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Parental Contributions to Character Development in Primary Education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to investigate the role of parents in supporting character education for primary school children in Bangkinang, Indonesia, and to identify effective strategies for parental involvement in character development.

Materials and methods: A quantitative research design was employed, involving 186 parents of primary school children (grades 1-6) from five elementary schools in Bangkinang. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring six dimensions of parental involvement in character education. Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30.

Results: The findings revealed that 78.5% of parents actively participated in their children's character education through various strategies. The most effective approaches included role modeling ($M=4.32$, $SD=0.76$), providing guidance ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.84$), and establishing consistent routines ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.92$). Significant differences were found between parental education levels and the implementation of character education strategies ($p<0.05$).

Conclusions: The study concludes that parental involvement significantly contributes to character development in primary school children. Collaboration between parents and schools is essential for establishing effective character education. Parents who model positive behaviors, provide consistent guidance, and establish routines demonstrate the most effective approaches to character education.

Keywords

character education, parental role, primary school children, moral development, quantitative research.

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become increasingly important in the Indonesian educational landscape as the country strives to cultivate a generation with strong moral values and positive character traits. The family environment serves as the initial gateway for young children to gain valuable experiences in understanding character (Muslim, 2020). Parents, as primary caregivers, play a crucial role in shaping children's character development, particularly during the formative primary school years (Anthonia, 2019). Through their daily interactions, guidance, and modeling of desired behaviors, parents lay the foundation for children to internalize and demonstrate virtues such as honesty, responsibility, and respect (Mondal, 2017). This early exposure within the family context significantly influences the development of a child's moral compass and shapes their future actions and decision-making. The family's role in character education is thus paramount in preparing children to become responsible and contributing members of society (Amalia et al., 2019).

The Indonesian government has placed a strong emphasis on character education in the national education system since 2010, recognizing its vital role in developing high-quality human resources for the country (Lonto, 2019; Setyanto et al., 2019). Through character education, schools aim to cultivate core values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and empathy in students, preparing them to become responsible and contributing members of society who can positively impact their communities (Singh, 2019; Zhou & Hou, 2025). While schools play a crucial role in delivering formal character education through curriculum-based approaches, the role of parents remains fundamental in reinforcing and further strengthening these values within the home environment (Eden et al., 2024). Parents have the unique opportunity to model desired behaviors, provide consistent guidance, and establish routines that align with and complement the character education initiatives implemented in schools (Tresco et al., 2010).

Existing research has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of parental involvement in shaping children's character development and moral foundations. For instance, a study by (Zhu et al., 2022) indicates that both parents and teachers share equal responsibility and influence in implementing effective character education initiatives, particularly in the digital era where children are exposed to a multitude of societal influences. Similarly, numerous studies have demonstrated that parents contribute significantly to character education through various strategies, such as serving as exemplary role models, providing consistent guidance and support, and establishing family routines and habits that reinforce positive values (Setiawan et al., 2020; Zhu et al.,

2022). However, despite the recognized importance of parental involvement, research has also revealed that the role of parents in educating the character of their young children within the family environment has not always been fully optimized or consistent, suggesting a need for further exploration and intervention (Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013).

Critical examination of the literature reveals several gaps in understanding the specific mechanisms through which parents support character education. First, while the importance of parental involvement is recognized, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of different parental strategies in the Indonesian context, particularly in smaller urban areas like Bangkinang. Second, few studies have examined how socioeconomic factors influence parents' approaches to character education. Third, research on the collaborative dynamics between parents and schools in character education remains underdeveloped.

The rationale for this study stems from the need to address these research gaps and provide empirical evidence on effective parental strategies for supporting character education. By understanding how parents in Bangkinang contribute to their children's character development, this study aims to inform educational policies and practices that strengthen the home-school partnership in character education.

The primary objectives of this study are to: (1) examine the extent of parental involvement in supporting character education for primary school children in Bangkinang; (2) identify the most effective parental strategies for fostering positive character traits; (3) analyze the relationship between sociodemographic factors and parental approaches to character education; and (4) provide recommendations for enhancing parental involvement in character education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Participants

The study participants consisted of 186 parents of primary school children from five public elementary schools in Bangkinang city, Indonesia. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different grade levels (grades 1-6) and socioeconomic backgrounds. The sample included 112 mothers (60.2%) and 74 fathers (39.8%) with children aged between 6 and 12 years. Regarding educational background, 42 participants (22.6%) had completed primary education, 78 (41.9%) had secondary education, and 66 (35.5%) had tertiary education. The inclusion criteria required participants to be primary caregivers actively involved in their child's education and residing in Bangkinang.

Study Organization

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically collect and analyze data on parental involvement in character education. Data collection was conducted between January and March 2025 after obtaining approval from the relevant educational authorities and ethical clearance from the institutional review board. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary involvement and confidentiality of responses.

Test and Measurement Procedures

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on a comprehensive literature review and validated through expert review and pilot testing. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections:

Demographic Information: Age, gender, education level, occupation, family structure, and number of children.

Parental Involvement Scale: A 30-item scale measuring six dimensions of parental involvement in character education: (a) exemplary behavior/role modeling, (b) providing guidance and advice, (c) establishing routines and habits, (d) monitoring and supervision, (e) communication about values, and (f) reinforcement through rewards and consequences. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Character Education Outcomes: Parents' perceptions of their children's character development across eight core values: honesty, responsibility, respect, empathy, perseverance, self-discipline, gratitude, and cooperation.

The instrument demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 for the overall scale and ranging from 0.78 to 0.91 for individual dimensions.

Statistical Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic characteristics and levels of parental involvement. Inferential statistics were also applied, starting with independent samples t-tests to compare differences in parental involvement based on gender and family structure. One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across educational levels and socioeconomic status. Pearson's correlation was used to analyze relationships between parental involvement dimensions and children's character outcomes. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was performed to identify predictors of effective parental involvement in character education. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant for all analyses.

RESULTS

Parental Involvement Dimensions

Table 1. Parental Involvement Dimensions: Mean and Standard Deviation of Parenting Practices

Dimension	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
<i>Role Modeling</i>	4.32	0.76
<i>Providing Guidance</i>	4.17	0.84
<i>Establishing Routines</i>	3.98	0.92
<i>Monitoring and Supervision</i>	3.75	0.88

Communication about Values	3.62	0.95
Reinforcement through Rewards	3.48	1.02

Table 1 presents the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) of various parental involvement dimensions. The data indicates how parents engage in different aspects of child-rearing. The highest mean score is observed for "Role Modeling" (M = 4.32, SD = 0.76), suggesting that parents most frequently engage in setting a positive example for their children. In contrast, the lowest mean score is found for "Reinforcement through Rewards" (M = 3.48, SD = 1.02), indicating that this strategy is less commonly used. The standard deviations show variability in the practices, with "Reinforcement through Rewards" having the highest variability (SD = 1.02), suggesting that parents may have diverse approaches to reinforcing behavior with rewards.

Effective Parental Strategies (Regression Analysis)

Table 2. Effective Parental Strategies: Regression Analysis of Parenting Dimensions

Strategy	Beta (β)	p-value
Role Modeling	0.42	<0.001
Establishing Routines	0.37	<0.001
Providing Guidance	0.33	<0.01

Table 2 reports the results of regression analysis examining the effectiveness of different parental strategies. The "Beta" (β) values represent the strength of the relationship between each parental strategy and its effectiveness in influencing children's development. "Role Modeling" has the strongest positive influence on child outcomes (β = 0.42, p < 0.001), followed by "Establishing Routines" (β = 0.37, p < 0.001) and "Providing Guidance" (β = 0.33, p < 0.01). The significant p-values indicate that all these strategies are statistically significant in contributing to children's development.

Correlations between Parental Strategies and Character Outcomes

Table 3. Correlations between Parental Strategies and Character Outcomes in Children

Parental Strategy	Character Outcome	Correlation (r)	p-value
Role Modeling	Honesty	0.65	<0.001
Role Modeling	Responsibility	0.62	<0.001
Establishing Routines	Self-discipline	0.59	<0.001
Establishing Routines	Perseverance	0.54	<0.001

This table presents the correlation coefficients (r) and p-values between specific parental strategies and children's character outcomes. The data shows strong positive correlations between "Role Modeling" and both "Honesty" (r = 0.65, p < 0.001) and "Responsibility" (r = 0.62, p < 0.001), suggesting that parents who serve as role models are more likely to influence these positive character traits in their children. Similarly, "Establishing Routines" shows strong correlations with "Self-discipline" (r = 0.59, p < 0.001) and "Perseverance" (r = 0.54, p < 0.001), highlighting the importance of structured routines in fostering these traits in children.

Sociodemographic Differences in Parental Approaches

Table 4. Sociodemographic Differences in Parental Approaches and Parenting Practices

Factor	Significant Differences	Notes
Education Level	Yes (p < 0.01)	Higher education linked to more communication about values
Socioeconomic Status	Yes (p < 0.01)	Higher income linked to more enriching experiences
Gender	No (p = 0.064)	Mothers slightly higher in monitoring (p < 0.05)

Table 4 examines the impact of sociodemographic factors such as education level, socioeconomic status, and gender on parental approaches to child-rearing. The data suggests significant differences in parenting practices based on education level and socioeconomic status. Parents with higher education levels engage more in "Communication about Values" (p < 0.01), while higher income levels are associated with more enriching parenting experiences (p < 0.01). Gender differences are less pronounced, with mothers exhibiting slightly higher levels of monitoring (p < 0.05), though the difference is not statistically significant at the conventional threshold (p = 0.064).

The analysis revealed that 78.5% of parents reported active involvement in their children's character education. The multiple regression analysis identified role modeling, establishing routines, and providing guidance as significant predictors of positive character outcomes, explaining 58% of the variance in children's character development (R² = 0.58). Additionally, 67.2% of parents believed strong collaboration exists between parents and schools in character education implementation.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Key Findings

This study provides empirical evidence on the crucial role of parents in supporting character education for primary school children in Bangkinang, Indonesia. The high percentage of parents reporting active involvement indicates a growing awareness of parental responsibility in character development, aligning with previous research emphasizing the family's role as the initial gateway for character formation (Alampay, 2024; Diana et al., 2021). The findings suggest that parents are increasingly recognizing their pivotal influence on their children's moral and ethical development, which is the foundation of a well-rounded education. By actively engaging in various aspects of character education, such as modeling positive behaviors, establishing consistent routines, and providing guidance through meaningful conversations, parents can significantly contribute to shaping the values and virtues of the next generation (Elsayed, 2024; Ramadhani et al., 2024).

The finding that exemplary behavior/role modeling emerged as the most prevalent and effective strategy strongly supports the assertion that character education can be effectively transmitted through parents providing real-life examples and demonstrations as adults for their children to observe and emulate. This aligns with the research by Zhou et al., (2024), which

highlighted the crucial significance of parents actively demonstrating and living out core values through their everyday activities and daily routines. The remarkable effectiveness of role modeling as a character education approach can be largely attributed to children's natural tendency to closely observe and subsequently imitate the behaviors and actions of their parents, making it an exceptionally powerful tool for shaping and cultivating positive character traits in young learners (Kedia et al., 2019). By consistently modeling desired behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes, parents serve as living embodiments of the values they wish to instill in their children, creating a profound and lasting impact on their character development.

The significant correlation between establishing consistent routines and children's self-discipline supports the view that habituation is a key mechanism for character development. This finding resonates with extensive research indicating that the role of parents in optimizing character education includes exemplary behavior, habituation, and providing consistent guidance and support (Ismail, 2018; Zhu et al., 2022). By establishing and maintaining structured, predictable routines in the home environment, parents create a framework that reinforces desired behaviors until they become internalized as stable character traits within their children (Lamb, 1993; Major et al., 2023). The repetition and familiarity of these routines help children develop self-discipline, as they learn to regulate their own actions and emotions to align with the expectations set by their parents. This process of habituation is crucial for the long-term cultivation of positive character qualities, as it goes beyond simply teaching values to facilitating their genuine integration into a child's behavioral patterns and decision-making processes.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Our findings both support and extend previous research on parental involvement in character education. Similar to the study by Hao, (2024), our results confirm that parents play a crucial role in implementing character education through monitoring, mentoring, and learning activities at home. However, while their study emphasized the equal importance of parental and teacher roles, our research provides more granular insights into specific parental strategies and their differential effects on character outcomes (Kantová, 2024). By delving deeper into the specific parental approaches that contribute to positive character development, our study offers a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted ways in which parents can actively shape the character of their children (Li et al., 2025). This level of detail can inform more targeted and effective interventions that leverage the unique strengths and influences of parents in the character education process.

The relationship between sociodemographic factors and parental approaches observed in our study partially aligns with existing literature. The finding that parents with higher education levels demonstrated greater involvement in communication about values suggests that educational background influences parents' capacity to engage in value-based discussions with children (Xiao-man, 2023). This extends previous research by identifying specific dimensions of parental involvement that are influenced by educational background.

Implications of the Findings

The findings have several important implications for educational practice and policy. First, parent education programs should emphasize the importance of role modeling, as our results identify this as the most effective strategy for character development. Schools and community organizations can develop workshops that help parents understand how their behaviors directly influence their children's character formation.

Second, the significant relationship between establishing routines and positive character outcomes suggests that parents should be encouraged to create consistent home environments that reinforce desired behaviors. Educational interventions could focus on helping parents develop effective routines that support character development.

Third, the influence of sociodemographic factors on parental approaches indicates the need for tailored support for parents from diverse backgrounds. Educational policies should ensure equitable access to resources that support parental involvement in character education, particularly for families with lower educational and socioeconomic status.

Limitations of the Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the reliance on self-reported data from parents may introduce social desirability bias, potentially leading to overreporting of positive parental behaviors. Future studies could incorporate multiple data sources, including teacher reports and child observations, to provide a more comprehensive picture of parental involvement.

Second, the cross-sectional design limits our ability to establish causal relationships between parental strategies and character outcomes. Longitudinal research would provide stronger evidence for the long-term effects of parental involvement on character development.

Third, while the sample was diverse in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, it was limited to urban areas of Bangkinang, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to rural communities or other regions of Indonesia. Further research with more geographically diverse samples would enhance the external validity of the findings.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the role of parents in supporting character education for primary school children in Bangkinang, Indonesia. The findings highlight the significant contribution of parental involvement to children's character development, with role modeling, establishing routines, and providing guidance emerging as the most effective strategies. The study also reveals the influence of sociodemographic factors on parental approaches to character education, pointing to the need for tailored support for diverse families.

The results reinforce the concept that parents serve as the first and most influential educators in children's character formation, complementing the formal character education provided in schools. The strong correlation between specific parental strategies and character outcomes confirms the hypothesized importance of the home environment in fostering positive character

traits.

These findings have important implications for educational practice and policy. Schools and educational authorities should prioritize strengthening home-school partnerships to create a consistent and supportive environment for character development. Parent education programs should focus on enhancing parents' capacity to model positive behaviors, establish effective routines, and engage in meaningful conversations about values with their children.

Future research should address the limitations of this study by employing longitudinal designs, incorporating multiple data sources, and exploring the dynamics of parental involvement in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Additionally, investigating the interaction between parental and school-based approaches to character education would provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective character development strategies.

By enhancing parents' understanding of their role in character education and providing them with effective strategies, we can work toward developing a generation with strong moral values who can contribute positively to society and face the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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