A Character Education Framework Grounded in Exemplary Leadership: Insights and Applications

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Abstract: Character education is a fundamental aspect of human development, as it shapes individuals into ethical and responsible members of society. This study explores the effectiveness of exemplary leadership as a method for character education through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The findings reveal that exemplary teaching methods play a pivotal role in fostering holistic character development by integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. These methods enable educators to act as role models, guiding students to internalize and practice ethical values in their daily lives. Despite its potential, the study identifies gaps in the systematic application of exemplary leadership within educational practices, particularly in teacher training programs. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, and communities. This research underscores the transformative potential of exemplary leadership in addressing moral challenges and promoting sustainable character education across diverse educational contexts. The findings contribute valuable insights to the field of character education, offering a robust framework for implementation and policy development.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of global and contemporary issues, character education has emerged as a critical and increasingly prominent focus in the field of education, particularly in Indonesia. This prominence arises as a response to the growing moral decline within society, which has had far-reaching consequences across various sector (Salsabila et al., 2024; Susilo et al., 2022). The erosion of moral values has not only weakened social cohesion but also fostered structural and cultural dehumanization. Such conditions necessitate immediate educational interventions to restore and strengthen moral integrity as a foundation for sustainable national development.

The moral challenges faced by Indonesia are multifaceted, encompassing disorientation and lack of internalization of Pancasila values, insufficient integration of policies to uphold these values, the erosion of ethical norms in public and private life, diminishing appreciation for cultural heritage, and the threat of national disintegration (Irfan & Sain, 2024; Metcalfe & Moulin-Stożek, 2021). These issues signify a broader crisis that threatens the realization of a just and prosperous society. Education, as a transformative tool, is uniquely

positioned to address these challenges by instilling values that reflect the nation's moral compass and cultural identity.

Recognizing this urgency, the Indonesian government has placed significant emphasis on character education. Policies and initiatives have been introduced to cultivate individuals who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and aligned with ideals of faith, creativity, independence, and democratic citizenship (Dabdoub et al., 2024; Syukur et al., 2024; Torres et al., 2025). However, despite these efforts, the practical implementation of character education in schools often falls short of its intended goals. Studies reveal a significant gap between the ideals of character education and the observed behaviors and attitudes in society (Intania & Sutama, 2020; Laws, 2019; Permady et al., 2023). Unethical behavior, lack of civic responsibility, and societal moral decline underscore the need for more effective educational approaches.

One approach widely regarded as effective in character education is role modeling or exemplary teaching. This method emphasizes the role of educators as exemplars, demonstrating the values and behaviors they seek to instill in their students. Role modeling has been described as fundamental to character education, enabling educators to inspire moral development through personal example (Gamage et al., 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2019). However, the systematic integration of role modeling into educational practices remains underexplored. Many institutions fail to incorporate this approach comprehensively into curricula and teacher training programs, creating a gap in both theoretical understanding and practical application.

This study seeks to address this gap by emphasizing the significance of role modeling as a central method in character education. While previous research has explored various strategies for fostering character development, limited attention has been given to the critical role of educators as moral exemplars. By focusing on this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for integrating role modeling into educational practices, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge on effective character education.

The urgency of this research is further amplified by the increasing moral challenges faced by young people in the digital age. The proliferation of social media, online content, and global cultural influences has exposed students to conflicting values, making the role of educators as moral guides even more critical. Through role modeling, educators can provide students with a moral framework that helps them navigate these complexities while maintaining alignment with their cultural and ethical heritage.

Furthermore, this study aligns with global educational trends emphasizing social-emotional learning (SEL) and the development of 21st-century skills (Anis, 2024; Lestari et al., 2023; Nur Fitria, 2024). Character education, with its focus on fostering empathy, resilience, and ethical decision-making, complements these trends by preparing students for both academic success and meaningful societal participation. The integration of role modeling into character education offers a practical approach to achieving these broader educational goals.

In summary, this study aims to bridge the gap in existing literature by highlighting the role of educators as exemplars in character education. It addresses the theoretical and practical challenges of implementing role modeling in educational settings, providing actionable insights for educators and policymakers. By offering a structured framework, this research underscores the transformative potential of character education in addressing the moral challenges of the 21st century. Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to

contribute to the realization of a more ethical and harmonious society, both in Indonesia and beyond.

METHOD

This study employs a library research method using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) framework (Díaz-Millón & Olvera-Lobo, 2023). The SLR approach was chosen for its structured process, allowing for the synthesis and critical evaluation of academic literature to address the research questions effectively. This method involves systematically identifying, selecting, and analyzing scholarly works to ensure credible and comprehensive findings (Raes et al., 2020).

The research utilized academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ERIC, and SpringerLink to gather peer-reviewed articles, books, and conference proceedings. Keywords like "character building," "educational approaches," "exemplary methods," and "educator influence" guided the literature search. Articles were filtered based on relevance, publication date (preferably within the last decade), and alignment with the research objectives. Priority was given to literature addressing role modeling as an educational approach to maintain focus and relevance.

The selected literature was categorized into themes, including theoretical foundations of character education, the role of educators as moral exemplars, and the impact of role modeling on student behavior. This categorization helped identify patterns, gaps, and areas for further exploration. The researcher's insights and experiences were integrated into the analysis, enriching the discussion by linking theoretical frameworks to practical applications, particularly in the Indonesian educational context.

Inclusion criteria ensured the selection of sources directly addressing character education and role modeling, while studies lacking empirical grounding or relevance were excluded. This rigorous process enhanced the study's reliability and validity.

Ethical research practices were maintained throughout the study, with proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources to avoid plagiarism. By synthesizing key findings, the study identified the effectiveness of role modeling in character education, drawing comparisons with other approaches. A meta-analytical perspective provided actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and researchers, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Through this methodological approach, the study offers a concise and nuanced exploration of role modeling in character education, contributing valuable insights to the field.

Table 1. Research Stages and Descriptions.

No	Stage	Key Activities	Explanation
1	Theme Identification	Determining keywords such as "character building," "educational approaches," "exemplary methods," and "educator influence."	Keywords guide the search for relevant literature aligned with the research objectives.
2	Data Collection	Searching for literature in databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ERIC, and SpringerLink.	Articles and other sources are selected based on relevance, publication date (preferably within the last decade), and alignment with research goals.
3	Literature Screening	Filtering literature based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.	Inclusion: Sources addressing character education and role modeling. Exclusion: Sources lacking theoretical grounding or relevance.

No	Stage	Key Activities	Explanation
4	Theme Categorization	Grouping literature into themes such as theoretical foundations, the educator\u2019s role, and the impact of role modeling.	Helps identify patterns, gaps, and areas requiring further exploration.
5	Analysis and Synthesis	Analyzing key findings from the literature to answer the research questions.	Findings are contextualized within theoretical frameworks and the researcher\u2019s insights, connecting theory to practical applications.
6	Results Compilation	Compiling findings into a research report with meta-analysis and actionable recommendations.	Provides practical guidance for educators, policymakers, and researchers regarding the role of role modeling in character education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides an overview of key studies supporting the role of exemplary leadership in character education. The literature highlights how character formation is deeply influenced by educators' behavior, parental guidance, and institutional practices. It also explores the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains as essential components of character education.

Table 2 summarizes the objectives, focus, and findings of these studies, offering a concise foundation for understanding the theoretical and practical dimensions of character education. This synthesis underscores the relevance of exemplary methods in shaping ethical, responsible, and well-rounded individuals.

Table 2. Summary of Literature Review.

Author(s)	Title	Objective/Focus	Key Findings
Suhardini et al. (2020)	Character as Personality	Examines the integration of personality and moral values into character.	Character is an integration of personality, moral values, and behavior.
Hermino & Arifin (2020)	Contextual character education for students in the senior high school	Explores the integration of moral and social dimensions in character education.	Character education is a holistic process combining moral and social dimensions for principled individuals.
Nainggolan & Naibaho (2022)	The Integration of Kohlberg Moral Development Theory with Education Character	Proposes a model for integrating cognitive, emotional, and actionable dimensions in character education.	Integrating these dimensions strengthens moral development in students.
Hasbiyallah et al. (2023)	Character Education Model for High School Students during the Pandemic in terms of Pedagogic Competence and Teacher Personality	Identifies key methods for implementing character education in schools and families.	Character education requires integration across school systems and family practices.
Dewi & Alam (2020)	Transformation model for character education of students	Explores the role of exemplarity in family, school, and community settings for character formation.	Exemplary behavior is central to fostering character through imitation across all educational environments.
van Dijk et al. (2020)	Armoured with morality: Parental perspectives on moral education in the violent context of Brazilian slums	Examines the influence of parental exemplarity on children's character development.	Parents' behavior strongly affects children's understanding and practice of moral values.

Author(s)	Title	Objective/Focus	Key Findings
Alfarikh et al. (2021)	Implementation Religious Character Values for Students Through School Extracurricular Programs	Investigates the integration of cultural values into character education frameworks.	Character education integrates cultural, religious, and national values into students' learning experiences.
Ata & Kimzan (2024)	Shaping Student Relationships: The Role of Personality in Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers	Explores the role of teachers as moral exemplars in fostering character development.	Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping character through behavior and communication.
Sethi & Jain (2024)	AI technologies for social emotional learning: recent research and future directions	Examines the relationship between social-emotional learning and character education.	SEL complements character education by fostering empathy, resilience, and ethical decision-making.

The Essence of Character Education

The term "character" originates from the Greek word "charassein", meaning "to engrave." This analogy compares the character to the engraving of a gemstone or the surface of hard iron, emphasizing its permanence and depth. Over time, the concept of character has evolved into a distinctive mark or pattern of behavior. (Suhardini et al., 2020) equates character with personality, while Masnur Muslich associates it with moral strength, highlighting its inherently positive connotation. According to Hermino & Arifin (2020) a person of character possesses a defined moral quality. (Domínguez Romero, 2022) as cited by (Haniah et al., 2020), describes a character as a trait or feature intrinsic to an object or person, serving as an identifying marker.

Character education as defined by (Zaenab et al., 2020) aims to shape an individual's personality through moral education. Its outcomes manifest in observable actions, such as honest behavior, accountability, respect for others' rights, and diligence. Similarly, (Jasper et al., 2020; Nainggolan & Naibaho, 2022) as cited by (Hart, 2022) conceptualizes character education as a holistic educational process that integrates moral and social dimensions, forming a foundational pathway for students to develop into independent and principled individuals. At its core, character education represents the integration of intelligence, personality, and noble character. According to (Agustini, 2021) it serves as a medium for helping learners comprehend, care for, and act upon ethical values. (Susilo et al., 2022) expands this idea by describing character education as an enhanced form of moral education that incorporates cognitive, emotional, and actionable aspects.

The Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia outlines character education as a process of cultivating and empowering noble values in schools, families, and communities. These values are drawn from various sources, including educational and psychological theories, religious teachings, the Pancasila, and the Indonesian Constitution (UUD 1945). They are also informed by empirical research and real-life experiences. To strengthen character education, 18 core values have been identified. These include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, appreciation of achievements, friendliness, love of peace, reading habits, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. While these values form a foundation, educational institutions may tailor their

focus based on contextual needs, prioritizing certain values over others to meet local demands. In essence, character education is a deliberate and systematic effort designed to assist learners in understanding, internalizing, and practicing ethical values. This process integrates knowledge, emotions, and actions, ultimately fostering behaviors aligned with religious, cultural, and legal norms.

Objectives and Functions of Character Education

Character education encompasses every action taken by educators to shape students' character. Teachers play a pivotal role through exemplary behavior, effective communication, and fostering tolerance. This form of education is essential at all levels, from early childhood education to higher education, through formal instruction, extracurricular activities, and the cultivation of a positive school culture. The objectives of character education include creating a resilient and competitive nation imbued with noble morals, mutual tolerance, collaboration, and patriotism. Additionally, it aims to foster dynamic, knowledge-oriented citizens who uphold faith and devotion to God, guided by the principles of Pancasila. Character education serves multiple functions.
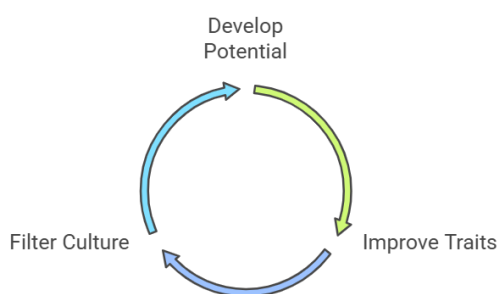

Figure 1. The Objectives and Functions of Character Education.

Character education plays a vital role in nurturing and developing individuals' potential by enabling them to think, feel, and act in alignment with the values of Pancasila. It serves as a mechanism to address negative traits while simultaneously strengthening the roles of families, educational institutions, and communities in fostering a progressive, independent, and prosperous society. Furthermore, character education functions as a cultural filter, integrating positive values from global cultures into the national character, ensuring that Indonesia remains a dignified and respectful nation. Through these interconnected objectives, character education contributes to the holistic development of individuals and the preservation of the nation's identity. Ultimately, character education aspires to instill a culture of moral excellence in schools and beyond, forming individuals and communities that uphold shared ethical values.

Values in Character Formation

Educational institutions have long embedded character-building values into their operational programs. These foundational efforts have been further strengthened by identifying 18 core values derived from religion, Pancasila, culture, and national educational goals. The identified values include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, appreciation of achievements, friendliness, love of peace, reading habits, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. While these values form a comprehensive guide, institutions are encouraged to prioritize and adapt them according to their unique circumstances and regional contexts.

The incorporation of these values into education serves as a roadmap for cultivating ethical, empathetic, and responsible individuals. By systematically integrating these values into curricular and extracurricular activities, schools can ensure that character education becomes a

cornerstone of the nation's educational framework. Character education in Indonesia represents a holistic and integrative effort to foster moral, social, and intellectual growth among learners. By combining traditional values with modern pedagogical approaches, it creates a foundation for developing principled, capable, and culturally aware citizens. Its ultimate goal is to shape individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally responsible, contributing to a resilient and dignified nation.

Approaches to Character Education

Role Modeling: To support the effective implementation of character education, both formal and non-formal educational institutions must serve as primary facilitators, fostering environments that reflect and reinforce the desired character values. Educators and educational personnel play a crucial role by exemplifying positive behaviors and attitudes, acting as role models for students to emulate. By demonstrating good practices, they set an aspirational standard, encouraging students to internalize and adopt these values in their own lives.

Learning: Character education can be imparted through various activities within and beyond the classroom. Character education is implemented through various approaches that encompass classroom learning, institutional activities, and extracurricular programs. In the classroom, character education is integrated into lessons across all subjects or delivered through specifically designed activities aimed at instilling core values. Beyond the classroom, formal and non-formal educational settings facilitate character education through institutional activities involving all stakeholders, including students, educators, and support staff. Additionally, character-building efforts are reinforced through extracurricular

programs and other initiatives planned at the start of the academic year. These programs, incorporated into the institution's academic calendar, provide students with opportunities to internalize and practice values in diverse contexts, fostering holistic character development.
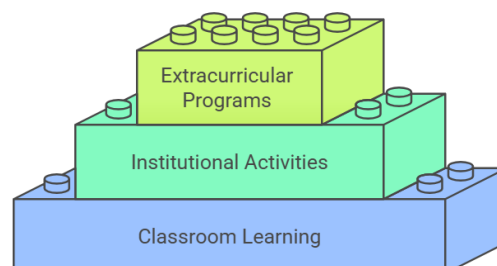

Figure 2. Approaches to Character Education in Formal and Non-Formal Settings.

Empowerment and Cultivation. The development of character values operates on two levels. At the macro level, character education involves comprehensive planning and implementation at the national scale, engaging all stakeholders in the education system. This process includes planning, execution, and evaluation phases, drawing insights from foundational sources such as Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and educational laws like Law No. 20 of 2003. It also incorporates frameworks from brain theory, psychology, education, ethics, and socio-cultural studies, as well as best practices and experiences from exemplary institutions such as pesantrens, cultural groups, and other high-performing educational entities. At the micro level, character education is embedded into daily activities and interactions within schools and communities. This collaborative effort ensures consistent reinforcement of character values, fostering a cohesive and supportive environment for moral and ethical development.
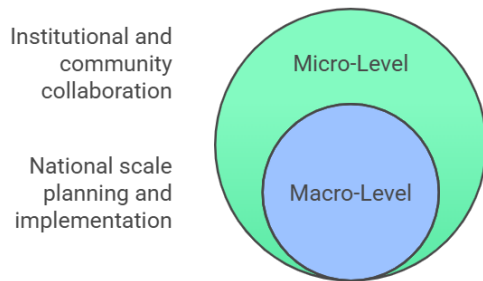
Figure 3. Macro and Micro Levels of Character Education Development.

Reinforcement. Reinforcement is a long-term and continuous response to character education, beginning with the immediate environment and gradually expanding outward. Reinforcement plays a crucial role in the intervention process of character education and occurs through various strategies. Habituation involves repeated exposure to positive behaviors, which gradually leads individuals to internalize and personalize these values. The structuring of both formal and non-formal learning environments further supports character development by inspiring and fostering ethical growth. Additionally, recognition and rewards serve as powerful motivators by acknowledging the contributions of educators, staff, students, and institutions to character development, thereby sustaining and encouraging ongoing efforts to cultivate positive values. Through these approaches, reinforcement ensures the consistent and long-term integration of character education into daily practices.

Assessment. Character education assessment evaluates the performance of educators, educational staff, and students based on specific criteria. For educators, assessment focuses on work performance, commitment, and interpersonal relationships. This includes evaluating work results, initiative, attendance quality, task contributions, willingness to follow directives, teamwork, integrity, self-control, and the ability to inspire and guide others. For educational activities, educators and staff document their efforts in portfolios or daily logs, showcasing values such as

honesty, responsibility, creativity, cleanliness, health, care, and teamwork. These efforts are further assessed through observations by supervisors or direct superiors to ensure adherence to character education principles. For students, the assessment of cultural and character values is conducted continuously during classroom interactions and institutional activities. Behavioral and performance observations serve as indicators, ensuring that character education remains an integral and ongoing component of the educational experience.
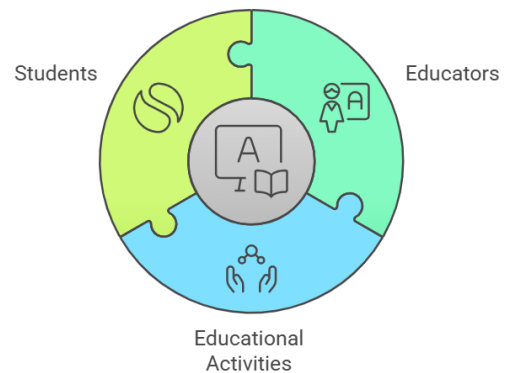

Figure 4. Strategies for Reinforcement in Character Education.

Examplary Behavior as Method

Character education involves three stages: instilling knowledge about character, feelings about character, and actions reflecting character (Murcahyanto & Mohzana, 2023). These stages reveal that character education, like other types of education, must address the three domains of human psychology: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Dewi & Alam, 2020).

In character education, exemplarity is required in every educational environment: family, school, and society. In the family setting, parental exemplarity is crucial in character education. Parental exemplarity determines the success of students in acquiring knowledge about character, developing feelings about character, and displaying actions that

reflect character. Parents who lack knowledge about manners will unknowingly pass on this ignorance to their children, leading to children who do not understand good manners. Similarly, parents who do not value the importance of good manners may allow their children to engage in inappropriate behavior, leading the children to also lack an understanding of proper conduct.

Parents who exhibit rude behavior will display such behavior in front of their children, and the children, observing their parents' rude actions, may imitate these behaviors. This supports the idea that children with low knowledge, feelings, and actions regarding character often reflect the low exemplarity of their parents in these areas (Cahyo Adi Kistoro et al., 2021). Girls tend to have a stronger imitative ability than boys (Putri et al., 2020). Therefore, parental exemplarity is more effective in character education for girls than for boys. Additionally, because instilling character in boys through exemplarity is more challenging, parents must use other educational methods alongside exemplarity when educating their sons (Iksal et al., 2024). However, this does not imply that parents should exclude other educational methods when educating their daughters.

The essence of exemplarity lies in imitation, where students mimic their educators; children imitate adults; students copy their teachers; and community members imitate societal figures. In this sense, exemplarity involves the process of imitation (Muzakkir et al., 2024). The imitative nature of exemplarity makes it a conservative method, preserving behaviors. When parents exemplify virtuous behavior, that behavior remains with the child, who continues to replicate it. Similarly, if a grandparent sets an example of virtuous behavior, that behavior persists with the grandchild, repeating the same actions. The concept of "exactly the same" here

refers to actions such as showing respect for others, which the child or grandchild will continue to display. Exemplarity ensures that both words and deeds are preserved across generations.

Imitation within exemplarity can occur both consciously and unconsciously. Unconscious imitation happens when the imitator does not realize they are mimicking a behavior they admire or observe frequently (Dewantara et al., 2021). An example of unconscious imitation is when a student consistently observes their teacher's neat appearance, and over time, the student unknowingly adopts a similar style without being told to do so. Conscious imitation occurs when the imitator knowingly recognizes the importance or benefits of the behavior they are copying. Students who understand the value of certain character traits will consciously replicate them from their educators. In this case, conscious imitation happens when the imitator possesses knowledge (character knowing) and feelings (character feeling) about the character they are imitating (Hidayati et al., 2020).

In formal school settings, character knowledge can be fostered through lessons such as Citizenship Education, which helps students recognize the importance and benefits of possessing national character traits. In informal settings, such as the family and community, character knowledge can be instilled through students toward understanding the significance of character. Given that imitation is central to exemplarity, the outcome is that the imitator becomes like the one they imitate; the student's behavior mirrors the teacher's, and a child's polite speech mirrors their parents'. In other words, students reflect their educators' characters (Hermino & Arifin, 2020).

Exemplarity as a method of character education can be used to identify the causes of good or poor character traits in individuals (Rokhman

et al., 2014). For example, if a student lacks environmental awareness, it is likely because their educator does not exhibit such a character trait. Similarly, if a child does not exhibit a strong work ethic, it could be due to the lack of such behavior in the parents, or if an individual lacks a peaceful nature, their educators in the family, school, and community likely also lack these traits.

In Indonesia, educators are expected to instill 18 character traits in students, including: religiousness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, love for the country, respect for achievements, communication, peace-loving, love of reading, environmental awareness, social care, and responsibility (Iriany & Paciana, 2019). To apply the method of exemplarity in character education, educators, whether parents, teachers, or community members, must first embody these traits and demonstrate them to their students. For example, to teach religious character, educators must display their religious values in daily life, especially in front of their students. Therefore, exemplarity in character education can only be effectively used by educators who possess these traits and have internalized them as part of their personality. Educators must demonstrate these traits at all times and in all settings (Baena, 2021).

The family environment is considered highly influential in providing exemplarity (Kambali et al., 2023). Families are the first and primary source of exemplarity because children initially receive guidance from their parents. Furthermore, the family is the primary setting where the effects of exemplarity are felt, if parents set good examples, and they are the first to benefit from their children's good behavior (Prayitno et al., 2022). Conversely, if parents set poor examples, they will experience the negative consequences through their children's behavior. Parental exemplarity plays a significant role in the success of character education in both schools and communities. To achieve effective character education in students, schools must collaborate with parents (Hadian et al., 2022). Without this cooperation, character education will be difficult to achieve at its full potential.

For a family environment to be effective in character education, parents need to be educated. They should have a high level of education, both formal and informal so that they understand the importance of character education for their children. This understanding will help parents apply character education in their households. However, in modern times, it can be challenging for parents to play their full role in character education because many parents are overwhelmed with work and career responsibilities, leaving them with limited time to interact with their children at home. Nevertheless, exemplarity can only be instilled through intensive interaction between parents and children. As a solution, if parents must rely on a babysitter for their child's care, they should select one carefully. The babysitter should be physically healthy, understand nutrition, speak gently, and possess good character traits to serve as an example for the child. Alternatively, if parents do not employ a babysitter because their child is older, they should strategically monitor their child's social interactions to ensure they are spending time with positive peers.

In the school environment, teachers are pivotal in supporting character education. Teachers play a crucial role as exemplars in various aspects: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Teachers should possess deep knowledge, display noble attitudes, and demonstrate proficiency in skills, allowing students to observe, hear, and imitate these qualities. However,

teachers are not the only exemplars in a school; all educational staff, including school operators and librarians, should also serve as role models.

Despite this, the teacher remains the central figure of exemplarity in schools (Hamdani et al., 2022) as they have the most consistent and intensive interaction with students. Therefore, teachers have the greatest influence on students' character development. Historically, formal education has been overly focused on cognitive achievements, neglecting the development of soft skills, which are essential to character education (Solissa et al., 2024). However, this changed with the introduction of the Curriculum 2013, which places more emphasis on fostering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development in students, with teachers serving as facilitators. This approach encourages students to be more independent, diligent, and inquisitive, actively engaging in their learning process.

In schools, exemplarity can be applied across all subjects, not just those directly related to character education, such as Islamic Religious Education and Citizenship Education. Even subjects like history can incorporate character education through careful planning of lesson objectives, content, media, methods, and assessments (Sari & Faizin, 2023). This integration of character education across all subjects highlights that every teacher, regardless of the subject they teach, must possess personal competence and exemplarity. Furthermore, it emphasizes that character education is a collaborative effort that requires involvement from all educators.

In conclusion, exemplarity as a method for character education must be demonstrated not only by educators in the family, school, and community but also by peers and media outlets (Mulyasa, 2022). The environment influencing a child's character development has expanded beyond the traditional educational triangle of family, school, and society, influenced by the advancements in science and technology, which significantly affect educational outcomes. Peer relationships also play a vital role in character development. The presence of peers as role models shows that imitation is not only directed from adults to children but also between children themselves. Therefore, it is important for parents to supervise their children's interactions with peers to ensure they are engaging with those who exhibit positive behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of exemplary leadership in character education, demonstrating that educators' moral integrity and behavior significantly influence students' character development. By integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, exemplary methods foster holistic character formation, enabling students to internalize and practice ethical values in their daily lives. Implementing these methods comprehensively across family, school, and community settings can effectively address societal moral challenges. The findings also emphasize the need for systematic integration of role modeling in teacher training programs and educational policies to maximize its impact. Future efforts should focus on bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications to ensure sustainable character education. By empowering educators as role models, character education has the potential to cultivate ethical and responsible individuals, contributing to a more harmonious society.

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