behavior in social media can undermine students' moral development. This indicates the need for stronger digital ethics education in schools (Bates, 2019).

Another important finding is that values-based education is effective in improving students' ethical awareness and decision-making skills. When students are taught to reflect on moral dilemmas and social issues, they become more capable of making responsible choices. This approach encourages critical thinking while reinforcing moral principles in everyday life (Nucci, 2014).

However, several challenges in implementing character education are also identified in the literature. These include limited time in the curriculum, lack of teacher training, and insufficient integration of moral values into academic subjects. In some cases, schools tend to prioritize academic achievement over character development, which reduces the effectiveness of moral education programs (Arthur, 2014).

Despite these challenges, the overall findings emphasize that education remains a powerful tool for shaping students' character. When properly implemented, character education contributes to the development of disciplined, responsible, and socially aware individuals. This aligns with the broader goals of education, which aim to produce not only intelligent students but also morally strong and socially responsible citizens.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that successful character education requires a holistic approach involving teachers, schools, families, and society. Continuous reinforcement of moral values across different environments ensures that students can internalize and practice positive behaviors consistently in their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that education plays a fundamental role in shaping students' character and moral behavior. Character education is not only concerned with academic achievement but also with the development of students' ethical awareness, social responsibility, and positive attitudes in daily life. Through consistent value-based learning, students are able to internalize important moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, and empathy.

The study also concludes that teachers, school environments, and family support are key factors in the success of character education implementation. Teachers serve as role models who influence students' behavior through daily interactions and learning activities. A positive school environment provides opportunities for students to practice moral values in real situations, while family involvement ensures consistency in value formation at home and at school.

Furthermore, the study highlights that modern challenges such as technological development and social media exposure can influence students' character development both positively and negatively. Therefore, schools need to strengthen digital ethics education and guide students in using technology responsibly.

However, the implementation of character education still faces several challenges, including limited time in the curriculum, lack of teacher training, and insufficient integration of moral values in learning activities. Despite these limitations, character education remains essential in developing well-rounded individuals.

Overall, it can be concluded that strengthening students' character through education requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving teachers, schools, families, and society. Continuous reinforcement of moral values is necessary to ensure that students grow into responsible, ethical, and socially aware individuals in the future.

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