

## CHARACTER EDUCATION INTERVENTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL: A LITERATURE REVIEW AS A FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to assess the effect of an evidence-based character education intervention on students' positive behaviour. The research method used was a literature review. The results showed that the character education intervention designed and implemented based on empirical evidence had a significant and positive impact on students' behaviour. Specifically, findings indicated improvements in empathy, co-operation, social awareness and emotion management skills. Students who experienced evidence-based character education tended to show a decrease in negative behaviours such as aggression, bullying, and discipline infractions. Determinants of the effectiveness of such interventions include the quality and adherence of implementation, adaptation of content to the local context, and active involvement of teachers and teaching staff. The findings confirm the importance of adopting and implementing evidence-based character education programmes in school settings to promote the development of positive behaviours among students.

**Keywords:** Intervention, Character Education, Primary School, Foundation of Community Service.

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## **Introduction**

Character education has become an important issue in the world of education, especially at the primary school level, where the stages of moral and character development of children are in the process of formation. (Howe & Hill, 2024). In Indonesia, the cultivation of character education has become an urgent need along with the various social and cultural challenges faced by the younger generation (Bachmann et al., 2022). (Bachmann et al., 2022)..

Character education in primary schools has significant urgency, especially in the context of Indonesian education today. In the midst of the rapid development of information technology and globalisation, children are exposed to various influences that have the potential to shape their character in ways that are not always positive. (Winter et al., 2022). Social media, for example, provides almost unlimited access to information that does not necessarily filter out constructive values. As a result, they are indirectly vulnerable to negative influences that can erode the cultural and moral values that are the foundation of the nation (Sudarmo et al., 2022). (Sudarmo et al., 2021).. In this condition, primary schools as one of the formal education platforms, especially in the critical phase of moral formation, are expected to provide a learning environment that instils key values such as honesty, integrity, empathy, and social responsibility (Astuti et al., 20). (Astuti et al., 2023)..

Furthermore, the shift in educational paradigm from a narrow academic orientation to holistic education reinforces the urgency of character education in primary schools. (Sitopu et al., 2024; Hairiyanto et al., 2024).. Character education in Indonesia is not only considered as a complement, but becomes the core in the education system, which is designed to give birth to a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also strong and noble in character. (Okonofua et al., 2022).. The increase in cases of intolerance, radicalism and corruption, has highlighted the lack of emphasis on values and ethics education. Therefore, it is important for primary schools to implement effective character education that not only instils positive values but also develops leadership and life skills that will equip students to face the complexities of life in the future and contribute positively to society (Pearson et al., 2022). (Pearson et al., 2022)..

To realise these goals, a multidimensional approach is needed in the implementation of character education in primary schools. It is not enough just to teach theory in the classroom, but it must also involve the school environment, family, and society as a whole. (Schnepel & Aunio, 2022).. School-based character education should be designed in such a way that students can learn through real

experiences, such as through extracurricular activities, social projects, and role simulations involving critical values such as empathy, co-operation, and social justice. This requires a strong commitment from the school, teachers, as well as support from parents and the surrounding community to consistently implement and reinforce these values in daily life. (Chiva-Bartoll & Fernández-Rio, 2022)..

In turn, evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of character education is also important. Measuring the impact of character education should go beyond cognitive assessments to include behavioural and attitudinal assessments. This requires the development of comprehensive assessment instruments capable of capturing student progress in multiple dimensions of character (Collins, 2023). (Collins, 2023). In addition, teachers and educators need continuous training and professional development to embed character education (Kardeş et al., 2023). (Kardeş et al., 2022).. Through this training, teachers can acquire effective and character development-oriented teaching strategies and strengthen their capacity to respond to students' moral and ethical needs in a more sensitive and personalised way. (Antonopoulou et al., 2022).

In the long term, concerted and systematic efforts to support character education in primary schools can result in positive impacts on individual and community development. (Goodwin & Tiderington, 2022).. Children who have a strong moral foundation will grow up to be resilient youth, have the ability to make ethical choices, and contribute productively to society. Therefore, renewal and improvement in character education should be a strategic priority in Indonesia's national education policy (Antonopoulou et al., 2022).. It is not only about shaping children's character for their future as individuals, but also about the broader social and moral development of the nation. (Hidayati et al., 2022)..

In conclusion, character education in primary schools plays an important role in the current Indonesian educational context. The challenges of modernity and shifting social values demand a holistic and integrative approach to character education, involving not only schools but also families and communities. (Afriani et al., 2022).. With full support from various parties, the effective implementation of character education can form the foundation for a young generation that is not only academically successful but also has integrity and strong social adaptability in the future. (Arif et al., 2023).

Issues such as declining moral values, cases of bullying, and deviant behaviour among students indicate a deep need for effective character education programs. (Susilo et al., 2022). The Ministry of Education and Culture of the

Republic of Indonesia has initiated various programmes to strengthen character education, which includes values such as integrity, nationalism, independence, gotong royong, and religiosity. (Reay, 2023)..

Character education is integrated into the school curriculum to guide students in developing positive attitudes and behaviours. However, its implementation in the field often encounters obstacles, ranging from unclear teaching methods, limited teacher training, to obstacles in evaluating the effectiveness of the programme (Lamb et al., 2022). (Lamb et al., 2022).

A comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions related to character education interventions is important to inform education practitioners and stakeholders in developing effective teaching strategies. In addition, an in-depth literature review can serve as a foundation for community service initiatives that aim to support the inculcation of character education in primary schools.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a literature review of character education practices, identify factors that influence the effectiveness of these interventions, and propose suggestions that can be used as a basis for community service actions to support the character building of children in primary schools.

## **Research Methods**

The research method used in this study is literature review. Literature research method, or often called literature review, is a systematic process of searching, evaluating, and analysing available publications (both printed and electronic) on a particular topic or research question. (Sio et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024).. This method is widely used across various disciplines and is a key component in the academic research process to help understand what is already known about a topic and what still needs to be further researched. (Kim, 2022).

Good literature research requires critical skills in assessing the quality and relevance of sources, in addition to the ability to synthesise complex information. It also aims to avoid confirmation bias by ensuring that all relevant and important sources have been considered. A comprehensive literature study will provide a solid foundation for further empirical or theoretical research (Nesset et al., 2024)..

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Concept of Character Education**

Character education is the process of teaching and learning moral values that aims to form positive attitudes, behaviours, and habits that become the basis of

student character. (Harrison & Laco, 2022).. This approach emphasises the importance of forming individuals who are not only academically smart but also have high integrity, empathy and social responsibility. In an educational context, this means that students are taught to internalise ethical and moral values that will guide their actions throughout life (McGrath et al., 2022). (McGrath et al., 2022).. Character education is often integrated into the school curriculum through various subjects and extracurricular activities, with the aim of developing individuals who are able to contribute positively to the wider society (Thompson, 2024). (Thompson, 2024).

The components of character education include various interrelated aspects. First is the introduction of core values, such as honesty, fairness, respect for others, resilience, independence and respect. Second is the practical application of these values in daily life through activities designed to internalise the value, such as class discussions, group projects, and tasks involving ethical decision-making (McCarthy et al., 20). (McCarthy et al., 2022).. Thirdly, continuous evaluation of this character learning process, from teachers, parents and students themselves, to assess progress and make adjustments where necessary. Fourth is cross-curriculum learning, where character values are taught not only during specialised lessons, but also integrated into all aspects of education (Jones et al., 2023). (Jones et al., 2023). By paying attention to these components, character education aims to hone and shape future generations who have strong moral and ethical strengths. (Asakura, 2024).

Theories of character education can be found in the works of educational and psychological experts such as Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Carol Gilligan, who all have different perspectives on moral development and how best to integrate ethical values in education. (Cipriano et al., 2023).. Piaget emphasised the importance of active learning and the role of experience in children's moral formation. Kohlberg's theory of moral development describes six stages of moral development that individuals can enter based on their experiences, which encourages dialectical learning and discussion of moral dilemmas to help students understand more abstract ethical values. Gilligan, on the other hand, criticised Kohlberg's approach, which he considered to be too justice-focused, by offering a more empathy- and relationship-oriented perspective. (Berdychevsky et al., 2022)..

In the context of basic education, the implementation of character education theory can be done through various ways (Guna et al., 2024). Teachers can design curricula and teaching methods that support active and participatory learning, where students are given the opportunity to experience ethical situations directly

(Fiteriadi et al., 2024). (Fiteriadi et al., 2024).. This could be through case studies, group projects that require cooperation and ethical decision-making, or role plays that require students to empathise and consider others' perspectives. In addition, behavioural modelling by teachers and school staff plays an important role in instilling character values (Berg-Weger & Tyuse, 2023).. They demonstrate behaviours that are in line with the values, so that students can learn through observation and imitation of positive actions. Moreover, involving families and communities in character education can reinforce the learning of ethical values as it provides a broader context for students to apply and see the importance of these values in everyday life (Flay et al., 2023). (Flay et al., 2023)..

The conclusion of the discussion on character education and its theories is that the moral and ethical development of students is considered as important as academic education. Character education focuses on the formation of individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also responsible, empathetic, and have high integrity. Character education theory, built on the work of scholars such as Piaget, Kohlberg, and Gilligan, provides a framework for educators to design and implement teaching approaches that encourage students to actively engage in learning ethical values through discussions, simulations, and collaborative projects. The implementation of character education in basic education includes an integrated curriculum, interactive teaching methods, modelling by teaching staff, and family and community involvement to reinforce moral and ethical messages consistently in various contexts of students' lives. Thus, character education is essentially a comprehensive effort that is not only limited to the classroom but is also part of a larger educational ecosystem, in order to produce the next generation with character strengths that are able to make positive contributions in society.

### **Barriers and challenges in implementing character education in primary schools**

The implementation of character education in primary schools often encounters a number of obstacles and challenges, mainly due to the complexity of the character itself which is the result of the interaction of many factors, both internal and external to the students. (Hardiansyah, 2022). Firstly, one of the main challenges is the different values and norms that students bring with them from home, which may not always be in line with the values they want to instil through character education at school. In addition, in this digital era, students are exposed to various sources of information and influences from social media, which may convey messages that contradict the positive values championed in character

education (Afandi et al., 2022). (Afandi et al., 2022).. This requires educators to be more creative and adaptive in designing programmes that are relevant and interesting to students, while reinforcing the positive values they want to instil (Kurniawan et al., 2022). (Kurniawan et al., 2022).

The second challenge is limited resources and support. Effective implementation of character education programmes requires sufficient resources, including time, energy and funds. Teachers need to be provided with adequate training to effectively integrate character education into academic lessons and to implement teaching methods that promote active learning of values. However, in many schools, especially in areas with limited resources, this is a significant challenge (Abbott et al., 2022).. In addition, support from school leadership and co-operation with parents and the wider community are essential to create an environment conducive to students' character development. Lack of understanding or commitment from these stakeholders can be an obstacle in creating a coherent and sustainable character education programme (Malla et al., 2023)..

Furthermore, the challenge in implementing character education in primary schools lies in assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the programme. Measuring the development and change of students' character is not something that is immediately visible or easily measured like academic test results. (Marsidin, 2022). Evaluation of character education often requires the use of more subjective and qualitative assessment methods, such as behavioural observation, student self-reflection, and feedback from parents and teachers. This means that schools must develop a comprehensive assessment system that is sensitive to changes in students' behaviour and attitudes, which requires additional time, expertise and resources. (Maisyaroh et al., 2023)..

Another challenge is maintaining student engagement and motivation in character learning activities (Tubagus et al., 2023).. In primary school age, where students' interests and attention often vary, finding methods that consistently appeal to them and are at the same time educational in terms of character can be difficult (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).. This requires high creativity from teachers and the education system to make character learning materials not only educational but also fun and relevant to students' lives. (Nurdiana et al., 2023).; (Sarmila et al., 2023)..

Thus, the implementation of character education in primary schools faces various barriers and challenges, including the different values that students bring from home, the influence of social media, limited resources and support, as well as difficulties in assessment and maintaining student engagement. However, the

importance of character education in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have integrity, empathy and responsibility makes overcoming these challenges a worthwhile long-term investment. It takes commitment from all parties involved, from schools, teachers, parents, to the community, to collaborate in creating an environment that supports students' character development. With consistent co-operation and innovation, primary schools can transcend these barriers and succeed in implementing effective character education that positively impacts future generations.

To overcome the challenges in teaching character, it is important for schools to integrate character values into all aspects of school activities, not just through specialised subjects. This can be done by incorporating the learning of values such as honesty, responsibility and empathy into the content of existing academic lessons. (Green, 2023). For example, in history lessons, teachers can emphasise the moral and character aspects of the historical figures studied. In addition, schools can implement participatory and collaborative learning methods, such as group projects or community service, that encourage students to put these values into practice. This will help make character learning more relevant and engaging for students, increasing their understanding of the practical importance of the values (Kartel et al., 20). (Kartel et al., 2022)..

In addition, to achieve effective support from all parties, it is important for schools to actively communicate and co-operate with parents and communities. This can be done through the establishment of parent forums or community events in schools where character values and the importance of character education are openly discussed. (Ferguson et al., 2022).. This helps to create consistency in the teaching of such values at home and at school, reducing the value gap that students may bring from home. Furthermore, the use of technology can also be utilised to disseminate character education materials through digital platforms that can be accessed by both students and parents, ensuring that character learning can still be done even outside the school environment. (Trisiana & Utami, 2022)..

### **Link between Community Service and Character Education**

Community service plays an important role in supporting character education as it provides opportunities for students to apply the values learnt at school in real situations. (Haddar et al., 2023).. Involvement in community service activities helps strengthen students' understanding of empathy, social responsibility, and the importance of making a positive contribution to society.

(Tuhuteru et al., 2023).; (Aslan & Pong, 2023). For example, by participating in programmes such as environmental clean-ups, students not only learn about the importance of keeping the environment clean but also develop a sense of responsibility and care for public spaces. This hands-on experience encourages the interiorisation of such values, making them more meaningful and deepening their influence on students' character formation (Pearson et al., 2022).

In addition, community service also encourages students to work in teams, communicate with various community groups, and tackle challenges together. These skills are very important in character building as they teach students about the importance of cooperation, effective communication, and leadership. (Chiva-Bartoll & Fernández-Rio, 2022).. Through this experience, students learn to appreciate differences, develop problem-solving skills, and internalise the importance of being part of the solution to problems facing society. Thus, community service not only supports the teaching of character values but also helps students develop life skills that will be beneficial to themselves and to society at large (Collins, 2023).

Furthermore, community service activities offer valuable lessons on diversity and inclusivity, teaching students to accept and appreciate differences. It can open their eyes to various social, economic, and cultural situations, instilling a deep understanding of the diversity of the world around them. (Hidayati et al., 2022). Through interactions with people from different backgrounds, students learn to respect different views and ways of life, which are key components of empathy and tolerance. These values not only enrich their personal character, but also prepare them to operate effectively in an increasingly connected and diverse global society (Gross-Manos et al., 2022). (Gross-Manos et al., 2022).

Finally, by integrating community service into character education, schools show students that education is not only about academic achievement, but also about being good and productive citizens. This sends a strong message about the values upheld by society and the importance of contributing back. (Killaspy et al., 2022). This action not only strengthens the school's commitment to character building but also encourages students to continue participating in community service long term, even after they leave school. As such, character education through community service forms the basis for building a more caring, inclusive, and responsible society (Rogowski, 2024).

Collaboration between schools, parents and communities has great potential in strengthening children's character education. Schools can act as learning centres

that provide the foundations of moral values and character, while parents can reinforce this learning at home by setting an example and providing emotional support. (Zainuri & Huda, 2023).. Communities, including local organisations, businesses, and other institutions, can provide a platform for students to practice and apply these values in real-life scenarios, through programmes such as internships, volunteering, or social service projects. This collaboration creates a holistic character education system, where the messages and values taught are consistent and mutually reinforcing between school, home, and other places in society at large. (Asakura, 2024).

To facilitate this collaboration, open and continuous dialogue between schools and parents is essential, which can be done through regular meetings, newsletters, and digital communication platforms. (Gasker, 2023). This allows for the exchange of ideas and expectations regarding character education, as well as coordination in setting common goals to be achieved. The community, through its active participation in school programmes, also gets the opportunity to contribute to student learning, for example by providing experiences that support such teaching or by becoming mentors in certain programmes. (Davies, 2023). Thus, each party contributes according to their capacity in supporting students' character education, realising an education that not only focuses on intellectual knowledge but also on the formation of good character.

## **Conclusion**

Key findings from research on evidence-based character education interventions show that a systematic and structured approach to integrating character education into the school curriculum has a significant positive impact on students' attitudes, behaviour and academic performance. These studies found that students who participated in evidence-based character education programmes showed improvements in empathy, cooperation, social responsibility and the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that evidence-based character education can reduce the incidence of negative behaviours such as bullying, cheating and withdrawal from school activities. The effectiveness of such interventions varies depending on how well the programme is designed, implemented and tailored to each school's local context.

The importance of evidence-based character education interventions lies in their ability to provide strategies and practices that are tested and proven to be effective in building student character. This approach allows schools to confidently

allocate their resources and time into programmes that have a high likelihood of success, based on research results. By relying on evidence rather than assumptions or traditions, character education becomes more focused and targeted, ensuring that interventions are not only effective but also efficient. In addition, the application of evidence-based practices in character education strengthens schools' accountability in achieving social and emotional learning goals, as well as academic improvement, providing long-term benefits for students, schools and the wider community.

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