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Challenges and Urgency of Character Education for Children in the Modern Era

Reisa Aulia Fatimah¹**Rahman Wahid²****Citera Yusrina³****Affiliation:**

^{1,2} Institut Darul Falah, Bandung Barat, Indonesia

³ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

³ Yayasan Lembaga Pendidikan dan Pelatihan satria Siliwangi, Bandung, Indonesia

Correspondence:

Reisa Aulia Fatimah, Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Institut Darul Falah, Email: Reisafatimah902@gmail.com

Abstract

In this modern era, digitization has become a supporting factor in globalization. Digitization is a rapidly developing technology that allows information to spread easily. In practice, technology does not always bring positive things; many children are beginning to be indoctrinated with various negative things from this technological development. In this situation, there are also various challenges to forming good character values in children. This study uses a qualitative research method with a library research approach. The data collection technique is a literature study that compiles various sources relevant to the research topic. Conceptually, character education is an effort made on children from an early age so that they get used to doing good things and stay away from despicable traits. The goal is for children to become individuals who are faithful, moral, knowledgeable, and understand existing rules and norms. This goal is in line with Law No. 20 of 2003. The challenges of character education for children in the modern era are the development of technology, social change, identity crisis and value disorientation, the role of family and environment, and challenges at school. Given these challenges, character education is urgent because children may be exposed to various negative influences if they are not given character education and strict supervision, one of which is becoming temperamental. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of character education in children and to raise awareness to minimize challenges related to character education in children.

Keywords: Character Education, modern era.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current era of change can be said to be developing so rapidly that humans are experiencing various evolutions in their lives. In the era of globalization, also known as the era of digitalization, knowledge and information are no longer difficult to obtain but are very easy to access on various sophisticated digital platforms (Delfi & Hudaidah, 2021).

In this digital era, technology is an important part of everyday life, including in the world of education. This is inseparable from the role of human resources in utilizing and

developing rapidly advancing technology (Putri et al., 2025). Therefore, we need to be well prepared to be able to control and use existing technology wisely so that we are not enslaved by the technology itself.

In practice, the use of technology knows no age limits; children, teenagers, and adults alike can quickly adapt to using technology (Yumarni, 2022). In addition, children who should be focusing on their education are now largely influenced by the use of technological gadgets, dividing their focus between education and these gadgets. Gadget

technology itself does not always have a positive impact. Many of the younger generation, namely children, are beginning to be indoctrinated by various negative aspects of this technological advancement (Febrianti et al., 2024). One example is children watching content that is not age-appropriate and even imitating it in real life. Another example is children becoming addicted to playing online games, causing them to forget their routines in the real world (Irianto et al., 2022).

Amidst this technological development, which is not always positive, there are also various challenges to forming good character values in children. Currently, the use of foul language in communication has become commonplace among peers. Because they are not yet able to control themselves, children often bring this way of communicating into the school environment (Daniati et al., 2024). In addition, digitalization has the potential to reduce direct social interaction. Children who use gadgets for more than three hours per day tend to have lower social skills compared to children who use gadgets in moderation (Suci, 2025). Children also tend to have minimal empathy and manners when they use gadgets too much. This is a serious challenge for education, especially in terms of character education for students (Yunansah et al., 2022).

The character education process is a crucial element in education. It cannot be taken lightly because character education plays a vital role in improving the way of thinking of the younger generation in Indonesia (Rasyid et al.,

2. METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative research method with a library research approach. Qualitative research was chosen because it aims to understand, examine, and analyze in depth the theories, ideas, and topics relevant to the research. The literature study was conducted by analyzing various literature related to the research topic. Data collection techniques included documentation studies or literature studies, which involved compiling various sources relevant to the research topic. The data type was qualitative data in the form of concepts, theories, ideas, expert opinions, and results from previous studies. Data sources are taken from relevant books and scientific

2024). Therefore, education should not only focus on students' academic intelligence but also on their character values. This is in line with the goal of education, which is to bring about change after the learning process. These changes include individual behavior towards oneself and society. This concept and objective are in line with Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, which states that national education develops the potential of students to become people of faith, morals, knowledge, and responsibility (Mida & Maunah, 2023).

With the various moral and character problems among children, character education has become a very important necessity in the midst of a nation that is currently mired in a multidimensional crisis, especially a moral and ethical crisis (Sobihah, 2020). In addition, studies on the challenges and urgency of character education for children in the modern era of globalization and digitalization are now important to examine. This article offers a conceptual synthesis of the challenges of character education for children in the modern era and its urgency within a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that focused on Gen Z teenagers or even adults, this study focuses on children as the main subject. This study is also expected to contribute to the understanding of character education in children and raise awareness to minimize the challenges related to character education in children (Abidin et al., 2022; Hendriyani et al., 2022).

journals as well as other supporting articles and documents. Data analysis is carried out using qualitative descriptive analysis, namely through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. (1) Data reduction is the selection and simplification of data by selecting information that is relevant to the research focus, (2) Data presentation is the compilation of data in narrative form, (3) Drawing conclusions is formulating meanings and findings based on the data analysis that has been carried out.

3. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

Result

Based on the literature, conceptually character education is an educational process that aims to shape children's attitudes, values, and personalities for the better. This concept also places students as both subjects and objects in the educational process. Character education is carried out in children from an early age so that they become accustomed to doing good things consistently and continuously, and understand how to make decisions. A number of literature also mentions that character education needs to involve three things, namely knowledge (cognitive), feelings (affective), and actions (psychomotor). These three processes are interrelated; it is not possible to involve only one aspect. Therefore, children are expected to be able to understand the values taught, feel the importance of these values, and practice them in their daily lives.

In addition, character education plays a role in shaping children's personalities to be honest, responsible, disciplined, and socially empathetic. The roles of family, teachers, and society are important elements in the process of character education for children. The family is the first environment that instills values in children, while teachers serve as role models and educators in teaching children values. Character education has an impact on children who have character intelligence and good morals and attitudes in terms of education, religion, and social life. The goal of character education itself is to develop children's character so that they are faithful, moral, knowledgeable, and able to control their desires in order to avoid despicable traits and bad deeds.

Thus, conceptually, character education aims to develop individuals who have a balance between intellectual and moral intelligence. It also aims to shape individuals who have integrity, are responsible, and have social sensitivity. Character education is an important foundation in building a generation that is virtuous, noble, and able to face life's challenges wisely. Character education cannot be achieved instantly but requires a long and consistent process so that the values instilled become ingrained and become part of the child's personality.

Based on the literature, character education in children is not immune to

challenges in the modern era. There are several major challenges, namely technological developments, social changes, identity crises and value disorientation, the role of family and environment, and challenges at school.

- a. Technological developments pose a challenge to character education because many children quickly adapt to the use of technological gadgets. They more often use gadgets for things that lead to addiction, such as online games. It is not uncommon for them to imitate viral things they see or hear.
- b. Social change is a phenomenon in which humans transform into more modern things. This phenomenon is one of the main challenges because currently, the learning process more often utilizes digital space than social space as in the past. This causes children to interact more often with gadgets than with the people around them. Their focus becomes divided and they are less serious about learning.
- c. Identity crises and value disorientation are rampant in the modern era. This has become a serious challenge, as children tend to be confused about their own identities due to being exposed to too much global information and popular trends. In addition, this occurs because of the clash between the values they learn in their families and the values in their surroundings.
- d. In today's era, the role of family and environment has diminished due to individuality among peers. Many children lack supervision from their families or adults around them, so they are more often exposed to negative information and imitate it without considering whether it is good or bad. This is because they still need guidance and supervision from their families and adults.
- e. The challenges in character education at school are the lack of internalization of moral values in the curriculum and the lack of understanding among teachers about the concept of character education. It is also not uncommon for teachers who do not understand to run out of time in the learning process, so that

character education is not delivered optimally.

Children in the modern era are easily exposed to negative influences if they are not given character education and minimal supervision from parents and family. Children grow up in an environment that not only offers ease of access to knowledge, but also various negative things that are not in line with moral values, resulting in a decline in ethics and the rise of individualism.

Discussions

According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, character education is an educational concept that is carried out continuously and becomes a habit in daily life to build character intelligence so that one has a good and strong character (Suryana & Muhtar, 2022). Good habits can have a positive impact on humans, as they can easily control their desires to do bad things. People who possess character intelligence will always use their thoughts, feelings, and considerations in making decisions.

According to Thomas Lickona, character education is a person's deliberate effort to understand ethical values. In this case, students become the subjects and objects of character education. Thomas Lickona also mentions that there are three types of character education, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Damariswara et al., 2021). These three things are interrelated. Therefore, if only one or two aspects are implemented, character education is considered not yet successful.

According to Al-Ghazali, character education consists of two words, namely education and character. Education means the stages of a creature to humanize itself (humanization) from birth until death. Meanwhile, character is referred to as morals and manners. In Al-Ghazali's work, *Ihya Ulumuddin* juz 3, he states that morals are a form of expression embedded in the soul that easily brings about good deeds. Al-Ghazali mentions that the goal of moral education is *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, which is to purify oneself from despicable traits in order to obtain physical, spiritual, material, and spiritual happiness in this world and the hereafter (Mainuddin et al., 2023).

According to Jean Piaget's theory, moral development is closely related to

children's thinking, which changes as they grow older. From an early age, children need guidance to understand the rules and norms that apply in education, religion, and society so that they develop good morals and attitudes. Piaget also said that every individual will experience two stages of moral development. The first stage is heteronomous, where children see rules as absolute and unchangeable. They also assume that rules come from outside themselves, such as parents, teachers, and other figures. The second stage is autonomous, where children begin to realize that they have the freedom to not fully accept rules from outside themselves. They also realize that rules can be changed by mutual agreement (Safitri & Dewantoro, 2025).

From these four theories and ideas, the four figures agree that character is not formed instantly. It requires a process of habituation and experience for children to understand and practice what they have learned. The environment is also an influential aspect, whether it be the family environment, school, or social interactions, all of which can influence the pattern of a child's character development. The four figures also agree that character education aims to shape individuals who are good, moral, and responsible.

The concept of character education is also outlined in Permendikbud No. 23 concerning Character Development in 2015. The objectives are:

- a. To make schools a pleasant learning environment for students, teachers, and educational staff.
- b. To foster good habits as a form of character education starting from the family, school, and community.
- c. To make education a movement that involves the government, local government, community, and family.
- d. To foster a harmonious learning environment and culture between families, schools, and communities.

Thus, it can be concluded that, conceptually, character education is a continuous effort to form habits in controlling desires by involving knowledge, feelings, and actions aimed at purifying oneself from despicable traits or bad deeds. Character education is provided to children from an early

age so that they develop good morals and attitudes and understand the rules and norms that apply in education, religion, and social aspects. In addition, the roles of families, teachers, communities, and the government are important in the process of developing character education in children.

Based on the results of various relevant literature, there are several challenges related to character education in children in this modern era. These challenges are as follows:

1. Globalization and rapid technological development

In this modern era, technological and information development has become one of the supporting factors of globalization, where information can spread so quickly throughout the world.

1. Perubahan sosial

Johan (2024) berpendapat bahwa perubahan sosial di era modern seperti sekarang, telah menciptakan lanskap pendidikan yang semakin kompleks. Transformasi ini tidak hanya berdampak pada cara belajar siswa tetapi juga berdampak pada pola pikir, nilai, dan perilakunya. Dulu pengetahuan banyak dihasilkan dari buku-buku fisik sedangkan sekarang, pengetahuan menjadi bertambah dengan bisa dihasilkan lewat digital. Apostidolou (2022) mencatat bahwa pengetahuan yang terletak secara digital telah mengubah cara kita berinteraksi dan belajar (Sriartha et al., 2024). Contoh konkret dari perubahan sosial dalam pendidikan karakter adalah anak banyak berinteraksi dengan gadget dan komunikasi cenderung singkat serta minim empati.

2. Krisis identitas dan disorientasi nilai

Salah satu dampak di era sekarang adalah munculnya krisis identitas dan disorientasi nilai. Ketika terus-menerus terpapar informasi global dan budaya populer yang sering kali tidak selaras dengan nilai-nilai lokal dan keagamaan, anak-anak beresiko mengalami kebingungan dalam menentukan siapa diri mereka, apa yang diyakini, dan bagaimana seharusnya bersikap. Hal ini juga terjadi karena individu mengalami benturan nilai-nilai yang diwariskan oleh keluarga dan institusi sosial serta nilai baru yang mereka temukan di lingkungan sekitar mereka,

termasuk media digital (Zahrotunnisa et al., 2025).

3. The role of family and environment

With the development of technology, social interaction tends to be minimal, both within the family and in the surrounding social environment. In today's era, individuality is created everywhere, family gatherings no longer focus on discussion or conversation and interaction, but now each individual is more focused on the gadgets in their hands (Hutabarat, 2024). Social interaction is also rarely carried out, even with neighbors. This poses a challenge due to the loss of the role of families and adults in supervising their children. There is a concern that children will receive information without any filters and consider it to be good without knowing that the information is bad.

4. Challenges at school

Kartika et al., 2025, say that the lack of implementation of character education in elementary schools is mainly due to the lack of integration of moral values in the existing curriculum and the low awareness of students regarding the importance of morals and ethics. Often, the implementation of character education is hampered by factors such as inadequate teacher training, lack of parental involvement, and limited resources. Nucci (2008) emphasizes that teachers' limited understanding of moral concepts is a major obstacle. Teachers' limited understanding causes the implementation of character education to be less than optimal (Sukarno et al., 2025).

Children's growth and development are so rapid that they cannot be repeated in the future. At a young age, children can easily imitate and absorb various knowledge from their environment. Whether positive or negative, it is very good to provide children with positive knowledge at a young age. According to Gardner (1998), human brain development experiences leaps and develops very rapidly, reaching 80%. When born into the world, human children have achieved 25% brain development. By the age of 4, their development increases to 50%, and by the age of 8, it reaches 80%. Therefore, education plays a vital role in instilling character in children

through character education (Devianti et al., 2020).

In this modern era, technological developments are a very strong reason to instill character education in children. Because the impact of technology is not always positive, families, teachers, and communities are required to monitor what they watch and what information they receive, ensuring that what they consume is positive. The impact will be serious in the future if what they consume is negative. The following are negative things that can happen to children in today's digital era if they do not receive character education and strict supervision.

1. Individualistic, with minimal social interaction.

2. Temperamental, as frequent interaction with gadgets will cause children to believe that the outside world is a threat.

3. Exposed to hoaxes, irresponsibility, and bullying.

4. Vulnerability to eye health problems, such as nearsightedness and farsightedness.

5. Inability to enjoy life, where gadgets are always sought after.

6. Radiation that can harm children's brains.

7. Exposure to fraud cases, via text messages, telephone calls, and the internet.

8. Easy access to pornography.

9. Forgetting responsibilities assigned by parents or teachers, such as homework and religious studies.

10. Becoming targets of crimes such as kidnapping and rape.

Therefore, to avoid these issues, character education must be implemented as early as possible so that children can develop good attitudes and morals, enabling them to carry these habits into adulthood (Erfina, 2025).

In addition, the following factors further support the urgency of character education.

1. Counteracting moral and ethical crises

One of the causes of moral and ethical crises among children is the lack of character education. Character education is a system of instilling character values that include knowledge, feelings, and actions as a form of guidance for individual morals and behavior (Pamuji, 2024).

2. Building integrity and tolerance

With character education, children will be open to differences so that they are tolerant and build peaceful integrity without conflict, uphold human values, and maintain unity amid diversity (Nuraeni, 2016).

3. Shaping a globally competitive generation

With character education, humans will have strong resources to compete, universal character, and support the progress of individuals, families, organizations, and nations. Global competitiveness is not only shaped by mastery of knowledge and skills but also by the quality of individual character. Generations with strong character tend to be able to face challenges (Sudarma, 2022).

4. Maintaining national identity

Character education plays an important role in preserving national identity amid rapid globalization and social change (Muis et al., 2024). Through character education, noble values are instilled in the next generation so that they are not eroded by incompatible external cultural influences. Without character, children have the potential to lose their grip on what makes their nation unique.

5. Preventing negative behavior

Through character education that instills moral values and positive attitudes from an early age, children understand the boundaries between good behavior and behavior that does not conform to norms. Character education can give children self-control, a sense of responsibility, and awareness of the consequences of their actions (Wardah et al., 2019).

6. Being able to control oneself and manage emotions

Through character education, children are guided to recognize the feelings that arise within them and understand how to express those emotions appropriately (Soetari, 2014). This process helps children to be calm, patient, and not easily react excessively when faced with situations of disagreement, pressure, and other challenges.

7. Improving social relationships

By instilling values of mutual respect, tolerance, and empathy, children are guided to interact positively with others (Rusmiati, 2023). With these values instilled, children will

understand the feelings of others and interact harmoniously.

8. Foundation for nation building

A solid foundation is not only seen in the advancement of science and technology but also in the character quality of human resources. Children who grow up with strong character will become a responsible future generation capable of preparing quality resources and building an advanced and ethical civilization (Hamid et al., 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

In the modern era, character education has become urgent. Because technological developments do not always bring positive things, many children are beginning to be indoctrinated with negative things. Conceptually, character education is the process of fostering positive habits in children from an early age, starting from the family environment. The goal is to become a good person, faithful, moral, knowledgeable, and responsible in making decisions. This is in line with the objectives of National Law No. 20 of 2003. Along with the emergence of negative influences, various challenges to character education have also arisen, namely globalization and technological developments, social changes, identity crises and value disorientation, the lack of family and community involvement, and challenges in schools. Character education will have a positive impact if it is carried out optimally. These impacts include countering moral and ethical crises, building integrity and tolerance, shaping a globally competitive generation, preserving national identity, preventing negative behavior, enabling self-control and emotional management, improving social relationships, and laying the foundation for nation building.

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