



THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AT SMP DDI POLMAN SULBAR

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Abstract

This study aims to identify challenges in implementing character education at SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi. Character education in this school is expected to shape students with excellent and responsible behavior. Nevertheless, it encounters a variety of challenges during its execution. This investigation implements a qualitative descriptive methodology. Data were gathered through documentation analysis, direct observation, and in-depth interviews.

The study results indicate that one of the main obstacles is the limited time available in the learning schedule. Character education is often considered an additional, low priority because the main focus is more on the academic achievement being tested. In addition, the lack of understanding and commitment from all related parties, including teachers, principals, and students, also affects the effectiveness of the implementation of character education. Consequently, it is imperative to incorporate character education into all school activities consistently. This study implies that creating a quality generation is contingent upon enhancing collective awareness of the urgency of character education and improving time management.

Keywords: Character education, SMP DDI Polman, time management.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is a fundamental component of education designed to cultivate students' personalities with moral values, ethics, and a sense of responsibility. In Indonesia, character education primarily focuses on cultivating a generation with virtuous character capable of making positive contributions to society. It aligns with the mandate of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which emphasizes character education's importance in shaping students with noble personalities. However, implementing character education in schools often faces various challenges and obstacles.

One of the main obstacles educators face in implementing character education is the need for more understanding of the concept. Character education involves teaching about social norms and behavior formation through role models and habits in everyday school life. Teachers are expected to be good role models who reflect the desired character values. However, many teachers must fully understand how to integrate character education into daily learning (Sari, 2019).

Character education is an integral part of the education system that aims to shape individuals with good morals, high ethics, and positive social skills. Anggraini (2022) states, "Character

education must be applied continuously and consistently in every aspect of students' lives to form strong, noble, and responsible individuals." Character education that is adequately implemented will produce individuals who can think critically, make wise decisions, and respect others in various situations.

Nevertheless, character education in educational institutions is frequently obstructed by multiple factors, including the restricted time allocated within a demanding curriculum. Numerous educational institutions prioritize academic success, relegating character education to a secondary status. This results in character education needing to be noticed in everyday learning activities. Wibowo and Kurniawati (2021) explain that character education must be an integral part of the curriculum because the moral values applied in character education will strengthen the formation of students' personalities in everyday life. Therefore, to achieve optimal character education goals, schools must find ways to integrate it well into all existing activities.

At SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi, although the school is committed to integrating character education into various school programs and activities, its implementation still needs to be improved. One of the main obstacles is the limited time available in a hectic learning schedule. Much time is allocated to delivering academic material, which is the main focus, so character education is often considered an additional element that needs more attention. As a result, character education is usually forgotten or only used as a side activity without a structured and systematic approach. Character education should be an integral part that cannot be separated from daily activities at school. Character values must be applied consistently in every learning activity, both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities, to comprehensively and sustainably form students with noble and responsible morals (Bakar, 2020).

In addition to the time issue, teachers need more awareness and understanding of the importance of character education in shaping students' characters. Many teachers need help integrating character education into learning based on academic achievement. Moreover, many still view character education as separate from the subject matter rather than an inseparable part of the educational process. Effective character education requires exemplary teacher behavior and consistency in implementing moral values in every school activity. Teachers should be good role models for students by instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, and discipline through daily interactions. If character education is not integrated well into learning activities and school life, then the goal of forming students who are not only academically intelligent but also have good morals will be challenging.

However, at SMP DDI Polman, there are still some parents who are less concerned about the importance of character education, which results in a lack of synergy between schools, parents, and the community in implementing character values in students (Syamsudin, 2021). Another problem is the limited facilities and infrastructure supporting character education implementation. In several schools, including SMP DDI Polman, the limited condition of facilities affects the effectiveness of

activities that can be carried out to support character education. For example, there is a lack of open space for extracurricular activities that can foster cooperation, honesty, and leadership in students. It is a significant obstacle in optimizing the implementation of character education in schools (Rohman, 2022).

One crucial aspect that needs to be considered is teachers' readiness to act as agents of change in character education. Teachers at SMP DDI Polman face the challenge of creating a school climate that supports student character formation. In practice, many teachers feel pressured by the demands of delivering dense academic material, while on the other hand, they are also expected to teach character values. The combination of heavy workload and limited resources is one of the main obstacles that hinders the implementation of maximum character education in schools (Hasan, 2018).

The phenomenon of this research is that character education is the main focus of the education system in Indonesia, forming students who are not only academically superior but also have strong morals and integrity. However, SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi, needs help with its implementation. The phenomenon shows that although the character education program has been designed, a busy learning schedule often disrupts its implementation. Hence, character values are less integrated into teaching and learning activities. Teachers, as the main actors, also usually do not receive adequate training to manage character education effectively. On the other hand, the lack of collaboration between schools, families, and communities further complicates the implementation of consistent character education. Limited school resources, both in terms of supporting materials and facilities, coupled with the principal's leadership, which is not yet fully optimal, widen the gap between the school's goals and practices of character education.

Previous studies have shown various obstacles and efforts in implementing character education in schools. A survey by Setiawan and Rahmawati (2020) revealed that time constraints in the learning schedule were one of the main obstacles. Their study found that character education was often considered an addition, so its implementation could have been more optimal. The results of this study provide insight into the importance of training teachers to integrate character values into the daily learning process.

Another study by Prasetyo and Lestari (2021) highlighted the importance of involving all parties in supporting character education. They found that collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community significantly influences the success of character education. However, obstacles such as lack of effective communication and minimal support from the family environment are often the main obstacles. This study emphasizes that school character education programs must involve families and communities to create a climate conducive to student character formation.

Meanwhile, a study by Santoso (2022) emphasized the role of the principal in supporting character education in the school environment. This study shows that good leadership from the principal can create policies and programs that support character education. However, the need for

more resources, such as time and supporting materials, is often the principal facet of implementing this program. This study, together with the findings by Kurniawati (2021), which highlight the importance of teacher role models, as well as the study by Anggraini (2022) on the integration of character education through extracurricular activities, provides a comprehensive picture of the challenges and strategies in implementing character education in schools.

Table 1 Research Gap and findings from studies

Researchers and Years	Research Gap	Findings
The Last Supper (2020)	Research only focuses on internal challenges such as time constraints in learning.	Character education is often seen as an add-on and less of a priority because of the emphasis on academic achievement.
The Last Supper (2021)	It has yet to explore the influence of local culture and government policies in supporting character education.	Collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community is essential, but a significant barrier is a lack of effective communication.
Santoso (2022)	It still needs to discuss the synergy between the principal and teachers in successfully implementing character education.	Principals have a strategic role in character education policies but need more resources to succeed.
The Greatest Showman (2021)	Lack of exploration of the influence of teacher training in increasing the capacity for implementing character education.	Teachers' role models are fundamental in shaping students' character, but training support is needed for the holistic implementation of character values.
Anggraini (2022)	They are not still trying to explore innovative learning methods in character education on a busy curriculum schedule.	Extracurricular activities effectively implement character education by giving students space to practice moral values in authentic contexts.

This table offers a comprehensive summary of each study's primary contributions (findings) related to character education and the gaps in previous research. Numerous studies have demonstrated that, despite incorporating character education into the school curriculum, many still need to be restricted to theoretical aspects and need practical implementation in the field. It is particularly true in the context of the limited time in the learning schedule and the need for more commitment from all interested parties. Most studies emphasize the significance of the role of teachers and principals in the success of character education; however, they need to adequately investigate how to enhance their awareness and motivation in this regard. This study addresses this gap by conducting a more comprehensive examination of the hindering factors that affect the implementation of character education at SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi. It also offers practical recommendations regarding the involvement of all parties involved in creating a school environment that supports character education holistically and sustainably, as well as time management.

This study aims to investigate, in greater depth, the various factors that influence the effectiveness of implementing character education at the school. This will be accomplished by

considering the various challenges that teachers encounter when attempting to implement character education at SMP DDI Polman. Additionally, it is anticipated that this study will provide recommendations concerning the strategies that need to be implemented to overcome the existing obstacles and ensure that character education is implemented in the most effective manner possible.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Character Education in the School Context

Character education in schools must involve the formation of positive attitudes and values in students through academic and moral teaching. Haryanto and Sari (2023) assert that character education is essential to produce a new generation that possesses a high moral character, self-control, and responsibility. They argue that it is essential to incorporate character education into every activity at school, whether in the classroom or outside, to cultivate well-rounded students in terms of both their cognitive and affective capabilities.

Character Development Through School Environment

The school environment plays a vital role in developing students' character. Sukmaningsih (2022) stated that students' character is not only formed through learning in the classroom but also through their interactions outside the classroom, both with their peers and teachers. Students can internalize the character values taught in a supportive environment. She believes that character education must be integrated into all aspects of the school so that students can apply these principles in their daily lives.

Theory of Time Limitations in the Implementation of Character Education

One of the main obstacles in implementing character education is the limited time available for teaching and learning activities. Mulyadi (2022) explains that limited curriculum time often neglects character education, even though it is essential for students' social and emotional development. Therefore, schools must allocate particular time for character education while still paying attention to the needs of academic learning, which are also important.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study takes a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the difficulties and approaches involved in implementing character education in schools. This method was selected because it enables researchers to understand the phenomenon comprehensively by utilizing the experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of the individuals who participated in the study (Creswell, 2014). With teachers, principals, and students serving as the primary sources of information, this research was carried out at SMP DDI Polman, located in West Sulawesi.

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive research design was chosen to explore the phenomenon of character education at SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi because this method allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and practices that occur in its implementation. Through this approach, researchers can identify factors that influence the implementation of character education, such as time constraints, school commitment, and student involvement. This study aims to directly explore the field's reality to produce more relevant and applicable findings for improving school character education practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Location and Time of Research

This research was conducted at SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi, for 2 months (September-October 2024). This location was selected based on the relevance of the context of character education applied in the school and the school's readiness to participate in the research. Thus, this research is expected to provide an accurate picture of the school's challenges and practices of character education.

Data collection technique

Data was collected through three main methods:

1. In-depth interview

I conducted interviews with principals, teachers, and students to understand their perspectives on implementing character education, the challenges they faced, and the efforts they made. This technique allows for in-depth information mining (Patton, 2015).

2. Direct observation

Observing learning activities and school programs related to character education to understand the practices accurately. Observation also helps verify findings from interviews.

3. Documentation

This includes analyzing curriculum documents, lesson implementation plans (RPP), and school programs related to character education. The documentation provides objective supporting data (Bowen, 2009).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Relevant information from interviews, observations, and documentation was filtered to reduce data. The data were then presented in narrative and tabular form to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on patterns and themes found in the data.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity and legitimacy of the data, this study used source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, and students. Meanwhile, method triangulation involved combining the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis (Denzin, 2012).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study based on a review of five previous studies revealed various challenges and solutions related to the implementation of character education in schools:

1. Learning time challenges

Character education often needs to get more attention in schools because the main focus of learning is more directed at academic achievement, such as exams and grade standards. Consequently, numerous schools regard character education as a supplementary component not deemed imperative for implementation. Character education should be essential to all school activities within and beyond the classroom.

When character education is not implemented consistently, students tend to only accept moral values in theory without being able to internalize and practice them in everyday life. It certainly reduces the effectiveness of character education, which should be able to shape students' personalities to be better and ready to face challenges outside of school. Therefore, schools must balance students' academic achievement and holistic character development (Setiawan & Rahmawati, 2020).

2. Less effective collaboration

Parental and community involvement in school character education still tends to be low. However, close collaboration between schools, families, and communities is essential to creating an environment that supports student character formation. Most parents focus more on their children's academic achievements, such as test scores and school achievements. They must be made aware of the importance of their role in developing their children's character outside the school environment. This results in character education in schools not getting maximum reinforcement from the home and community environment, which should be essential in supporting the values taught in schools.

Inadequate communication between schools and families is a significant barrier to increasing parental involvement. Many parents need to receive sufficient information about the character education programs run in schools or feel unempowered to participate in these activities. The lack of effective communication channels between schools and parents leads to miscommunication about the purpose and importance of character education and how parents can play an active role. Therefore, efforts are needed to build a more solid partnership between

schools, parents, and the community to implement character education more effectively and sustainably (Prasetyo & Lestari, 2021).

3. Limitations of teacher training

Numerous educators encounter challenges when attempting to incorporate character education into their courses. Although they acknowledge the significance of character education, they need help effectively teaching these values within academic learning due to a lack of a profound comprehension of the subject matter.

Character education is often considered an addition, not an integrated part of the teaching material, so teachers tend to focus on academic achievement and pay less attention to student character formation. Therefore, special training is needed for teachers to understand better practical ways to implement character education in every subject they teach.

Teacher role models are recognized as critical factors in character education. Teachers who can demonstrate positive behavior and good values are expected to be role models for students. However, teachers need support through more intensive training and skills development to be effective role models. The training is related to the theoretical understanding of character education and concrete strategies to integrate it into teaching and learning activities. With more focused and in-depth training, it is hoped that teachers can be more confident and skilled in guiding students to internalize the expected character values (Kurniawati, 2021).

4. The role of the principal

Principals play a crucial role in designing and implementing school character education policies. As leaders, they are responsible for creating an environment that supports the development of student character through relevant programs and activities. However, often limited resources in terms of funds, time, and facilities become obstacles to implementing this policy optimally. Principals need more support from related parties to realize optimal character education (Santoso, 2022).

5. Benefits of extracurricular activities

Character education through extracurricular activities has been proven effective in shaping students' moral values, such as discipline, cooperation, and responsibility. Extracurricular activities provide a more flexible space for students to develop themselves outside the classroom, allowing them to practice character values in more informal situations. Activities such as sports, arts, and leadership can instill the importance of ethics and positive behavior that will impact their social lives (Anggraini, 2022). However, despite the great potential of extracurricular activities, they are often not designed with clear objectives related to character education. Therefore, it is essential to design fun extracurricular programs that systematically integrate character values that align with the primary curriculum's educational objectives.

Integrating the primary curriculum with extracurricular activities in character education can enhance the efficacy of student character development. Extracurricular activities with explicit

character development objectives, such as those focusing on leadership, ethics, and discipline, will offer a more significant experience for students. Therefore, cooperation between teachers, principals, and extracurricular coaches is essential to ensure that character values can be applied comprehensively in all aspects of student life at school (Anggraini, 2022).

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the primary obstacle to implementing character education in schools is the need to emphasize integrating character values into the learning process. A busy schedule and a focus on academics separate the ideal goals of character education and practice in the field. In this instance, it is crucial to revise the curriculum to ensure that character education is not merely an auxiliary component, but an integral component of the learning process (Setiawan & Rahmawati, 2020).

In addition, collaboration between schools, families, and communities needs to be strengthened. Prasetyo and Lestari's (2021) research shows that effective communication can be the key to the success of character education, especially in building an environment that supports students' moral values. The role of the principal is also vital in creating policies and mobilizing resources to support character education. As Santoso (2022) expressed, the principal must overcome resource limitations with innovation and strong leadership.

Teacher role models are another equally important element. Teachers not only teach character values but also become behavioral models for students. Kurniawati (2021) emphasized the need for teachers to be trained to improve their capacity in implementing character education. On the other hand, extracurricular activities mentioned by Anggraini (2022) show great potential in shaping students' character through non-academic activities. It indicates that character education should be integrated within the classroom and throughout all school activities.

This discussion necessitates a comprehensive approach, encompassing curriculum revision, teacher training, enhanced collaboration with families, and incorporating extracurricular activities to address challenges and optimize the efficacy of character education in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an overview of the challenges and obstacles faced in implementing character education at SMP DDI Polman, West Sulawesi. Based on the findings, several factors influence the success of the character education program at the school, including the limited time available in the learning schedule. Character education is often considered an additional element that

is less prioritized, while the main focus is more on achieving academic material that will be tested. It causes character education to fail to run optimally.

Another factor that influences character education is the lack of understanding and commitment from all parties involved, be it teachers, principals, or students, regarding its importance. Although several activities related to character education have been carried out, their implementation has not been fully consistent in every aspect of school life, both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, further efforts are needed from the school to integrate character education comprehensively into all aspects of school activities and actively involve all related parties.

Therefore, enhancements in time management, increased comprehension of the significance of character education, and a collective commitment from the entire academic community are needed to guarantee that character education is not only a supplement to the existing learning process but also an integral component.

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