

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SHAPING STUDENTS' MORAL CHARACTER AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 1 KOBO KECIL

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Abstract: This study aims to examine teachers' roles in shaping students' moral values and to identify the methods used to instill moral values in the school context. The background of this research is the increasing importance of moral education in the modern era, characterized by complex moral challenges, in which teachers play a vital role in guiding students' moral development. This study employed a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers, and documentation. The participants were teachers at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil, located in East Kotamobagu. The findings indicate that teachers play a central role in students' moral formation by consistently demonstrating exemplary behavior through their words, actions, and attitudes during the teaching and learning process. Moral values are integrated into all subject areas as part of daily instructional practices. In addition to providing rewards and appreciation for positive behavior, teachers also strive to create a conducive school environment by maintaining cleanliness, aesthetic quality, safety, and comfort to support effective learning. To address behaviors that do not reflect moral values, teachers apply persuasive approaches, including constructive, non-judgmental guidance, close collaboration with the school principal and parents through formal meetings and home visits, and the implementation of educational sanctions to guide students toward positive behavioral development.

Keywords: teacher's role; moral values; teaching methods; SD Negeri 1 Kobo Kecil

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peran guru dalam pembentukan nilai moral siswa serta mengidentifikasi metode yang digunakan guru dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai moral di sekolah. Latar belakang dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya pendidikan moral pada saat era modern yang penuh tantangan moral, guru tentunya memiliki peran yang sangat penting dalam hal tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data yang peneliti peroleh melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dengan guru, serta dokumentasi. Sumber penelitian adalah guru di SD Negeri 1 Kobo Kecil di daerah Kotamobagu Timur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru memegang peranan sentral dalam membentuk moral siswa melalui pemberian teladan yang konsisten dalam perkataan, perbuatan, dan sikap selama interaksi belajar-mengajar, serta dengan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai moral ke dalam seluruh mata pelajaran. Selain memberikan penghargaan dan apresiasi atas perilaku positif, guru di sekolah juga berupaya menciptakan lingkungan sekolah yang kondusif dengan menjaga kebersihan, keindahan, keamanan, dan kenyamanan demi mendukung efektivitas pembelajaran. Dalam menangani perilaku yang tidak mencerminkan nilai moral, guru menerapkan pendekatan persuasif seperti menegur tanpa menghakimi, menjalin kolaborasi erat dengan kepala sekolah serta orang tua melalui pertemuan formal maupun kunjungan rumah (*home visit*), hingga memberikan sanksi yang bersifat mendidik untuk membimbing siswa kembali ke arah yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: peran guru; moral; metode guru; SD Negeri 1 Kobo Kecil

Introduction

Currently, the field of education faces serious challenges, including a moral crisis among children. Various recent social phenomena in Indonesia indicate that issues of character lie at the root of problems that cannot be ignored. Therefore, in line with the primary objectives of national education, character development or the cultivation of noble moral values must become a central focus. Education itself is a consciously designed process aimed at shaping students' superior personalities so that they may serve as a strong foundation for religion, the nation, and the state (Nurhasanah et al, 2024).

The essence of education is fundamentally a process of humanizing human beings, guiding individuals to recognize their true identity. When individuals fail to understand who they are, it becomes difficult for them to recognize their Creator, namely Allah. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of human character and nature should serve as the primary foundation for the educational process. Unfortunately, in practice, many educational approaches have not yet aligned with these noble objectives (Nurhasanah et al, 2024).

National education plays a vital role in developing individual potential and shaping a nation's character and civilization, with integrity, as part of its mission to enlighten the nation's life. Its main objective is to help learners grow into individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are physically and mentally healthy, intelligent, creative, independent, and capable of fulfilling their roles as democratic and responsible citizens. However, in practice, educators often focus predominantly on cognitive aspects of learning, even though affective learning approaches are crucial for instilling attitudes and values through systematic and well-directed methods (Alifah, 2019).

Immoral behavior reflects a deterioration of character that can undermine the foundations of society. Beyond harming individuals, behaviors characterized by egoism, dishonesty, and a lack of empathy erode a social order grounded in respect and trust. Such behavioral patterns generate environments marked by conflict and tension, where justice is neglected, and empathy becomes scarce. If left unaddressed, these conditions may lead to internal discord, produce widespread negative consequences,

hinder progress, and ultimately result in generations that have lost their moral compass.

Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that students understand learning materials effectively. Their role extends beyond instructional duties to encompass a range of strategic functions within the learning process. These include acting as educators who shape students' character and moral values; instructors who systematically transmit knowledge; sources of information; facilitators who create conducive learning environments; mentors who guide students in developing their potential and interests; demonstrators who provide concrete examples; advisors who offer guidance and consideration; and innovators who continuously develop teaching methods and strategies to enhance the quality of education (Yestiani & Zahwa, 2020).

Teachers play a primary role in shaping students' moral development. In other words, they demonstrate how to become good individuals, not only by teaching academic subjects such as mathematics or history, but also through their daily behavior. Students learn from teachers' conduct, patterns of speech, respect for others, and even how they respond to difficulties. Therefore, educators are expected to exemplify values such as integrity, tolerance, politeness, and empathy.

Beyond serving as role models, teachers are also responsible for encouraging students to engage in discussions on moral issues. Stories, classroom debates, or real-life situations within the school environment can be used as learning contexts. For instance, teachers may teach the value of forgiveness and guide students in reaching fair resolutions to peer conflicts. Essentially, educators should help students think critically about right and wrong and support them in drawing conclusions that align with moral principles.

Education at the elementary school level plays a vital role as the initial foundation that shapes children's educational trajectories at subsequent stages. When character values are not instilled optimally at this stage, students' moral development may be hindered. Therefore, character strengthening must be carried out consistently and seriously, as strong moral values and good character constitute the main foundation for national progress. Childhood at the elementary level is also a critical phase in identity formation.

If character development is neglected early on, children may have difficulty demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviors later (Nurhasanah et al, 2024).

Schools serve as frontline institutions in the development of moral and character education. The formation and development of children's morality can be readily observed and assessed in school settings, where moral values are systematically and routinely cultivated through established moral pillars and adherence to specific rules (Fauziah et al, 2022).

Creating a school environment that fosters moral development is another important responsibility of educators. This involves ensuring that students feel safe expressing opinions, asking questions, and even making mistakes without fear of punishment. Teachers can encourage students to respect diversity, cooperate with others, and provide mutual support. A positive classroom atmosphere facilitates students' ability to learn and internalize moral values in their daily lives.

From a psychological perspective, character education should encompass three core components: moral reasoning, moral feeling, and moral behavior (Muchlas, 2017). Good character reflects the ability to understand what is right, possess the intention to do good, and translate these intentions into concrete actions. This process involves aligned patterns of thought, emotional disposition, and behavior grounded in moral values. Accordingly, character education should not merely involve the transmission of ethical concepts or values training. Effective character education methods must integrate three essential aspects: intellectual understanding of goodness (cognitive), emotional motivation or willingness to act rightly (affective), and the skills to practice goodness in real actions (psychomotor) (Barnawi & Arifin, 2017).

Character education envisions the development of a strong and competitive nation that upholds noble morals, high ethical standards, respect for diversity, a spirit of cooperation, national consciousness, adaptability to change, and progress grounded in science and technology. These values are guided and enriched by faith and devotion to God Almighty and rooted in the noble values of Pancasila. Character is reflected not only in outward behavior but also in the underlying motivations behind one's actions. In this regard, the surrounding environment plays a significant role. The success of

addressing the character crisis largely depends on individual awareness, which begins in the closest environments such as the family, home, and workplace, and gradually expands to the broader community and national level. Therefore, character development efforts should be realized as a national movement involving all elements of society. Among these environments, the family remains the primary foundation for character formation, making parental roles at home the most crucial pillar in shaping children's character from an early age (Hendarman, 2019).

Moral reinforcement among third-grade students at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil is an integral part of implementing social and emotional learning. In this context, teachers play a central role as facilitators, guiding students in understanding and regulating their emotions in healthy ways. Teachers also foster students' abilities to build harmonious social relationships and resolve conflicts constructively. This process is carried out through engaging, interactive learning approaches that not only enhance student participation but also enrich their experiences as they develop essential life skills. To cultivate resilient and principled student character, teachers at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil must integrate moral values into all learning activities, both in academic classroom instruction and in everyday interactions. Such a comprehensive approach enables students to observe, internalize, and gradually apply these values in their daily lives, ensuring that moral development is not merely theoretical but also contextual and practical. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine teachers' roles in shaping students' moral development at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach with the primary objective of exploring in depth the role of teachers in instilling norms among third-grade students at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil. The selection of a qualitative approach was based on its capacity to provide a comprehensive description of social interactions and the dynamics that occur within the school environment.

Qualitative research is an approach that emphasizes an in-depth understanding of phenomena directly experienced by research participants. These phenomena may include behaviors, perspectives, motivations, and

actions, which are examined holistically and described through narrative forms using words within their natural context, while employing multiple data collection techniques. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis.

Results and Discussion

The optimal role of teachers has contributed significantly to positive changes in students at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil. Students who previously demonstrated less desirable attitudes gradually began to show improvements in their behavior. In addition to teachers, the school principal, as the institutional leader, actively facilitated teachers' success in shaping students' moral values. This support was achieved through the provision of reading materials, such as folklore containing moral lessons, the creation of a positive school environment, and direct communication with parents regarding students' moral education.

In this regard, the principal of Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil in Kotamobagu stated that, as a school leader, active participation is essential in supporting teachers' efforts to develop students' moral education. This support includes reinforcing school rules during morning assemblies, conducting routine prayers before lessons and at the end of the school day, facilitating communication between teachers and parents, and continuously monitoring students' behavior. A. L. (2025) said the principal emphasized that students' success is not solely the responsibility of teachers but also of school leadership.

Moral education is crucial for every individual and is most effective when introduced from an early age. Contemporary social conditions indicate an increase in incidents of conflict and misconduct stemming from inadequate moral foundations. Moreover, unrestricted internet access exposes children to various negative influences, underscoring the importance of moral education as a fundamental safeguard against harmful behaviors.

The absence of moral principles in society can be likened to an unstable building foundation. Although the consequences may not be immediately visible, they eventually emerge and expand. Social trust declines when honesty, integrity, and mutual respect are no longer upheld. Human interactions become transactional rather than sincere, fostering an

atmosphere of fear, conflict, and difficulty in cooperation, which ultimately hinders collective progress.

N. P. (2025) said moral education is a learning process that aims to instill positive values such as responsibility, honesty, and compassion in students. Teachers emphasized that moral education helps students distinguish between good and bad behavior, develop a sense of social responsibility, build positive relationships, and practice honesty and accountability. In line with N. P. (2025), M. M. (2025) said that individuals with strong moral values tend to contribute positively to their families, schools, and communities, becoming law-abiding citizens who respect diversity and uphold humanitarian values. R. M. (2025) also said that moral education also fosters inclusive attitudes among students, such as not discriminating against peers.

Teachers play an irreplaceable role in nurturing students' moral sensitivity through systematic and continuous efforts that go beyond academic instruction. They function as role models, mentors, and motivators whose daily interactions, teaching strategies, and demonstrated attitudes directly and indirectly influence students' moral development. Professional teachers are capable of developing both students' academic competencies and their moral character.

Interview results revealed that all participating teachers shared similar views on the importance of moral education for students' future development, social interaction, and the ability to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Teachers highlighted core moral values such as responsibility, honesty, compassion, empathy, and environmental awareness as essential components of moral education.

The research findings indicate that teachers instill moral values such as environmental awareness, social care, honesty, and responsibility. Teachers emphasized that honesty is the most fundamental value, followed by empathy and responsibility. The implementation of these values is reflected in practices such as maintaining classroom and school cleanliness as a form of shared responsibility. In addition, approximately 80% of students have demonstrated responsible behavior, while the remaining students are still developing gradually (S.H.P., 2025; N., 2025; M.M., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be explained by contemporary character education approaches that emphasize integrating moral values into daily school practices. Berkowitz and Bier (2016) argue that character education is most effective when values such as honesty and responsibility are not merely taught conceptually but are internalized through school culture and the habituation of positive behaviors. This aligns with the practices identified in this study, where students are routinely encouraged to maintain cleanliness as a tangible expression of responsibility.

Teachers' emphasis on honesty as a core value is also consistent with Sanderse's (2019) findings, which indicate that teacher modeling significantly influences students' character development, particularly in integrity and responsibility. When teachers consistently demonstrate and reinforce the importance of honesty, students are more likely to internalize this value.

Furthermore, the practice of maintaining a clean school environment as an expression of responsibility and social concern aligns with Lavy's (2020) study, which found that strengthening prosocial norms within the school environment contributes to improved responsible behavior among students. A school environment that consistently promotes collective values helps students understand the social consequences of their actions.

Nevertheless, the finding that approximately 20% of students are still developing gradually is consistent with the work of Thornberg and Oğuz (2016), who suggest that individual factors, peer relationships, and family support influence the internalization of moral values. This indicates that, although schools play a crucial role, students' moral development is also shaped by broader social contexts.

In addition, recent research by Nucci, Narvaez, and Krettenauer (2019) emphasizes that effective moral education requires a developmental approach, as students progress through different stages of moral development. This perspective helps explain why some students consistently demonstrate responsible behavior, while others are still in the process of internalizing moral values.

Effective moral education requires appropriate delivery methods that avoid a patronizing tone. Teachers emphasized the importance of using persuasive, empathetic, and appreciative approaches rather than rigid

instructions. Positive reinforcement through praise was identified as a simple yet effective strategy to strengthen students' moral behavior. Praise motivates students to repeat positive actions and gradually transforms moral values into conscious habits.

Teachers also face various challenges in shaping students' moral values, including diverse parenting styles, external social environments, and unrestricted access to social media. Children's tendency to imitate behaviors observed in their surroundings increases their vulnerability to negative influences, particularly when parental supervision is inadequate.

To address these challenges, teachers employ contextual storytelling, humor, reflective dialogue, and gentle guidance to convey moral messages. Such approaches help students internalize moral values without feeling lectured. Teachers also reported that sincere praise enhances students' confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in positive behavior (N.P., S.H.P., N., M.M., R.M., 2025).

In the digital era, moral values serve as an essential filter, enabling students to resist negative influences, make ethical decisions, distinguish right from wrong, and develop mutual respect. Therefore, moral education must be introduced early to ensure that students are not only intellectually capable but also ethically resilient.

Finally, effective learning requires appropriate teaching methods. Instructional methods are a crucial component of learning strategies that enhance students' understanding and engagement. Teachers are encouraged to combine various teaching methods to create an effective and motivating learning environment. This principle also applies to moral education, where appropriate methods are necessary to ensure the successful formation of students' moral character.

Conclusion

Teachers play a central role in shaping students' moral development by consistently demonstrating exemplary behavior through their words, actions, and attitudes during the teaching and learning process, and by integrating moral values across all subject areas. In addition to providing rewards and appreciation for positive behavior, teachers at Elementary School 1 Kobo Kecil strive to create a conducive school environment by

maintaining cleanliness, aesthetic quality, safety, and comfort to support effective learning.

In addressing behaviors that do not reflect moral values, teachers apply persuasive approaches, such as offering constructive, non-judgmental guidance, fostering close collaboration with the school principal and parents through formal meetings and home visits, and implementing educational sanctions to guide students back toward positive behavioral development.

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