

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN IMPROVING STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of character education in improving student discipline in elementary schools through a literature review approach. Character education is an important aspect in the world of education, especially in forming disciplined behavior from an early age. This study analyzes various sources such as journal articles, theses, and books that are relevant and published in the last ten years. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of character education integrated into subjects, extracurricular activities, and school culture has a positive impact on improving student discipline. Supporting factors such as principal leadership, teacher and parent involvement, and adequate facilities also strengthen the success of this program. On the other hand, limited teacher training and inconsistent application of values are major obstacles. This study concludes that character education that is implemented in a planned, consistent, and collaborative manner has proven effective in forming disciplined behavior in elementary school students.

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, Character Education, Discipline, Elementary School Students

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advances, the challenges in the world of education are increasingly complex. Schools are not only required to produce students who are academically intelligent, but also have strong and resilient characters. Character education is an urgent need in

order to form a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has integrity, responsibility, and discipline (Liando et al., 2023). Character values such as honesty, hard work, and discipline are very important to be instilled from an early age, especially at the elementary school level as a foundation for personality formation (Bachrudin, 2022). The problem that often occurs in elementary schools is the low discipline of students, which is reflected in various forms of behavior, such as being late for school, not doing assignments, violating rules, and a lack of sense of responsibility for obligations as students (Noritasari et al., 2024). This indiscipline not only disrupts the teaching and learning process, but also has the potential to form negative habits that are carried over to higher levels of education and even in community life.

Factors that influence low student discipline in elementary schools are very diverse, ranging from lack of family involvement, weak role models from the school environment, to the less than optimal implementation of character education in schools. Education that is only oriented towards academic achievement often ignores the development of attitudes and values (Fajar et al., 2024). In fact, disciplined character is one of the basic values that must be instilled to support student success in various aspects of life. Character education, which aims to instill moral and ethical values in students, is believed to be a solution to improving student discipline (Hasanah, 2022). Through character education, students are taught to understand the value of discipline not only as a rule that must be obeyed, but as a habit that is built on personal awareness (Hulkin & Zakaria, 2024). Character education that is integrated with learning activities and school culture can shape students' mindsets and behaviors that are more orderly, responsible, and consistent in carrying out their obligations (Akbar, 2024).

At the elementary school level, character education should be designed according to the child's developmental stage. Teachers as role models have an important role in conveying the values of discipline through a communicative, contextual, and consistent approach. In addition, the involvement of parents and the social environment in the character formation process is needed to ensure continuity of values between home and school (Wardhono et al., 2023). Various previous studies have shown that character education that is implemented effectively can have a positive impact on students' disciplinary attitudes. However, the implementation of character education in the field still faces a number of obstacles, such as lack of teacher training, weak support from school management, and minimal evaluation of the results of the

character programs implemented (Luwumba et al., 2022). This raises the question of to what extent character education is truly effective in improving student discipline in elementary schools.

Thus, it is important to conduct an in-depth literature review to examine various approaches, strategies, and previous research results that discuss the relationship between character education and student discipline in elementary schools. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of character education in shaping disciplined behavior and provide recommendations for schools in developing more holistic education policies. Through this study, the author wants to raise the issue of how character education can contribute significantly to improving student discipline in elementary schools. This study will focus on analyzing various relevant literature to find patterns, effectiveness, and challenges in implementing character education in the context of shaping the discipline of elementary school-aged children.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive literature review approach. This method was chosen because it aims to analyze and synthesize the results of previous relevant research on the effectiveness of character education in improving student discipline in elementary schools. The data sources in this study come from various scientific literature such as journal articles, theses, dissertations, books, and research reports that have been officially published. All sources reviewed were selected based on certain criteria so that the data analyzed is valid and relevant to the focus of the study. The criteria for selecting literature include: (1) research that directly discusses the topic of character education and student discipline at the elementary school level; (2) literature published in the last 10 years to ensure that the context is still relevant to current educational developments; and (3) has academic validity and can be scientifically accounted for. The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (theme-based analysis) to identify patterns of findings in the literature, as well as narrative synthesis, which is used to describe the relationships between findings descriptively and comprehensively. This approach allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of character education in shaping student discipline (Earley, M.A.2014; Snyder, H.2019).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation of Character Education in Elementary Schools**

Character education in elementary schools is a process of learning moral and ethical values that are instilled in students through various planned and sustainable methods. Its implementation is not only limited to teaching theory in the classroom, but also includes habituating daily attitudes and behaviors. Elementary schools as the initial stage of formal education are an important place to instill basic values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and discipline that will form the foundation of students' personalities (Febriyanti & Amrullah, 2023). One of the common strategies for implementing character education is through integration in subjects. In this case, character values are integrated into the curricular learning process, for example, teachers link Indonesian language lessons or Pancasila Education with attitudes of responsibility and honesty in communicating (Syahbudin et al., 2024). This strategy aims for students not only to understand the concept of character values theoretically, but also to see examples of their application in the context of everyday learning.

In addition to integration in subjects, extracurricular activities are also an important medium in the implementation of character education. Activities such as scouts, sports, arts, and social activities teach students the values of discipline, cooperation, sportsmanship, and empathy through direct experience (Hasanah & Ningsih, 2023). By involving students in activities outside the classroom, character values are more easily instilled because they are obtained through real practice, not just through lectures or teacher explanations (Hasibuan & Nasution, 2024). School culture also plays a vital role in the success of character education. Schools that have a culture of discipline, such as getting used to arriving on time, maintaining cleanliness, and respecting teachers and friends, will be a conducive environment for the internalization of positive values. This culture can be formed through consistent school rules, exemplary teachers and staff, and appreciation for positive student behavior (Handayani, 2023).

In its implementation, teachers have a primary role as role models, facilitators, and motivators. Teachers not only teach character values, but must also be real examples in daily attitudes and behavior. Consistency between teacher speech and actions will greatly influence how students assess and imitate the values taught (Indriyati & Siswadi, 2023). Teachers must also be able to use a communicative and empathetic approach so that students feel appreciated and encouraged to behave positively. In addition to teachers, the role of parents is very important in supporting character

education at home. The values taught in schools must be continued and reinforced in the family environment. The mismatch between the values taught in schools and those applied at home can cause confusion for students (Melpi et al., 2024). Therefore, collaboration between schools and parents through good communication, regular meetings, and involvement in school activities is the key to the successful implementation of character education.

The community environment also cannot be ignored in the process of forming children's character. The environment around the school and where students live can influence the way they behave. An environment that supports positive values such as discipline, tolerance, and responsibility will strengthen the character learning obtained at school (Darojati & Hidayat, 2024). Therefore, schools need to collaborate with community leaders and social institutions in supporting character education programs. Overall, the implementation of character education in elementary schools requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach. The success of character education does not only depend on one method, but on the synergy between academic learning, behavioral habits, and a supportive environment. Collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community is an important factor in creating an educational environment that can effectively instill character values in students from an early age.

### **The Impact of Character Education on Student Discipline**

Various research results show that character education has a significant influence on improving student discipline in elementary schools. Character education that is consistently applied can shape students' mindsets and habits to act in accordance with positive values such as responsibility, obedience to rules, and self-awareness (Lestari, 2022). For example, research conducted by Fitriani (2019) found that the implementation of character education in elementary schools through morning habituation programs and daily reflections can significantly increase student compliance with school rules. Similar research by Suryadi (2021) revealed that character education programs based on school culture contributed to a decrease in the number of student disciplinary violations. In the study, schools that implemented a reward policy for disciplined behavior showed an increase in student motivation to arrive on time, keep the classroom clean, and complete schoolwork well. This shows that character education can influence students' concrete behavior in a sustainable manner.

In addition, the integration of character values in learning has also been proven effective in shaping student discipline (Maesaroh & Kustiarini, 2024). Research by Wahyuni (2018) shows that when teachers actively link subject matter with values such as honesty and responsibility, students become more aware of the importance of following rules and demonstrating appropriate behavior. This shows that a contextual approach to character education can increase the internalization of discipline values in students. Comparisons between schools with different implementations of character education also provide a clear picture of its impact on student discipline. For example, schools that implement a structured character education program with daily, weekly activities, and periodic evaluations show a higher level of discipline compared to schools that do it unsystematically (Juniarti et al., 2024). This was revealed in a comparative study conducted by Ramadhan (2020) between two elementary schools in the city and village, where schools that had a more planned character education program showed more positive disciplinary results.

Some schools even develop character education models based on religious activities or cultural localities that also have an impact on increasing disciplined behavior. For example, schools that integrate religious values such as congregational prayer, joint prayer, and faith-based social activities show increased discipline in terms of time, neatness, and polite behavior of students (Pangesti, 2023). This shows that an approach based on local and religious values is also effective in forming disciplined character. However, not all implementations of character education are effective. In several studies, it was found that programs that were only symbolic or formal tended not to have a significant impact on student behavior. Character education that is not supported by teacher role models or the absence of evaluation and follow-up will only be an administrative program without long-term effects (Elliani et al., 2024). Therefore, the success of character education is greatly influenced by the sincerity and consistency of its implementation.

From the results of the reviewed studies, it can be concluded that character education has a positive impact on improving student discipline if it is implemented in an integrated, consistent manner, and involves all components of the school. Changes in student behavior do not occur instantly, but through a process of habituation, role modeling, and continuous coaching (Azzahra & Taqwani, 2024). Schools that are able to create an environment that instills character values comprehensively will be more successful in forming disciplined students. Thus, it is important for elementary

schools not only to design character education programs, but also to evaluate their implementation periodically and involve teachers, students, parents, and the community. Character education is not just part of the curriculum, but is a process of forming a whole person. Through effective character education, students can grow into individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also disciplined, responsible, and moral.

### **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Effectiveness of Character Education**

The effectiveness of character education in improving student discipline is greatly influenced by a number of interrelated supporting factors. One key factor is the support of the principal as a leader in the educational environment. A principal who has a strong vision of the importance of character education will encourage all components of the school to integrate character values in various aspects of school activities (Zakiah et al., 2022). This support can be seen in school policies, budget allocation for character programs, and the formation of a special team tasked with overseeing their implementation. Another supporting factor is the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure. Facilities such as comfortable classrooms, places of worship, character value information boards, and a clean and tidy school environment will create an atmosphere that supports character learning (Mustoip et al., 2023). Supporting facilities also include relevant learning media and tools to instill discipline values, such as student daily journals, habituation modules, or motivational posters that remind students of the importance of certain values.

Parental involvement is also an important factor in supporting the success of character education. Parents play a role in strengthening the values taught in schools through habits at home. A synergistic relationship between teachers and parents will facilitate consistent supervision and coaching of student behavior. Schools that actively involve parents in activities such as parenting classes, seminars, or regular meetings tend to be more successful in building students' character as a whole (Kurniawan & Rambe, 2024). However, in practice, there are a number of obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of character education. One of the main obstacles is the lack of training or provision for teachers. Many teachers do not fully understand the right approach to teaching character values effectively. Character education is often considered an additional task, not an integral part of the learning

process, so that its implementation is less than optimal and tends to be mere formality (Azizah & Kurniawan, 2022).

In addition, inconsistency in the application of character values is also a serious obstacle. When teachers, school staff, or even principals do not show exemplary behavior, students will experience confusion and lose confidence in the values taught (Shanie & Batubara, 2023). For example, teachers who teach discipline but are often late or inconsistent in giving sanctions will actually weaken the message of character education itself. Another obstacle is the dense curriculum load so that character education does not get enough space in the learning process. In conditions like this, teachers tend to focus on achieving academic targets and ignore the character dimension. In fact, character education requires time, repetition, and a patient approach so that these values can be properly embedded in students (Putri & Mustika, 2024).

The problem of minimal evaluation of character education outcomes is also an obstacle that is often overlooked. Without clear and systematic evaluation, schools do not have an idea of whether the character education program being implemented is successful or not. Evaluation should not only include cognitive aspects, but also observations of students' real behavior in everyday life at school (Hidayat, 2024). Taking into account these supporting and inhibiting factors, it can be concluded that the success of character education is highly dependent on the integration of school leadership, teacher readiness, parental involvement, and a supportive environment (Rauf & Mahmudah, 2022). Therefore, careful planning, regular training, and ongoing evaluation are needed to ensure that character education can run effectively and have a real impact on improving student discipline in elementary schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that character education has a significant role in shaping and improving student discipline in elementary schools. The implementation of character education through the integration of moral values in subjects, extracurricular activities, and school culture has been proven to be able to positively influence student behavior. In addition, the active involvement of teachers, principals, parents, and the surrounding environment is also an important factor in supporting the success of character education. Findings from various studies show that students who are involved in structured and consistent character education programs tend to show improvements in discipline, such as arriving on time, obeying school rules, and being



responsible for assignments. Thus, it can be concluded that character education that is designed and implemented effectively can be a relevant and useful strategy in shaping disciplined behavior from an early age at the elementary school level.

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