

## CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES SUBJECTS

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### Abstract

This research aims to explore and analyze the practice of character education in the context of Social Sciences (IPS) learning. The Social Sciences (IPS) subject plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, as it touches on various aspects of social, political, and cultural life. This study employs a library research method, which involves collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the research. Data collection is conducted by sourcing and constructing information from various sources, such as books, journals, and prior research. The findings of this study conclude that character education in Social Sciences subjects has a significant impact on shaping students' character. With a deep understanding of the role of Social Sciences in character education, more effective learning strategies can be designed to produce individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also morally upright and socially responsible.

**Keywords:** Education, Character, Social Sciences

### INTRODUCTION

Instilling character values can be achieved through education in schools, within the family, and in society. Education in schools not only demands students to excel academically and achieve high performance but also to develop good attitudes and behavior. Schools play a vital role and bear absolute responsibility for instilling and developing character values. Character education in schools is directed toward values deemed relevant to students' growth, such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, tolerance, and others (Siska dkk., 2021).

Globalization today brings both positive and negative impacts. The negative impact of globalization on students' lives includes the erosion of character values within them. It is widely observed now that many students exhibit deviant behaviors, such as being quick-tempered, involvement in student fights, diminishing ethical values, and violations of human rights. These behaviors clearly contradict the character of the Indonesian nation, which is known for being polite, friendly, and compassionate.

The current reality among students undeniably tarnishes the Indonesian national character, which has been well-preserved since ancient times. If this issue is left unaddressed and no actions are taken by all parties, it is certain that Indonesia will lose its identity and character as a nation that is hospitable, ethical, and family-oriented. This shift in values and morals must be carefully observed, as it is the root cause of the changes in the nation's character.

Education in Indonesia is currently facing challenging times. Despite significant educational funding and various innovative learning programs initiated by the government, they seem unable to address the fundamental issue in education—how to nurture students to possess good morals, faith, piety, and character in alignment with the educational goals of Indonesia. Indonesia is striving to build the character of its youth to improve and uphold the nation's dignity while preserving its cultural identity. This effort is realized by balancing growth and equity while maintaining or preserving the sociocultural aspects that support this process in a manner that is more precise and aligned with Indonesia's identity as a nation.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Definition of Character Education

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<sup>1</sup> Mursidul Amin, "Peran Pembelajaran IPS dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa," *OSF Preprints*. June 7 (2021), hal: 2. <https://osf.io/8x79f/download>.

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process so that learners can actively develop their potential to achieve spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed for their society, nation, and state (Muh Idri, 2018, hlm. hal. 80-81).

The term "character" has numerous definitions from various experts. According to Poerwadarminta, character means disposition, traits, mental attributes, morality, or behavior that distinguish one person from another. Furthermore, an American psychology figure, Alport, defines character as the determinant of someone's individuality (character is personality evaluated) (Amirullah Syarbini, 2012, hlm. Hal. 1381).

Character education can be defined as a conscious and planned effort to develop positive values, attitudes, and skills within an individual. Its goal is to shape individuals with integrity, ethics, and social responsibility.

Education is a process that transforms human behavior. Character can be described as someone's distinct trait or identity. Lickona interprets character education as an intentionally designed effort to enhance students' character. Meanwhile, according to Scerenko, character education can also be seen as a serious and earnest effort conducted in a specific manner. Positive personality traits are developed, encouraged, and strengthened through the study of exemplary figures (history and biographies of wise and great thinkers) and the practice of imitation (a thorough effort to understand and learn from observed wisdom).<sup>2</sup>

According to Thomas Lickona, character refers to moral concepts (moral knowledge), moral attitudes (moral feeling), and moral behavior. Based on these three components, it can be said that good character is supported by knowing what is good, desiring to do good, and acting upon it. On this subject, he also states: 'Character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values.' (The purpose of character education is a deliberate (conscious) effort to help people understand, care about, and apply basic ethical values.)

In his book *Character Matters*, he further explains: 'Character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue—that is objectively good human qualities—that are good for the individual person and good for the whole society.' (Character education is a deliberate (conscious) effort to foster virtues, which are objectively good human qualities, beneficial not only for individuals but also for society as a whole) (Glorya Loloagin dkk., 2023, hlm. hal. 6015).

This is crucial in character education because when ethical values develop, core values such as care, honesty, justice, responsibility, self-respect, and respect for others, along with performance-supporting values like determination, a strong work ethic, and perseverance, form the foundation of good character. Schools must be committed to fostering students' traits based on these values. These traits should be defined as observable behaviors in daily school life that exemplify these values. Students should learn, discuss, and use these values as the foundation for interpersonal relationships and evaluate their expression in schools and communities. Every part of the school is responsible for ensuring that rules of behavior align with core values (Triatmanto, 2010, hlm. hal. 192.)

## **2. The Role of Social Studies (IPS) in Character Education**

Social Studies (IPS) is an integration of various disciplines, such as humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, and even religion. Therefore, the content of Social Studies is a combination of social sciences, which must be integrated to make it more meaningful. Social Studies content is inseparable from social issues that align with societal developments.

The objective is to develop students' sensitivity to social problems in the community and to equip them with skills to address everyday challenges effectively.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dicky Setiardi, "Keluarga sebagai Sumber Pendidikan Karakter bagi Anak," *Jurnal Tarbawi* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Desember 2017): hal. 137.

<sup>3</sup> (Amin, 2021) Hal: 4.

Social Studies has a great potential to shape students' character through contextual learning. Teaching subjects like history, geography, and economics not only provides an understanding of the world but also teaches values such as tolerance, justice, and social skills necessary for daily life.

Social Studies plays a significant role in the formation of national character, as it shares similarities with value education or character education, which both aim to develop students into good citizens who are concerned about social issues, their environment, and have a strong sense of nationalism (Sardiman, 2010).

Moreover, teachers have an essential role in Social Studies education in shaping students' character. Teachers are not only required to be academic educators but also character, moral, and cultural educators for their students. Teachers are expected to be role models, mentors, and guides in helping students develop behaviors that reflect character, including emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development.

## METHOD

This research employs the library research method, which involves collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the study. Data collection is conducted by sourcing and constructing information from various materials, such as books, journals, and previous research. The literature obtained from these references is critically and thoroughly analyzed to support the propositions and ideas presented (Adlini dkk., 2022)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Implementation of Moral Values in Social Studies Learning

Character education is an effort to help the development of the soul toward becoming a better individual. Issues often arising among students related to character should receive serious attention from educational institutions in Indonesia. Student character must continually be nurtured to align with expectations, producing a comprehensive totality in learning that reflects achievements in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

In examining character education programs, six methods can be employed (Rasyid, 2016):

- a. Instruction in basic values and virtues.
- b. Enforcement and implementation of a code of ethical behavior.
- c. Teaching the historical lessons of moral values.
- d. Providing models (examples) of desirable traits and values.
- e. Upholding moral exemplars found in history, literature, and religion, and praising their virtues.
- f. Offering broad opportunities in schools and communities (service projects) through which students can be trained in good traits and taught noble values.

One form of character education that should be instilled early in elementary school is the education of independence. According to Wulandari et al., independence is a trait of not easily relying on others to solve one's problems or complete tasks. It involves the ability to learn independently, analyze, and solve problems, as well as persistence, responsibility, independence, and effective use of free time. Character education on independence should be included for elementary school-aged children. Independence is not determined by age but can be observed through behavior. In reality, independence can also be seen in social and emotional forms. Therefore, schools need to create an environment that fosters student independence and provides a classroom atmosphere that encourages independent learning (Akhid Ilyas Alfatah dkk., t.t., hlm. hal. 90.).

Social Studies learning applies the knowledge of values found in the social sciences to students, aiming to shape their character as preparation for the future so they become good and beneficial members of society. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of Social Studies learning in schools is to foster responsibility for shaping students' characters into good citizens (Aprianti dkk., 2022)

The cultivation and development of character education in schools is a shared responsibility. Character education can be integrated into learning across all subjects. The cultivation and development of character values in schools can be carried out through the learning process, particularly in certain subjects. Subjects or materials considered suitable for instilling character values in schools include Social Studies, especially at the elementary school level. Schools should provide supporting facilities for instilling the values of character education, one of which is textbooks. This is expected to equip students with the knowledge to address challenges in community life.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, Social Studies teachers play a key role in transferring moral values to students. Contextual learning allows teachers to connect Social Studies concepts with character values, such as honesty in interpreting history or social responsibility in understanding global issues.

## **2. Challenges in Character Education in Social Studies**

Despite its many positive potentials, this study identifies several challenges in implementing character education in Social Studies. Limited instructional time, the pressure to achieve academic targets, and the variation in teachers' understanding of character values are the primary obstacles.

One significant challenge lies in teaching students how to consciously, proactively, and thoughtfully navigate the rapidly evolving ethics of the digital era. Challenges in character education in the digital age include issues of balance, safety and security, cyberbullying, sexuality, copyright, and plagiarism.

From the perspective of balance, teachers must understand the past, the present, and the potential consequences of future technology. A balance must be maintained between opportunities and responsibilities, impulsivity and caution, self-interest, community well-being, and global welfare. Many individuals exhibit behaviors reflecting excessive technology use. Unregulated technology usage can influence personal relationships and interactions, particularly among youth who may feel a constant need for internet connectivity or fear of missing out on peer interactions.

The safety aspect requires teachers to fully understand that online activities can harm oneself or others. Safety includes protecting one's privacy, respecting the privacy of others, and identifying inappropriate websites, such as sexual content or other unsuitable materials aimed at children. Network security is a challenge that can determine the stability and smooth operation of systems. Despite increased awareness, the growing use of the internet, combined with a lack of knowledge and attention from users, makes them vulnerable to risks such as data loss and digital identity theft. Training programs are needed to reverse this trend and foster good habits in the use of technology and networks.

Regarding cyberbullying, teachers need to grasp the potentially harmful impacts of such behavior, which violates principles of personal integrity, compassion, and responsible conduct. Cyberbullying—whether in or out of school—occurs when technology allows children or adolescents to be persistently harassed or intimidated. Both recipients and perpetrators are victims of various forms of cyberbullying, including sexting, trolling, and stalking, which disrupt psychological and personal development. A gender-related issue, for instance, involves understanding the negative effects of using mobile phones to take and share sexual images of oneself or others.

Copyright and plagiarism considerations require teachers to teach respect for others' intellectual property rights and emphasize the legality and ethics of using online materials without permission. Using others' ideas, words, or works as one's own constitutes plagiarism. However, plagiarism is not always intentional or malicious. Sometimes it occurs unintentionally due to a lack of prior knowledge. Agud states that some students admit to plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty and warns against such violations as they could lead to fraud in professional

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<sup>4</sup> (Siska dkk., 2021) Hal: 2.

careers. The growth of digital technology has made recording, reproduction, and distribution of content more accessible, complicating copyright protection and the commercial use of digital works. The importance of digital character education as a solution to educational challenges and the rising number of students learning online has underscored the need to examine the factors influencing students' character development in digital education (Triyanto, 2020).

Character is a product manifested in a person's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. If character education is solely based on schools, it is bound to fail. Schools, particularly in Indonesia, are not yet the dominant environment in children's lives. Children spend only a small portion of their time in the school setting. Communication between teachers and students is largely confined to subject-related instruction. Rarely are there situations or opportunities for students and school staff to interact outside of class. In most cases, children are in their family environments, making the family a crucial factor in character education. However, as Daniel Goleman points out, many parents fail to nurture their children's character. This failure is often due to a rushed approach or an overemphasis on the cognitive aspect of a child's development. These shortcomings can be addressed by integrating character education in schools (Triatmanto, 2010, hlm. hal. 197-198.)

## CONCLUSION

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process that enables students to actively develop their potential. This includes achieving spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills necessary for their community, nation, and country. Character education can be defined as a deliberate and structured effort to cultivate positive values, attitudes, and skills within individuals. Its goal is to shape individuals with integrity, ethics, and social responsibility.

Social Studies holds significant potential for shaping students' character through contextual learning. Lessons in history, geography, and economics not only provide an understanding of the world but also teach values such as tolerance, justice, and essential social skills for everyday life.

Character education is an effort to aid the development of the soul towards a better individual. Issues often arising among students related to character should be a serious concern for educational institutions in Indonesia. Student character must always be nurtured to align with expectations and result in a comprehensive learning experience, encompassing achievements in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

Despite its many positive potentials, this study also identifies several challenges in implementing character education within Social Studies. Limited instructional time, the pressure to meet academic targets, and varying teacher understandings of character values are the main obstacles.

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