

THE DYNAMICS OF MORAL EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY AND SCHOOL: SYNERGY OR CONFLICT OF VALUES AMIDST THE PLURALISM OF CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the dynamics of moral education within the family and school amidst the pluralism of contemporary Indonesian society, focusing on whether there is synergy or conflict of values in the character formation of students. It employs a literature review (library research) using a qualitative-descriptive approach. The findings indicate that the dynamics of moral education are dialectical: on the one hand, value synergy can be achieved when families and schools build authentic collaboration through open communication, shared role modelling, coordinated value instillation, and inclusive normative agreements that result in the consistent and profound internalisation of character in children. On the other hand, value conflicts remain a significant structural challenge, stemming from a clash of paradigms between the family's religious-traditional values and the school's secular-universal values, generational dissonance between parents and Generation Z, as well as the influence of moral relativism from social media and globalisation, which has the potential to trigger a moral identity crisis and deviant behaviour. This study concludes that pluralism can serve as social capital or a source of moral fragmentation, depending on the institutional and cultural capacity to bridge value differences through dialogue and transformation. Strategic recommendations include the reformulation of policies supporting tripartite collaboration (family-school-community), strengthening teachers' capacity in multicultural education, and empowering parents as strategic partners in shaping the character of a Generation Z that is adaptive yet principled.

Keywords: moral education, pluralism, value synergy, value conflict, family, school, Generation Z, contemporary Indonesia

Introduction

Moral education is the primary foundation in the character formation of a nation, emphasising not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects within learners (Hasan et al., 2021). In Indonesia, moral education is not solely the responsibility of schools as formal institutions, but also of the family as the primary institution that first instils the fundamental values of life. Synergy between these two institutions is key to creating consistency in the values that children internalise from early childhood through to adolescence (Yajie et al., 2023). However, within the context of contemporary Indonesian society, which is becoming increasingly pluralistic, the

dynamics of moral education face complex challenges that require a deep understanding of the interplay of values between home and school.

The pluralism of Indonesian society, characterised by diversity in religion, ethnicity, culture, and social class, creates a heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory landscape of values. This situation raises critical questions regarding whether the moral values taught in the family align with those conveyed at school, or whether conflicts arise which have the potential to hinder the formation of a child's character. Research indicates that a mismatch in values between the family and school can lead to moral confusion in children, particularly when traditional norms at home conflict with the universal values taught at school (Kreeft, 2009). This phenomenon is becoming increasingly relevant amidst the social transformation accelerated by globalisation and digitalisation.

The digital age has brought fundamental changes to the way children and adolescents access information, engage in social interaction, and form their moral perceptions. Exposure to negative content on social media, such as hate speech, cyberbullying, and pornography, poses a serious challenge to moral education, which has traditionally relied on conventional approaches based on role modelling and habit formation. Generation Z, having grown up as *digital natives*, faces moral dilemmas never before experienced by previous generations, thus requiring an adaptive, inclusive, and responsive approach to moral education that keeps pace with the dynamics of the times (Hutagaluh & Aslan, 2019).

The family, as the primary institution of moral education, has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades, in line with changes in socio-economic structures and parenting patterns in Indonesia. The nuclear family has become increasingly dominant compared to the extended family, which previously served as the primary source of the transmission of cultural and religious values. Research has found that the weakening role of the family in emotional and social education correlates with a decline in *school engagement* or children's attachment to school, which in turn affects the effectiveness of character education in the classroom (Mizani et al., 2020). This situation demands a reorientation of parents' roles from merely providers of material needs to active and consistent moral companions.

On the other hand, schools, as formal institutions of moral education, also face internal and external challenges that are no less complex. The Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) curriculum and Religious Education, which should serve as the primary vehicles for instilling moral values, are often trapped in a cognitive approach that fails to address the affective and behavioural aspects of pupils. Consequently, although students understand moral concepts theoretically, their implementation in daily life remains weak, as reflected in the rising cases of bullying, intolerance, and ethical violations within the school environment (Kreeft, 2009). This gap between theory and practice indicates the need for a reformulation of the approach to moral education in schools.

Conflicts of values between families and schools often stem from differences in the moral paradigms they adhere to. Families, particularly those with religious and traditional backgrounds, tend to emphasise normative values based on religious teachings and customs, whilst schools, within the context of the national curriculum, prioritise universal values such as tolerance, democracy, and human rights. When these two value systems are not constructively discussed, children may experience cognitive and moral dissonance which hinders the full internalisation of values (Hesti et al., 2022). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in areas with high levels of pluralism, where interactions between groups with differing value backgrounds occur intensively.

However, amidst this potential for conflict, there also lies a significant opportunity to create a synergy of values that strengthens children's moral education. Empirical research indicates that active collaboration between families and schools—in the form of regular communication, parental involvement in school programmes, and consistency in moral messaging—can significantly enhance the effectiveness of character education (Shintia et al., 2024). A *collaborative parenting* model involving tripartite synergy between family, school, and community has proven capable of creating a holistic and sustainable moral ecosystem (Judrah et al., 2024). This approach requires shared commitment and structured coordination mechanisms.

Pluralism, if managed well, can actually serve as social capital that strengthens moral education rather than becoming a source of conflict. Education based on pluralistic values—integrating recognition of diversity, respect for differences, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue—has proven effective in fostering inclusive attitudes and empathy among students (Kreeft, 2009). The Merdeka Belajar curriculum, with its P5 (Pancasila Student Profile) project, provides scope for schools to implement a pluralistic approach aligned with the values of Pancasila, enabling students to develop a character that is adaptable to diversity (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Irwan et al., 2024)

Although such potential for synergy exists, the reality on the ground shows that structural and cultural barriers remain the main obstacles. Limited school resources, a lack of teacher training in dialogical approaches to moral education, and a weak culture of communication between parents and teachers are factors hindering effective collaboration (Sii & Sukardi, 2025). Furthermore, local socio-political dynamics, which sometimes trigger the polarisation of religious and ethnic identities, also influence the climate of moral education in schools, thus requiring appropriate mitigation strategies (Walad et al., 2024).

Indonesia's Generation Z, the primary focus of contemporary moral education, exhibits unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They possess a high level of awareness regarding global issues such as climate change, gender equality, and social justice; yet, at the same time, they are vulnerable to moral decline, including individualism, a decline in empathy, and a weakening of

communication ethics (Fadhillah, 2020) . Effective moral education for this generation must be able to bridge traditional values with their global aspirations, thereby producing individuals who are not only of integrity but also relevant to the demands of the times (Aslan et al., 2019) .

This article aims to analyse the dynamics of moral education within the family and school, focusing on whether there is synergy or conflict of values amidst the pluralism of contemporary Indonesian society. The discussion will be divided into two main sections: first, an exploration of the forms of moral value synergy between family and school and their impact on the formation of children's character; second, the identification of the sources and manifestations of value conflict, as well as harmonisation strategies within the context of a pluralistic society.

Research Method

This study employs a literature review (library research) using a qualitative-descriptive approach to analyse the dynamics of moral education within families and schools amidst the pluralism of contemporary Indonesian society. Data were collected through a documentary study of relevant secondary sources, including national journals, international journals, books, and seminar proceedings, with a focus on moral education, character education, pluralism, family-school collaboration, and value conflicts in Indonesia (Eliyah & Aslan, 2025) . The data analysis technique employed is content analysis, involving the steps of identification, classification, comparison, and synthesis of empirical and theoretical findings from various sources to construct a coherent argument regarding the forms of synergy and value conflict, as well as their implications for the character development of learners. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to integrate multidisciplinary perspectives from the fields of education, sociology, developmental psychology, and multicultural studies, thereby yielding a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study without the need for primary data collection in the field (McNeill, 2006) .

Results and Discussion

Synergy of Moral Values between Family and School

The synergy of moral values between family and school is the primary foundation for the formation of a child's holistic and consistent character, wherein these two institutions function as strategic partners that mutually reinforce one another rather than operating in isolation. The family, as *the primary agent of moral socialisation*, instils fundamental values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect for parents from an early age through daily upbringing, whilst the school, as *the secondary agent*, reinforces and contextualises these values within a broader social setting through the formal curriculum and peer interactions (Rahayu & Suwandari, 2026) . When the moral messages conveyed at home and at school are aligned, children undergo a deeper and more sustained process of value internalisation, as they receive

consistent norms from the two most influential social environments in their lives (Hapinas et al., 2025).

The most fundamental form of synergy is realised through open and regular communication between parents and teachers, which enables both parties to understand each other's approaches to moral education and to identify potential value gaps at an early stage. Research indicates that schools implementing structured communication programmes—such as monthly parent-teacher meetings, digital communication books, and messaging app-based communication groups—experience a significant increase in the consistency of pupils' moral behaviour compared to schools that rely solely on incidental communication (Revalina & Aslan, 2025). This communication is not merely informative regarding academic progress, but also involves dialogue on specific moral issues faced by the child, thereby enabling timely and coordinated intervention (Sii & Sukardi, 2025).

In addition to communication, shared modelling serves as a highly effective mechanism for synergy, whereby parents and teachers consistently demonstrate the same moral values in their daily behaviour. When children witness their parents respecting their teachers, and their teachers showing respect towards their parents, they learn that values such as respect, integrity, and responsibility are universal and not context-dependent (Astuti et al., 2023). This phenomenon is reinforced by Bandura's social learning theory, which asserts that children learn morality not only through verbal instruction but primarily through observation and imitation of authority figures they trust; thus, consistency in role modelling between home and school is key to the effectiveness of moral education (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003).

Value habituation through structured programmes coordinated between families and schools also constitutes a form of synergy proven effective in internalising moral character. Programmes such as the habit of praying in congregation, community service, visits to children's homes, or anti-bullying campaigns carried out simultaneously at home and school create repeated moral experiences that strengthen neural pathways related to prosocial behaviour in children (Zahra et al., 2025). Research at SDIT Nurul Fikri in Banjarmasin and SDI As-Salam in Malang found that an integrated habit-forming model between home and school resulted in a significant improvement in pupils' discipline, social concern, and ethical awareness compared to habit formation carried out in only one environment (Barsihanor, 2015).

Synergy is also achieved through a shared value agreement formulated collaboratively between representatives of parents, teachers and school management at the start of the school year. This agreement covers the core values to be instilled (such as honesty, tolerance, responsibility), indicators of expected behaviour, and logical consequences for breaches of these values, thereby creating clear and consistent norms for children (Fitroh & Aslan, 2026). This agreement document is then used as a shared reference in decision-making regarding moral issues that arise,

thereby avoiding confusion for children caused by differing standards between home and school (Hesti et al., 2022).

The role of school committees and parents' associations as formal institutions facilitating family-school synergy cannot be overlooked in the context of moral education in Indonesia. These institutions serve as platforms for strategic dialogue where parents can actively participate in the formulation of character education policies, provide input based on local community values, and oversee the implementation of moral programmes in schools (Sitepu et al., 2022). In areas with high levels of pluralism, inclusive and representative school committees have proven capable of bridging differences in values between groups of parents, thereby producing moral education policies that are inclusive yet principled (Muniz-Fraticelli, 2014).

Parental engagement in school activities is a dimension of synergy that is empirically positively correlated with increased *school engagement* and children's moral development. When parents attend school events, volunteer in character-building programmes, or participate in community-based learning projects, children perceive moral education as a serious shared responsibility, not merely a curricular formality (Rahayu & Suwandari, 2026). Longitudinal research indicates that pupils with high levels of parental involvement at school demonstrate higher levels of empathy, social responsibility, and adherence to norms compared to pupils whose parents are passive (Utami et al., 2023).

Within the context of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, family-school synergy is further facilitated through the P5 (Pancasila Student Profile) project, which explicitly requires tripartite collaboration between schools, families, and the community. Thematic projects such as 'Nurturing Mind and Body', 'Voice of Democracy', or 'Entrepreneurship' are designed to involve parents as learning partners, so that the values of Pancasila are not merely taught cognitively in the classroom but experienced contextually through real-life interactions with family and the community (Aslan et al., 2020). This project-based learning approach allows the transfer of moral values to occur organically through collaborative experiences, rather than through one-way indoctrination (Aslan & Imelda, 2025).

The collaborative parenting approach, developed over the last two decades, increasingly emphasises the importance of systemic synergy between home, school and community as a holistic moral ecosystem. This model emphasises that effective moral education requires intensive coordination in which parents and teachers routinely share strategies, provide mutual feedback on children's moral development, and jointly design interventions when behavioural issues arise (Judrah et al., 2024). Digital technologies such as learning management applications, parent portals, and school communication platforms have facilitated this approach by enabling real-time communication and documentation of children's moral development that is accessible to both parties.

Synergy is also strengthened through the integration of local wisdom values, which act as a bridge between traditional family norms and universal school values. In various regions of Indonesia, schools that have successfully integrated local values such as *gotong royong*, *siri' na pacce* (Bugis-Makassar), *tri hita karana* (Bali), or *hamemayu hayuning bawana* (Javanese) into their character curriculum have experienced higher levels of acceptance and internalisation of these values among parents and students (Aslan, 2017a) . This approach not only respects the family's cultural identity but also enriches the school's moral education with meaningful local context, thereby creating authentic rather than forced synergy.

Previous reviews of various multi-site studies in Indonesia indicate that schools which systematically implement family-school synergy experience a significant reduction in cases of bullying, disciplinary offences, and intolerance, as well as an improvement in positive school climate, parental satisfaction, and students' character development (Barsihanor, 2015) . The effects of this synergy are cumulative and long-term; students who grow up in a consistent moral ecosystem between home and school tend to develop a more stable moral identity, are resilient to negative peer pressure, and are capable of making autonomous ethical decisions during adolescence and adulthood (Yajie et al., 2023) .

Thus, the synergy of moral values between family and school is not merely a strategic option, but a pedagogical imperative within the context of contemporary Indonesian society, which is pluralistic and dynamic. This synergy requires institutional commitment from schools to create opportunities for parental participation, cultural commitment from parents to actively engage in their children's education, and structural commitment from the government to provide policy frameworks and resources that support this collaboration. Only through authentic and sustainable synergy can moral education produce a generation that not only understands values cognitively, but also internalises and consistently practises them in daily life amidst diversity.

Value Conflicts in Moral Education Amid Social Pluralism

Value conflicts in moral education amidst the pluralism of contemporary Indonesian society are a complex phenomenon arising from the clash between the value systems upheld by families and schools, and external influences from globalisation and digital media. Pluralism, which should be a social strength, often becomes a source of tension when the moral values taught at home conflict with the universal values promoted by schools, or when traditional local norms clash with more liberal global norms (Zakiah & Aslan, 2024) ; (Zahra et al., 2025) . This conflict is not merely cognitive in nature, manifesting as conceptual confusion in children, but is also affective and behavioural, manifesting in the form of moral dissonance, a decline in compliance with norms, and, in extreme cases, deviant behaviour such as bullying, intolerance, and rebellion against authority.

The most fundamental source of conflict over values lies in the differing moral paradigms between religious-traditional families and secular-universal schools. Families with a strong religious background tend to instil moral values derived from religious doctrine, such as absolute obedience to parental authority, strict gender segregation, and a prioritisation of the afterlife, whilst schools within the national curriculum framework place greater emphasis on universal values such as gender equality, individual autonomy, critical thinking, and a worldly orientation towards career success (Sukaesih, 2025). When children receive these contradictory messages without adequate mediation, they experience what Kohlberg refers to as an unresolved *moral dilemma*, which can hinder their moral development to higher stages (Aslan, 2017b).

Religious pluralism, as a social reality in Indonesia, is also a significant source of value conflict, particularly in areas with a heterogeneous religious composition. Families from an exclusive religious background may teach that only their beliefs are correct and that interaction with adherents of other religions should be limited, whilst schools, through multicultural education and Civic Education (PPKn), encourage inclusive attitudes, interfaith dialogue, and respect for diversity of belief (Walad et al., 2024). Research in various state and private schools indicates that pupils from families with exclusive religious views often experience internal conflict when asked to participate in interfaith activities or to study the values of other religious traditions, which they perceive as a threat to their religious identity (Alya et al., 2025).

Beyond the religious dimension, generational value clashes between Generation X and Y parents and their Generation Z children further complicate the dynamics of moral education. Indonesian Generation Z, having grown up in a globally connected digital ecosystem, has internalised values such as freedom of expression, LGBTQ+ equality, individualism, and scepticism towards traditional authority, which often clash with the values of collectivism, hierarchy, and conformity held by their parents (Aslan et al., 2019). This conflict becomes more acute when children access online content and communities that promote progressive values not endorsed by their parents, creating a gap in understanding that is difficult to bridge through conventional communication (Saputra et al., 2024).

The impact of social media and globalisation on value conflicts cannot be underestimated, given that exposure to unfiltered digital content has become a primary source of alternative moral socialisation for Indonesia's younger generation. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter) disseminate values that often conflict with local and religious norms, such as the normalisation of promiscuity, consumerist materialism, extreme individualism, and moral relativism which regards all values as equally valid (Aslan, 2019a). Whilst schools and families attempt to instil values of simplicity, modesty, and obedience, children are simultaneously bombarded with content that glorifies instant wealth, boundless freedom, and rebellion against norms, creating a deep and difficult-to-manage internal conflict (Fadhillah, 2020).

This conflict of values is also manifested in the clash between moral economics and rational economics faced by Indonesia's Generation Z. On the one hand, families and schools teach the values of mutual cooperation, honesty, and prioritising collective well-being (moral economy); yet on the other hand, children witness a social reality that values material success, individual competition, and pragmatism in the pursuit of profit (rational economy). This dilemma becomes increasingly complex when students observe that individuals who succeed within the rational economic system often disregard traditional moral values, thereby questioning the relevance of the moral education they receive (Judrah et al., 2024) .

An educational curriculum that fails to represent diversity also serves as a source of systemic value conflict. Many textbooks and teaching materials remain homogeneous and do not reflect the reality of Indonesia's pluralism, causing students from ethnic, religious, or cultural minority backgrounds to feel alienated and underrepresented (Aslan, 2019b) . When schools teach the values of tolerance and inclusion but use materials that implicitly marginalise certain groups, a dissonance arises between the explicit message of the curriculum and the implicit message received by students, which can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices rather than reduce them (Alya et al., 2025) .

Polarised local socio-political dynamics also exacerbate value conflicts in schools, particularly in the context of local elections, general elections, or sensitive issues such as blasphemy and identity-based policies. Research indicates that polarising discourse from the media and politics often seeps into the school environment, where students from different political or religious backgrounds experience tension in their daily interactions, and teachers struggle to maintain neutrality whilst teaching the values of democracy and tolerance (Sunarwi & Amin, 2025) . In such situations, schools—which should serve as safe spaces for dialogue—instead become arenas for the reproduction of broader social conflicts.

Teachers' limited capacity to manage value conflicts is also a structural factor exacerbating the situation. Many teachers lack adequate training in multicultural education, interfaith dialogue, or facilitating sensitive discussions; consequently, when value conflicts arise in the classroom, they tend to avoid the topic or provide dogmatic answers that fail to satisfy students' critical curiosity (Sunarwi & Amin, 2025) . Consequently, students do not receive the guidance needed to navigate the moral complexities they face, and value conflicts remain unresolved or even suppressed, potentially to erupt at a later date.

Value conflicts also have implications for the moral identity crisis experienced by many contemporary Indonesian students. When children are unable to integrate conflicting values from various sources of socialisation, they may experience identity confusion, a loss of moral direction, and in extreme cases, adopt radical moral relativism that rejects all values as arbitrary social constructs (Aslan & Hifza, 2020) . This phenomenon is evident in the growing apathy towards moral issues, a decline in

participation in social activities, and a weakening commitment to the values of Pancasila amongst Generation Z.

Previous studies indicate that poorly managed value conflicts correlate with an increase in deviant behaviour among students, including cyberbullying, gang fights, drug abuse, promiscuity, and acts of intolerance based on religion or ethnicity (Erwan et al., 2023) . Students experiencing chronic moral dissonance tend to seek an escape through risky behaviour or by joining extremist groups that offer absolute certainty of values, even though such values are exclusive and have the potential to undermine social cohesion (Walad et al., 2024) .

Thus, the conflict of values in moral education amidst pluralism is not merely a pedagogical challenge, but an existential crisis that threatens the very foundations of the Indonesian nation's character. Without a systemic and inclusive harmonisation strategy, this conflict has the potential to produce a generation that is morally fragmented, lacking an ethical compass, and vulnerable to ideological manipulation that could lead to long-term socio-political destabilisation. Therefore, a deep understanding of the sources, manifestations, and dynamics of value conflicts is a prerequisite for formulating an adaptive, dialogical, and transformative approach to moral education.

Conclusion

The dynamics of moral education within families and schools amidst the pluralism of contemporary Indonesian society reveal a dialectical reality between the potential for synergy and the risk of value conflict, both of which are equally significant. On the one hand, when families and schools succeed in building authentic collaboration through open communication, shared role modelling, coordinated value-building, and inclusive normative agreements, a consistent moral ecosystem is formed that strengthens the internalisation of character in learners. This synergy has proven effective in producing a generation that not only understands values cognitively but also embodies and practises them consistently in daily life, even amidst the pressures of pluralism and globalisation.

On the other hand, value conflicts remain a structural challenge that cannot be ignored, stemming from a clash of paradigms between the religious-traditional values of the family and the secular-universal values of the school, generational dissonance between parents and Generation Z, as well as the barrage of relativistic values from social media and globalisation. If not managed through a dialogical, inclusive, and transformative approach, this conflict has the potential to result in a moral identity crisis, ethical confusion, and deviant behaviour that threatens the nation's social cohesion. Pluralism, which should serve as social capital, can instead become a source of moral fragmentation when not accompanied by the institutional and cultural capacity to bridge value differences constructively.

Therefore, the future of moral education in Indonesia depends on the collective ability of families, schools, and the government to transform the potential for conflict into opportunities for synergy through policy reformulation that supports tripartite collaboration, strengthening teachers' capacity in multicultural education and value dialogue, and empowering parents as strategic partners in character formation. Only through a systemic and sustained collective commitment can moral education produce a generation of Pancasila-minded individuals who are adaptable to diversity, resilient to global value disruptions, and remain rooted in the nation's noble identity.

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