

The Role of Teachers as Role Models in Shaping Students' Honest and Disciplined Character at SDIT Insan Taqwa

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Character education, Discipline, Elementary school students, Honesty, Teacher role modeling	Character education serves as a fundamental pillar in elementary education, particularly in shaping moral values such as honesty and discipline. This study aims to analyze the role of teachers as role models in developing students' honest and disciplined character at SDIT Insan Taqwa. The findings indicate that teachers play a central role as behavioral models observed and imitated by students, especially in honest behaviors such as keeping promises, providing transparent assessments, and being punctual in fulfilling responsibilities. Teachers also integrate character values into learning activities through reflection, discussions, digital media, and collaboration with parents. The main challenges faced by teachers in instilling character include the negative influence of digital media, students limited social interaction, and inconsistent home environments in reinforcing similar values. This study emphasizes that teacher role modeling, supported by contextual and collaborative learning strategies, is highly effective in the internalization of honest and disciplined character among elementary school students in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

Character education constitutes a fundamental aspect of the educational world, serving to establish the moral and social foundations of children from an early age. At the elementary school level, character building becomes a critical cornerstone in shaping students' personalities, which will influence both their academic and social lives in the future (Rahmadona et al., 2023). At SDIT Insan Taqwa, reinforcing character has become one of the primary priorities alongside academic achievements, emphasizing two core values: honesty and discipline. The value of honesty fosters personal integrity and responsibility, whereas discipline builds an awareness of rules and time, both of which are highly essential in school life as well as the broader society (Sutiani, 2021). Nevertheless, a major challenge faced by the school is how these two values are practically internalized through daily habits, particularly by teachers as the individuals who interact most frequently with students. Teachers are not merely academic educators; they also serve as exemplary figures emulated by students in developing moral habits. If teachers fail to provide

concrete examples of honesty or discipline such as arriving late, breaking promises, or demonstrating inconsistent attitudes students tend to experience moral confusion and fail to comprehend the importance of these character values in their lives (Najla, 2025).

The phenomenon of incongruity between theory and practice is the central concern of this study. Although teachers have formally conveyed the importance of honesty and discipline, field practices have not fully supported the internalization of these values. Previous research also indicates that reinforcing students' positive behavior through appreciation has not been consistently implemented, thereby diminishing students' motivation to maintain honest and disciplined attitudes in their daily lives (Fahmi, 2019). External factors, such as the lack of support from families and the community environment, further encumber the character-building process. When students do not receive similar examples at home or within their social environments, the school's efforts become less effective and fragmented (Suryadi & Permana, 2022). Therefore, character education should not be the sole responsibility of the school, but rather the result of ongoing collaboration among teachers, families, and the students' social environment. Based on this background, the focus of this study is to determine the extent to which the role of teachers as role models shapes students' honest and disciplined character at SDIT Insan Taqwa, how teachers' behavior influences students' attitudes, and what challenges teachers face in teaching and internalizing these values within the classroom and the school environment. This study is expected to contribute to strengthening exemplary-based character education practices as a concrete effort to foster a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also excellent in morals and noble character.

METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research method to examine the pivotal role of teachers as role models in shaping students' honest and disciplined character at SDIT Insan Taqwa. The primary data source was derived from purposive fieldwork, specifically through structured and in-depth interviews with a key informant, a Mathematics teacher at the institution, to capture real-world pedagogical insights. The qualitative datasets were systematically processed and interpreted using a thematic analysis framework. This analytical approach involved verbatim transcription, thematic open coding, and the subsequent synthesis of findings into explicit core areas, which included the mechanism of value internalization through modeling, contextual learning integration, and the multifaceted barriers presented by the modern digital ecosystem. To ensure analytical validity, the identified themes were triangulated and continuously evaluated against relevant empirical literature and core socio-behavioral learning theories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The formation of an honest character in elementary school learners cannot be separated from the role of the teacher as a role model. Based on the results of the interview with Nasywa Fauziah Thahirah, a Mathematics Teacher at SDIT Insan Taqwa, it was revealed that the process of internalizing honesty values in students runs effectively when teachers consistently demonstrate honest attitudes and behaviors in their daily routines, both in learning activities and social interactions at school. Nasywa stated, "Children are very quick to imitate a teacher's behavior, so role modeling is the most effective way." This reinforces the modeling theory in social developmental psychology by Bandura (1977), which explains that children learn through the observation of figures they respect and deem authoritative. At SDIT Insan Taqwa, the learning approach employed by teachers involves integrating character values into subject matter contextually. Teachers do not merely deliver academic material but also insert moral content through reflective questions and discussions based on stories or prominent figures. This practice aligns with the notion proposed by Lickona (2012), which asserts that character education must be

implemented through direct learning, role modeling, and value reflection. Teacher exemplary behavior in being honest such as admitting mistakes in front of students, keeping promises, and not manipulating student grades becomes an essential element in establishing honesty as an internalized value within students.

Furthermore, teachers utilize digital media to instill an honest character, for instance, by showcasing inspiring videos or biographical accounts that emphasize the importance of honesty. Nasywa mentioned that media platforms such as YouTube and Padlet are used to engage students in discussing moral values in both real-life and digital contexts. This strengthens the research findings of Rahmadona et al. (2023), which state that the utilization of technology in character education can enhance children's moral understanding, provided its usage is accompanied by active guidance from teachers. Nasywa also emphasized the vital importance of cooperation with parents. She stated that character education will be more robust when the values taught at school are reinforced at home. She frequently assigns moral tasks such as "say thank you to your parents every day," which are documented in the students' character journals. This collaborative approach aligns with the perspective of Suryadi & Permana (2022), who emphasize that effective character education requires synergy between the school and the family. When parents actively reinforce the value of honesty through role modeling at home, children will achieve value consistency in their daily lives.

However, challenges persist, particularly in the digital era. Teachers face the reality that students are exposed to rapid and often instantaneous information, which can blur the boundaries between honest and manipulative values. Nasywa observed that some students are easily influenced by plagiarism practices or hiding the truth in online assignments. Therefore, teachers need to possess high sensitivity in detecting potential covert dishonest behaviors, while guiding students using an empathetic and personal approach. A disciplined character stands as one of the primary values in character education because it is closely related to attitudes of responsibility, punctuality, and consistency in learning behavior. In the interview conducted with Nasywa Fauziah Thahirah, a Mathematics teacher at SDIT Insan Taqwa, it was explained that the value of discipline is a critical component to be instilled from an early age because it directly influences children's learning habits and future lives. She stated, "Children need to learn to manage time, complete assignments, and understand the consequences of their actions."

The significance of the teacher's role in shaping a disciplined character also aligns with Lickona's (2012) view that character building cannot merely be conveyed through theory but must be accompanied by concrete examples from authoritative figures. When teachers demonstrate consistency in arriving on time, grading assignments according to schedule, and keeping promises, students learn directly from that exemplary behavior. Conversely, teachers who show inaccuracy in small matters, such as lateness or ignoring rules, potentially diminish students' enthusiasm for forming disciplined habits. At SDIT Insan Taqwa, the value of discipline is instilled through habituation in daily learning processes, such as classroom entry regulations, time management in completing tasks, and orderliness in group activities. Teachers actively instill the meaning behind every disciplined action, not merely as a form of rule compliance, but as a reflection of personal responsibility. This approach corresponds with the principles of behaviorist theory by B.F. Skinner, which posits that behavior can be shaped through habituation, reinforcement, and consequences (Slavin, 2018).

Nasywa also asserted that in integrating the value of discipline, she does not merely provide instructions but actively involves students through daily reflections and character journals. For example, students are asked to record their discipline in completing tasks or adhering to classroom rules. This activity trains students' self-awareness regarding their daily responsibilities. She also encourages group work with clear role distributions so that children become accustomed to following structures and shared rules. Through these activities, students learn that every member bears a responsibility that must be fulfilled, and the undisciplined behavior of a single individual

can affect the entire team's performance. Nonetheless, teachers also face major challenges in instilling the value of discipline in the digital era. Nasywa revealed that technology, although beneficial, frequently causes a loss of focus and fosters an instant gratification culture. Students are more easily distracted and desire quick results without undergoing the necessary process. This is where the teacher's role becomes increasingly vital to instill that discipline is a long-term process involving patience and consistency. She stated, "Today's children are used to things being instant. We need to teach them that all achievements require a process."

To address this challenge, teachers utilize digital media strategically. For instance, she leverages Google Docs to train students in managing time and tasks collaboratively or creates videos regarding students' experiences in executing their responsibilities. This approach aligns with the ideas of Rahmadona et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of value-based technology utilization, thereby turning digital media into a character education tool relevant to the times. Another aspect that reinforces the formation of a disciplined character is parental involvement. Nasywa mentioned that she frequently assigns homework that involves discipline habituation, such as consistently helping with household chores for a week. Parents are requested to provide feedback, ensuring that the discipline education process becomes synergistic between the school and the family. Suryadi & Permana (2022) affirm that family involvement is crucial to reinforce the values taught at school.

Overall, the formation of a disciplined character at SDIT Insan Taqwa progresses through a collaborative and contextual approach. The teacher serves as a central figure who not only teaches discipline but acts as a direct example and facilitator of value habituation. Discipline is not instilled through coercion, but through active participation, self-reflection, and supportive technology use. This strategy demonstrates that shaping a disciplined character is more effective when the value is brought to life in real activities, demonstrated by the teacher, and reinforced by the family environment.

Instilling the character values of honesty and discipline in elementary school students is not a simple task, particularly in today's digital era. Based on the interview results with Nasywa Fauziah Thahirah, a Mathematics Teacher at SDIT Insan Taqwa, there are several significant challenges faced by teachers in their character-building efforts. These challenges stem from students' internal factors, social environmental conditions, and the rapid dynamics of technological advancements. She stated, "In today's digital era, instilling character values in students faces a number of quite complex challenges." One of the primary challenges is the negative influence of digital media. Students today live in a torrential flow of information, where access to age-inappropriate content, instant culture, and plagiarism practices is widely open. This presents a barrier to shaping an honest character, as students tend to seek quick, instant methods to complete assignments without understanding the process. As explained by Nasywa, students become more easily distracted and struggle to differentiate between true and false information, which can impact the loss of academic integrity values from an early age. This finding aligns with the research results of Rahmadona et al. (2023), which indicate that unsupervised technology use can decrease social empathy and increase the risk of manipulative behavior.

The second challenge is the decline in direct social interaction. Children interact more frequently with device screens than with peers or teachers; thus, the process of instilling values like discipline and honesty, which ideally occurs in real-world interactions, becomes hindered. In fact, character values are most effectively instilled through direct social experiences, such as group activities, face-to-face communication, and the observation of exemplary behavior from adults around them (Lickona, 2012). When social interactions become restricted, opportunities to instill values such as time discipline, responsibility in social roles, and honesty in communication also become limited. The third challenge conveyed by the teacher is the lack of consistent synergy between the school and the home environment. Despite the efforts made at school, character values are frequently not reinforced at home. Children who do not receive concrete examples from

their parents or social environments at home tend to struggle to maintain the honest and disciplined values instilled at school. According to Suryadi & Permana (2022), the disharmony between the values taught at school and the reality at home acts as a serious impediment to the internalization of character values. Therefore, a strong and sustainable collaboration between teachers and parents becomes crucial in the character-building process.

Teachers also face constraints regarding limited pedagogical and digital skills in integrating character education into contextual learning. Nasywa expressed that specialized training for teachers is highly necessary so they can adapt character teaching approaches to modern developments. She stated, "Training can open insights into how to use digital media wisely and educationally." This aligns with the findings of Fahmi (2019), which suggest that the lack of teacher competence in using character-based learning technology is one of the causes of suboptimal character education in schools. Additionally, students' psychosocial factors, such as a lack of intrinsic motivation, present distinct challenges. Some students do not yet possess full awareness of the importance of honesty and discipline values; thus, teachers must work extra hard to motivate them through personal approaches, assigning responsibilities within groups, and self-reflection. This strategy requires time and patience because character transformation cannot happen instantaneously. Consequently, it can be concluded that teachers' challenges in instilling honest and disciplined values encompass: (1) the negative influence of digital media and instant culture; (2) the minimal amount of meaningful social interaction; (3) the lack of synergistic support from the family environment; (4) the limitations in digital-based character teaching training for teachers; and (5) students' low intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, teachers at SDIT Insan Taqwa demonstrate a strong commitment to confronting these challenges through contextual, collaborative, and reflective approaches. Supported by school policies, teacher training, and parental involvement, these challenges can be minimized to create a more effective and sustainable character education environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of in-depth interviews and an analysis of character education practices at SDIT Insan Taqwa, it can be concluded that the role of teachers as role models is highly significant in shaping students' honest and disciplined character. Teachers do not merely act as educators of academic material, but also as figures who reflect character values through their daily behavior. Teacher exemplary behavior in being honest, punctual, consistent in providing guidance, and fair toward all students has exerted a powerful influence on the value internalization process within learners. Contextual and reflective learning approaches, alongside the integration of character values into classroom activities, have proven effective in making students more engaged and aware of the importance of honest and disciplined attitudes in their lives. Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges that teachers must confront in this process. Among these are the negative influence of digital media, the lack of direct social interaction among students, minimal synergy with parents, and limited teacher training in facing modern dynamics. These challenges can impede the internalization process of character values if they are not addressed seriously and systematically. Therefore, strategic and sustainable efforts from various parties are required to reinforce exemplary-based character education in schools. As a matter of recommendation, teachers need to receive intensive training relevant to the challenges of character education in the digital era, including strategies for integrating moral values into the digital media routinely used by students. It is also recommended that the school continuously strengthen communication with parents to ensure value consistency between the school and home environments. Furthermore, providing positive reinforcement to students who demonstrate honest and disciplined attitudes must be consistently executed as a form of appreciation for the good behavior intended to be instilled. Ultimately, effective character education is not only about what is taught, but also about who teaches it and how they serve as a reflection of the values intended to be embedded.

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