

## Character education building a generation with integrity and ethics

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### ABSTRACT

Character education plays a significant role in shaping individuals who possess not just intellectual intelligence, but also robust moral and social integrity. This objective can be achieved through cooperative endeavors among schools, families, and communities. Schools, functioning as formal educational establishments, bear a substantial responsibility in reinforcing and broadening the values instilled at home through both curriculum and extracurricular engagements. Families, serving as the primary environment, wield considerable influence in implanting the fundamental values that mold children's character. Likewise, the community also plays a noteworthy role in character education, considering children's upbringing and interactions within their social milieu. The article underscores the significance of upholding moral integrity within character education, alongside emphasizing the cultivation of social, emotional, and moral competence. It stresses the urgency of tackling the moral crises faced by many nations by adopting methodologies that impart ethical principles, integrity, and sincerity to the younger generation. In an era marked by globalization and technological advancement, possessing a resilient character emerges as paramount for individual success in navigating life's complexities. Therefore, crafting effective character education strategies becomes crucial to instill ethics and constructive values in the upcoming generation. Through character education initiatives, it is anticipated that young people will evolve into conscientious, compassionate, and engaged citizens actively contributing to societal and global betterment. In this vein, collaborative effort among educational institutions, families, and communities is imperative. By bolstering collaboration among these three pillars, character education stands poised to wield greater efficacy in shaping individuals endowed with steadfast moral integrity, prepared to confront the multifaceted challenges of modern life.



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## INTRODUCTION

In navigating various life situations, character education plays a crucial role (Wulantari et al., 2023). Character education is not solely the responsibility of schools; it is a collaborative effort involving families, schools, and communities. The engagement of these three parties is essential in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also possess strong moral and social integrity. The family, being the primary and fundamental environment for children, is instrumental in instilling the core values that form the foundation of a child's character. Parents significantly influence the development of their children's attitudes and behaviors through everyday examples and interactions. Meanwhile, schools, as formal educational institutions, play a role in reinforcing and expanding the values taught at home. By integrating these values into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, schools create an environment conducive to character development. Communities also have a vital role in character education, as children grow and interact within their social environment. A supportive community can foster the development of good character, whereas a negative environment can pose challenges. Therefore, a synergistic relationship between family, school, and community is necessary to establish a comprehensive ecosystem that supports holistic character development in children.

Effective character education requires harmonious cooperation and commitment from all relevant parties. Thus, children will grow into individuals who not only excel academically, but also have good attitudes and behaviors, ready to face various life challenges wisely and responsibly. Character education addresses the moral crises faced by many countries by instilling ethical values, integrity, and honesty in young people. By teaching values such as empathy, cooperation, and

peaceful conflict resolution, character education can help decrease conflict and violence in schools and communities (Khairuddin & Si, 2018). Additionally, character education aids in the development of social, emotional, and moral skills, contributing to happier and more meaningful lives. In the era of globalization, character education is crucial for helping students interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Ranam, Muslim, & Priyono, 2021). Thus, character education is essential for preparing young people to become responsible, caring, and engaged members of society and the world (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). Consequently, many countries worldwide are increasingly recognizing character education as a vital component of their educational systems (Bomans Wadu, et.al, 2021).

The advancement of technology and globalization significantly influences societal dynamics, particularly affecting the younger generation (Pamungkas et al., 2023). In adapting to these changes, possessing a strong character is crucial for individuals to thrive in their daily lives. Consequently, it is essential to outline effective character education strategies that can instill ethics and values in the younger generation. Character education aims to cultivate individuals who possess not only academic intelligence but also exhibit high moral integrity and social ethics (Fortuna & Khadir, 2022). It encompasses endeavors to foster a well-rounded personality, considering not just cognitive aspects but also instilling positive values and attitudes. The objective is to nurture citizens who demonstrate responsibility, honesty, and empathy towards society and the environment. Furthermore, character education serves to prevent moral and ethical decay in society and address traditional value crises. It also shapes individuals who are socially adept, capable of engaging in diverse societal contexts, and enjoy a better quality of life due to a robust moral foundation (Susanto, 2017).

Character education also equips students with essential skills for success in the professional realm, emphasizing values like diligence, accountability, and collaboration. This process develops individuals with both intellectual acumen and unwavering moral principles. Such an approach is regarded as a crucial cornerstone in fostering positive character traits and behaviors in students, ultimately benefiting society and the nation (Jaenullah, Ferdian Utama, 2022). The advancement of social and moral ethics stands as a critical component of character education. It facilitates individuals in comprehending their civic duties and responsibilities, fostering positive interpersonal relationships, steering clear of detrimental behaviors, and fostering virtues such as honesty and equity (Hudiarini, 2017). Moreover, the cultivation of social and moral ethics contributes significantly to societal well-being, assisting individuals in navigating moral dilemmas, fostering a constructive organizational ethos, and nurturing personal development (Santi Dey et al., 2021). Consequently, the cultivation of social and moral ethics serves as a fundamental cornerstone in shaping individual character, fortifying community cohesion, and fostering a fairer, sustainable world (Amelia et al., 2023). Thus, character education must earnestly integrate this dimension into both the curriculum and the societal values imparted. Robust social and moral ethics will empower students to confront diverse life scenarios, make informed decisions, and forge positive connections with others.

By examining scholarly literature, this article aims to offer an in-depth comprehension of character education, the determinants impacting character development, and proven strategies for instilling ethics and positive values in the youth. The goal is to furnish valuable guidance for educators, parents, and stakeholders engaged in molding the character of the younger generation, enabling them to respond sagaciously and efficiently to contemporary challenges.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study utilizes a qualitative approach, employing a literature review as its methodology. Data collection involves gathering documentation from diverse literature sources pertinent to the research topic. The research process encompasses selecting subjects, collecting data from various literature references, analyzing the data, writing the report, and presenting the research findings. In conducting this study, a range of literature references, including books, journals, articles, and bibliographies, were consulted. The chosen references were carefully selected to ensure the data's validity, with a rigorous selection and verification process implemented to ensure accuracy and reliability. Additionally, reputable educational and academic sources were included in the reference materials. Through the application of these research methods, the researchers aim to produce an accurate and comprehensive research report on the Character Education Strategy: Cultivating an Ethical and Principled Generation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education involves transforming the attitudes and behaviors of individuals or groups through teaching and training to foster maturity. As defined by the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) in 1991 and the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, education is a deliberate and planned effort to create a learning environment and process that enables students to actively develop their potential. According to Anas Salahudin and Irwanto Alkrienciehie, character refers to the values that distinguish individuals, both in everyday life and interactions with their environment, and these values are reflected in their behavior. Dr. John Dewan asserts that character education in early adulthood aims to instill positive values such as integrity, honesty, empathy, responsibility, and cooperation. The goal is to develop a responsible generation through consistent teaching, the practice of these values in daily life, and comprehensive support for moral development.

In the realm of education, character education can be described as an endeavor to cultivate moral values, manners, and character in individuals, enabling them to make sound decisions, foster goodness, and consistently apply it in daily life with dedication. This process entails shaping individuals' moral values and attitudes through both formal and informal education, emphasizing the development of personality, morality, and positive attitudes essential for achieving success and leading a meaningful life. The concept of character education within the context of modern societal development requires a profound understanding of values, ethics, and attitudes essential for shaping individuals who are not only academically proficient but also possess moral and social awareness (Marzuki & Hakim, 2019). The role of educators at all educational levels extends beyond merely imparting knowledge to children. Educators must offer a holistic education that encompasses aspects of faith and morality. Consequently, they need to cultivate good speech and behavior in students within the classroom, which will ultimately be ingrained as positive character traits in their future education. The development and nurturing of quality character should begin early. Childhood is a crucial period for character formation. Many experts suggest that failing to instill character in individuals from a young age can lead to problematic behavior in adulthood. Furthermore, instilling character in children is a strategic effort (Tyas., et.al. 2020).

Character building can be likened to training someone to become a bodybuilder, which requires continuous practice to strengthen the moral muscles. Furthermore, the success of character education must be bolstered by providing a positive and enjoyable educational and social environment for children. Hence, the education needed today should integrate character education with a curriculum that optimizes the development of all aspects of children (cognitive, physical, social-emotional, creativity, and spiritual). This educational model aims to develop children as whole individuals. Well-rounded students excel not only in cognitive abilities but also in character. Children who are strong in character will be better equipped to handle the problems and challenges they encounter in life.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), integrity of character refers to dependable conduct in actions, speech, and tasks, along with a dedication to humane and ethical principles. Fundamental principles of integrity encompass honesty, accountability, devotion to truth, and serving as a role model. Integrity also involves honoring individuals' dignity and actively engaging in communal endeavors. Essential conduct associated with integrity, as outlined by Development Dimensions International (DID), entails engaging in transparent interactions and demonstrating alignment between words and deeds. Hay Consultant categorizes integrity into various forms, including transparent interaction and adherence to values even amidst challenges. Integrity mirrors the consistency of one's behavior guided by societal and religious norms in daily life.

Adolescents benefit greatly from engaging in intensive religious activities, which can serve as a positive influence and deter juvenile delinquency, while simultaneously reinforcing their personal integrity. Within the realm of character education, particularly concerning the value of integrity, teachers play a pivotal role in effectively managing character education, fostering a supportive atmosphere, and nurturing the development of desired character traits, particularly those linked to integrity. Teachers are not solely responsible for imparting subject matter pertaining to character education; they also possess the capacity to enact changes in students' character and aid them in cultivating integrity. Nevertheless, some teachers in practice fail to positively impact students and instead contribute to the formation of negative behaviors and attitudes. Hence, it remains crucial for

educators to serve as exemplary figures for students, notwithstanding the fact that certain students may no longer hold teachers in high regard, but rather fear them.

Religion-centered character education plays a vital role in nurturing morally grounded values in students, thereby enhancing their integrity. Virtually all educational institutions include character education in their curriculum, whether through indigenous subjects or Islamic Religious Education (PAI), with the objective of fostering religiously oriented character traits among students. Consequently, students can discern between virtuous and detrimental actions, shaping a perspective that associates goodness with virtuous conduct and vice versa. Despite the existence of character education programs, their deployment as a remedy for the nation's moral and character crisis has not been executed effectively and comprehensively. This is largely due to stakeholders' incomplete grasp of how to effectively and comprehensively administer and implement character education initiatives. Consequently, it is imperative to assess and enhance their execution.

Character education within the educational system encompasses four categories: a) rooted in religious principles, reflecting divine truths (moral preservation); b) grounded in cultural values, encompassing traits, Pancasila, literary works, exemplary historical figures, and national leaders (environmental preservation); c) centered on environmental awareness (environmental preservation); d) focused on individual potential, fostering personal attitudes emerging from self-empowerment to enhance educational standards (humanitarian preservation). Thus, it's no wonder that numerous scholars posit the intimate connection between a nation's character and its accomplishments across various spheres. The goal of character education is to cultivate individuals with robust, competitive, dignified, moral, tolerant, cooperative, patriotic, dynamic spirits, oriented toward science and technology, while adhering to Pancasila-based faith and piety. When addressing personality development, one cannot overlook the importance of shaping human resource character. Building character in human resources serves as a critical linchpin in constructing an Indonesia capable of confronting regional and global trials. These trials encompass ensuring that the younger generation possesses not only cognitive prowess but also robust emotional and moral foundations. Hence, character education becomes essential in instilling moral integrity in individuals, fostering respect for others, honesty, and environmental concern. Human resources stand as the paramount asset in advancing and enhancing a nation, yet the cultivation of strong character is imperative for this endeavor. Such character is defined by distinctive mental attributes like trustworthiness, sincerity, honesty, bravery, resilience, steadfast adherence to principles, and other inherent qualities.

When we talk about shaping personalities, it's impossible to separate it from the endeavor to mold the character of human resources. Character development is paramount and inevitable in the quest to forge an Indonesia capable of confronting global and regional challenges. These challenges encompass ensuring that the younger generation possesses robust cognitive, affective, and moral faculties. Hence, character education is pivotal in instilling integrity in moral values among individuals, fostering their capacity to show respect, honesty, and environmental concern. Humans constitute the cornerstone in constructing a superior and progressive nation. Nevertheless, for this aspiration to materialize, human resources must possess resilient characters. Resilient character is exemplified by unique mental attributes, such as trustworthiness, sincerity, honesty, bravery, steadfastness, adherence to principles, and other distinctive traits inherent to them.

To achieve this concept, the active involvement of three main entities—school, family, and community—is essential for the effective character development of the younger generation. Schools function as formal institutions that deliver character education through a specially designed curriculum. This education not only emphasizes academic learning but also focuses on instilling values such as integrity, responsibility, cooperation, and social care. Extracurricular activities, including class projects, clubs, and self-development programs, play a significant role in shaping character. Teachers are central to this process, providing examples, instruction, and guidance to help students comprehend and embody positive values in their everyday lives. The family serves as the primary environment where children first learn about values and ethics. Open communication between parents and children, along with the daily reinforcement of positive values, is crucial for character development. Parents act as role models, demonstrating the behaviors they wish to instill in their children. Their active participation in their children's lives, such as supporting school activities and fostering healthy emotional bonds, helps build a strong character foundation.

Society offers a cultural backdrop that shapes the norms and values deemed important. Collaboration among schools, families, and the local community can foster a supportive environment for character development by offering opportunities to engage in social and community activities. In today's world, media and technology significantly influence perceptions of values and ethics. Therefore, character education must also address the impact of media and technology on shaping the attitudes and behaviors of young people. By fostering robust collaboration among schools, families, and communities, character education in contemporary society can serve as a sturdy groundwork for molding young individuals characterized by responsibility and preparedness to confront the intricate challenges of their lives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Character education plays a vital role in molding individuals who possess not only intellectual intelligence but also robust moral and social integrity. This objective can be realized through collaborative efforts involving schools, families, and communities. Schools, serving as formal educational establishments, bear a substantial responsibility in reinforcing and broadening the values cultivated at home through both the curriculum and extracurricular endeavors. Families, as the primary environment, wield considerable influence in instilling the fundamental values that shape a child's character. Concurrently, communities contribute significantly to character education, given that children mature and interact within their social milieu. Effective collaboration among these three entities is essential for fostering an environment conducive to nurturing holistic character development in children.

The article also underscores the significance of upholding moral integrity within character education, alongside placing emphasis on cultivating social, emotional, and moral competencies. This underscores the pressing need to tackle the moral crises confronting numerous nations by adopting methodologies that impart ethical principles, integrity, and sincerity to the younger populace. Amidst the era of globalization and technological progress, possessing a resilient character emerges as the linchpin for individual triumph in navigating the intricacies of daily existence. Consequently, devising an efficacious character education strategy becomes imperative to instill ethics and constructive values in the upcoming generation. Through character education initiatives, it is envisaged that youth will evolve into conscientious, compassionate, and engaged citizens, actively contributing to the betterment of society and the world. In this vein, collaborative endeavors among educational establishments, families, and communities are paramount. By fortifying collaboration among these three pillars, character education stands poised to wield greater efficacy in shaping individuals endowed with steadfast moral integrity, poised to confront the multifaceted challenges of contemporary life.

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