

# Implementation of Character Education in Schools: Barriers, Constraints, and the Moral Aspects of the Young Generation

<sup>1</sup>Nelud Darajaatul Aliyah, <sup>2</sup>Eli Masnawati

<sup>1</sup>*Sunan Giri University of Surabaya, Indonesia*

<sup>2</sup>*STKIP PGRI of Bangkalan, Indonesia*

## ARTICLE INFO

### **Article history:**

Received 15 November 2021

Revised 11 January 2022

Accepted 21 January 2022

### **Key words:**

Character education,

Ethics,

Moral of the young generation,

School,

Technology,

Education policy.

## ABSTRACT

Character and ethics education in the modern era is a fundamental aspect to build the morals of the younger generation. Schools as educational institutions have an important role to play in implementing character education through curriculum, learning methods and a supportive environment. The implementation of character education in schools still faces various challenges, such as teachers' lack of understanding, curriculum limitations, and lack of parental involvement. The influence of technology and social media is also an obstacle to instilling moral values in students. Lack of consistency in the application of character values can have an impact on the low ethical awareness of students in everyday life. Effective strategies are needed to integrate character education in the school environment. This study aims to analyze how the implementation of character and ethics education can shape the morals of the younger generation and identify the factors that contribute to its success. The literature study approach is used to review previous studies that discuss the implementation of character education in schools and its impact on students' moral development. The results of the study show that the success of character education depends on support from various parties, including schools, families and communities. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of integrating the coordination of every party involved including stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness of character education to create a generation with integrity, responsibility and high social awareness.

## INTRODUCTION

The modern era, marked by the rapid development of technology and globalization, poses increasingly complex challenges in character and ethics formation. The rapid flow of information and exposure to diverse cultures and values make character education a very important aspect of education. According to Lickona (1991), character education plays a role in forming individuals who are intellectually intelligent and have strong moral integrity. Schools as educational institutions have a great responsibility to instill moral values in students so that they are able to face various social dynamics with the right principles. The implementation of character education in schools still faces various obstacles, such as the lack of attention to moral aspects in the curriculum and the lack of involvement of the surrounding environment in the character learning process (Jennings & Niemi, 2015).

The challenge of implementing character education in schools is even more apparent when looking at current social realities. Cases of juvenile delinquency, lack of empathy, and weak awareness of social norms indicate a gap in the implemented character education system (Lavy, 2020). Berkowitz and Bier (2005) point out that effective character education requires an appropriate approach that includes an integrated curriculum, teacher example, and family and community involvement. Many schools still focus on academic achievement without giving adequate attention to strengthening students' character (Chowdhury, 2018). It is important to analyze how character education is implemented in schools and its impact on young people's moral development to find more effective strategies to build individuals with strong ethical values (Jeynes, 2019).

\* Corresponding author, email address: [dr.elimasnawati@gmail.com](mailto:dr.elimasnawati@gmail.com)

One of the main problems in character and ethics education in modern times is the lack of consistency in the implementation of character education programs in schools. Many schools still make character education as an additional program, not as an integral part of the main curriculum (Nucci, 2008). This causes character education to be limited to theory without any internalization of moral values in students' daily lives. Many schools do not have clear standards or methods to assess the success of character education, making its effectiveness difficult to measure objectively (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

Another problem that arises is the lack of involvement of parents and the environment to support character education provided at school. Character education taught at school is often not in line with the values applied at home or students' social environment (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This mismatch can cause moral confusion in children, especially when they are faced with social realities that contradict the values taught in school. The rise of uncontrolled digital media influence further complicates efforts to build student character, as children spend more time with media than interacting directly with a healthy social environment (Turiel, 2006).

Another problem is the lack of readiness of educators to teach and instill character values effectively. Many teachers have not received specialized training on how to practically implement character education in the learning process (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009). Teachers often focus more on students' academic achievement so that moral and ethical aspects are not taken seriously. Exemplary teachers as role models in character education is also a challenge, because there are still cases where teachers or education personnel do not provide examples of behavior that reflect the moral values taught (Chowdhury, 2018).

Character and ethics education in modern times is becoming increasingly important to observe due to the shift in social values occurring as a result of globalization, technological advances, and cultural changes. Today's young generation faces more complex moral challenges than previous generations, such as the rapid spread of information through social media, higher individualism, and decreased direct social interaction. According to Lickona (1991), good character education can help shape individuals who have integrity, a sense of responsibility, and empathy for others. Therefore, it is necessary to study how character education is implemented in schools and how effective it is in building students' morals.

The urgency of this research is also supported by the increasing number of cases that show weak character among adolescents, such as increasing acts of bullying, low social care, and weak discipline and work ethic. According to Nucci (2008), ineffective moral education can cause young people to have weak ethical standards and difficulty making correct decisions in everyday life. Researching how character education is implemented and how it impacts the behavior of the younger generation can help find better strategies to build strong character and good ethics in schools. This research is expected to provide insights for educators and policy makers to design character education programs that are more relevant to the needs of modern times.

This research aims to analyze how character and ethics education is implemented in the modern education system and its role in shaping the morals of the younger generation. This research also seeks to identify the challenges and obstacles faced by schools to implement character education effectively and identify the determinants of the success of character education. This research is expected to provide insight into its impact on students' moral development and find aspects that need to be improved to increase the effectiveness of its implementation by understanding the factors that influence the success of character education.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature study approach to analyze the implementation of character and ethics education in schools and its impact on the moral development of the younger generation. The literature study was conducted by tracing various academic sources, such as books, journals and research report relevant to this topic. This approach allows researchers to gain an understanding of the concept of character education as well as the various strategies that have been implemented in different countries. According to Creswell (2018), literature review is an effective method for identifying patterns and trends in previous research that can be used as a basis for developing further studies.

Data sources were collected from various scientific publications that discuss character education in schools, the factors that influence its success and the challenges faced in its implementation. For example, research conducted by Lickona (2004) revealed that effective character education must involve three main components, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Narvaez and Lapsley (2009) emphasize that character education must be integrated into the curriculum systematically in order to shape students' personalities well.

The data obtained was analyzed using the content analysis method, which allowed the researcher to identify key themes in previous studies. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of character education and how schools can improve its implementation. This literature study also examines various theories of character education, such as Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development and Borba's (2001) theory of moral intelligence, to understand how different approaches can contribute to the moral formation of young people.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Character education is a learning process that aims to shape and develop moral values, ethics, and positive attitudes in individuals, especially among children and adolescents. It focuses on academic aspects, and on the development of personality and good character, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and cooperation (Lavy, 2020). Character education is often integrated into the curriculum through various subjects and extracurricular activities, as well as through behavioral examples demonstrated by educators and the school environment. Effective character education will create individuals who not only have extensive knowledge, but also have good attitudes and behaviors, which in turn will have a positive impact on personal development, social, and national progress (Lockwood, 2015).

The importance of character education is great, especially to form a generation that is intellectually intelligent, and has high integrity and morals (Chowdhury, 2018). Character education helps individuals to develop critical thinking, responsibility, and empathy for others. In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the challenges faced by the younger generation are increasingly complex (Pala, 2011). Character education helps them to face these challenges in a positive and constructive way (Jennings & Niemi, 2015). Strong character enables individuals to make wise decisions, behave ethically, and contribute positively to society.

Character education also plays an important role in creating a harmonious social environment. When individuals have good character values, they tend to interact with others more positively, appreciate differences and work together to achieve common goals (Jeynes, 2019). This is particularly important in multicultural and diverse societies, where tolerance and mutual respect are key to creating social peace and stability. Character education is beneficial for individuals, and for society as a whole, as it helps build a strong moral foundation for a better future.

## **The Application of Character and Ethics Education to Shape the Morals of the Young Generation in the Modern Era**

Character and ethics education is a fundamental aspect to shape the morals of the younger generation in the modern era full of challenges of globalization and technological development. According to Berkowitz and Bier (2005), character education aims to instill strong moral values in students so that they can face life with the right principles. The rise of outside cultural influences and unlimited access to information has an impact on the younger generation who often face complex moral dilemmas. The implementation of character and ethics education in schools is becoming increasingly important to shape their morality. Through structured learning and good behavioral examples from educators, students can more easily understand and internalize the moral values taught (Schuitema et al., 2008). Character education does not only focus on learning theory, but also on daily life practices, where students are invited to apply the values in their social interactions and decision-making.

Character education in schools is limited to certain subjects, and should be applied in every aspect of learning and the school environment. Lickona (1991) states that schools should be places conducive to the formation of students' character through positive social interactions and good role models from teachers. Many schools still face obstacles to systematically integrating character education into the curriculum. Many schools find it difficult to find effective ways to incorporate character values in already crowded subjects, such as math or science, without losing focus on the academic material that must be completed (Damon, 2013). As a result, character education is often considered an add-on or a separate activity, rather than an integral part of the daily learning process.

One of the main challenges in implementing character education is the lack of involvement of all parties, including parents and communities (Jennings & Niemi, 2015). According to Nucci (2001), effective moral education is the responsibility of schools, and requires support from families and neighborhoods. When there is an imbalance in moral formation between school and family, students tend to experience confusion to determine the values they should hold. The presence of these parties is crucial in creating a consistent and supportive environment for students' moral development (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). When parents and communities play a role in character education, the values taught at school will be more easily accepted and applied in students' daily lives.

Social media is a significant factor in influencing the moral development of the younger generation. Social media has the potential to serve as a positive means of spreading moral values, such as solidarity, empathy and justice, through social campaigns and movements that educate the public. Social media also risks increasing children and young people's exposure to negative content, such as hate speech, bullying and other unethical behaviors. According to research conducted by Turiel (2006), children and adolescents who are frequently exposed to negative values from the media without adequate guidance are more vulnerable to moral degradation. When they are exposed to damaging content without proper explanations, they may internalize behaviors and attitudes that are not in line with expected moral values. Character education should be able to teach students to think critically to respond to the information they receive. This includes the ability to analyze and evaluate the content they see on social media, as well as understanding the impact of their actions online. They can be wiser to choose the information they consume and better able to distinguish between positive and negative values by equipping students with critical thinking skills (Chowdhury, 2018).

Character education should also involve discussions on digital ethics so that students understand their responsibilities as social media users. Character education can help young people to become smart consumers of information, and agents of change who are able to spread positive moral values in the digital world. Although technology brings new challenges to moral development, effective character education can harness its positive potential and minimize the risks. Providing students with knowledge about digital ethics has an impact on using technology wisely, maintaining a balance between the online and offline worlds, and taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on the internet (Yamamoto & Ananou, 2015). Character education is not only important for developing morality in general, but also as a key to helping young people lead ethical, dignified and responsible digital lives.

Experiential learning methods have been widely used to improve the effectiveness of character education. For example, project-based learning and community service programs have been shown to increase students' moral awareness and empathy (Narvaez, 2010). Students can better understand the importance of good character in their lives by providing direct experience to apply moral values in real life. Experiential learning methods not only enhance students' moral awareness, but also equip them with the skills to overcome moral challenges in daily life (Schutte & Wetmore, 2012).

The success of character education relies heavily on the role of the teacher as a facilitator of moral learning. According to Ryan and Bohlin (1999), teachers function as academic teachers, and as moral role models for students. Students often learn more from the behavior they observe than just listening to teachings or theories delivered by teachers. Teachers must be equipped with a strong understanding of character education and effective strategies to teach it in the classroom. Character education does not only teach moral values separately, but also integrates them into daily learning. Teachers need to have knowledge of different theories of character education and how to adapt them to the situation and needs of students. Teachers also need to understand various teaching approaches that can facilitate character development, such as ethics discussions, self-reflection, and activities involving social skills.

The implementation of character and ethics education to shape the morals of the younger generation requires a comprehensive approach and involves various parties, including schools, families, communities and the government. Character education is limited to classroom teaching, and should include daily life experiences that can shape positive attitudes and behaviors. The involvement of parents to educate their children about moral values is crucial, as the family is the first environment where children learn about ethics and social norms. Communities also have a crucial role in creating an environment that supports character education, for example through community activities that emphasize cooperation, tolerance and social care (Lavy, 2020).

Technology and social media have a great influence on the behavior and mindset of the younger generation, character education must be able to adapt to the times. This means that the character education curriculum needs to be designed to be relevant to the challenges faced by children and young people today, such as social pressure, cyberbullying and negative influences from media content. With the right strategies, such as the integration of character values in academic learning, the use of interactive learning methods, and reinforcement through extracurricular activities, character education can be an effective solution to the moral challenges facing the younger generation (Jeynes, 2019). Through adaptive approaches, it is expected that young people will have good academic knowledge, and have strong character, good ethics, and the ability to contribute positively to society. Character education can serve as a solid foundation to form individuals who are intellectually intelligent, and have high integrity and social responsibility (Chowdhury, 2018).



### **Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of Character Education in Schools and its Impact on the Moral Development of Students and Determinants of Character Education**

Character education is a fundamental aspect to shape the morals of students to become individuals who have ethical values, responsibility, and social care. According to Lickona (2004), character education aims to teach goodness, and familiarize students to apply moral values in everyday life. Character education not only teaches students to know what is right and wrong, but also to internalize those values so that they can apply them in their decisions, behavior, and interactions with others. The implementation of character education in schools still faces various challenges and obstacles that affect its effectiveness in shaping students' morals.

One of the main challenges in implementing character education is the lack of understanding and commitment from educators to integrate character values in every aspect of learning. Many teachers still consider character education as an additional program that has no connection with academic subjects (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This can happen because of the view that character education only focuses on the morality aspect and not on academic achievement. According to Nucci (2001), character education should be an integral part of the entire school curriculum in order to have a more tangible impact on students' moral development. Moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation can be taught through various subjects by linking academic material to real situations that require students to apply these principles. It is crucial for educators to have a deeper understanding of the importance of integrating character education in the curriculum.

The limitations of a curriculum that focuses more on academic achievement are also an obstacle to the implementation of character education. According to Wynne and Ryan (1993), an education system that focuses too much on academic achievement often neglects the development of student character. Many schools prioritize test achievement, subject grades and intellectual competence, while the teaching of moral and ethical values is considered less important. As a result, moral values do not get a sufficient portion in the learning process so that students lack real experience to internalize ethical and social values. This risk reducing students' ability to develop positive and responsible attitudes towards themselves and others, which is an important part of their development as individuals. Linking character education into every aspect of learning has an impact on useful real-life experiences in internalizing ethical and social values.

A less supportive school environment is also a factor that hinders character education. According to Narvaez (2010), schools that have a competitive and individualistic culture tend to ignore character aspects such as empathy, cooperation and honesty. Students who are accustomed to fierce competition may find that moral values such as empathy and honesty are not important in achieving their goals, especially if they see that high academic achievement or winning competitions is more valued than showing good behavior. When the school environment does not provide good role models, it will be difficult for students to understand the importance of moral values in their lives. It is important for schools to create an environment that not only prioritizes academic achievement, but also values the process of character development through positive interactions between students, teachers and the school community as a whole.

Another challenge is the lack of parental involvement in children's character education. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), the success of character education depends on schools, and requires support from families. Families have a very important role in supporting children's character building, because moral values taught at school will be more effective if practiced and accepted in the home environment. Many parents leave the responsibility of moral education entirely to schools without providing consistent modeling and mentoring at home. Parents who are not actively involved in discussing the importance of character with their children or do not support the teaching of moral values in schools will cause confusion in children about which values they should hold in their lives.

The development of technology and social media is also an obstacle in the implementation of character education. According to Turiel (2006), today's students spend more time in the digital world compared to the real social environment so they are more vulnerable to negative influences from media that are less supportive of moral development. Easy and quick access to information, as well as the ability to interact with others through social media, has a major impact on students' moral and social development. If there is not enough supervision, the values obtained from school may conflict with those they absorb from the virtual world. Education that teaches critical thinking, empathy, and ethics in cyberspace will help students become smart consumers of information and maintain a balance between their online and offline worlds, so that character education can remain effective. It is crucial for schools, families and communities to provide adequate supervision of students' use of technology and social media.

Another barrier is the lack of systematic evaluation of character education programs. According to Schaps et al. (2004), many schools implement character education without a clear evaluation mechanism, making it difficult to measure its effectiveness in shaping students' morals. Without good evaluation, schools cannot adjust more effective character education strategies. This evaluation could include data collection from various sources, such as teacher observation, student self-reflection, interviews with parents, and assessment of extracurricular activities that contain character values.

The impact of these barriers on students' moral development is significant. According to Rest et al. (1999), students who do not receive adequate character education tend to have shallow moral understanding and are less able to apply ethical values in real life. As a result, they are more prone to negative behaviors such as dishonesty, lack of sense of responsibility, and low empathy towards others.

There are several determining factors that can support the success of character education in schools. One of the main factors is visionary school leadership that is committed to developing a school culture based on character values, as expressed by Fullan (2001). Strong leadership from school principals is essential as they serve as the director and prime mover in the implementation of the character education program. Principals who understand the importance of character education will set a clear vision, and will create a supportive environment where moral and ethical values become an integral part of daily life at school. Principals can encourage teachers and education personnel to be more active in integrating character values in learning by providing the necessary support and resources (Lavy, 2020). This can be done through professional training, developing relevant curricula, and creating opportunities for teachers to share best practices for teaching character.

Visionary principals can also facilitate collaboration between teachers, students and parents to create a learning community that supports each other in character development. Effective leadership focuses on academic achievement, and on student character building, which will ultimately result in individuals who are intelligent, and have integrity and social responsibility. The success of character education in schools largely depends on the commitment and vision of the principal to create a school culture that values and emphasizes character values so as to form a young generation that is ready to face future challenges (Chowdhury, 2018).

Interactive and experiential learning methods are also important factors in the success of character education. According to Battistich et al. (2004), approaches such as project-based learning, moral discussions, and social activities can help students to understand and apply moral values more tangibly. Interactive learning methods allow students to be actively involved in the learning process so that they not receive information passively, and participate in discussions and deep reflections on the values being taught. For example, in project-based learning, students can work together in groups to complete tasks related to social issues, which encourages them to collaborate, communicate and develop empathy for others. This is important because a deeper understanding of character can only be achieved when students can feel and experience these values in the context of real life.

Moral discussions can also be considered to provide opportunities for students to explore ethical dilemmas and consider various perspectives so that they can develop critical thinking skills and make decisions based on moral values. Social activities, such as community service or environmental projects, allow students to apply character values in real life so that they can see the positive impact of their actions on society. Character education is taught in theory, and practiced in daily life, which makes the values more relevant and easily internalized by students. This approach strengthens students' understanding of character, and forms positive habits and attitudes that they will carry into their lives outside of school (Jeynes, 2019). Character education can be more effective in shaping individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be responsible and ethical members of society by integrating interactive and experiential learning methods.

Finally, support from various parties, including parents, community and government, is needed to ensure the success of character education. According to Berkowitz and Bier (2005), the synergy between school, family, and social environment can create an ecosystem conducive to students' moral development. When parents are actively involved in their children's character education, they can reinforce the values taught at school through daily examples and practices at home. For example, parents who demonstrate empathy, honesty and responsibility in their daily interactions will provide strong role models for their children to emulate (Jennings & Niemi, 2015). Active parental involvement in teaching these values is crucial, as children are often more likely to imitate what they see than just follow what they hear.

Communities also play an important role in creating a supportive environment for character education. Community activities that emphasize social values, such as cooperation, tolerance and caring for others, can provide direct experience for students to apply these values outside the school environment. This hands-on experience reinforces the learning of character values gained in the classroom and makes students more aware of their social responsibility. Support from the government is also crucial, especially in terms of providing resources, policies and programs that support character education. When the government integrates character education in the national curriculum and provides training for teachers, it will strengthen schools' efforts to teach moral values. With the support of policies, training and programs that support character education, the school's efforts to shape student character will be more structured and have a greater impact in the long-term.

The existence of strong cooperation between schools, families, and communities affects the character values taught at school in the daily lives of students to understand the theory of character, and be able to internalize and apply it in real actions (Chowdhury, 2018). This synergy creates a supportive environment where character education can develop optimally, producing young people who are academically smart, and have high integrity, empathy and social responsibility (Lavy, 2020). The success of character education does not depend on one party, but is the result of harmonious collaboration between various elements in society. This collaboration creates an educational ecosystem that not only focuses on academics, but also on developing a good personality, which will enable the younger generation to grow into individuals who are responsible, have empathy, and have high integrity in society (Masnawati, 2021).

Although character education faces various challenges and obstacles, its success can still be achieved through strong leadership, effective learning methods, and support from various parties. Challenges faced in character education often include a lack of awareness of the importance of moral values, negative influences from the social environment, as well as limited resources available for the implementation of character education programs. Strong leadership on the part of schools and educational institutions is essential to overcome these challenges. Visionary leaders can create a school culture that supports character education, set clear goals and motivate all staff to commit to student character development. Through thoughtful leadership, schools can create a conducive environment where students feel valued and encouraged to develop positive attitudes and behaviors that support their character development.

Effective learning methods, such as project-based learning, group discussions and hands-on experiences, can increase student engagement and help them understand and apply character values in everyday life. Support from various parties, including parents, communities and governments, is also crucial to create an ecosystem that supports character education. When all parties collaborate and contribute, character education can be better and more integrated. Well-executed character education will shape students who have high morality and good ethics, and prepare them to face various challenges in this modern era, such as social pressure, technological changes, and global dynamics. Character education plays an important role in creating young people who are academically intelligent, and have integrity, empathy and social responsibility, all of which are indispensable for building a better and more sustainable society.

## CONCLUSION

Character and ethics education in the modern era has a very important role in shaping the morals of the younger generation. Challenges faced in implementing character education in schools include teachers' lack of understanding, curriculum limitations, a less supportive school environment and lack of parental involvement. The development of technology and social media also provides new challenges for shaping students' characters. These obstacles can have an impact on the low moral and ethical awareness among students so that they are less able to apply good values in everyday life. With strong school leadership, experiential learning methods, and support from families and communities, character education can be implemented more effectively and sustainably.

Schools need to be more proactive in integrating character education in the curriculum and creating an environment that supports students' moral development. In addition to teaching academic subjects, character education should be incorporated into every aspect of learning and activities at school. Teachers should receive adequate training to teach character values more effectively. Parents need to be involved in children's character education by providing good examples in daily life. When parents set a good example at home, the character values taught at school become easier for children to understand and apply in their daily lives. The government also has an important role to play in ensuring that education policies support the sustainable development of learners' character. Character education can be a strong foundation for building a generation that has integrity, responsibility, and high social awareness in this modern era.



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\*Aliyah, N. D. & E. Masnawati. (2022). Implementation of Character Education in Schools: Barriers, Constraints, and the Moral Aspects of the Young Generation, *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 119 – 126.