

# Character Education as the Foundation of Education

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## Abstract

This study explores the role of values and morals in the formation of character education of grade VI students at SDN Tawangrejo Blitar Regency through a descriptive qualitative approach. The research was conducted through in-depth interviews with homeroom teachers and three students, complemented by documentation. The results showed that teachers implement habituation of honesty and discipline values through activities such as flag salute and dhuha prayer in congregation. This strategy is considered effective because it is based on student awareness, without physical punishment or psychological pressure. Educational consequences such as repeating prayers are carried out to instill an attitude of obedience and responsibility. The research also highlights the urgency of collaboration between teachers, families and communities in shaping strong character from an early age. Although there are still challenges in the consistency of value application outside the school environment, the integration of national character values in the curriculum and teachers' exemplary behavior contribute greatly to shaping students' morals. Overall, a humanist and contextual approach has proven effective in instilling positive character values and building national identity in elementary school students.

## 1. Introduction

Character is the principle that guides human behaviour in relation to God Almighty, oneself, others, the environment, and nationality. Thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions reflect these values, which are based on religion, law, etiquette, customs, and culture. Character values are based on morality and good manners, so the benchmark for a country with character is a country with good manners. Meanwhile, an amoral country is a country that lacks moral standards and good attitudes. Therefore, character education is an effort to understand, build, and instil moral principles for oneself, as well as for every individual who is part of society or a citizen (Puspitasari, 2022).

Character education is very important for children because it will influence their future lives. The objectives of character education are related to the tasks of education throughout the country. Education is a process of action aimed at shaping, directing, and developing humans to achieve certain goals. Character education is the main objective in the national education process as an effort to form a society with character and dignity (Lisia Miranda, 2024).

Character education is an educational process deliberately intended to shape and improve students' character, teaching them how to make good choices, uphold what is good, and perform acts of kindness in daily life freely and without coercion. In certain subjects at school or madrasah, this educational process can be significantly applied. The basic concept instilled in a person's mind to improve their character and physical and spiritual morals has become more important than ever before in the hope of reducing the moral crisis plaguing this country, known as character education. Experts argue that character education can shape a person's morality and values from an early age, through adolescence, and even into adulthood (Triana, 2022).

Values and morals play a crucial role in building students' character from an early age. Values are the standards or rules that individuals or groups use to assess how they behave. Meanwhile, morals are principles about what is considered right and wrong in everyday life (Khaulani et al., 2020). In her journal, Puspitasari (2022) states that education includes formal, informal, and non-formal education.

The instilling of values and morals is not only done through formal teaching; real-life examples, habits, and a supportive environment are also very important. Education across the country includes informal or out-of-school education. In educating children, there are three environments that are responsible, according to Zakiah Daradjat. These three environments are the family, school, and community. These three environments cannot be separated. Parents and teachers play a major role as role models and guides at this stage. Children will grow up to be people with good character, honesty,

and responsibility through a consistent and empathetic approach. This approach will also enable them to live harmoniously in society.

Armini (2024) states that character education plays a major role in improving students' character by developing existing moral principles and ethical values. Thus, the implementation of character education is an obligation at every stage of a child's growth and development. Character education is any form of effort by educators to influence students to develop good character (Salsabilah et al., 2021). In primary school education, students are focused on character and personality development. On the other hand, the focus of education is not only to support the development of cognitive aspects but also to encourage progress in the affective dimension or students' attitudes (Nababan, 2023). Teachers are the foundation in the character development of students, especially in schools. All forms of teacher behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal, serve as role models for students (Jannah & Mauizdati, 2022). Therefore, teachers as educators are not only tasked with transferring knowledge but also need to possess commendable character and personality (Salsabilah et al., 2021).

The family is a social unit with a significant impact on realising the nation's aspirations (ARLIMAN S et al., 2022). For children, the family is the source of all initial knowledge in their growth and development. Informal education in the family is the main foundation for shaping children's character. This is because the family is the environment in which children grow and develop from birth to adulthood. Through the role of informal education, children form and create their first character and personality (Ramdani et al., 2023).

According to Hasanah (2021), the growth and development of children is the responsibility of three environments. The environments in question are the family, school, and community. To support the optimal growth and development of children as the nation's future leaders, collaboration among these three environments is needed. Through the support of all education stakeholders, a generation of future leaders with noble and praiseworthy personalities can be realised. This is expected to address the increasing moral degradation that is increasingly plaguing the nation's youth.

## **2. Method**

This study was conducted qualitatively and used a descriptive approach. The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth description of the role of morals and values in character education in grade VI at SDN Tawangrejo, Blitar Regency. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gain a contextual understanding of the assessment procedures from the perspective of teachers, who are the direct implementers in the field. Field studies were used, and the main data collection techniques were in-depth interviews and documentation. This study involved the homeroom teacher and three students in the sixth grade at SDN Tawangrejo. The tool used was a systematically compiled list of interview questions aimed at gathering information about the role of morality and principles related to character education for students.

The data collection process involved direct interviews with the relevant parties to ensure that the information collected was accurate, as well as documentation to support the research results as concrete evidence. The interviews were recorded in full and conducted in a semi-structured manner. Data reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing processes were used to analyse the collected data descriptively. The main themes and patterns of thought that emerged from the informants' answers were identified through content analysis techniques. With this method, the study is expected to provide an in-depth picture of the role of moral values in student character education.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

They should be combined. The study results should be clear and concise. Restrict the use of tables and figures to depict data that is essential to the message and interpretation of the study. The results should be presented in a logical sequence in the text, tables and illustrations. The part of result exposes the findings obtained from research data which is related to the hypotheses. The results should summarize (scientific) findings rather than providing data in great detail. The discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work. Explains the findings obtained from research data along with theory and similar research comparison. Make the discussion corresponding to the results, but do not reiterate the results. The following components should be covered in discussion: How do your results relate to the original question or objectives outlined in the Introduction section (what/how)? Do you provide interpretation scientifically for each of your results or findings presented (why)? Are your results consistent with what other investigators have reported (what else)? Or are there any

differences?. Include in the discussion the implications of the findings and their limitations, how the findings fit into the context of other relevant work, and directions for future research.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews conducted verbally with the 6th grade teacher of SDN Tawangrejo, Blitar Regency, an understanding of the urgency of instilling character education since the early stages of education was obtained. In an effort to instill the moral value of honesty in students, the school applies a habituation-based approach that is carried out consistently. One aspect that is highlighted is getting students used to being honest, for example in terms of the completeness of school attributes. After the flag ceremony, students who do not complete their attributes voluntarily and without coercion from the teacher come forward to undergo consequences in the form of respect for the flag. This activity aims to form a habit of honesty that arises from self-awareness, not because of pressure and coercion.

Every school rule needs to provide consequences with the aim of preventing violations of the rules. In dealing with rule violations by students, teachers apply educational forms of consequences without exerting burdensome emotional or physical pressure. For example, during the *dhuha* prayer, if there are students who do not follow the prayer quietly, the teacher in charge will record the student's name. Furthermore, the recorded student is required to repeat the prayer again. This approach has proven to be quite effective in fostering compliance with the rules while at the same time providing educational consequences for violations without hurting students.

Based on the results of interviews with the homeroom teacher of grade VI SDN Tawangrejo, it was found that the teacher's role in improving the value and moral aspects of students. Teachers as educators encourage students to have positive character traits such as honesty and obeying rules. The habit of honesty is carried out through the consequences of respecting the flag after the ceremony for students who do not complete their uniform attributes. Meanwhile, discipline or obeying the rules is instilled by the teacher through praying *dhuha* in congregation. In addition, the consequences of violations without hurting or educational consequences are given in the form of praying *dhuha* again for students who are busy and not calm during worship.



**Figure 1. Teacher Interview grade VI SDN Tawangrejo**

Education is a structured process that aims to improve students' intelligence and understanding through guided learning experiences. Education is a conscious effort to educate students in preparation for a bright future. According to Ahmad (2021), education is an effort to enlighten the nation's future generations because it is expected to bring about a civilisation that supports moral values and reflects human nature. Education provides students with knowledge, understanding, skills, and principles that will help them succeed in the future, both personally and professionally (Wati & Anggriani, 2024).

Character building is an important component of education. Character itself is defined as the traits, attitudes, and habits that distinguish one person from another. Character education aims to teach students about ethical and moral guidelines through their interactions with others, their environment, and themselves (Rasyid et al., 2024). Schools play an important role in character education and character development because students are not only valued for their academic abilities but also for their good morals or praiseworthy traits. Knowing what is good, loving what is good, and doing what is good are all aspects of good character (Ichsan, 2021).

According to Masnur Muslich, the goal of character education is to improve the quality of learning outcomes, especially in schools. This will result in the formation of students' character and noble morals in a comprehensive, integrated, and balanced manner in accordance with graduate competency standards (Triana, 2022). In line with the national education objectives outlined in the National Education System, education serves as a catalyst for students' potential to become a society that is

faithful and God-fearing, with praiseworthy morals, capable, creative, independent, knowledgeable, and responsible and democratic citizens (Indonesia, 2003).

Cut Zahri Harun (2013) states that, beyond moral education, character education also focuses on fostering good habits in individual students. This includes a deep awareness and understanding of the values of goodness, as well as a commitment to applying them in daily life. In addition to developing personal potential, character education also plays a role in internalising cultural values and national identity, enabling individuals to face the challenges of globalisation that could weaken national identity (Rahmatiani, 2017).

Instilling character values from an early age is crucial because values indirectly shape students' habits and ways of thinking. Over time, this will lead to the development of a strong character in the next generation (Wati & Anggriani, 2024). These character values encompass spiritual, personal, social, environmental, and national aspects to create a generation that is beneficial to themselves and society.

According to Ichsan (2021), character education aims to provide space for students to develop their personal potential while instilling a spirit of nationalism through the integration of cultural values and national character. To achieve effective character education in schools, the involvement of all stakeholders is required. These parties encompass various aspects of the educational world, such as curriculum content, teaching methods and assessment systems, the quality of interactions among school members, subject management, school management, extracurricular activities, optimisation of facilities and infrastructure, funding, and the work ethic of the entire school community. Before integrating values that represent national character into the educational process, it is necessary to first reach an understanding of the meaning of the lessons to be learned. A shared understanding is important to avoid differences in interpretation of the material that could hinder efforts to unify values that reflect the nation's identity (Ichsan, 2021).

Saylor et al. (1981), argue that learning is a manifestation of the implementation of the curriculum as a written document, so that the discussion of learning cannot be separated from the problem of curriculum implementation in force. According to Hasan (2002), when the curriculum that is compiled in writing is implemented, therefore the implementation process is a concrete manifestation of the curriculum as an educational plan. In reality, two educators who implement the same curriculum, for example in social studies subjects, can produce different learning experiences for students. This difference is not caused by different curriculum content, but rather differences in the way each educator implements the curriculum in the classroom.

The integration of national character values in learning activities means applying and harmonizing values that are considered positive and appropriate in the process of developing, fostering, and forming students' attitudes and personalities that are in line with national character during the teaching and learning process. According to Dalyono and Lestariningsih (2017), the values of national character are shown through strong religious aspects reflected in the high level of faith and piety to God Almighty, and shown through good character and socialization skills, such as independence, responsibility, creativity, innovation, dynamic spirit, and upholding tolerance and democratic values.

Integrating national character values in teaching and learning activities can be done through several stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. The explanation for each of these learning stages is as follows.

#### 1) Planning

The integration of national character values requires careful planning, from the preparation of lesson plans to the organization of the learning environment. This planning includes aspects of "what will be taught" as well as "how the learning process is carried out" both inside and outside the classroom. The result of this stage is the design of learning activities that will be implemented.

#### 2) Learning Implementation

The integration of national character values in the teaching and learning process is applied to all subjects listed in the school curriculum. These values are expected to appear in every stage of learning, starting from the introduction, core, to closing. Therefore, each learning

phase contains or inserts moral messages and national character values in accordance with the subject matter being taught.

Classroom management is an important aspect of learning activities that emphasizes the application of national character values. The purpose of classroom management is to create and maintain conducive learning conditions, so that students are not only able to master academic competencies but also able to apply character values in their daily lives. In addition, academic guidance has a strategic role in supporting student success, especially in terms of integrating national character values. This guidance is a form of service provided by teachers to help students overcome learning problems.

### 3) Evaluation

The last stage in integrating national character values into the learning process is the assessment stage. This assessment aims to measure the extent of students' success in completing various learning tasks, both during the learning process and at the end of learning. Some components that become the reference in determining the final grade include: attendance rate in face-to-face activities, completion of learning tasks, mid-semester exam results, and final semester grades. All components of the assessment are summarized in the form of a learning outcome report submitted to parents at the end of each semester.

In addition, the assessment of learning outcomes cannot stand alone without considering the contribution of the students' immediate environment in character building, especially the role of the family as the main foundation for early education of moral and ethical values. In forming a strong and characterful generation, education is not solely the responsibility of teachers and schools. Family is the closest environment in the process of starting character education. As the first environment known to learners since birth, the family has a great influence on the formation of moral values, ethics, and positive habits. Character education that is built early in the family will be the main foundation for the development of the child's personality in the school family environment and society. Therefore, understanding and optimizing the role of the family in character education is very important.

Students learn character from daily interactions, especially through parental example. The values instilled, such as responsibility, honesty, discipline, courtesy, social care, and independence (Inspirasi et al., 2023). The family plays the earliest and most important role in the process of learner development, because it is responsible for forming the initial foundation of their growth. Learners are born, raised, and develop in a family environment, and first learn to interact through relationships with parents. Support and encouragement from parents are very influential in shaping the personality of learners in the future, as part of basic education (Gunawan et al., 2022).

Small habits in the family environment, such as greeting, maintaining cleanliness, and helping parents are the basis of good character that is formed naturally (Tsania & Rigianti, 2023). A loving, caring family environment and good communication between family members encourage children to feel safe and valued, which is important for positive character development. In the digital age, children are exposed to a lot of information from the internet and social media. Without family supervision, children can be influenced by negative values. Therefore, families play a role in controlling, accompanying, and educating media ethics.

After the family, schools and teachers play an important role in strengthening and shaping children's character in a sustainable manner. Teachers and schools have a strategic role in shaping the character of students who are not only academically superior but also have noble character. Teachers are the main role models in the school environment. Through their attitudes, words, and actions, teachers directly or indirectly teach values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility.

Research Ahmad & Arkiang (2021) proves that the role of teachers in character building achieves high effectiveness, especially in the habituation of positive behavior at school. In addition, teachers play an important role in integrating character values into each subject. In learning Islamic Religious Education, for example, students are invited to instill the values of tolerance, responsibility, and hard work. Fikri et al. (2025) emphasized that this approach is effective in shaping students' spiritual and social attitudes.

Schools as formal education institutions also play an important role in creating a culture that supports character building. A conducive, orderly, and friendly school environment will strengthen the internalization of positive values in students. Research by Hendri et al. (2022) shows that school culture is very influential in strengthening student character education. In addition to the teaching and learning process, character education is strengthened through extracurricular activities such as scouts, sports, and arts that foster cooperation, leadership, and empathy between students. A. R. Jannah et al (2022) stated that teachers can increase students' positive behavior through character building in activities outside the classroom.

In addition, collaboration between schools, parents and communities is key to the success of character education. This synergy allows the values taught at school to be reinforced at home and in the social environment. Research by Ramandhini et al. (2023) confirms that the active role of parents together with teachers is very effective in shaping children's character from an early age. In the policy context, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a great opportunity for schools to develop character education based on the Pancasila Student Profile. (Febriyani, 2025) shows that this curriculum encourages the formation of students who are faithful, independent, critical reasoning, and global diversity through a flexible and contextual learning approach.

Teachers and schools play a major role in shaping a generation of intelligence and character. However, the success of character education also depends on the active role of the community, which helps shape children's personalities through the social environment and daily interactions. Community involvement strengthens the values of responsibility, caring and cooperation. Furthermore, character education that involves the community can help overcome social problems such as juvenile delinquency and moral degradation. Research by Rasyid et al. (2024) emphasizes that early cultivation of positive character values through character education involving the community can prevent and reduce these social problems. In addition, Febriyani (2025) also stated that, synergy between school, family, community, and government is needed so that character education can be implemented optimally and sustainably. This shows that the role of the community is not only as a supporter, but also as an active partner in shaping the character of the younger generation. Character education requires the collaboration of families, schools, teachers and communities. Families form the basis of values, schools and teachers strengthen them, and communities support them through the social environment. This synergy forms a generation of character and resilience.

### 3.1. Conclusion

Character education has a fundamental role in shaping a generation that is noble, independent, and contributes to society. This research highlights the important role of morals and values in education, focusing on how teachers implement values such as honesty and discipline in learning. Habituation through activities such as flag salute and dhuha prayer in congregation shows that character education can be effectively implemented without hurtful punishment.

In addition, education not only aims to improve students' intelligence and skills but also to form strong habits and mindsets from an early age. The integration of national character values in the school curriculum is an important factor in creating an educational environment that supports character building. With the involvement of teachers, schools, families and communities, character education can be sustainable, ensuring that future generations have a strong national identity and good morals. This article emphasizes that synergy between various parties in the education ecosystem is needed so that the formation of national character can take place optimally and sustainably.

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