



Teachers and student character development: a literature review

Nining Andriani^{1,2,3}, Kusuma Dewi Nur Aini^{1,2,3}, Fulusia Nurmawati^{1,2,3}, Sri Nurul Walidain¹

¹ Universitas Samawa Sumba

² Universitas Darussalam Gontor

³ STKIP Muhammadiyah Blora

Correspondence: nininga818@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to comprehensively examine the role of teachers in developing students' character, identify applied character values, analyze the obstacles faced by teachers, and formulate effective strategies to support the formation of students' character. The method used is a systematic literature review with descriptive qualitative analysis. The literature was collected from 52 scientific articles published between 2018–2025 through the Google Scholar, Garuda, Sinta, and national/international journal portals. Inclusion criteria include research that discusses students' character education, the role of teachers, implementation strategies, and constraints in the context of formal schools. The results of the study show that teachers have a multidimensional role as teachers, moral guides, role models, and facilitators of character values. The character values developed include religious, honest, discipline, hard work, creative, independent, tolerant, democratic, social care, environmental care, national spirit, and love of peace. Effective character development strategies include understanding, habituation, and teacher example, which is supported by active collaboration between schools, families, and communities. The obstacles faced include low student motivation, limited teacher examples, limited parental involvement, and the influence of the social environment and globalization. These findings confirm that character education requires an integrated and sustainable approach so that students can effectively internalize moral, social, cultural, and religious values.



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INTRODUCTION

Character education in schools is an important aspect in shaping the moral and social behavior of students with high integrity. The educational literature states that character education is an integral part of formal education because education aims to form human beings who are not only cognitively intelligent but also moral in daily behavior (Y Hadi, 2025). Empirical research shows that character education helps students develop the values of responsibility, honesty, and discipline necessary in social life (Lestari & Mahrus, 2025). Character education is also associated with the effectiveness of education in primary and secondary schools as an effort to reduce negative behaviors such as indiscipline and social conflict (Maulana, 2022). The global context of character education follows the trend of increasing focus on the character development of learners in various countries, and systematic studies show that this concept continues to be expanded and followed up in key education policies (Hadi, 2025).

The role of teachers in character education is seen as a determining factor in the successful implementation of the character curriculum in schools. Research shows that teachers function as role models, facilitators, motivators, and integrators of character values into learning based on contextual curriculum and active learning (Nurjana, 2024). Other studies indicate that teachers who are able to apply character values through habituation and integrated learning will have a significant effect on students' positive behavior in the classroom (Siducat, 2024). This role is consistent with the view that teachers are not only the deliverers of academic materials but also as the shapers of the social and moral environment in the context of schools (Punggeti & Prijambodo, 2025). For example, the role of teachers as role models helps internalize values such as honesty and responsibility through daily interactions between teachers and students (Saputri et al., 2024).

A number of empirical studies have highlighted gaps in the character education literature related to the incorporation of teacher roles, character values developed, obstacles faced, and integrated implementation strategies. For example, although many studies have addressed the role of teachers partially at the school level or specific subjects (Nurhasanah et al., 2024), other studies have shown that there are still limitations in the systematic understanding of how teachers consistently integrate character in daily learning (Nurhidaya et al., 2021). The international literature also highlights the need for studies that map the practice of character education in the context of national curricula and innovative pedagogical approaches (Syarif et al., 2025). Global studies show a tendency that the success of character education is highly dependent on understanding the role of teachers in various formal learning contexts (Syarif, 2025).

The benefits of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study strengthens the concept of character education as an important component in 21st century education by emphasizing the relationship between the role of teachers and the formation of moral attitudes of students. The literature on character education trends shows that the position of teachers as the main actors in character education is the focus of scientific studies that develop between 2019 and 2025 (Hadi, 2025). Empirical findings in various studies show that understanding the role of teachers and the strategies applied can be an important reference for holistic character learning theories (Nurhasanah et al., 2024). Practically, these findings can be used as a reference for educators and policymakers in designing effective and contextual character development strategies in schools.

The formulation of this research problem is formulated as follows: (1) how is the role of teachers in developing the character of students in schools; (2) what character values are developed by teachers; (3) what obstacles are faced by teachers in developing students' character; and (4) what strategies teachers use to optimize the character development of students. This question is prepared to direct the systematic literature review so that the findings of various articles can be analyzed and synthesized consistently to answer comprehensive research questions. This literature search will include empirical studies and theories of character education in a variety of primary and secondary school contexts.

The purpose of this research is to comprehensively examine the role of teachers in the development of students' character through literature analysis, identify applied character values, analyze the obstacles faced by teachers, and formulate effective strategies to support the formation of students' characters. This research is expected to provide clear insights into the contribution of teachers in character education, as well as present scientific recommendations that are useful for educational practices and the development of effective and sustainable character education policies in schools. The study is expected to bridge gaps in the character education literature and provide an empirical basis for further research in the future.

METHODS

This study uses the literature review method with a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of teachers in developing students' character. The literature is collected from a variety of

sources, including scientific journals, books, scientific articles, and relevant research reports. The literature collection process is carried out systematically to ensure the validity and relevance of information sources.

Literature sources are obtained through online databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, Sinta, and national/international journal portals. The keywords used include: "role of teachers", "character education", "character development of students", "teacher strategies in character education", and "character values of students". The search was limited to publications between 2018 and 2025, in Indonesian or English, and available in full-text form.

Inclusive criteria include studies that discuss the character development of students in formal schools, teachers' strategies in character education, character values developed, and obstacles faced by teachers. Exclusive criteria include literature that is not relevant to character education, is not fully available, is opinionated without empirical data, or only discusses the level of non-formal education.

The collected data was analyzed using data reduction measures, theme grouping, and synthesis of findings. The analysis focused on four main themes: (1) the role of teachers, (2) character values, (3) character development constraints, and (4) teacher strategies. The synthesis process is carried out by identifying patterns of findings from various literatures, comparing findings between studies, and drawing conclusions based on the consistency and relevance of the data.

The literature selection process follows the principles of PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) 2020, which ensures openness and systematic in the selection of studies.

Table 1. Literature selection according to PRISMA

PRISMA Stage	Number of Studies	Remarks
Identification	356	Initial searches on Google Scholar, Garuda, Sinta, national/international journal portals using related keywords
Screening	210	Duplicate articles removed, abstracts selected for topic relevance
Eligibility	87	Full-text articles are examined, relevance of methods and focus on student character development
Included	52	Articles that meet all inclusion and exclusion criteria are further analyzed

RESULTS

The Role of Teachers in Student Character Development

From the analysis of 52 articles, teachers have a strategic role in developing students' character. The majority of the literature shows the four main roles of teachers. First, teachers act as teachers of moral and religious values, providing guidance and understanding of ethics, responsibility, and social behavior. Second, teachers function as moral guides, helping students internalize moral values through discussion, reflection, and reinforcement of positive behavior. Third, teachers act as role models, where the teacher's behavior and attitude become a real example for students in daily life. Fourth, teachers play a role in instilling social values and leadership, for example through responsibility in group activities, school organizations, or social projects involving students. Several studies have noted that history teachers and religious education teachers play a significant role in instilling cultural awareness, nationalism, and local wisdom (Judrah et al., 2023; Susilo and Isbandiyah, 2019).

Character Values Developed

The literature analyzed identified various character values developed by teachers in schools. These values include religion, honesty, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, tolerance, democracy, social care, environmental care, national spirit, and love of peace (Subarkah and Ahmad, 2022; Ramdan and Fauziah, 2019). Several studies emphasize the importance of integrating these values through formal learning, extracurricular activities, school culture, and teacher example. Data shows that

character values that are developed consistently and sustainably encourage students to have responsibility for themselves, the environment, and society. In addition, several studies highlight the application of character values through activities such as community service, social activities, and involvement in school organizations.

Obstacles Faced by Teachers

Literature analysis shows that there are internal and external obstacles faced by teachers in character development. Internal constraints include low student motivation, limited interest in learning, and lack of talent development, which causes some students to be reluctant to participate in character development activities (Malaikokal and Atang, 2023). External constraints include a lack of school support, limited teacher role-playing, limited parental involvement, the influence of a negative social environment, and the impact of globalization and modernization that affect student behavior (Khairani and Rosyidi, 2022; Wiltarsan et al., 2023). Some studies also highlight obstacles related to school facilities and infrastructure, academic curriculum pressures, and a lack of collaboration between teachers, schools, and the community.

Teachers' Strategies in Developing Students' Character

The literature identifies the main strategies of teachers that are applied to shape the character of learners. The first strategy is understanding, namely providing knowledge and character values through learning that is contextual, fun, and relevant to students' lives (Adha and Ulpa, 2021). The second strategy is habituation, in which character values are applied in daily activities, such as maintaining class cleanliness, working together on group assignments, and participation in school social activities. The third strategy is exemplar, where the teacher shows behavior that is consistent with the values taught, so that students imitate positive behavior.

Several studies add additional strategies, such as the use of learning media, the integration of character-based curriculum, and active collaboration with parents and the community (Sormin and Rangkuti, 2018; Wiltarsan et al., 2023). Data from the literature shows that a combination of understanding, habituation, and exemplary strategies, if applied in an integrated manner, is able to form the character of students who are responsible, disciplined, and concerned about the social and cultural environment.

Synthesis of Findings

The results of the literature analysis concluded that the success of student character development depends on an integrated approach involving teachers, schools, families, and communities. Teachers play a role as the core of character education strategies through learning, habituation, and example. The character values developed are consistent across various studies and levels of education, including moral, social, cultural, and religious. Internal and external constraints must be overcome through an integrated and collaborative strategy. Literature findings also show that the integration of learning strategies, school culture, teacher examples, and parental involvement is a key factor in effectively increasing the internalization of students' character values.

DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review show that teachers have a strategic and multidimensional role in the development of students' characters. Several studies emphasize that teachers play the role of teachers, moral guides, role models, and facilitators of character values (Arsini et al., 2023; Judrah et al., 2024). This finding is in line with the character education theory of Thomas Lickona (2019), which states that students' character is formed through moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions. In practice, teachers guide students to understand and apply ethical and social values, so that the character formed is not only normative but also reflective and contextual.

Character values developed in schools, including religious, honest, disciplined, hard work, creative, independent, tolerant, democratic, social care, environmental care, national spirit, and love of peace, are consistently found in various literature (Subarkah and Ahmad, 2022; Ramdan and Fauziah,

2019). These findings support Albert Bandura's (2020) theory of social learning, which emphasizes that individuals learn through observation and imitation of behavioral models. The example of teachers in daily behavior is the main factor in imitating these values, so that the internalization of character values is more effective and can form positive habits of students.

The internal and external obstacles faced by teachers are also widely recorded in the literature. Internal constraints are in the form of low motivation, limited interest, and lack of talent development of students, while external constraints include limited teacher examples, lack of school support, limited parental involvement, and the influence of the social environment and modernization (Malaikokal & Atang, 2023; Khairani & Rosyidi, 2022). This is in accordance with the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2021), which emphasizes that children's development is influenced by the interaction between the individual and the micro, meso, and macro environments. These findings confirm the need for systemic support from schools, families, and communities in the development of students' character.

Teachers' strategies applied in the development of students' character are divided into understanding, habituation, and example. Understanding is provided through contextual and fun learning; habituation through routine activities that internalize character values; and example through teacher behavior that is consistent with the values taught (Adha & Ulpa, 2021; Wiltarsan et al., 2023). Other studies emphasize that the integration of this strategy with the use of learning media, school facilities and infrastructure, as well as active collaboration with parents and the community increases the effectiveness of internalizing character values (Sormin & Rangkuti, 2018).

The synthesis of literature shows that the success of character education cannot be done partially. Teachers remain the main actors in learning and example, but the success of student character development is also determined by school culture, parental involvement, and community support (Judrah et al., 2024; Arsini et al., 2023). The integration of learning strategies, habituation, and exemplary allows learners to effectively internalize moral, social, cultural, and religious values. This finding answers the formulation of research problems regarding the role of teachers, character values developed, obstacles faced, and strategies applied.

The implications of this research are theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research strengthens the conceptual foundation of character education by affirming the role of teachers as agents of change and moral guides of students (Lickona, 2019). Practically, these findings can be used as a reference for teachers, education staff, schools, and policymakers in designing effective, collaborative, and contextual character development strategies. This research is also a reference for teacher training and curriculum development based on character education, so that students can internalize positive values that are relevant to global challenges and current socio-cultural developments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review, teachers have a strategic and multidimensional role in the development of students' character, which includes the function of teachers, moral guides, role models, and facilitators. The character values developed include religious, honesty, discipline, hard work, creative, independent, tolerant, democratic, social, environmentally friendly, national spirit, and love of peace. The success of character development is influenced by teachers' strategies in the form of understanding, habituation, and example, and is supported by the collaboration of schools, families, and communities. The results of the study confirm that character education requires an integrated and sustainable approach so that students are able to apply moral, social, cultural, and religious values in their daily lives, as well as respond to global challenges and socio-cultural changes.

The limitations of this study include a focus on the published literature between 2018–2025 so that the findings may not include previous practices or recent studies that have not yet been published. In addition, most of the literature is descriptive and contextual in Indonesia, so generalizations to the

global context must be done carefully. The study also relied on the literature available online, so some relevant sources that were not indexed or did not have open access might not be included in the analysis.

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