

STRENGTHENING CHARACTER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH SCHOOL CULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

Ismu Sukamto*, Haryanto, Murjainah, Hatta Yarid, Zefrin

Doctoral Program of Primary Education, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
email: ismusukamto.2022@student.uny.ac.id

Abstract: Elementary school is the best place to prepare for superior human character. This takes into consideration that learners in primary schools are still not much contaminated by the negative traits of the environment. However, in reality, not many elementary schools are able to integrate character education into all school-based development programs. Therefore, this study aims to explore character-strengthening practices in elementary schools. This research uses an ethnographic approach. A sample of one school in Yogyakarta City was determined using *purposive sampling* techniques with the criteria that the school had implemented character education and gained public trust. Research data were collected using interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. Data analysis with stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. Triangulation techniques are used as data validity tests. The findings of this study show that the practice of character strengthening in the sample elementary schools is carried out in 4 ways, namely: school culture, learning process, extracurricular activities, and cooperation with parents/guardians, children's education care communities, and local governments. Thus, it can be concluded that character education will be optimal by conditioning places and involving people who may be met by students to be in line with character education programs. The findings of this study recommend various activities that can strengthen character in elementary school.

Keywords: Character education; elementary school; learners

Accepted: October 2, 2023

Approved: 10 November 10, 2023

Published: March 25, 2024



© 2024 FKIP Universitas Terbuka
This is an open access under the CC-BY license

INTRODUCTION

The Pancasila Student Profile Policy is one of the policies to realize the goals of national education in strengthening character (Irawati et al., 2022). This Pancasila Student Profile directs students to become individuals with character in accordance with Pancasila values (Rusnaini et al., 2021). Through the application of 6 dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, namely: having faith, fearing True Source, and having a noble character; global diversity; self-sufficient; mutual cooperation; critical reasoning; and creative then (Kemdikbudristek, 2023), It is hoped that the Indonesian nation will be able to face the challenges of the 21st century and can realize a prosperous and dignified national life as one of the mandates of the 1945 Constitution.

However, in fact; there are still many students who have lost their virtuous character so that there are deviations (Sholichah et al., 2023). This setback occurs due to the failure of education in forming good character in students. The failure of education indicates that the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile is still not optimal due to too short a gap between socialization and implementation, limited learning time, little lesson substance, limited information and communication technology tried by educators, very less student attention to subjects (Kahfi, 2022).

Thus, schools must strive to carry out character education by providing the right environment to strengthen the character of students. This considers that character education has a positive effect on the character of students (Ahmed, 2016; Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012; Riadi & Muda, 2016). Moreover, character education is a high-priority focus in teacher preparation during the accreditation process (Jones et al., 1999). One way is to transform local cultural values into activities in the school environment. This is key to establishing and correcting potential loss of student character (Sholichah et al., 2023). Therefore, educators and all stakeholders must realize the importance of local wisdom to correct potential deficiencies and encourage their implementation in improving student character (Sholichah et al., 2023). In addition, the internalization of religious values is also seen as having a contribution in strengthening student character. Spirituality in formal education has been widely discussed over the past few decades (Carr & Haldane, 2003; Miller et al., 2005; Wright, 2003). The theme of spirituality in education, both in formal, non-formal, informal education, and education in the community; has gained significance recently (Veselský et al., 2016). Based on the findings of previous studies, it is stated that spiritual aspects are present in character development, both in formal, informal, and non-formal education (Jirásek et al., 2017).

School involvement is very important in character education. This takes into account that the school exerts a direct influence on student activity. For example, schools can facilitate the relationship between students and the environment, both in learning and in other activities; that leads to values or attitudes that care for the environment that support the development of environmentally caring character (La Fua et al., 2018; Rokhman et al., 2014). This direct experience may be more significant than scientific knowledge, technocratic considerations, or blind trust in scientific perspectives on environmental issues (Tsevreni, 2011). Such experiences provide a differentiated educational effect and support the potential of sustainable environmental education (Sund & Lysgaard, 2013). It is also a possible way to introduce the theme of environmental sustainability as an educational issue, without the need to resort to discursive constructions (Duhn, 2012). Therefore, schools need to provide policies where learning that occurs should be through reflection on daily experiences (Watkins & Marsick, 1992).

Student character development can be done by instilling knowledge, providing supportive conditions or environments, then providing opportunities to practice and shape personality (Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012). This takes into consideration that character can only be built continuously through a comprehensive process. The most effective implementation model is through a comprehensive approach that integrates all aspects of school life (Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012). Effective character education can be done by transforming culture and school life (Berkowitz, 2011). However, this approach or model must also have controls and evaluations to ensure the effectiveness of the method, the consistency of the people involved, and its positive implications on student character

(Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012).

Character education can be done through culture, rules, regulations, events and ceremonies to provide examples that support good habits for students (Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012). In addition, character education can be integrated into courses, such as classroom disciplines (Lickona, 1992). From a religious point of view, character education in the culture of religious schools, through the provision of means of worship, religious ceremonies and religious symbols. This has a predictive effect on the religious character of students which is described by obedience in carrying out one's religious teachings, practicing religious tolerance towards others and living in harmony with other religions. (Marini, 2017)

Elementary school is the best place to prepare for superior human character. This takes into consideration that learners in primary schools are still not much contaminated by the negative traits of the environment. However, in reality, not many elementary schools are able to integrate character education into all school-based development programs (Defitrika & Mahmudah, 2021). Therefore, there needs to be an in-depth study of the practice of implementing character strengthening in elementary schools that have been considered successful in strengthening student character. This will be a reference or role model for other schools that are still having difficulty in implementing character education strengthening programs.

METHOD

Research Design

This research is qualitative research using ethnographic approach (Siraj-Blatchford, 2020). This approach is done by investigating how character strengthening and what characters have been strengthened. Researchers look for the information needed based on the activities of school residents from the beginning of entering the school environment to leaving the neighborhood.

Sample and Data Collection

A sample of one school in Yogyakarta City was determined using *purposive sampling* techniques with the criteria that the school had implemented character education and gained public trust. Research data were collected using interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. Interviewee adalah sample principal. Observations were made by researchers by photographing and recording the activities of school residents. Documentation is done on the website and YouTube channel of the sample school. Data collection will be conducted during September 2023.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. This method includes 7 phases, namely: 1) Preparing and organizing the data for analysis; 2) Transcribing the data; 3) Becoming familiar with the data; 4) Memoing the data; 5) Coding the data; 6) Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes; and 7) Making the analytic process transparent (Lester et al., 2020). Furthermore, researchers apply criteria to maintain the quality of qualitative data analysis. The criteria include triangulation of

techniques (Lester et al., 2020), and detailed data analysis process (Rocco, 2010).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

RQ 1: How to Strengthen Character

Character strengthening is done in 4 ways. This is as stated by the principal,

“Karakter ataupun penguatan karakter dilaksanakan dalam empat cara. Yang pertama, penguatan pendidikan karakter melalui budaya sekolah. Kemudian yang kedua, pendidikan karakter melalui proses pembelajaran. ... Kemudian yang ketiga, pendidikan karakter melalui kegiatan ekstrakurikuler. ... Kemudian yang keempat, pendidikan karakter di SD ... melalui kerjasama dengan orangtua wali siswa peserta didik. ...”

In detail, the 4 ways are described as follows.

1. School Culture

a. Character Strengthening by Schools

Character strengthening begins by setting school entrance hours at 06.40 a.m.. This was enacted to strengthen the character of discipline. This is as stated by the principal,

“... agar mempunyai karakter disiplin, 7.40 mulai tahun 8 ti... 6.40 mulai tahun 83, harus sudah sampai di sekolah. Mengapa? Karakter disiplin itu yang akan mengiringi karakter-karakter lainnya. ...”

In addition to disciplinary character, the school also applies religious character based on Islam. This is as stated by the principal,

“Contoh, kami di Agama Islam dituntut bahwa yang namanya melakukan sesuatu lalui dulu dengan langkah kaki kanan atau tangan kanan. Polisi cilik itu paham, ada temannya yang kaki kiri dulu ketika naik tangga, dia akan mengingatkan.”

“... langkah kaki, ucap salam, pujian dan sebagainya.”

In addition, the school also implements the character of caring for the environment and social care. This is evidenced by the presence of ward cadres and small doctors, as stated by the principal,

“Ada polisi cilik. Ada kader lingkungan juga. Kader lingkungan, kemudian ada pustakawan kecil, ada dokter kecil juga. ... Nanti ada juga, keamanan di jumat, nanti hari Jumat, yang mengatur shaft teman-temannya. Dia pakai rompi warna hijau.”

For parents who drive students by motorcycle, the school provides a special location

within the school premises to ensure security and safety (see Figure 1). This shows the character of social care.



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 1. Transit area for students who are escorted by motorbike

b. Character Strengthening by Teachers

Character strengthening starts with the teacher. One of the characteristics in question is discipline. Discipline starts with the teacher. Teacher discipline activities are:

- 1) There is a distribution of picket teachers every morning. Picket teachers are ready at school at 06:00 a.m. to welcome incoming students. The other teacher came in at 6:20 a.m. This shows the character of discipline. This is in accordance with the following statement submitted by the principal.

“Karena enam empat puluh sudah sampai di dalam kelas, maka dituntut sumber daya manusianya mempunyai disiplin yang tinggi.”

“Kalau enam empat puluh siswanya dituntut hadir, gurunya harus lebih pagi daripada siswa.”

- 2) The teacher welcomes newly arrived students to the school environment (entrances to the school) who demonstrate the character of responsibility, by opening the car door for students who are escorted by car (see Figure 2).



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 2. Picket teachers who are opening doors for students

c. Character Strengthening by Students

This character strengthening is implemented in the following ways.

- 1) Organizing the School Security Patrol Program (PKS) carried out by students. The following is one example of student activity as a PKS officer that indicates a disciplined character (see Figure 3). This is as stated by the principal,

“... maka, polisi cilik itu sebagai kader disiplin di SD ...”



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 3. Student activities as PKS that reflect the character of responsibility

- 2) Students take the initiative to dispose of the garbage scattered around them (see Figure 4). This reflects the character of caring for the environment.



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 4. Student activities pick up scattered garbage and then dispose of it in its place

- 3) Students are guided to tadarus at 06:40 a.m. and memorization of the Quran juz 30 at 06:50 a.m. (see Figure 5). This indicates a religious character. In addition to tadarus, students are also guided to interpret the meaning of reading. This is a form of strengthening the character based on Islam.



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 5. Students' activities in memorizing Al-Quran letters

d. Character Strengthening by Parents

Character strengthening is also evident from the behavior of parents when delivering their children by motorcycle. This can be seen from the following parental activities.

- 1) Getting the child used to kissing the parent's hand (see Figure 6). This shows the character of politeness.



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 6. Students kiss their parents' hands shortly after arriving at school

This is also as stated by the principal,

“... Nak, kalau jabat tangan dengan bundamu, cium tangan bundamu. ...”

This activity is a form of strengthening based on Javanese culture.

- 2) Rub the child's head and help remove the helmet from the child's head to show a sense of concern (see Figure 7). This shows the character of social care.



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 7. Parents remove helmets worn by students shortly after arriving at the transit location

- 3) Parents greet their children who have just arrived home after school and then listen to the child to tell him about activities at school that day. This is as stated by the principal,

“Ini gambaran anak saat pulang sekolah (sambil menunjukkan video anak yang baru pulang sekolah kemudian bercerita kepada orantuanya), Mohon maaf sekarang kita harus meluruskan kembali. Cerita dia (klip video yang menunjukkan anak bercerita kepada orangtuanya). Inilah karakter SD ... yang berbasis budaya.”

This shows the character of social care by parents and the character of democracy for children when telling stories, where the strengthening of this character is based on Javanese cultural values. The character of democracy is also shown by discussions with parents to discuss the development of students and school programs. This is as stated by the principal,

“Setiap hari Sabtu orang tua kami hadirkan pukul 06.00 sampai pukul 08.30. Di situlah tempat curahan hati para orang tua wali siswa, menyampaikan perkembangan putra putrinya di rumah, mencari feedback dari gurunya dan memyampaikan masukan-masukan terkait dengan program-program sekolah. Guru-guru ... itu tidak boleh anti kritik. Orang tua wali siswa ... itu boleh, mau mengkritik memberi masukan dan lain sebagainya. ...”

e. Spatial Planning in the School Environment

School culture is also implemented by arranging the room as comfortably as possible. It's like what the principal stated,

“Budaya sekolah kami lakukan melalui penataan ruangan. Tidak harus mewah tetapi nyaman. ...”

“Komitmen kami bagaimana budaya sekolah di SD ... Fisiknya kami buat rapih. Kami di sini satu kamar mandi satu pengawas satu penjaga. Itu pun belum optimal. ...”

“Kelas kami serahkan sepenuhnya kepada guru-guru, mau dibentuk seperti apa, modelnya seperti apa. ...”

“Sekali lagi penataan fisik, kelengkapan fisik bukan untuk kemewahan tetapi untuk mengembangkan bakat, minat peserta didik, baik ranah afeksi, kognisi maupun pskimotor.”

In addition, in the arrangement of this room, the character formed is that this collaboration can be seen from the cooperation between class teachers and parents. This is in accordance with the principal's statement,

“Kelas-kelas seperti ini, itu didesain oleh ... ini yang mendesain adalah teman-teman guru kelas bersama dengan orang tua wali. Ada keterlibatan orang tua wali siswa.”

Another character that is strengthened is the character of gotong royong. The character of gotong royong is a form of strengthening Javanese culture-based character. The realization in the classroom as stated by the principal below.

“Kemudian, kalau untuk kebersihan, penanggungjawab kebersihan kelas itu adalah semua warga kelas. Ya guru kelasnya, ya siswanya. Maka, ada yang namanya gotong royong, karakter gotong royong di situ, piket, piket kelas. ...”

This comfort is proven by the response of students who do not want to go home quickly even though school class hours are over. This is as stated by the principal,

“Buktinya, kalau anak nyaman, anak-anak jam empat belas sudah pulang. Rata-rata, “Mah, nanti jemputnya.”

2. Learning Process

Character strengthening is implemented in local content activities. This is as stated by the principal,

“... Intrakurikuler itu ada muatan lokal. Muatan lokal yang kami pakai, jelas, kami ada orang jawa, boso jowo yang pertama.”

“... mengambil 3; 1 karawitan; 2 tari tradional; dan 3 membatik. Itulah muatan lokal yang diterapkan di SD”

“Yang namanya karawitan, itu sebagai salah satu muatan lokal yang harus didapatkan peserta didik.”

“Bagaimana kreativitas peserta didik itu kita tumbuhkan melalui muatan lokal

membatik.”

Based on this statement, it can be stated that character strengthening in the sample elementary school is based on Javanese cultural values. The local content includes Javanese, Traditional Dance, Karawitan (see Figure 8), Batik (see Figure 9),



Source: Documentation archive

Figure 8. Activities of students learning karawitan



Source: Documentation archive

Figure 9. Student batik making activities

This shows that local content is directed to foster the creative character of learners. In addition, the local content subjects indicate that the sample elementary school implements the character of love for the homeland and love for Javanese culture.

In the learning process, teachers engage in conversation and physical touch to get the hearts and attention of students ready to receive lessons (see Figure 10). This is also as stated by the principal,

“Satu guru ini hanya melakukan satu tindakan yang sederhana. Guru mengusap kepala murid. Mungkin dia di rumah tidak melaksana... melaku... apa mendapatkan hal itu. ...”



Source: Researcher documents

Figure 10. Teachers do socially caring character

In addition, character education in the learning process is carried out by pouring a minimum of 2 dimensions of the Pancasila student profile in learning. This is as stated by the principal,

“... nah dalam modul aja itu, guru harus menuangkan salah satu minimal 2, minimal 2 dari 6 dimensi profil pelajar Pancasila. Itu pendidikan karakter dalam pembelajaran. ...”

Furthermore, the principal said that

“Kami punya tagline, mendidik dengan hati, mengajar penuh inovasi. ... Kemampuan teknologi informasi harus kami kenalkan dengan anak-anak agar dia bisa adaptif. ...”

Character strengthening is also carried out in learning outside the classroom. As stated by the principal, the sample elementary school has a special location that is open so that children can develop character. One of the strengthened characters is social care.

“Penguatan karakter tidak harus di kelas, penguatan karakter bisa dimana saja. ... Ini adalah lahan milik kami. Yang salah satu tujuannya untuk menguatkan karakter peserta didik SD Seminggu sekali, anak-anak belajar di sini, tidak di dalam kelas. ... Olah raga, olah hati, olah rasa, olah pikir bisa dilaksanakan di tempat ini.”



Source: Documentation archive

Figure 11. Special location of sample elementary schools as a place to learn outside the classroom

3. Extracurricular Activities

Character strengthening is also carried out in extracurricular activities. Some extracurricular activities are a form of culture-based character strengthening. This is as stated by the principal,

“... 39 jenis kegiatan ekstrakurikuler sebagai usaha kami memfasilitasi minat dari peserta didik untuk mengembangkan karakter-karakter. ...”

“Bagaimana nilai-nilai tanggung jawab, disiplin, kemudian integritas ada dalam kegiatan-kegiatan itu (kegiatan ekstrakurikuler). Kepercayaan diri, cinta budaya. ...”

In determining these extracurricular activities, the school collaborates with parents to determine extracurricular activities to suit the interests of students. This is as stated by the principal,

“... awalnya kami dulu sedikit (kegiatan ekstrakurikuler), tapi dalam perkembangannya orang tua menanyakan menanyakan kami... mohon maaf, di awal kadang-kadang kami itu melaksanakan sebuah jajak pendapat, melalui google form, apa sih minat putra-putri bapak-ibu, seperti itu, ... dari situlah bisa memetakan. Kami dulu tidak ada namanya ekstra karate, ...”

This is a form of collaborative character development. This will be a real example for students to collaborate.

4. Cooperation with Parents/Guardians, Communities, Local Government

Cooperation with parents/guardians, communities, and local governments is outlined below.

a. Cooperation with Parents/Guardians

Effective communication with parents/guardians regarding student development is carried out once a week. This is as stated by the principal,

“Setiap hari Sabtu, 6 minggu sekali, orangtua kami hadirkan di sekolah, setiap hari Sabtu, untuk apa? Berkomunikasi dengan guru kelas, untuk apa? Terkait dengan perkembangan peserta didik atau putra-putrinya.”

“... Jadi, setiap hari Sabtu, orang tua kami hadirkan di sekolah pukul 06.00 sampai 08.30. DI situlah tempat curhatan hati para orang tua wali siswa. ...”

b. Cooperation with RT, RW, and Village Managers

This collaboration is intended to discuss school programs. This is as stated by the principal,

“... Pengurus RT, RW sampai kelurahan, setiap dua bulan sekali, kami hadirkan di sekolah untuk berdiskusi berdialog dari pukul 15.30 sampai pukul 17.30. Kami menyampaikan program-program sekolah dan para RT, RW memberikan masukan-masukan kepada kami. ...”

c. Cooperation with Education Care Community

Cooperation is also carried out with communities that care about children's education. This is as stated by the principal,

“Kami untuk mengupayakan kegiatan itu, baru saja, melaksanakan MoU dengan RAJo (Kepanjangannya: Read Aloud Jogjakarta), adalah sebuah komunitas Read Aloud Jogjakarta. Komunitas Read Aloud Jogjakarta ini, kami minta memberikan bimbingan kepada anak-anak kami, agar bisa menceritakan, agar ada komunikasi dua arah yang baik dengan orang tuanya.”

RQ 2: Strengthened Characters

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, the characters strengthened in the school, including discipline, religious, environmental care, social care, responsibility, decency, democracy, mutual assistance, creativity, patriotism, and collaboration. If examined more deeply, there is a possibility of finding other characters. In detail, the forms of activities for these characters are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Character and form activities in sample school

No	Character	Activity	Subject
1	Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have arrived at school before 06:40 a.m. The picket teachers arrived at the school before 06:00 a.m. Teachers who did not picket arrived at the school before 6:20 a.m. PKS officers perform functions as scheduled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Teachers Teachers Students
2	Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little police (PKS) remind students who do something not starting with the right hand or foot in the appropriate activity, not saying greetings, and so on. Students perform <i>tadarus</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PKS Officer/ Students Students

No	Character	Activity	Subject
3	Care for the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do rote memorization juz 30. • There are ward cadres in the school. • The school provides a transit area for students who are escorted by motorbike. • Students throw scattered garbage into the trash can. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Students • School authorities • Students
4	Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a small doctor in the school premises. • Parents help children remove helmets upon arrival at transit areas. • Parents welcome their children who have just arrived from school. • The class teacher has conversations and physical touch (as necessary) to get the hearts and attention of students ready to receive lessons. • Students learn together outside the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Parents • Parents • Class teachers • Students
5	Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The picket teacher opened the car door for the students who had just arrived at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picket teachers
6	Decency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students kiss parents' hands during delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students
7	Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents listen to children who are telling about activities at school that have been passed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents
8	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and class teachers collaborate in organizing students' classrooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and class teachers
9	Mutual Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students and class teachers are responsible for the cleanliness of the classroom by dividing the picket schedule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and class teachers
10	Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students improvise and imagine producing creative products, such as batik. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students
11	Patriotism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local content provided by the school is national cultural values and products, such as: Javanese, karawitan, batik, and traditional dance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School authorities

Discussion

Character is a belief system or habit that directs the actions of each individual human being (Casika et al., 2023). Considering that character is a habit, the way to form

and strengthen it is to give students the opportunity to do it repeatedly or habitually (Sinta et al., 2022). If referring to learning theory, then the learning theory that can be used as a rationale is behaviorism and social cognitive learning theory (Schunk, 2012). It considers that the orientation of such learning theories is the formation of behavior. Therefore, the way to strengthen the character of students is by conditioning, namely by creating an appropriate environment. The environment that students may encounter is school, home, and community. Thus, schools should work together with parents, the children's education care community, the government around the school, and the community in general to be able to shape and strengthen the character of students.

The conditioning done by sample school is based on Islamic values and Javanese cultural values. This can be seen from the activities carried out at school, mapping local content subjects, and organizing extracurricular activities. In addition, the sample elementary school also included the Pancasila student profile which is a national content that must be applied in education in schools.

Character building in the sample elementary school involved all school residents, both teachers, education staff, and students. When teachers and education staff show certain characters, then they are actually becoming role *models* for students who interact with them. This will increase the confidence of learners to do the same.

The sample elementary school applies 4 ways to strengthen the character of students, namely: 1) through school culture; 2) learning process, 3) extracurricular activities, (Zulela et al., 2022) and 4) work with parents, communities, and local government officials. In detail, these methods are discussed as follows.

1. School Culture

In an institution, all activities must have references, both in the form of laws and policies. Likewise, with character strengthening, this must start from school policy (Ismail et al., 2020). This school policy will be a rule that needs to be followed by all residents to create an environment of character strengthening. This policy must be comprehensive, both in school culture, learning, and in extracurricular activities. This conditioning will shape the behavior of students which will later become habits and ultimately form character. Conditioning at this school level refers to the learning theory of behaviorism (Schunk, 2012). Thus, every activity in one aspect will reinforce each other's aspects. As stakeholders, parents, teachers, and administrators must adhere to these policies to encourage children to live lives that reflect positive values that will shape student character (Novianti, 2017). It also considers that today's education should focus on maximizing child growth in all dimensions, whether in cognitive, physical, social, emotional, creative, or spiritual domains (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This shows that learning which is the main activity of children in school is not enough to strengthen the character of students. Thus, through school culture, students can develop the basic potential of every human being to become a person who thinks well, has a good heart, and also behaves well (Lickona, 1992).

2. Learning Process

Learning is the longest activity carried out by students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to integrate character strengthening in learning. If in the appropriate subjects,

characters based on positive values can be taught. It will also strengthen the confidence of learners to act positively. However, knowledge alone is not enough. Teachers should set examples that can be role models for students (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018). This can be done by approaching students one by one, giving physical touch to the extent, and discussing for a while to show concern. This will be a good real-life example for students who see it so they are less likely to follow it. This corresponds to the theory of social cognitive learning (Schunk, 2012). Therefore, teachers are seen as role models because teachers' attitudes and behaviors have a great impact on children (Sisson et al., 2017).

3. Extracurricular Activities

In accordance with the learning theory of behaviorism, behavior will be formed when conditioning is done repeatedly. This habituation is one of the right methods to implement character education in schools (Attaran, 2015). Thus, schools need to apply also to other activities in the school environment, in addition to intracurricular activities. These activities are extracurricular activities. This activity contributes to the development and formation of student character. Extracurricular activities can expand students' knowledge, about relationships between subjects, channel talents and interests, and complete complete human development. Through extracurricular activities, students can collaborate with other students to play sports or play together. Scheduling extracurricular activities will also direct students to always be on time. This is where discipline will be formed. This is in accordance with the findings of previous research showing that extracurricular activities can reveal student character (Marini, 2017).

4. Cooperation with Parents/Guardians, Communities, and Local Government

If the school environment has been systematized in implementing character strengthening, then parents at home also need to synchronize activities at home with what is done at school. This is important so that activities at home and at school do not weaken each other. For example, children at school have been carried away in religious schools by praying on time in congregation. However, it turns out that at home, parents do not pay attention to it so the child carries out alone. Of course, this weakens what is already built in schools. Therefore, schools need to collaborate with parents of students in strengthening character (Paul et al., 2022). The form of parental involvement can be in the form of reading with books at home, helping with homework (Froiland, 2021), and listen to their children's stories about children's activities at school that they just passed. In addition to parents, children also have the right to interact with the social environment in society. This needs to be a concern so that children's activities in the community do not weaken what has been strengthened both at school and at home. Thus, schools need to collaborate with children's education care communities and local village governments (Fajri & Mirsal, 2021). Communities and local governments will become teachers when children are out of reach of classroom teachers and parents.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the practice of character strengthening in the sample elementary schools is carried out in 4 ways, namely: school culture, learning process, extracurricular activities, and cooperation with parents/guardians, children's education care communities, and local governments. Thus, it can be concluded that character education will be optimal by conditioning places and involving people who may be met by students to be in line with character education programs. The findings of this study recommend various activities that can strengthen character in elementary school.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, M. (2016). Ethnicity, Identity and Group Vitality. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 1–10.
- Attaran, M. (2015). Moral education, habituation, and divine assistance in view of Ghazali. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 24(1), 43–51.
- Berkowitz, M. W. (2011). What works in values education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50(3), 153–158.
- Carr, D., & Haldane, J. (2003). *Spirituality, philosophy and education*. Routledge.
- Casika, A., Lidia, A., & Asbari, M. (2023). Pendidikan Karakter dan Dekadensi Moral Kaum Milenial. *Literaksi: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 1(01), 13–19.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140.
- Defitrika, F., & Mahmudah, F. N. (2021). Development of Life Skills Education As Character Building. *International Journal of Educational Management and Innovation*, 2(1), 116. <https://doi.org/10.12928/ijemi.v2i1.3195>
- Duhn, I. (2012). Making ‘place’ for ecological sustainability in early childhood education. *Environmental Education Research*, 18(1), 19–29.
- Fajri, N., & Mirsal, M. (2021). Implementasi Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter di Satuan Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar. *At-Tarbiyah Al-Mustamirrah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1), 1–10.
- Froiland, J. M. (2021). A comprehensive model of preschool through high school parent involvement with emphasis on the psychological facets. *School Psychology International*, 42(2), 103–131.
- Goodman-Scott, E., Hays, D., & Cholewa, B. (2018). “It Takes a Village”: A Case Study of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Implementation in an Exemplary Urban Middle School. *The Urban Review*, 50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0431-z>
- Irawati, D., Iqbal, A. M., Hasanah, A., & Arifin, B. S. (2022). Profil pelajar Pancasila sebagai upaya mewujudkan karakter bangsa. *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 6(1), 1224–1238.
- Ismail, S., Suhana, S., & Zakiah, Q. Y. (2020). Analisis kebijakan penguatan pendidikan karakter dalam mewujudkan pelajar pancasila di sekolah. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 2(1), 76–84.

- Izfanna, D., & Hisyam, N. A. (2012). A comprehensive approach in developing akhlaq: A case study on the implementation of character education at Pondok Pesantren Darunnajah. *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, 6(2), 77–86.
- Jirásek, I., Veselský, P., & Poslt, J. (2017). Winter outdoor trekking: spiritual aspects of environmental education. *Environmental Education Research*, 23(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2016.1149553>
- Jones, E. N., Ryan, K., & Bohlin, K. (1999). Character education & teacher education: how are prospective teachers being prepared to foster good character in students? *Action in Teacher Education*, 20(4), 11–28.
- Kahfi, A. (2022). Implementasi profil pelajar Pancasila dan Implikasinya terhadap karakter siswa di sekolah. *DIRASAH: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Dasar Islam*, 5(2), 138–151.
- Kemdikbudristek, I. J. (2023). *Profil Pelajar Pancasila: Menggali Makna, Manfaat, dan Implementasinya*. <https://itjen.kemdikbud.go.id/web/profil-pelajar-pancasila-menggali-makna-manfaat-dan-implementasinya/>
- La Fua, J., Nurlila, R. U., & Wekke, I. S. (2018). Strategy of Islamic education in developing character building of environmental students in Indonesia. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 175(1), 12149.
- Lester, J. N., Cho, Y., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2020). Learning to do qualitative data analysis: A starting point. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(1), 94–106.
- Lickona, T. (1992). *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. Bantam.
- Marini, A. (2017). Building Students' Characters Through Extracurricular Activities. *1st Yogyakarta International Conference on Educational Management/Administration and Pedagogy (YICEMAP 2017)*, 266–268.
- Miller, J. P., Karsten, S., Denton, D., Orr, D., & Kates, I. C. (2005). *Holistic learning and spirituality in education: Breaking new ground*. SUNY Press.
- Novianti, N. (2017). Teaching Character Education to College Students Using Bildungsromans. *International Journal of Instruction*, 10, 255–272. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2017.10415a>
- Paul, S.-A. S., Hart, P., Augustin, L., Clarke, P. J., & Pike, M. (2022). Parents' perspectives on home-based character education activities. *Journal of Family Studies*, 28(3), 1158–1180.
- Riadi, R. M., & Muda, I. (2016). Competency mapping and analysis of students competency based on economics subject national examination and its alternative solutions in state high schools at Pekanbaru. *International Journal of Economic Research*, 3(5), 2133–2148.
- Rokhman, F., Hum, M., & Syaifudin, A. (2014). Character education for golden generation 2045 (national character building for Indonesian golden years). *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 141, 1161–1165.
- Rusnaini, R., Raharjo, R., Suryaningsih, A., & Noventari, W. (2021). Intensifikasi profil pelajar Pancasila dan implikasinya terhadap ketahanan pribadi siswa. *Jurnal Ketahanan Nasional*, 27(2), 230–249.
- Schunk, D. H. (2012). *Learning theories an educational perspective*. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Sholichah, U., Indriayu, M., & Widiyanto, I. R. (2023). Direct effects of the internalization

- of character education based on local wisdom on thematic learning in elementary school. In S. S., S. A., & N. D.A. (Eds.), *AIP Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 2751). American Institute of Physics Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0143271>
- Sinta, L., Malaikosa, Y. M. L., & Supriyanto, D. H. (2022). Implementasi Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter pada Siswa Kelas Rendah di Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(4), 3193–3202.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2020). An ethnographic approach to researching young children’s learning. In *Doing early childhood research* (pp. 271–289). Routledge.
- Sisson, S. B., Smith, C. L., & Cheney, M. (2017). Big impact on small children: Child-care providers’ perceptions of their role in early childhood healthy lifestyle behaviours. *Child Care in Practice*, 23(2), 162–180.
- Sund, P., & Lysgaard, J. G. (2013). Reclaim “education” in environmental and sustainability education research. *Sustainability*, 5(4), 1598–1616.
- Tsevreni, I. (2011). Towards an environmental education without scientific knowledge: an attempt to create an action model based on children’s experiences, emotions and perceptions about their environment. *Environmental Education Research*, 17(1), 53–67.
- Veselský, P., Poslt, J., Majewská, P., & Bolcková, M. (2016). Spiritualita ve vzdělávání—zpět k širšímu pojetí učení se. *Paidagogos*, 24(2), 411–430.
- Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (1992). Towards a theory of informal and incidental learning in organizations. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 11(4), 287–300.
- Wright, A. (2003). *Spirituality and education*. Routledge.
- Zulela, M. S., Neolaka, A., Iasha, V., & Setiawan, B. (2022). How is the education character implemented? The case study in Indonesian elementary school. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 12(1), 371.