

How is Character Education in the Formation of Morals in Elementary Schools?

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ABSTRACT

One of the fundamental aspects in preparing future generations who are ready to face the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 era is character education. Thus, this research aims to examine how character education is implemented in forming moral values in elementary schools. This research was conducted at Gampingrowo State Elementary School in Sidoarjo using the case study method. Data were collected through observation, interviews and documentation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model which includes: data reduction; data presentation; and conclusion drawing. The results of this study showed that in implementing character education, SDN Gampingrowo prepared three systematic steps, namely planning, implementation and evaluation. In its implementation, character education was integrated with intracurricular, extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Meanwhile, the habituation program at school was also employed as a support for character building. To measure the success of character education in the school, SDN Gampingrowo conducted an assessment and reward program.

Keywords: Character Education, Elementary School, Morals

How to Cite Setyowulandari, R., Rifki, M., Nasution, N. R., & Usman, F. (2025). How is Character Education in the Formation of Morals in Elementary Schools?. *Jurnal Al Burhan*, 5(1), 187-197. <https://doi.org/10.58988/jab.v5i1.370>

INTRODUCTION

Education has a significant role in the development of human potential. By being educated, a person is not only in the process of discovering identity, but also can use education as a key to building the nation. It has been mentioned by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Ir. Joko Widodo that education is a long way taken by a nation in facing the challenge of building its identity, character and dignity. Furthermore, as stated in one the classical literature, Japanese people believed that the mirror that indicates the quality of personality is a more significant component than the sword (weapon) and gold (treasure). A person who has noble character and morals, both to God, the environment, and others, is a person who is not only said to be the successor of the nation's struggle as mandated by the Constitution (*Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia 1945, 1945*) but can maintain a sustainable environmental balance.

In essence, character education is defined as an effort to instill good habits (habituation) so that students are able to behave and act based on values that have become their personality (Nurlaila et al., 2023). Character education should regularly be taught, made a habit, trained consistently and then it becomes a character for students. Therefore, strengthening character education should be an educational movement under the responsibility of the education unit to strengthen the character of learners through feeling, thinking and exercising with the involvement and cooperation between education units, families and communities as part of the National Movement for Mental Revolution (GNRM). This was initiated by President Joko Widodo which is also the basis for the birth of Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education (Karimah et al., 2022)

As the character is part of the challenges that continue to be faced, research conducted by Jenny believed that character education in schools still requires more serious concern (Poerwanti & Marmoah, 2021). This can be seen from the significance of several cases of juvenile delinquency that occur in educational units, such as the increase in violence among adolescents/society, the use of inappropriate language by students, the lower respect for parents and teachers, the low sense of individual and group responsibility, the culture of lies/dishonesty, and the existence of mutual suspicion and hatred between people, making character education a priority that should be strengthened (Amaliati, 2020). So it becomes a special concern not only for teachers but also for school principals, stakeholders and parents.

Basically, character education and moral formation is a shared responsibility. Moreover, school as a place of learning and teaching has a great opportunity to educate a student to have positive character and morals. If a person has a positive character but is weak and unable to respond to this fast-paced digital world with various content found on the internet, it will threaten moral degradation (Indra, 2016). This is due to the good and bad of the digital world depending on the subject of its users. Thus, by focusing on character and moral education, a student as the future successor of the nation is expected to be able to respond wisely to various opportunities and challenges in the future. Several studies related to character education in schools have been conducted by a number of researchers including Harry Pramono, et al. who stated that character education is not only influenced by teachers but also by the school environment (Pramono et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to Nikson Kollo et al character education strategy in education units by integrated it into all learning in schools, both intracurricular, extracurricular and co-curricular (Kollo et al., 2024).

Based on observations, Gampingrowo Sidoarjo, State Primary School, has implemented character education in the school, both in the form of integration with co-curricular (learning experience), co-curricular (project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile and *rahmatan lil alamin* student profile), and extracurricular. In addition, character education is integrated with habituation and school culture. Thus, considering how important character education must be continuously built and strengthened, this research aims to reveal how character education contributed in shaping students' morals at SDN Gampingrowo Sidoarjo.

As stated by one of the principals at the senior high school level, character education is the key to student success in taking the next level, both in college and readiness to appear in facing the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 era. Therefore, primary school is the foundation point of how character education can be built comprehensively.

METHOD

The research conducted at Gampingrowo State Elementary School in Sidoarjo is a case study research with a qualitative approach. This qualitative approach is used to achieve an in-depth understanding of the complexity of humans and the world around them (Rahardjo, 2023). The process of data collection, analysis and verification is described as follows:

Table 1. Data Collection, Analysis, and Verification

Data Collections	Data Sources	Data Analysis and Validity
Interview	Principal, facilitators, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, student guardians	Analysis was done through data reduction, presentation and conclusion drawing. Data validity through triangulation of data sources from one informant to another; and triangulation of interview methods with observation/documentation.
Observation	Learning Activities Intracurricular, co-curricular (P5 and PPRA), extracurricular, and habituation activities at school	
Documentation	The curriculum was used, as well as related books and scientific articles.	

From the table, it can be seen that data collection was carried out in three ways. First, observation was conducted where the researcher observed independently and objectively related to learning programs in schools that contain character values and education. Second, the researchers interviewed several informants as primary data sources. Third, the researchers conducted documentation that supports the analysis. The primary data in this study are the principal, facilitators, homeroom teachers and teachers of Civics and religion subjects, as well as several parents. While the secondary data in this study are some data related to the curriculum used, scientific articles and books that support the analysis of the data that has been obtained.

Meanwhile, in analyzing the data, researchers used the Miles and Huberman model which includes three steps, namely: data reduction in the form of sorting and selecting relevant and strong data; data presentation after the data selection process is complete; and conclusion drawing or verification (A. Michael Huberman & Miles, 2014). To ensure that the data obtained can be validly stated, researchers employed triangulation where the researchers compared the data obtained through interviews by verifying the data of one informant with another and verifying data obtained through interviews with observation or documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Urgency of Character and Moral Education in Schools

Along with the development of information and globalization, moral degradation in the form of weak character can bring concerns in the form of negative impacts on national life based on Pancasila, Unity in Diversity, NKRI and the Constitution (Pusmendik, 2021). Therefore, educational institutions have a big responsibility, which is not only to educate the nation's life but also how to build the morals and character of the nation. Concerning moral formation, it is the same as discussing the purpose of education since there are various opinions of experts who say that the purpose of education is moral formation (Muhammad Rabbi, 2006). Similarly, Ahmad D. Marimba argues that the main purpose of Islamic education is identical to the purpose of every Muslim's life, namely to become a servant of Allah, namely a servant who believes and surrenders himself to Him by embracing Islam (Marimba, 1989)

Factually, efforts to form morals through various educational institutions, both formal, informal, and non-formal institutions and through various means continue to be carried out and developed. This shows that morals need to be formed, fostered, educated, and habituated. Character education and moral formation must continue to be pursued, especially by formal education institutions (Poerwanti & Marmoah, 2021). This is reinforced by the existence of Indonesian Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education system in Article 3 which states that the National education function is to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the nation's life, the potential of students to become human beings who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, responsible and become democratic citizens (Pusmendik, 2021).

Character education implies a positive disposition in a person that is in accordance with all applicable norms. Character education instills habits of what is good so that students understand what is right and what is wrong, they are able to feel good values and make them a habit. For students, the right transformation of character education is needed through direction, habituation, exemplification, reinforcement, and punishment. Student character values that can be explored in learning are religion, honesty, hard work, discipline, sense of responsibility, love for the country, care for the environment, and strong social spirit (Ratri & Atmojo, 2024).

There are seven reasons why character education transformation should be applied to learners. The seven reasons are as follows. 1) the best way to ensure that students have a good personality in life; (2) a way to improve academic achievement; (3) some students cannot form a strong character for themselves elsewhere; (4) preparation of students to respect others and be able to live in a pluralistic society; (5) getting to the root of problems related to social moral issues, such as incivility, dishonesty, violence, sexual activity violations, and low work (learning) ethics; (6) the best preparation in dealing various behavior in the workplace; and (7) learning cultural values that are part of the work of civilization (Mhd Saleh, 2017).

Implementation of Character Education at SDN Gampingrowo Sidoarjo

Results Based on the data analyzed, character education in primary schools is significant in shaping students' morals. Character education must be planned, implemented and evaluated. The character values are emphasized and the implementation process can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Character Education Values and Their Implementation

Planning	Implementation	Evaluation
Character and moral education is an approach in the formulation of the learning and teaching process at school. It is integrated into the curriculum used and included in the planning, which is in the form of providing an understanding of the importance of character for students, teachers and education personnel at school and by involving student guardians.	Character education is applied to learning experience activities (intracurricular), co-curricular (projects to strengthen the Pancasila student profile and the <i>Rahmatan lil 'alamin</i> student profile), and extracurricular as well as habituation activities in schools to support school culture.	Each teacher has the responsibility to evaluate the character of students. Student character assessment meeting is also conducted by the principal, stakeholders, teachers and parents.

To understand the table, in terms of planning, it was stated by the school principal as follows:

“Character education needs to be integrated and synchronized long before the beginning of learning, it means that we set character education values as formulated goals. So that the curriculum that becomes the intracurricular benchmark has the principle of character education. While other learning activities, such as co-curricular or P5, and extracurricular activities are inseparable from the value of character education”.

From this statement, it can be seen that character education is an approach implemented in every learning activity at school. This is conducted due to one of the main goals of education is to shape a person's character and morals (Marimba, 1989). The character of a student can be reflected as a Pancasila learner who has faith in God Almighty and noble character, and has the principle of being a lifelong learner (Muktamar et al., 2024). And Pancasila is the identity and character of the nation that can maintain unity in the midst of diversity (Toha, 2017).

When character education becomes an approach in the formulation of goals, this positively supports the ideals of Pancasila values and the mandate of the nation. The purpose of education in Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System states that ‘National education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the nation's life, aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable,

capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens' (Ratri & Atmojo, 2024).

After character education and moral values are integrated into the formulation of learning objectives at school, the principal and teachers consolidate their understanding of the importance of character and moral values applied at school. The learning process that takes place at school is not only focused on teachers but also on all education personnel at school without neglecting the support of parents. So that the understanding of character and moral values is also applied to education personnel and parents. Thus, the entire stages of learning activities at school can run effectively with the principle of character and moral values that are prioritized.

Primary school is the foundation as well as the first gate in character education. Every teacher and homeroom teacher in the school has the same responsibility, which is to foster positive character in every student in the school. In an interview at the school, the principal said:

"The teacher is the spearhead in the school. They have a very important role besides teaching knowledge and skills. That is to provide role models to students who directly instill character. Moreover, the teachers here work hand in hand to control and educate character to students directly".

In literature, it is stated that the teacher stands for '*digugu* and *ditiru*'. This means that the teacher's behavior at school is directly observed by students who then imitate them. It is also in accordance with the Middle Eastern proverb that states '*ibda' binafsika*' which means "start from yourself".

"The implementation of character education through role modeling is the most important thing in learning. Because exemplification is directly applied in real life. Forms of role models provided by teachers to students such as how to speak, act, dress, punctuality in attending school and how to interact in accordance with moral and religious values both in the classroom and outside the classroom".

To ensure and improve the quality of teachers at the school, one of the teachers at SDN Gampingrowo said that the school regularly organized training for teachers. This is conducted since the teachers' role is not only to educate, but also to set an example. Exemplary education is the most successful method in preparing and shaping students' personalities because it is the best example for students to imitate their behavior, both in words and deeds. Exemplary must also regularly be performed in all aspects of education and carried out continuously, so that it is more easily absorbed and accepted by students. The result of an interview with the vice principal stated as follows:

'The implementation of character education through exemplary is the most important thing in learning. Because exemplification is directly applied in real life. The form of role models provided by teachers to students such as how to speak, act, dress, punctuality in attending school and how to".

The character education instilled at SDN Gampingrowo is noble morals, both morals in worshipping God, social morals or towards others, and morals to the environment as well as to oneself. Then the values of compassion, honesty, justice and patience are the character education values prioritized in elementary schools. However, based on the fact, teachers require several skills related to understanding

the behavior and character of students since character building is not only requires a lecture model but also real experiences complemented by the teacher.

In addition to character education being an approach in all formulations of educational objectives in schools, the co-curricular activities related to student activities in schools are also based on character education. It is stated that to ensure the spiritual and religious quality of students, SDN Gampingrowo involves religious figures, such as Quran recitation teachers and ustadz who have expertise in religion. This is conducted since SDN Gampingrowo uses the *Merdeka* curriculum which has flexibility in designing learning programs, especially in the project of strengthening the student profile of Pancasila (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

Extracurricular activities are one of the most effective character education programs in assisting students' character development. One of the extracurricular activities programmed at school is scouting.



Figure 1. of Scout Extracurricular Activities

In general, students stated that they have experienced character changes, such as discipline, responsibility, confidence and courage after participating in several extracurricular activities. This is supported by Lukitorsari's findings, which state that extracurricular activities are a place to assess and develop students' characters, such as courage, leadership, responsibility, honesty and mutual cooperation (Lukitorsari & Indonesia, 2024)

SDN Gampingrowo integrates character education in the project of strengthening the Pancasila student profile and *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* student profile. This is conducted as a means for students in the process of strengthening their character while having the opportunity to learn directly from the surrounding environment. The learner profile is designed to answer one big question, namely students with what kind of profile (competence) the education system wants to produce (Pusmendik, 2021). The dimensions and values of the learner profile that correlate with character education are faith, devotion to God Almighty and noble character, mutual cooperation, independence, nationality, deliberation, dynamics and innovation (Muktamar et al., 2024).

In addition, evaluation was also conducted between the principal, teachers, and stakeholders. This aims to ensure that the school environment supports character education. The character education values that are integrated are mutual cooperation, citizenship and nationality, dynamic and innovation, love for the

environment, and noble character. During the process, the involvement of character education in schools in co-curricular learning does not only involve facilitators, but all elements in the school.

"The character education process certainly requires the involvement of all school stakeholders, teachers, staff, students and parents, as well as a strong commitment from the school in creating an environment that supports the formation of good morals".

Character Education Habits and Culture in Schools

Based on the observations that have been carried out, there are several cultures that support character education in schools, including cleaning activities; flag ceremonies; discipline; Qur'an literacy; habituation to praying in congregation and dhuha prayers, Ramadan boarding school, istighosah recitation, as well as the culture of greetings and smiles (3S). Class hygiene activities are carried out before the entrance bell rings. By conducting cleaning activities, students are directed to love their environment by maintaining cleanliness. Then in al-Qur'an literacy is carried out before starting lessons in class. This is performed to foster a religious environment at school. In addition, students' religious understanding and faith can grow and strengthen. Regarding the flag ceremony, it is carried out to improve the ideology of Pancasila as a homeland.

School culture becomes the implication of every activity that takes place in the school. So school culture or the educational environment in schools can play a role in streamlining the learning process, including the character education of students (Yulia & Quratul Ain, 2024). Since the character is formed when a behavior or action that involves emotional can be done repeatedly, it becomes a symbol for the perpetrator (Ratri & Atmojo, 2024). Therefore, positive learning activities that are continuously carried out will become a habit that supports the formation of a positive culture in the school environment.

Evaluation and assessment of character education at SDN Gampingrowo

Character education is a continuous effort to instill good values according to religion, customs, culture, nation and state. Likewise, its assessment requires a process and time in its development, so as to know what good values have been achieved and what has not been achieved. Therefore, every teacher has the responsibility to evaluate the character of students every day. According to one of the teachers, the evaluation does not have to be in the form of numbers, but careful supervision.

"Character assessment is not only in the form of numbers/letters but in the form of supervision or observation carried out by teachers every day. The results of reports or records of student development as a form of evaluation of character education, from the results of these reports can be seen the development of character pillars that have been achieved and those that have not been achieved so that the teacher knows what actions he must take".

In order to foster positive character, the school regularly announces an appreciation for students, in the form of giving awards to students who perform good behavior or achieve certain achievements in character development. This was conveyed by the principal as follows:

"Character education assessment is also held every week, by announcing during the flag ceremony such as the classes that achieving awards for discipline or class

cleanliness. The aim is to trigger students' awareness to discipline themselves. Assessment is also held every semester by holding a meeting that discusses the development of student character and what steps will be taken to overcome problems arising from behaviors that are considered contrary to the rules that have been established by various parties both from the school, parents, and the school committee".

From this statement, it appears that giving appreciation or rewards to learners who succeed in the character development program at school is necessary since it can foster awareness and understanding of the urgency of character behavior. Moreover, this statement is also supported by Aji Budiarmo's findings that giving rewards has an effective impact on the success of student character education (Aji Budiarmo, 2023).

To measure the success rate of character education implementation at school, SDN Gampingrowo conducts several assessment programs by comparing the initial conditions with the achievements within a certain time. The assessment programs are: 1) developing indicators of the values applied or agreed upon. In this case, teachers take a persuasive approach with students, namely providing an understanding of the importance of character values which will then become an agreement with the students themselves; 2) preparing assessment instruments in the form of observation sheets, attitude scale sheets, portfolio sheets, or other sheets; 3) recording the achievement of indicators; and 4) analyzing the results of assessment data and conducting evaluations. In monitoring and evaluating the character education of students, SDN Gampingrowo does not only focus on homeroom teachers but also involves collaboration between teachers and certain subject teachers as well as between the school and parents. So character education does not only apply at school but also is implemented outside the school or home environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be seen that the implementation of character education at SDN Gampingrowo is conducted through three stages, namely planning, implementation and evaluation. During the process, character education becomes an approach to teaching and learning activities and ecosystems in educational units. Thus, the curriculum and lessons delivered are based on character education. Additionally, teachers as crucial roles in schools delivering the learning process with methods and models by focusing on the foundation of character education. Every teacher's behavior and actions at school are indirectly an example that exemplifies character education for students.

Character education in the school environment can be integrated into a series of lessons, starting from intracurricular, extracurricular and co-curricular (Project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile and *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* student profile). There are several activities that have a positive impact on the environment of the education unit with character, namely cleaning activities, Qur'an literacy, flag ceremonies, and congregational prayers. To ensure the quality of character education in schools is achieved, teachers have a crucial role in monitoring the character of students every day and collaborating between subject teachers as well as with student guardians.

To measure the success of character education at school, SDN Gampingrowo conducts a number of assessment programs, namely: 1) developing indicators of the values applied or agreed upon; 2) preparing assessment instruments in the form of observation sheets, attitude scale sheets, portfolio sheets, or other sheets; 3) recording the achievement of indicators; and 4) analyzing the results of assessment data and conducting evaluations. To raise awareness and understanding of the importance of character education, SDN Gampingrowo provides awards to students who are successful in implementing certain character education programs, which are announced publicly during flag ceremonies or other joint activities.

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