



The Role of Teachers in Developing Character Education in Elementary Schools: Literature Review

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Abstract

Teachers, as educators, are not only responsible for delivering academic content but also serve as role models, mentors, and motivators in shaping students' character. This study aims to analyze the role of teachers in developing character education in elementary schools, with a particular focus on how teachers act as educators, exemplars, and motivators in character formation. Using a qualitative descriptive approach through a literature review method, data were collected from various credible sources, including journals, books, and scientific articles. The reviewed literature was selected based on specific inclusion criteria, namely publications issued between 2015 and 2024, written in English or Indonesian, and focusing on character education or teachers' roles in elementary schools. Sources that did not meet these criteria—such as studies on secondary or higher education, non-peer-reviewed materials, and publications without full-text access—were excluded from the review. The findings reveal that teachers play a strategic role in instilling values such as discipline, responsibility, and honesty through interactive teaching methods and a supportive classroom environment. In addition, teachers contribute to building a school culture that fosters character development by modeling positive behavior, guiding students in both academic and non-academic activities, and creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere. The study concludes that character education should be integrated into the overall school culture and supported by strong collaboration among schools, parents, and the wider community.

Keywords: Teacher's Role; Character Education; Elementary School; Moral Formation

Introduction

The issue of moral and character education has become a major concern in the world of education. The phenomenon of increasing immoral actions, both within schools and society at large, indicates a worrying degradation of morals (Faiz & Purwati, 2022). This situation has prompted education experts to make character education a critical aspect that must be continuously studied and developed. The importance of character education is reflected in the Indonesian Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes that the goal of national education is to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possess intelligence, skills, and noble character. In addition to shaping democratic and responsible citizens, education also aims to internalize the values of Pancasila in daily life (Rachman et al., 2021). Therefore, character education in schools must be implemented comprehensively, involving all elements, including school members, parents, teachers, and other educators.

Elementary School (SD) is a very strategic level of education for instilling character values. Children aged 6–12 years are in a phase of rapid development, both physically,

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cognitively, emotionally, and morally. This phase is crucial in forming the foundation of a child's personality and character. The instillation of character values at this age will become a strong foundation that lasts into adulthood (Hulu, 2021). Therefore, teachers, parents, and society need to understand the urgency of character education as the foundation of behavior and create an environment that supports the moral development of children. More than just producing academically intelligent students, character education aims to shape individuals who can become agents of change in social life. Hanafiah et al. (2024) emphasize that character education must be organized in a comprehensive, integrated, and balanced manner to shape students' personality and noble character in accordance with graduate competency standards. These values are expected to be internalized into students' lives and become part of the sustainable school culture.

The role of teachers in character education is vital, as they serve not only as instructors but also as key agents in shaping students' moral and ethical development. In the school environment, teachers act as role models, mentors, facilitators, and motivators who influence students' attitudes and behaviors (Bhughe, 2022). Their responsibility extends beyond knowledge transfer to the cultivation of values and integrity in everyday learning activities. Previous studies, such as that by Nurhidaya et al. (2021), have emphasized the teacher's multifaceted roles in character formation, including educator, mentor, facilitator, and motivator. However, most existing studies tend to describe these roles separately without providing an in-depth analysis of how they are integrated into curriculum practice or how teachers balance these roles in real classroom contexts. Therefore, this study aims to explore more comprehensively how teachers simultaneously enact their multiple roles in fostering students' character development within daily educational practices.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore in depth how character education is implemented in elementary schools and how teachers play a role in shaping students' character. To achieve this objective, a literature review approach was employed. This method is considered appropriate because it allows for a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of previous research findings related to teachers' roles in character education. By reviewing and comparing various scholarly sources, this study seeks to identify patterns, gaps, and best practices that can serve as a foundation for strengthening the implementation of character education in the elementary education context.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach through a literature review method. The use of this method is intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how character education is conceptualized and implemented in elementary schools by synthesizing existing theories and previous empirical findings. Unlike field-based research, this study does not involve direct observations or interviews with participants but instead relies entirely on secondary data derived from various academic sources.

A total of 38 sources were analyzed in this study, consisting of 27 journal articles, 6 academic books, and 5 policy documents and educational reports, both from national and international contexts. These materials were collected from several academic databases, including Google Scholar, DOAJ, ResearchGate, Garuda, and SINTA. The selection process emphasized relevance and academic credibility to ensure the reliability of the findings.

The inclusion criteria determined that only publications published between 2015 and 2024 were considered, focusing on topics related to character education within the context of elementary schools. The reviewed studies were required to discuss teachers' roles, strategies, or pedagogical approaches in character formation and to be peer-reviewed or otherwise academically credible. Meanwhile, sources that discussed character education at the secondary or higher education level, publications without full-text access, or works written in languages other than English or Indonesian were excluded from the review.

The literature review process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The process began with the identification stage, where 112 initial studies were retrieved using relevant keywords such as “character education,” “elementary school,” “teacher’s role,” and “moral values in education.” During the screening stage, 46 duplicate and irrelevant studies were removed. The eligibility stage involved a detailed reading of the remaining studies, resulting in the exclusion of 28 sources that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, 38 sources were selected for inclusion in the analysis.

The overall flow of this process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram, which visually depicts the four key stages—identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion—that guided the systematic selection and refinement of literature used in this study.

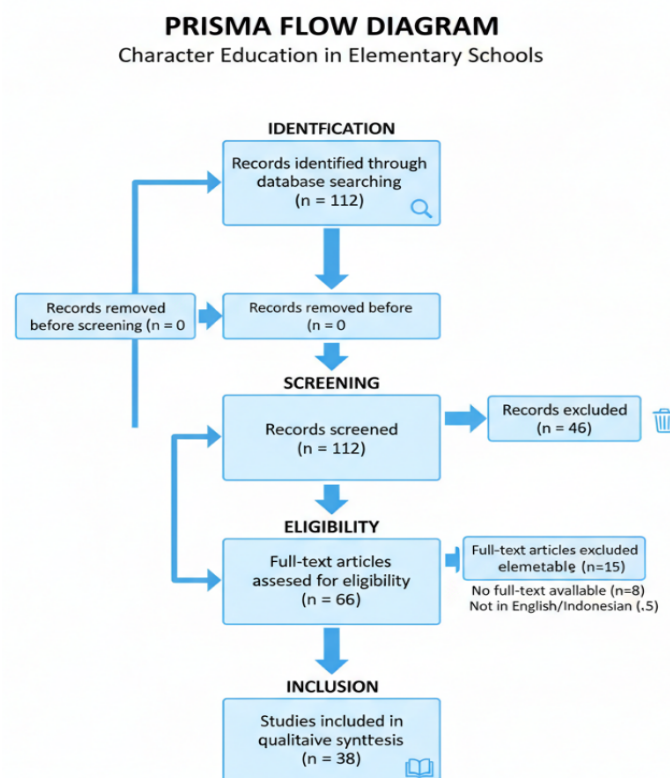


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the literature review and conceptual analysis conducted, it is evident that the role of teachers in character education has a very complex yet significant

dimension in the process of shaping students' personalities. Teachers are not only instructors who deliver lesson materials but also the primary agents in shaping character values through their attitudes, actions, and teaching methods applied in both the classroom and daily social interactions. This is in line with the opinion of Datunsolang et al. (2021), who state that teachers play an important role as role models, mentors, and motivators in the development of character education in schools.

One of the main roles of teachers in strengthening character education is as educators. As stated by Wally (2021), teachers as educators are not only responsible for delivering content but must also be able to integrate character values into the teaching material. In other words, teachers are expected to transform lessons into a medium for shaping students' worldviews, life attitudes, and life skills. When moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance are contextually instilled in the learning process, students not only gain academic knowledge but also undergo a comprehensive character-building process.

Furthermore, teachers also play the role of demonstrators, serving as real-life examples for students in behavior and actions. Nurhasanah et al. (2024) emphasize that teachers, as demonstrators, must be able to show positive attitudes and appreciate students who display good behavior. This appreciation will motivate students to continue developing positive behaviors and encourage other students to follow suit. In this case, the example set by teachers becomes one of the strongest forms of learning because children tend to imitate and adopt the behaviors they observe.

Equally important is the teacher's role as a motivator, which is key to creating a conducive and enjoyable learning environment. Teachers must be able to understand students' psychological conditions, including when they experience boredom, as explained by Hapsari et al. (2021). A responsive teacher will attempt to create activity variations such as icebreakers, singing, or relaxation activities to help students regain their enthusiasm for learning. The motivation installed by teachers can help students build resilience and self-confidence, which are part of positive character traits.

Furthermore, the strengthening of character education cannot be separated from role modeling and consistent habituation. Salsabilah et al. (2021) outline several steps that teachers can take in shaping students' character, such as being role models, appreciating students' efforts, instilling moral values in lessons, teaching manners, and providing opportunities for students to lead. All these approaches show that character formation is not only theoretical but must also be realized through real practices carried out repeatedly and consistently in the school environment.

The strengthening of character in students is also closely related to the character of the teachers themselves. Teachers who have high integrity, honesty, and responsibility will have a positive impact on students. Teachers' role modeling is the key, as students are more likely to imitate actions than merely listen to advice. Therefore, strengthening teachers' character should be a primary focus in the development of educators' professionalism.

Character itself, as explained by Najili et al. (2022) and Sumatri & Alwizar (2021), is the result of a process of internalizing moral values that occurs gradually and continuously. Character is not a genetic inheritance but is shaped through habitual thinking and actions. In this context, education plays a primary role as a medium for character formation by integrating positive values into all aspects of learning.

Character education also requires support from a broader system, including a curriculum that supports value integration, school policies, and the role of parents and the community. The goal of character education, as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 and Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 on Strengthening Character Education, is to shape a golden generation with integrity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, and religiousness. With this comprehensive approach, students will not only grow into academically intelligent individuals but also have strong and noble personalities.

However, the reality in the field shows that the implementation of character education still faces various challenges. Many educational institutions have yet to integrate character values into their lessons consistently. Character education programs are often seen as complementary rather than central to the learning process. As a result, activities for instilling moral values are usually sporadic and poorly structured. Character education must be an integral part of the entire educational process, not limited to certain activities. As stated by Amalianita et al. (2023), education must equip students with moral values, ethics, and social and emotional skills so that they can live responsibly. This strengthens the view that character education is the foundational element in shaping the future generation, not only intellectually superior but also morally and spiritually resilient.

Therefore, the role of teachers in character education is strategic and irreplaceable. Teachers are at the forefront of instilling noble values, whether through direct teaching, role modeling, or daily interactions with students. For this effort to succeed, synergy between teachers, schools, families, and communities is needed to create an environment conducive to the growth and development of students' positive character.

Conclusion

Character education in elementary schools plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that is intellectually capable and morally grounded. Teachers hold a central position in this process—not only as educators but also as role models, mentors, and facilitators who guide students in internalizing values such as discipline, honesty, empathy, and responsibility. However, challenges such as limited curriculum integration, inconsistent implementation, and insufficient teacher preparation remain significant obstacles.

To optimize character education, schools should embed moral and value-based learning directly into curriculum design rather than treating it as a supplementary program. Strengthening teachers' professional competence through structured professional development modules and continuous mentoring programs is essential to ensure they can employ innovative and value-oriented teaching strategies. Furthermore, collaboration among schools, families, and communities should be reinforced to build a holistic ecosystem that supports character development.

Future research should move beyond conceptual discussions by conducting empirical studies that examine teachers' classroom practices in character education and evaluate the effectiveness of existing teacher training programs. Such studies will provide practical insights and evidence-based recommendations for improving the sustainability and impact of character education in elementary schools.

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Biography

Naufal Qadri Syarif is a lecturer in the Department of Primary School Teacher Education at the Faculty of Education, Makassar State University. He teaches courses related to Educational Evaluation.