Understanding the Role of Educators: Teachers' Awareness of Character Education in Indonesia

Amrin Mushawir[1], Mhd. Lailan Arqam[2], Mgr Sinomba Rambe[3], Rivaldiansolih Lubis[4]
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta, Indonesia[123]
Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Karim Riau, Indonesia[4]
amrinmuzhawir123@gmail.com[1], muhammad.arqam@mpai.uad.ac.id[2],
mgrsinomba@gmail.com[3], rivaldilubis@gmail.com[4]

Abstract: Educators or teachers play a fundamental role in the field of education, not only as instructors but also as mentors in shaping students' character. Character education is an essential aspect of forming individuals with noble morals, in line with national educational goals. However, teachers' awareness of this role remains a challenge that needs attention. This study aims to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of character education in shaping students who are not only academically intelligent but also morally upright. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach, where data is collected through literature reviews from books, journals, and other academic sources. The findings indicate that teachers, as role models in character development, bear a significant responsibility that cannot be carried out individually. Synergy among teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders is necessary to create an educational environment conducive to character development. Additionally, character education should be integrated into the learning process so that students achieve a balance between intellectual and moral intelligence, enabling them to face life's challenges more effectively.

Keywords: Teacher, character education, role of Educators

Abstrak: *Pendidik atau guru memiliki peran fundamental dalam dunia pendidikan, tidak hanya sebagai pengajar tetapi juga sebagai pembimbing dalam pembentukan karakter peserta didik. Pendidikan karakter menjadi aspek penting dalam pembentukan pribadi yang berakhlak mulia, sejalan dengan tujuan pendidikan nasional. Namun, kesadaran guru terhadap peran ini masih menjadi tantangan yang perlu diperhatikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran guru terhadap pentingnya pendidikan karakter dalam membentuk peserta didik yang tidak hanya cerdas secara akademik, tetapi juga memiliki moral yang baik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan kepustakaan (library research), di mana data dikumpulkan melalui kajian literatur dari buku, jurnal, dan sumber akademik lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru sebagai role model dalam pembentukan karakter memegang tanggung jawab besar yang tidak bisa dijalankan secara individu. Diperlukan sinergi antara sesama guru, pihak sekolah, serta pemangku kepentingan lainnya untuk menciptakan lingkungan pendidikan yang kondusif bagi pengembangan karakter siswa. Selain itu, pendidikan karakter harus diintegrasikan dalam proses pembelajaran agar peserta didik mendapatkan keseimbangan antara kecerdasan intelektual dan moral, sehingga mampu menghadapi tantangan kehidupan dengan lebih baik.*

Kata kunci: Peran Pendidik, pendidikan karakter.

Corresponding Author:
Mgr Sinomba Rambe
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta; mgrsinomba@gmail.com

Introduction

Education is a fundamental factor in building civilization and determining the direction of a nation's progress (Darsiti Soeratman, 1984). Quality education is not solely oriented toward mastery of scientific knowledge but also emphasizes the formation of students' character so they become individuals who are morally upright, responsible, and capable of facing various life challenges. Within the educational ecosystem, there are several interrelated components, such as educators, students, curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation systems (Indarta et al., 2022). Among these components, educators or teachers play a crucial role in determining the quality of education received by students. Teachers are not merely conveyors of knowledge, but also mentors and character builders who influence students' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors in the future. Therefore, the presence of educators who are aware of their strategic role in shaping students' character is an indispensable necessity (Kholik et al., 2025).

In the context of education in Indonesia, the character development of students has become a primary focus, as reflected in the Merdeka Curriculum policy, which integrates character education across various subjects (Fajri et al., 2023). This concept aligns with the ideas of Thomas (Thomas lickona, 2019), who emphasizes that character education must involve three core aspects: knowing the good, feeling the good, and doing the good. Islam also stresses the importance of character education through the concept of akhlaq (morals), as explained by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, who stated that akhlaq is a part of personal perfection that must be instilled in every individual (Setiawan, 2017)

However, in practice, there remains a gap between the theory of character education and the reality in the field. Normatively, character education should be an integrated part of every learning process. Nevertheless, initial observations in several schools reveal that many teachers still prioritize students' academic achievement over character development. This situation is influenced by several factors, such as the pressure to complete the curriculum, evaluation systems that emphasize cognitive aspects over affective and psychomotor aspects, as well as the heavy administrative burdens faced by teachers. As a result, character education often becomes merely an additional subject or a ceremonial program without systematic and sustainable implementation.

Moreover, the lack of teachers' understanding and competence in integrating character education into the learning process has become a significant obstacle. Many teachers have not received specialized training on effective strategies for shaping students' character (Yanto et al., 2025). In some cases, character education is formally implemented only through specific subjects, such as Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) or Islamic Religious Education (PAI), without the internalization of character values across all subjects and daily school life. In fact, character education should be an integral part of the entire school ecosystem, involving all elements, including teachers, education personnel, parents, and the surrounding environment.

This phenomenon becomes even more alarming with the increasing cases of moral degradation among students. Various studies show that bullying (Aminah, A., & Nurdianah, 2019) The declining respect for teachers and parents, and the rise of consumerism and hedonistic lifestyles among teenagers, indicate that character education has not been optimally implemented (Nurhadi, 2017). The influence of globalization and the advancement of digital technology also present new challenges in shaping students' character (Danial et al., 2023). The easy access to information through the internet and social media often brings negative impacts on the moral development of children and adolescents, such as the rise of individualistic attitudes, the decline of communication ethics, and the tendency to imitate foreign cultures without a clear value filter.

Considering the various issues mentioned above, this study holds significant urgency in examining the extent of teachers' awareness in fulfilling their role as character builders for students. A teacher is not merely an educator, but also a role model who exemplifies values in students' daily lives. If a teacher focuses solely on the transfer of knowledge without the internalization of moral and ethical values, students may grow up without a strong foundation of character. Therefore, there is a need for more systematic and sustainable strategies to integrate character education into the learning process. Several previous studies have explored the implementation of character education in various educational contexts. For example, a study conducted by Vhalery et al. (2022) highlighted character education strategies through an integrative approach in primary school curricula. This study found that although character education had been incorporated into the curriculum, its implementation remained limited to certain subjects, such as Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) and Islamic Religious Education (PAI), without being internalized across other subjects.

Another study by Azhari et al., (2021) examined the effectiveness of role-modeling methods in shaping students' character at the junior high school level. The results indicated that teachers who consistently demonstrated positive attitudes and behavior significantly enhanced students' moral awareness. Additionally, a study conducted by (Rubini, 2019) revealed that the school environment and organizational culture played a major role in the success of character education. This research emphasized the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community in creating a conducive environment for students' character formation. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the strategies of implementing character education through curricula, teaching methods, or the role of technology, this study centers on teachers' awareness in carrying out their role as agents of character building. While prior research has explored how character education is integrated into curricula or specific teaching approaches, few have deeply investigated the extent to which teachers possess understanding, awareness, and readiness to internalize character education within the learning process.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach, which highlights teachers' awareness as a key factor in the effectiveness of character education. This research not only examines how character education is implemented but also explores the factors that influence teachers' awareness in fulfilling this role, including workload, training, and school policy support.

Thus, this study not only fills the gap left by previous research but also offers a new perspective on how teachers can take a more active role in shaping students' character.

Furthermore, the research gap also emerges from the challenges of globalization and technological advancement, which increasingly influence students' mindsets and behaviors. While previous studies have focused more on teaching methods and the learning environment, this research investigates how teachers can become aware of and adapt character education to address modern challenges such as the influence of social media, digital culture, and changing patterns of social interaction. Therefore, this study is relevant in addressing the question of how character education can remain effective in the digital era, with teachers playing an active role as the main agents in the development of students' morals and character. This study aims to analyze teachers' awareness of their crucial role in shaping students into individuals with noble character. In addition, the research seeks to identify the inhibiting factors in the implementation of character education in schools and offer applicable solutions to enhance its effectiveness.

The study will also map previous research findings from the past decade to observe the trends in character education and the challenges faced over time. After gaining a comprehensive understanding of the gap between the theory and practice of character education, this research will explore various approaches that teachers can use to effectively foster students' character. Some of the strategies to be examined include role-modeling methods, habituation, moral reflection, and the integration of character values across all subjects. Furthermore, this study will provide recommendations for schools to support the holistic implementation of character education.

Through this research, it is expected to provide a meaningful contribution to the field of education, particularly in enhancing teachers' awareness of the importance of their role in character building. The findings of this study are hoped to serve as a foundation for educators in designing more effective and sustainable character education strategies. Moreover, this research is expected to become a useful reference for policymakers in formulating regulations that support the reinforcement of character education in Indonesian schools.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a library research approach (Sugiono, 2014). This method was chosen because the research focuses on an in-depth analysis of the concepts, theories, and implementation of character education in the learning process. Descriptive qualitative research aims to understand phenomena holistically based on data obtained from relevant literature sources. The library research (Darmalaksana, 2020) approach enables the researcher to examine various academic references, including books, scientific journals, previous research findings, and educational policy documents, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the teacher's role in character education.

In this study, data collection was carried out by reviewing a variety of credible and relevant sources aligned with the research focus (Sutopo., 2002). The literature sources used were selected based on specific criteria: relevance, credibility, and recency. Relevance refers to sources that discuss the concept of character education, implementation strategies, and

the role of teachers in character education. Credibility is determined by the origin of the sources, such as indexed scientific journals, academic books, and official policy documents from educational institutions or government bodies. Meanwhile, recency refers to literature published in recent years to ensure that the data used reflects the latest developments in the field of character education.

The data collected were analyzed using content analysis techniques (Bungin, 2012) in which each piece of information was categorized based on major themes, such as the concept of character education, implementation strategies, challenges in practice, and applicable solutions. Through this approach, the study does not merely describe existing conditions but also interprets and evaluates the gap between the theory and practice of character education in schools. Consequently, this research can contribute to enriching the understanding of how the role of teachers can be optimized in shaping students' character.

The results of this study will be presented in a systematic descriptive format based on the synthesis of various literature sources. Through in-depth analysis, this study is expected to identify the factors that hinder the effectiveness of character education and to offer recommendations that teachers and policymakers can apply to improve the implementation of character education in schools. By using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study not only describes the phenomena that occur but also provides critical insights into how character education can be developed more systematically and effectively within the context of Indonesian education. The selected references are based on the criteria of relevance, credibility, and recency to ensure that the analyzed data possess high academic validity.

Result and Discussion

Results

The Nature of Educators: Teachers' Awareness of Character Education in Indonesia

This study aims to analyze Understanding the Role of Educators: Teachers' Awareness of Character Education in Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through library research, this study seeks to identify the concept of character education from various academic sources and previous studies. The literature review reveals that character education is a fundamental aspect of education, which not only aims to shape intellectually intelligent individuals but also morally upright ones. (Lickona, 1997) defines character education as a process involving three key elements: knowing the good, feeling the good, and acting the good. In the context of Islamic education, the concept of character education is closely related to the development of akhlaq (morals), as explained by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih (Rusn, 1998).

The essence of being an educator lies not only in the task of transferring knowledge but also in the responsibility of guiding and shaping students' character (Rini & Endang, 2022). Within the context of character education in Indonesia, this study finds that teachers' awareness of their role still faces many challenges. Although numerous educational policies emphasize the importance of character education, in practice, there remains a gap between ideal concepts and their implementation in the field. Most teachers still focus more on academic achievement than on fostering students' moral and ethical development. Furthermore, a lack of deep understanding of character education methods and the limited

training provided to teachers are obstacles to effectively integrating character values into the learning process.

Beyond the issue of teachers' awareness, the study also finds that not all schools have a clear evaluation system for measuring the success of character education. Some schools have implemented habituation programs, such as regular religious activities, leadership training, and the reinforcement of social values, but without a structured evaluation mechanism, the effectiveness of these programs is difficult to assess. The limited involvement of parents and the wider community in supporting character education at schools also presents a significant challenge to its comprehensive implementation (Jannah, 2019). Moreover, parental and community engagement in building a character-driven educational environment remains minimal, often leaving the responsibility solely on the school. Therefore, this study highlights the need to strengthen teachers' roles through continuous professional development, integration of character values across the curriculum, and closer collaboration among schools, families, and communities in shaping students with strong character.

However, in its implementation in Indonesia, a gap has been found between theory and practice. Several strategies have been used in schools to instill character education, including the integration of moral values into learning, teacher role modeling, and character-based extracurricular programs. However, the effectiveness of these strategies remains suboptimal due to various factors. One major factor is the lack of awareness and understanding among teachers regarding their role in shaping students' character. Many teachers are still primarily focused on students' academic achievement, without giving sufficient attention to character development. Additionally, the high administrative workload and the lack of specific training on character education strategies are significant obstacles.

The findings of this study reveal a significant disparity between the ideal concept of character education as developed by experts and the reality in the field. Theoretically, character education should be an integral part of the learning process, with teachers serving as primary role models for students. However, in practice, character education is often treated as an additional component that has yet to be fully integrated into the curriculum and teaching system. One of the key gaps identified in this study is the lack of teacher understanding regarding how to implement character education in the classroom. Although the government has issued various policies and guidelines on character education, such as in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes learning based on the Pancasila student profile, many teachers still struggle to apply these concepts effectively in their classrooms. Previous studies also show that many teachers remain oriented toward conventional teaching approaches, which results in limited attention to character development.

Furthermore, cultural and social factors also influence teachers' awareness of the importance of character education. Several studies reviewed in this research show that teachers in urban and rural schools have differing views on character education. In urban areas, the main challenge is the influence of media and technology, which tends to reduce the teacher's role as the primary source of character education. Meanwhile, in rural areas,

limited resources and access to teacher training are significant barriers to strengthening character education. In terms of the novelty of this research, further analysis is conducted to determine the extent to which the character education strategies implemented by teachers have a tangible impact on students' moral development. This study also seeks to identify more effective approaches to enhancing teachers' awareness of the importance of character education, thereby contributing new insights to the academic discourse on character education in Indonesia. While this research presents a comprehensive analytical framework, it remains limited in providing concrete empirical evidence to support its main arguments about teacher awareness in character education. Although it identifies various challenges and offers recommendations, the study lacks quantitative data or specific case examples that could strengthen the validity of its findings and provide a clearer picture of actual character education practices in the field.

To ensure that this research is built on a solid foundation, various academic references have been used, such as the book Pendidikan Karakter: Konsep dan Implementasi by (Ibrahim Bafadhol, 2018) scholarly articles from the Journal of Character Education, and policy documents such as regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia that address character education in schools. These references were selected based on criteria of relevance, credibility, and recency to ensure that the data analyzed holds high academic validity. By employing a literature review approach, this study not only provides a theoretical understanding of character education but also highlights the challenges teachers face in its implementation and offers applicable recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of character education in schools.

Improving Teacher Training and Professional Growth

Teachers hold a pivotal role in shaping students' character. However, in practice, many educators still lack a deep and comprehensive understanding of effective strategies for implementing character education (Prof. Dr. E. Mulyasa, 2023). As such, comprehensive and sustained professional development must be prioritized to enhance teachers' capacity in this area. Training programs should encompass both the theoretical foundations of character education and its practical application within classroom settings.

Importantly, such training should not be confined to theoretical lectures alone, but must incorporate hands-on, experiential learning approaches, such as workshops, case studies, and value-based teaching simulations. Moreover, professional development initiatives should be context-sensitive, tailored to the specific challenges faced by teachers across different educational levels and sociocultural environments (Hapsan & M.E., 2023). For instance, in urban areas, training might emphasize addressing the complexities of character education in the digital era and within a globalized society. Conversely, in rural areas, the focus may be placed on integrating local wisdom and cultural values into character formation.

To be truly effective, such training must be continuous rather than one-off, ensuring that teachers remain up-to-date with evolving pedagogical strategies and methodologies. Additionally, professional development should incorporate mentoring systems, where experienced educators in character education support and guide novice teachers or those

encountering challenges in classroom implementation (Umam & Hasan, 2025). With such structured support mechanisms, character education can be delivered more consistently and meaningfully within the school environment.

Integrating Character Education into the Curriculum

One of the main obstacles in implementing character education in schools is the continued separation of character education from other academic subjects (Judiani, 2010). In reality, character values should be an integral part of the entire learning process, not limited to specific subjects such as Civics (PPKn) or Religious Education. Therefore, the integration of character education into the curriculum must be systematic and comprehensive across all subjects.

For example, in science classes, teachers can promote values such as honesty and perseverance during experiments, as well as emphasize the importance of ethics in scientific research. In mathematics, students can be encouraged to think logically and maintain discipline in solving problems. In language classes, empathy can be cultivated through the analysis of literary works that portray various moral values. Through this approach, character education is not merely theoretical but becomes a lived experience embedded in every aspect of learning.

Moreover, character education should also be integrated into extracurricular activities and the overall school culture. This can be achieved through student leadership programs, community service initiatives, and project-based learning models that emphasize teamwork and social responsibility. In this way, students' character is shaped not only through formal instruction but also through direct experiences that foster moral awareness and ethical competence.

Improving Awareness and Involvement of Parents and the Community

Character education is not solely the responsibility of schools; rather, it must be a collaborative effort involving schools, families, and the wider community (Rakhmawati, 2015). Parents' awareness of the importance of character education plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of children's character development. However, in many cases, parents still perceive character education as the exclusive duty of schools, resulting in a lack of involvement in the process.

Therefore, programs aimed at increasing parental engagement in character education are essential. Schools can organize seminars or workshops for parents to raise awareness about the significance of character education and how they can support it at home. In addition, communication between teachers and parents should be strengthened through regular meetings or digital platforms that allow parents to monitor their children's character development at school.

On the other hand, the community also plays a vital role in supporting character education. Collaborative programs between schools and local communities can help reinforce the values taught in the classroom. For instance, students can participate in community service activities such as charity work, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), or value-based internships that allow them to apply learned character traits in real-life settings.

In this way, character education becomes a shared responsibility—actively supported not only by schools and families, but by all elements of society.

Reinforcing the Evaluation System for Character Education

One of the weaknesses in the implementation of character education in schools is the lack of a clear and structured evaluation system. Many schools have implemented various character education programs, but without an adequate evaluation mechanism, it is difficult to measure the extent to which these programs are successful in shaping students' character. Therefore, it is essential to develop a character education evaluation system based on observing students' behavior in various situations (Fitrianti, 2018). This evaluation can be conducted using various methods, such as student reflection journals, teacher observations, and assessments from peers and parents. For example, in student mentoring programs, teachers can observe how students demonstrate leadership, responsibility, and empathy in their daily interactions.

Furthermore, character education evaluation can also adopt a project-based approach, where students are given tasks that test their understanding of moral values in real-life contexts. For instance, they may be asked to create a social project in their local community or analyze ethical cases relevant to everyday life. With a more concrete evaluation system, character education can be measured more objectively, allowing teachers to adjust their teaching strategies according to the developmental needs of students' character.

Pemanfaatan Teknologi dalam Pendidikan Karakter

In the current digital era, technology can be a highly effective tool in supporting character education. Digital learning platforms, moral education applications, and digital content that instill positive values can serve as engaging media for students to understand and internalize good character traits. For example, gamification in character education can be used to increase student engagement in learning moral values. By using game-based educational applications, students can learn about the importance of honesty, teamwork, and discipline in a more interactive way. Additionally, educational videos showcasing inspirational stories can help students understand the meaning of various character values that need to be taught.

Moreover, technology can also be used as a tool to facilitate self-reflection and discussions on character values. For instance, through online learning platforms, students can be provided with ethical scenarios to discuss in groups. Teachers can also utilize social media and discussion forums to encourage students to think critically about moral issues in society. However, it is essential to ensure that the technology used in character education is accompanied by guidance from teachers and parents. Using technology without proper oversight can negatively impact students' character development. Therefore, strategies for utilizing technology in character education must be designed with a balanced approach, focusing on the primary goal of building strong, moral character in students. With these recommendations, it is hoped that the implementation of character education in Indonesia can become more systematic and sustainable. Teachers, as the key agents in character education, need adequate support to perform their roles optimally. This study also opens

avenues for further research to explore more effective strategies in building students' character across various educational levels and social contexts.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers' awareness of character education in Indonesia still faces significant challenges, both conceptually and in practice. Although character education has become a central agenda in national education policies, the reality on the ground shows that many teachers still lack a deep understanding of strategies for applying character values in teaching. The primary focus in many schools remains on academic achievement, while character education often becomes an additional element that has not been systematically integrated into the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, the heavy administrative workload and the lack of practice-based training for teachers have made it difficult for character education to be implemented optimally. In some schools, efforts to strengthen students' character have indeed been carried out through extracurricular activities and teacher role modeling, but without a clear evaluation system, the effectiveness of these programs is difficult to measure and develop further.

The researchers also emphasize that character education should be a shared responsibility among teachers, schools, families, and communities. However, in practice, the involvement of these parties has not been synergistic, so character education is often seen as solely the school's responsibility. To improve the effectiveness of character education, strategic steps are needed, such as more intensive professional development for teachers, integration of character values across all subjects, and a comprehensive evaluation system to measure students' character development. Additionally, the use of technology in character education can serve as an innovative solution to reach students in the digital era. With a more systematic and collaborative strategy, it is hoped that character education will not just be a discourse but will truly become a fundamental part of the national education system, capable of shaping a generation with strong character, good ethics, and high competitiveness.

Discussion

The Essence of an Educator

An educator plays a fundamental role in shaping both the character and intellect of students. Etymologically, the word "pendidik" (educator) comes from the root word "didik," which means to guide, direct, and nurture someone to develop optimally (Setiawati, 2016)). In educational literature, an educator is defined as an individual who is not only responsible for transferring knowledge but also for instilling moral values and guiding students to develop their potential. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara (Samuel Agus Setiawan, 2022) an educator is not only involved in academic aspects but also holds a moral and social responsibility in shaping the student's personality to become an individual with noble character. In a broader context, an educator is not just a teacher who teaches in the classroom but also includes parents, community leaders, and anyone contributing to the learning process and character formation.

The essence of an educator is not limited to the delivery of knowledge but also encompasses aspects of exemplarity, nurturing, and character formation. In the perspective of Islamic education, an educator is often associated with the concept of "murabbi," which refers to someone who not only teaches knowledge but also guides and instills moral and

spiritual values in students. Al-Ghazali (Al-Ghazali, 1989), in his book *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, emphasizes that an educator plays the role of "the heir of the prophets" responsible for shaping individuals with noble morals and extensive knowledge. Meanwhile, in Western educational philosophy, John Dewey stated that an educator must be able to build a conducive learning environment and provide meaningful experiences for students so that they can develop according to their potential and needs. Thus, the essence of an educator is not only as a material deliverer but also as a facilitator, motivator, and inspirator who encourages students to think critically, behave well, and have a high level of social awareness.

More than just a profession, being an educator is a calling that demands commitment, patience, and high dedication. The success of education is not only measured by the academic achievements of students but also by how their character and morals are shaped. Character education becomes an aspect that cannot be overlooked in the role of an educator. Therefore, a true educator must first internalize values of goodness within themselves before instilling them in students. Exemplarity becomes the key principle in the role of an educator because students learn not only from what they hear but also from what they see and feel from their educator's character. A good educator must be able to set an example in honesty, discipline, hard work, empathy, and responsibility, so that these values can be strongly embedded in the students.

In this modern era filled with challenges, the essence of an educator is evolving with technological advancements and rapid social changes. The role of an educator is no longer limited to the conventional classroom but must also be adaptable to various innovative learning methods, including technology-based education. An educator must have good digital literacy and the ability to use interactive learning media to remain relevant to the needs of today's generation. However, amidst these advancements, the essence of an educator remains the same: they hold a moral and intellectual responsibility to create a generation that is not only intelligent but also has strong character. Therefore, being an educator is a great trust that must be carried out with full awareness, integrity, and sincerity to achieve a civilized and knowledgeable society.

In instilling character education, an educator should not only focus on the transfer of knowledge but also on instilling moral values through various teaching strategies (Hakim et al., 2025). One effective approach is to integrate moral principles into the teaching material. Every subject has the potential to incorporate character education, such as through inspirational stories in language lessons, ethics-based problem-solving in mathematics, and the introduction of social values in social studies. Through this approach, students not only gain knowledge but also learn how to apply good values in their daily lives.

In addition to the teaching material, an educator must also instill character through behavior and role modeling. Role modeling is the most effective method of teaching because students tend to imitate the attitudes and behaviors of their teachers. Therefore, an educator must demonstrate discipline, honesty, responsibility, and compassion in every interaction with students. For example, a teacher who consistently arrives on time and exhibits a disciplined approach to work will set a real-life example for students to follow. Similarly,

honesty—if a teacher always speaks with integrity and keeps promises—teaches students that honesty is a principle to uphold in life.

Outside of the school environment, the role of the educator in shaping students' character continues through advice, guidance, and constructive social interaction. The advice given by a teacher should not only be in the form of warnings or reprimands, but can also be motivation and inspiration to encourage students to become better individuals. Advice delivered with wisdom and compassion is more likely to be accepted by students and will leave a lasting impact on them. For instance, a teacher who encourages their students not to give up easily and to always strive for self-improvement will instill perseverance and resilience in facing life's challenges. Moreover, teachers can involve students in social activities outside of school, such as community service, cooperation with local communities, or environmental programs, which can foster a sense of responsibility and empathy for others.

However, in its implementation in Indonesia, there are significant challenges in character education. Some of the obstacles include a lack of awareness and understanding among teachers about their role in shaping students' character, high administrative burdens, and the scarcity of specialized training on character education strategies. Additionally, many schools lack a clear evaluation system to assess the success of character education programs, making it difficult to measure their effectiveness. Another challenge is the lack of parental and community involvement in supporting character education at school, so character education often becomes the sole responsibility of the school.

These findings indicate that there is still a gap between the ideal concept of character education developed by experts and the reality on the ground. Theoretically, character education should be an integral part of the learning process, with teachers acting as the primary role models for students. However, in practice, character education is often treated as an additional aspect that has not been fully integrated into the curriculum and learning system. Therefore, a more comprehensive and innovative approach is needed to raise awareness and improve teachers' competence in effectively implementing character education in schools.

Character Education: Definition, Theories, and Implementation in Learning

Character education is a process aimed at shaping students' personalities so that they possess strong moral values and become individuals who are responsible, have integrity, and show empathy towards others. Character education is not limited to the theoretical transmission of moral values; rather, it emphasizes the practical application of those values in daily life. (Lickona, 1997) explains that character education encompasses three core components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These aspects must be instilled simultaneously so that students not only understand moral values but also develop the desire and ability to apply them in real-life situations.

In Islam, character education is closely tied to the development of noble character (*akhlaq*), as taught in the Qur'an and Hadith. Prominent scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh emphasize the importance of moral education in shaping individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also well-mannered. Therefore, character education should be

an integral part of the education system, embedded within schools, families, and the broader community (Rofiq et al., 2025). However, the implementation of character education in Indonesia still faces several significant challenges. One of the main issues is the lack of deep understanding among educators regarding effective strategies for implementing character education. Many teachers perceive it as an abstract concept, making it difficult to apply systematically in classroom instruction. Consequently, moral values are often introduced sporadically, without a structured approach. Furthermore, high administrative burdens frequently lead teachers to prioritize bureaucratic tasks over nurturing students' character development. As a result, although character education is included in the curriculum, its actual implementation is often symbolic and fails to produce a meaningful impact.

Another major barrier is the disconnect between policy and practice. While the government has formulated policies emphasizing the importance of character education within the national education system, in practice, many schools remain overly focused on academic achievement as the primary measure of educational success (Arif et al., 2024). This has led to the marginalization of character development in daily teaching and learning activities. Schools tend to prioritize exam results and grades, while students' moral and social growth receives less attention. This imbalance creates a paradox where students may excel intellectually but fall short in moral and ethical development.

Additionally, the lack of synergy between schools, families, and communities hinders the effectiveness of character education. Ideally, character formation should be a shared responsibility involving schools, parents, and students' social environments. In reality, many parents place the full responsibility for character education on schools, while the surrounding social environment may not consistently support the moral values promoted in school (Suriadi et al., 2020). For instance, even when schools teach honesty and discipline, students often witness contradictory behaviors in their communities, which undermines the impact of school-based character education.

To address these challenges, a more innovative and systematic approach to character education is required. Teachers should receive specialized training that goes beyond theoretical concepts and provides concrete strategies for integrating character education into the curriculum. Additionally, schools need to foster a school culture that consistently supports the internalization of moral values through teacher role modeling, daily routines, and character-building extracurricular activities. The government must also revisit education policies to ensure a balanced focus between cognitive development and character formation (Ibrahim Bafadhol, 2018).

Furthermore, the involvement of parents and the community in character education must be strengthened. Schools can foster more intensive communication with parents through parenting programs and active engagement in school activities. Communities also need to be educated on the importance of character education in order to create a conducive environment for the moral development of students. With synergy between schools, families, and communities, character education will not remain merely a discourse but will genuinely shape individuals with strong moral values who can contribute positively to social life (Syafar, 2017).

Thus, although character education has become a vital part of Indonesia's educational system, a gap still exists between its ideal concept and practical implementation. The challenges in implementing character education must be addressed through more innovative and systematic approaches that involve multiple stakeholders. Character education is not merely about teaching moral values theoretically, but also about ensuring that these values are practically applied in daily life (Susilowati, 2022). Therefore, the success of character education does not solely depend on schools but also requires comprehensive support from families and communities. With strong commitment from all parties, character education can serve as a foundational pillar in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also possesses integrity, social awareness, and noble character.

Conclusion

This study reveals rather surprising findings regarding teachers' awareness of character education in Indonesia. One of the most significant findings is that, although character education has become a key agenda in the national education system, teachers' awareness and understanding of how to implement character values in learning remain suboptimal. Many teachers are still caught in an academic achievement-oriented paradigm, causing character education to be sidelined. Moreover, the study indicates that the lack of a clear evaluation system makes it difficult to objectively measure the effectiveness of character education. Another notable finding is the limited support from the social environment, including parents and communities, in reinforcing students' character development—even though educational theories emphasize the importance of multi-party involvement in shaping individual character.

Academically, this study contributes by both confirming and expanding previous findings on the challenges of implementing character education in schools. It not only affirms that character education still faces various practical obstacles, but also offers a new perspective on the importance of teacher awareness as a key factor in its success. In addition, this study highlights how factors such as technology, teacher workload, and underdeveloped evaluation systems serve as major barriers to the effective implementation of character education. Accordingly, the study provides new insights into how character education strategies can be better aligned with actual field conditions, and how a more systematic and evaluation-based approach can be applied to enhance their effectiveness.

However, this study has several limitations that should be noted. First, as it is based on a literature review approach, the findings are conceptual in nature and do not include empirical data from various educational levels and regions. Second, the study does not specifically address character education implementation in terms of gender, age, or educational level, which might offer more nuanced results. Third, the research methods employed are limited in their capacity to measure the concrete impact of teacher awareness on student character development. Therefore, future research should include broader and more empirical approaches—both qualitative and quantitative—to provide a more comprehensive understanding and to support the development of more effective and sustainable character education policies in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

Al-Ghazali, A. H. M. (1989). *Ihya Ulum ad-Din* (Jilid 3). Dar al-Fikr.

Aminah, A., & Nurdianah, F. (2019). Pengaruh Teman Sebaya Terhadap Perilaku Bullying Siswa. *Jurnal Eksplorasi Bimbingan Dan Konseling, 1*(1), 8.

Arif, M., Kartiko, A., Rusydi, I., Zamroni, M. A., & Hasan, M. S. (2024). The Existence of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Based on Pesantren: Challenges and Opportunities in The Digital Era. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, *5*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i4.1401

Azhari, A., Arifa, Z., Rais, Q. M. N., & Hidayatullah, M. (2021). Konsep Pembelajaran Perspektif Ibnu Khaldun dan Relevansinya pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Abad 21. *Studi Arab*, *12*(1), 121–133.

Bungin, B. (2012). *Analisa Data Penelitian Kualitatif.* Rajawali Pers.

Danial, M., Rambe, M. S., Miftachurrozaq, T., Saleh, R., Ahmad, U., & Yogyakarta, D. (2023). *The Role Of Islamic Education As A Moral Foundation To The Young Generation Of Islam*. 4, 255–264.

Darmalaksana, W. (2020). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka dan Studi Lapangan.* Pre-Print Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

Darsiti Soeratman. (1984). *Ki Hadjar Dewantara.* Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.

Fajri, H. M., Edwita, & Yarmi, G. (2023). The Merdeka Curriculum In Strengthening Character Education In Basic Education. *Pendas : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, *8*(3), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v8i3.10938

Fitrianti, L. (2018). Prinsip Kontinuitas. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, *10*(1), 89–102.

Hakim, A. R., Wijono, H. A., Sugiyanto, S., Setyawan, A., & Khulailiyah, A. (2025). Implementasi Pendekatan Multidimensional Guru Aqidah Akhlak dalam Penanaman Sikap Percaya Diri. *Ngaos: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, *3*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.59373/ngaos.v3i1.101

Hapsan, A., & M.E., Drs. S. (2023). *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar untuk Guru Merdeka. 1*, 1–8.

Ibrahim Bafadhol. (2018). Pendidikan Akhlak Dalam Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kependidikan*, *2*(2549–8193), 45–61.

Indarta, Y., Ambiyar, Samala, A. D., & Watrianthos, R. (2022). Metaverse: Tantangan dan Peluang dalam Pendidikan. *Jurnal Basicedu*, *6*(3), 3351–3363. https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i3.2615

Jannah, M. (2019). Peranan Guru Dalam Pembinaan Akhlak Mulia Peserta Didik (Studi Kasus Di Mis Darul Ulum, Madin Sulamul Ulum Dan Tpa Az-Zahra Desa Papuyuan). *Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, *3*(2), 137. https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v0i0.136

Judiani, S. (2010). Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter di Sekolah Melalui Penguatan Pelaksanaan Kurikulum. *Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, *16*, 282.

Kholik, M., Muslih, I., Santoso, M. P., & Himami, S. (2025). Pendekatan Guru Profesional dalam Mengatasi Hambatan Belajar pada Pembelajaran Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam. *Ngaos: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, *3*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.59373/ngaos.v3i1.92

Lickona, T. (1997). The teachers Role in Character Education. *Jurnal of Education*, *179*(2), 63–80.

Nurhadi, R. (2017). Pendidikan Nasionalisme-Agamis dalam Pandangan K.H. Ahmad Dahlan dan K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari. *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam*, *12*(2), 121–132. https://doi.org/10.31603/cakrawala.v12i2.1716

E. Mulyasa, (2023). *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*. PT Bumi Aksara.

Rakhmawati, I. (2015). Peran Keluarga dalam Pengasuhan Anak. *Jurnalbimbingan Konseling Isla*, *6*(1), 1–18.

Rini, B., & Endang, F. (2022). Merdeka Belajar Dalam Perspektif Ki Hajar Dewantara. *Elementa: Jurnal PGSD STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin*, *4*(1), 15–25. https://doi.org/10.33654/pgsd

Rofiq, A., Hasan, M. S., Judijanto, L., Suprihatin, & Aziz, M. K. N. A. (2025). Kyai's Leadership in Prayer-Based Counseling at Pesantren: A Management Strategy. *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, *10*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.31538/ndhq.v10i1.53

Rubini, R. (2019). Pendidikan Moral Dalam Perspektif Islam. *Al-Manar*, *8*(1), 225–271. https://doi.org/10.36668/jal.v8i1.104

Rusn, A. I. (1998). *Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Tentang Pendidikan*. Pustaka Pelajar,.

Samuel Agus Setiawan, A. P. (2022). Konsep Merdeka Belajar Menurut ku Hajar dewantara Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Dan Implementasinya Dalam PAK di Sekolah. *Ekklesia Jurnal Teknologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, *1*(1), 45–56.

Setiawan, E. (2017). Konsep Pendidikan Akhlak Anak Perspektif Imam Al Ghazali. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, *5*(1), 55–70. https://doi.org/10.24090/jk.v5i1.1252

Setiawati, Sulis. (2016). "Penggunaan Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) dalam Pembelajaran Kosakata Baku dan Tidak Baku. *Jurnal Gramatika: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*, *2*(1), 44–51.

Sugiono. (2014). *Metode Penelitian kualitatif dan R&D*. Alfabeta,.

Suriadi, Supriyanto, T., & Adnan. (2020). Al-Qur'an Hadits Learning Using Cooperative Learning Strategy. *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna*, *11*(2), 153–160. https://doi.org/DOI: https://doi.org/10.31603/tarbiyatuna.v11i2.2750

Susilowati, Evi. (2022). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Al-Miskawaih: Journal of Science Education (MIJOSE)*, *1*(1).

Sutopo., H. B. (2002). *Pengantar Penelitian Kualitatif*. Universitas Sebelas Maret Press.

Syafar, D. (2017). Teori Kepemimpinan Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, *5*(1), 147–155.

Thomas lickona. (2019). *Terjemahan; education of carakter,*. alfabeta.

Umam, K., & Hasan, M. S. (2025). Increasing Student Resilience Through Integration of Islamic Values in PAI Learning. *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, *6*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v6i2.1673

Yanto, F., Meliana, N., Rosodor, S., Saifullah, R., & Etikoh, N. (2025). The Effectiveness of Internalizing Moral Values through Qur'anic Learning at Children's Boarding School. *Ngaos: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, *3*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.59373/ngaos.v3i1.93