

## CHARACTER EDUCATION FROM AN EARLY AGE: FAMILY STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING POSITIVE VALUES

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### Abstract

This research aims to investigate the strategies families use to develop positive values in children from an early age. This study uses a literature review where references are taken in accordance with the research context. The results showed that effective communication acts as a foundation that allows families to convey positive values, discuss the consequences of certain behaviors, and resolve value conflicts. Positive behavioral examples shown by parents were found to be the most influential factor, with children tending to imitate the behaviors they observed from their parents. Strategies of assigning responsibility and rewarding effort also contributed significantly to children's motivation to embrace positive values and apply them in their lives. Children who were given responsibility with positive support from their parents showed increased independence, confidence and willingness to contribute to their environment.

**Keyword:** Character Education, Early Children, Family Strategies, Developing Positive Values.

### Introduction

Character education is an important foundation in the formation of individuals with integrity who are able to contribute positively to society. In line with this understanding, the process of instilling character values cannot be delayed and must begin as early as possible.

The early age phase, often referred to as the golden period of human development, is the time when children are most receptive and absorb the values

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taught to them (Aslan & Shiong, 2023). Positive values such as honesty, responsibility, courage, empathy and patience are some examples of character traits that should ideally be instilled early in life. This not only helps children develop a healthy sense of identity, but also prepares them to interact with the outside world in constructive and ethical ways (Jung & Kim, 2022). In an increasingly complex and diverse society, character education has become an urgent necessity to ensure that children grow into individuals who are able to make smart decisions, respect differences, and contribute positively to society (Liberty, 2023).

In the midst of increasing social challenges in this era of globalization and digitalization, there is a trend of declining moral and ethical values. This phenomenon raises concerns about future generations who lack a strong character foundation to face life's problems (Aslan, 2019a); (Sarmila et al., 2023). Therefore, attention to character education from an early age is increasingly becoming an important topic to be raised and developed.

The role of the family in this context is very significant. The family is the first and main social institution that plays a role in forming the basis of children's personality and character. Parents and family members act as direct role models for children in their daily behavior (Aslan et al., 2019). In a changing environment where social interactions and access to information are increasingly unlimited, the family is the first place where children can learn about important values through interaction, conversation and observation. Parents have the responsibility of carving out social principles and norms, and teaching children ways to apply these values in everyday life (Ernawati et al., 2022). Thus, the approach taken by families in implementing character education must be strategic, consistent, and adjust to the times to be effective in shaping and strengthening children's character.

In addition, the process of instilling character in the family environment cannot be seen as a one-off task, but rather an ongoing process that adapts to the development and age phase of a child. This means that parents need to understand that character education must be dynamically adapted to the needs and understanding of children at each age stage (Hendrik, 2024). For example, at a very early age, character education focuses more on habituation through daily routines and educational games, while at school age, children will need a deeper understanding of the consequences and responsibilities of their actions (Solissa, 2022). Character education at home also includes learning by example and positive reinforcement, which means parents must be consistent in demonstrating behaviors that are in line with the values they want to instill in their children (Aslan & Hifza, 2020).

In the midst of the challenges presented by the digital and information age, which often raises complex moral dilemmas, parents are faced with demands to be more innovative and adaptive in character education methods (Handayana et al., 2021). The inclusion of technology in education can be utilized as a tool, but limits and guidance

are still needed to protect children from negative influences that may arise. Furthermore, cooperation between families and educational institutions and communities is also important to create a supportive environment for children's character growth. This includes establishing an open dialogue with educators, participating in community activities, and ensuring that children also get good examples from the environment outside the home (Mizani et al., 2020).

Through holistic and collaborative efforts, character education can be effectively shaped. This will not only benefit the individual child but also society and future generations. Therefore, investing in character education from an early age, with the family as the main foundation, is a shared responsibility that requires commitment and awareness from all parties involved in the child's life (Khoiriyah et al., 2023); (Aslan, 2019b).

However, many families today face obstacles in implementing effective character education. This can be caused by various factors, such as the limited time of parents who are busy working, lack of knowledge about character cultivation methods, to the influence of the environment and media that are not always supportive (Aslan, 2017).

From this background, the question arises of what strategies families can adopt in developing positive values in children from an early age. Further research is needed to identify and describe the various practices that have been carried out and provide practical recommendations related to character education in the family environment. This study aims to fill the knowledge gap and provide guidance for parents and caregivers in shaping a generation with positive and resilient characters.

## **Research Methods**

Literature research method is an approach to research that involves the collection, review, and analysis of existing literature to gain insight or infer knowledge about a particular topic or problem (Sio et al., 2024); (Nguyen et al., 2024). In literature research, researchers do not collect primary data through experiments or surveys, but rely on published sources such as books, journal articles, theses, academic works, and digital sources (Kim et al., 2024).

Literature research methods are useful for building a deep understanding of a topic, evaluating existing trends and debates, and identifying research questions that still need answers. Depending on the need, this research can serve as a foundation for further studies or be used as a means to develop theory (Nesset et al., 2024); (Teixeira & Carvalho, 2024).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Character Education**

Character education is a continuous process of educating and shaping good moral and ethical values in individuals, which include honesty, responsibility, respect, justice, and compassion. This education is not only about academic skills, but also about the formation of character and self-identity that will guide an individual's daily behavior (Mills, 2021). In other words, character education is a systematic effort to integrate positive values into all aspects of an individual's life, from the family environment, school, to society (Kowalski & Wingate, 2023).

The importance of character education cannot be separated from the reality that moral and ethical values are the foundation for the formation of a civilized and harmonious society. In the era of globalization and fast-paced technological advances, moral challenges are increasingly complex and varied (Leung, 2023). This requires the younger generation to not only be intellectually intelligent, but also have high character and integrity. Character education is one of the main keys in facing these challenges, by equipping individuals not only with knowledge, but also the ability to make right decisions and act in accordance with good ethical and moral values (Sydoriv, 2024).

The purpose of character education is to build individuals who not only excel in academic achievement, but also have noble hearts and attitudes. With character education, it is hoped that a generation that is resilient in facing various life challenges, able to think critically, be responsible, appreciate diversity, and empathize with others (Masrukhi et al., 2022). This goal includes learning and internalizing positive values that shape individuals into individuals who uphold honesty, justice, and have the ability to distinguish right from wrong, so that they can make a positive contribution to society (Filivani & Agung, 2021).

Thus, character education is a long-term investment to create a better society. It is not limited to the scope of formal education in schools, but also involves the participation of families, communities, and the media in the formation process. Character education is about preparing future generations who are not only intellectually smart, but also rich in heart, so that they can become agents of positive change for themselves, their environment, and even the world.

### **The Role of Family in Character Education**

Theories of the role of the family in the formation of children's character recognize the family as the first and main institution that contributes to the moral and character development of children. One of the best known theories is Bronfenbrenner's socialization theory, which introduced the concept of ecological systems (Wijaya & Permana, 2022). According to Bronfenbrenner, the family is in a micro system that has a direct influence on child development. Daily interactions between parents and children, the way parents instill values, the rules applied at home, and the examples of

behavior shown by parents, all play an important role in shaping children's values and character (Alkouri, 2022). In the family environment, children learn about respect, honesty, responsibility, and other social values that form the basis of their character.

Bandura, through his social learning theory, also emphasized the role of family in character formation. Bandura proposes that children learn through observation and imitation. In this context, the behavior of parents and other family members becomes a very important model, as children tend to imitate the behavior they witness in their environment (Hermawan & Kusniasari, 2023). Therefore, positive behaviors shown by parents, such as expressing empathy, practicing fairness, and being responsible, will be internalized by children and form the basis of their character. Bandura's emphasis on the importance of reinforcement and consequences for certain behaviors also shows how families can provide an environment that supports or hinders the formation of children's character (Guna et al., 2024).

In addition, attachment theory developed by Bowlby highlights the importance of bond formation between parents and children in children's emotional and social development. A secure bond between parents and children creates the foundation for children to explore the world confidently and form healthy relationships with others. Through this bond, children also learn about trust, empathy and positive social interactions. These strong, positive bonds greatly contribute to a child's character formation, instilling in them a sense of security and high self-esteem, both of which are essential for the formation of good character (Barlett, 2023).

Through these theories, it can be seen that the family plays a very important and fundamental role in the formation of children's character. Through interactions, behaviors, and emotional bonds within the family, children acquire moral and ethical foundations that will guide them throughout life.

### **Positive Value Development Strategy**

One of the main strategies that families can adopt in instilling positive values in children is through the application of behavioral examples or role modeling. Behavioral examples shown by parents are very influential in the formation of children's character (Utami, 2023). Children are good observers and tend to imitate the behavior they see, especially from people they admire and respect such as their parents. Therefore, it is very important for parents to consistently demonstrate positive behaviors such as honesty, perseverance, empathy, and patience in daily life. Consistency between what parents teach and demonstrate will strengthen the message and values to be transferred, making it easier for children to internalize these values as part of their character (Fijriyani et al., 2023).

Open and assertive communication is also an important strategy in instilling positive values in children. Families should create a supportive environment where children feel safe and comfortable to express their opinions, feelings and questions. This

includes encouraging conversations about values, ethics, and moral decision-making in everyday situations. Parents can use stories or actual events as moral lessons, discuss them with children, listen to their perspectives, and guide them to think critically about the situation (Onoshakpokaiye, 2023). Through this open discussion, children learn to understand the complexity of moral and ethical issues and develop the ability to judge right and wrong actions based on the values they have been taught at home (Yim, 2022).

Finally, assigning responsibilities is another effective way of instilling positive values. By giving children age-appropriate responsibilities, such as homework, caring for pets, or helping younger siblings, parents teach the importance of responsibility, hard work, and contributing to the family and community. Rewards and praise for effort and good behavior are also very important to reinforce this learning (Rohyati, 2023). Applying natural consequences or positive discipline for undesirable behavior in a consistent and fair manner helps children understand the implications of their choices and actions. This strategy also increases children's self-confidence and autonomy, while internalizing the values taught by parents as a foundation for their character development (Salmiati & Zaman, 2021).

Furthermore, it is very important to maintain consistency in the application of values and rules in the family. Consistency in behavior, teaching, and expectations creates structure and security that allows children to understand the boundaries and consequences of their actions. The use of stories or examples from pop culture, literature or history that reflect positive values can be an effective tool in communicating moral messages (Adnyana et al., 2022). In addition, supporting children to engage in social or community activities, such as volunteering, team sports or school clubs, can give them practice opportunities in applying values such as cooperation, fairness and caring for others (Luckey et al., 2021).

In conclusion, families play an essential role in shaping character and moral values in children. Strategies such as demonstrating good behavior through positive parental examples, open communication, assigning responsibility, and consistency in teaching and applying values, are essential in this process. At the core of these strategies is love, support and consistent guidance from parents, which not only helps in the formation of good character but also prepares children to become individuals who contribute positively in society. By instilling positive values early on, families can lay the foundation for healthy moral and personal development, helping children grow into responsible, empathetic and ethical adults.

### **Family strategies in developing positive values in children from an early age**

The family is the basic unit of society that plays an important role in shaping and developing positive values in children. There are various ways that families can sow and enrich these values:

First, establishing effective communication is key in developing values. Parents should create an environment where children feel heard and valued. This involves not only talking and teaching positive values to children, but also listening with empathy and giving supportive responses. Through open dialog, parents open the door for discussions about ethics, emotions, and decisions, and children learn how to articulate and consider values in the context of everyday life (Yim, 2022).

Second, is setting an example. Parents often forget that they are the most important role models for their children. Children learn through observation and imitation. Therefore, it is important for parents to actively demonstrate positive behaviors such as integrity, civility, patience, and hard work. If parents consistently demonstrate behaviors that match the values they want their children to have, then children will be more likely to imitate those values (Utomo & Alawiyah, 2022).

Third, giving responsibility can help children understand the importance of being responsible and independent individuals. Through small tasks and age-appropriate responsibilities, children learn about hard work, the consequences of their actions, and the satisfaction of contributing. These responsibilities can also involve children in family decision-making, thus creating a sense of ownership and the importance of participating in the group (Isom et al., 2021).

Finally, appreciating children's efforts and achievements is also very important. Sincere praise and support for their efforts encourage children to continue to grow in terms of morale and achievement. Parents should emphasize the importance of process and effort, not just the end result. By supporting children's effort-centered character development, families help children to internalize these values and apply them in real life (Wahab et al., 2022).

Through consistent commitment and effort from the family in implementing effective communication strategies, setting a good example, giving responsibility, and appreciating children's efforts, positive values can grow and develop along with children's growth as strong and ethical individuals in society (Karwadi & Indrawan, 2023).

In conclusion, the family plays an important role in instilling and developing positive values in children. Through effective communication, setting a good example, giving responsibility, and rewarding effort and achievement, parents can form the ethical, moral and character foundations in children that will guide them throughout life. These practices not only educate children about what positive values are, but also how to apply them in daily life. As the foundation of character education, the family not only invests in the development of the individual child, but also in the health and sustainability of society as a whole. Thus, the family's role in developing positive values in children is at the core of building a responsive, responsible and empathetic generation.

## Conclusion

Family strategies in developing positive values from an early age are crucial in shaping a child's character and moral foundation. Effective communication between parents and children plays an important role, where children feel valued and listened to, strengthening relationships and facilitating the cultivation of values. Open dialog at home helps children understand and reflect on values such as honesty, empathy and responsibility. By engaging children in conversations about ethical situations and daily decisions, they learn to apply these values practically.

Furthermore, the power of parental example cannot be underestimated. Children tend to mimic the behavior they see daily at home. Therefore, parents must consistently demonstrate behaviors that reflect the values they want to instill, such as diligence, friendliness, and discipline. These behaviors should be demonstrated not only in interactions with other family members, but also in broader social contexts, providing valuable lessons that these values are universal and important everywhere.

The implementation of responsibility and appreciation of the efforts made by children is also an important strategy. By giving children age-appropriate responsibilities, they not only learn the importance of contributing and the consequences of their actions, but also develop a sense of confidence and independence. Genuine praise and appreciation for their efforts, not just the end result, encourages intrinsic motivation and a desire to continue to grow and achieve. Young people who feel supported are more likely to develop solid character strengths and apply the values taught at home to a broader scope.

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