

RESEARCH

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Strengthening Student Character Education at the Tri Integrated Nature School of Education Center

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strengthening of character education for students in nature schools based on the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study was conducted at two nature schools, namely Sekolah Alam Muaro Bungo (SAMO) and Madrasah Alam Insan Rabbani, involving 12 participants consisting of school principals, teachers, students, and parents. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the strengthening of character education in nature schools is carried out through three main programs: exemplary leadership grounded in the philosophy of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, habit formation based on Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and meaningful interpretation rooted in Tut Wuri Handayani. These three programs are implemented in an integrated manner through collaboration between the school and parents within the framework of the Tri Pusat Pendidikan. These findings indicate that the nature school approach, which holistically integrates Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, is capable of shaping students' character to be strong, consistent, and grounded in local wisdom.

Keywords: Character education, Nature school, Ki Hajar Dewantara, Three Pillars of Education, Leading by example

Introduction

Character education is a key aspect in creating superior, cultured Indonesian human resources capable of facing global competition. However, various moral issues among the younger generation are still common, such as bullying, juvenile delinquency, low tolerance, and a diminishing sense of patriotism. This situation indicates that the educational process in Indonesia has not fully succeeded in instilling positive character values in students. Syahrial et al. (2022) stated that strengthening character through the development of teaching materials based on local wisdom and regional culture can be an effective strategy for fostering positive attitudes, tolerance, and the ability to work together in elementary school students. This situation encourages educational practitioners to present a learning approach that is more holistic, humane, and aligned with the nation's culture. According to Rais Abin et al. (2022), the implementation of humanistic education based on local values can be an effective alternative in strengthening character education in elementary schools in a contextual and realistic

manner. Therefore, a character education model is needed that is not only able to adapt to current developments but also maintains Indonesian cultural values and local wisdom.

In the implementation of character education, the educational ideas and philosophies put forward by Ki Hajar Dewantara as the Father of Indonesian National Education still have a strong connection with the current state of education. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education does not only function to transfer knowledge to students, but also becomes a means to humanize humans so that intelligent, emotionally mature, and morally sound individuals are formed. In line with this, from an Islamic educational perspective, Supian (2022) emphasized that the development of students' character and morals must be accompanied by the instillation of religious and spiritual values as a moral foundation in daily life, so that general education needs to be integrated harmoniously with religious values. Wardani et al. (2024) stated that Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational trilogy consisting of *Ing Ngarso Sun Tuladha*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa*, and *Tut Wuri Handayani* has an important contribution in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum while strengthening the character of students in elementary schools. The trilogy not only functions as an educational motto, but also serves as a guideline that includes moral, emotional, and intellectual values in learning activities. Thus, Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy can be used as a solid foundation in developing a character education model that is relevant to the needs and current situation of Indonesian education.

Sakban and Sundawa (2023) suggest that the process of national character development in Indonesia is carried out through several important stages. The initial stage is consolidation, namely efforts to instill an understanding of Pancasila values in students. This is followed by a stabilization stage through various educational components, such as subjects, curriculum, school environment, and support from family and community. The next stage is development, which focuses on strengthening the implementation of the Pancasila ideology-based curriculum. Through this process, character education is directed at shaping students into individuals who are tolerant, creative, able to work together, have integrity, care about the social environment, and are able to think globally. Research by Mawadha et al. (2024) and Muhammad Sofwan also supports this view by showing that the application of Pancasila values as a basis for character development in elementary school students can foster democratic attitudes, responsibility, and a spirit of nationalism from an early age.

Amidst various efforts to find an effective character education model, nature schools emerge as an innovative and attractive educational alternative. Nature schools are educational institutions that utilize the natural environment as the primary medium, method, and learning resource in their learning activities. In practice, nature schools focus not only on academic aspects but also integrate character education through students' direct experiences when interacting with the natural environment. Research conducted at the Bekasi Nature School shows that the implementation of a nature-based curriculum combined with academic learning can increase environmental awareness and shape students' positive behavior towards their surroundings (Putri, 2024). Furthermore, Syafitri and Sholeh et al. (2024) explain that increasingly rapid technological developments also influence changes in students' character. Therefore, nature schools, with their direct learning approach through nature, are becoming increasingly relevant as a means of balancing and reinforcing positive character values so that students are not easily influenced by the negative impacts of technological development.

Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy is highly suitable for implementation in nature schools because he believed that the universe is the greatest source of learning for

humans. This is evident in the concept of Panca Dharma Tamansiswa which encompasses the universe, independence, culture, nationality, and humanity. Research by Wardani et al. (2024) and Widyantoro et al. (2023) explains that the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's leadership trilogy is able to create an educational environment that balances freedom and responsibility, thus becoming a strong foundation for character formation. In line with that, Syahrial et al. (2022) found that the integration of local cultural values in the learning process through traditional game-based modules significantly improved the character of cooperation and tolerance of elementary school students, proving that local wisdom has invaluable pedagogical power in character formation of students. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the strengthening of student character education in nature schools based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy in depth and comprehensively.

Method

This research was conducted using qualitative research methods. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research is field research that produces data in the form of written or spoken words from observed objects and behaviors. The research design used is descriptive qualitative, namely research that aims to describe and illustrate various conditions, situations, and social phenomena that are the object of research in depth. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that qualitative research is an appropriate approach to understanding the meaning attributed by individuals or groups to a social or humanitarian problem, making it suitable for use in character education studies that are contextual and complex. In line with this, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the validity of data in qualitative research can be increased through triangulation techniques that include triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, as applied in this study.

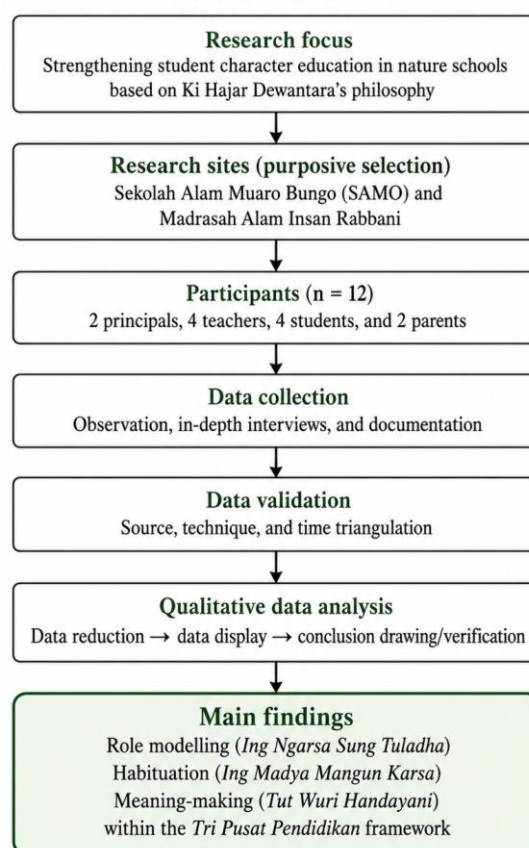


Fig. 1 Research Flow for Strengthening Student Character Education in Nature Schools

In line with the method used, the data collection techniques in this study were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation of predetermined samples. According to Sugiyono (2017), a research instrument is a tool used to measure observed natural and social phenomena. Based on the data collection techniques used, the research instruments used include observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation as tools for obtaining research data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that in-depth interviews are the most common and effective data collection technique in qualitative research, especially when researchers want to understand the perspectives, experiences, and meanings given by participants to a phenomenon. The use of participant observation techniques and documentation as source triangulation is necessary to ensure the validity and credibility of research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The participants in this study were 12 people from two schools: Muaro Bungo Nature School (SAMO) in Muaro Bungo Regency and Insan Rabbani Nature Madrasah in Sungai Penuh City. The selection of these two schools was based on their relevance to the research focus, which examines nature-based education in early grades. Participants from Muaro Bungo Nature School (SAMO) consisted of 1 principal, 2 early grade teachers, 2 early grade students, and 1 early grade parent. Participants from Insan Rabbani Nature Madrasah consisted of 1 principal, 2 early grade teachers, 2 early grade students, and 1 early grade parent. The determination of participants was carried out purposively, namely based on the consideration that the selected participants had direct involvement and relevant knowledge regarding the focus of the research problem (Sugiyono, 2017).

Results

General Characteristics

This research was conducted at the Nature School, which utilizes Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy as the primary foundation for building the holistic character of its students. Based on the research findings, the strengthening of character education at the school is realized through three main programs: role modelling, habituation, and meaning-making. These three programs are implemented in an integrated manner, involving collaboration between the school and families. All programs support each other and are part of an educational ecosystem guided by the Tri Pusat Pendidikan concept. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) emphasize that effective character education is comprehensive, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, implemented in an integrated manner throughout all aspects of school life and the educational community. Lickona (1991) also states that holistic character formation requires the involvement of all components of the educational community, including teachers, families, and the community, within an integrated and consistent educational framework.

The implementation of role models in Nature Schools is carried out comprehensively through three interrelated dimensions, namely role models as a source of motivation, role models in the form of real behavior, and role models as a means of strengthening student character. Rahmawati and Sofwan's (2025) research on the implementation of the 3S culture (Smile, Greet, Greeting) in elementary schools shows that habituating positive behavior through examples given by teachers and school residents has a significant influence on the formation of morals and character of students in everyday life. In practice, teachers and parents play a joint role as role models that can be emulated by students, both in the school environment and at home. This is in line with the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, which emphasizes that an educator must be able to be a good example through real attitudes and behaviors to students. Bandura (1977) in his social learning theory suggests that individuals learn through the process of observation, imitation, and modeling of the behavior of those around them, so that the role models

of teachers and parents become very powerful pedagogical instruments in the formation of student character. Arthur (2008) added that teachers who demonstrate good character authentically will be much more effective in shaping students' character compared to character teaching that is only verbal and instructive.

The habituation program at the Nature School is based on the Ing Madya Mangun Karsa philosophy, which places educators at the center of students as figures who build enthusiasm, motivation, and willpower within students. This program is implemented through various planned routine activities, such as nature-based morning ceremonies, group gardening activities, congregational prayer, and daily reflection activities. Based on interviews, the habituation program, which is consistently implemented for approximately three months, has been proven to foster positive, lasting behaviors in students. These results align with research by Syahrial et al. (2022), which confirms that a structured and repeated approach based on local cultural values can foster strong cooperative and tolerant characters in students, as seen in the habituation program at the Nature School. Furthermore, Syafitri and Sholeh et al. (2024) also stated that character building that is carried out consistently and in accordance with the context of students' lives is more effective than approaches that are temporary or only carried out when a problem arises.

The aspect of meaning-making is the most profound part of the process of strengthening character education at the Nature School. This program is based on the Tut Wuri Handayani philosophy, which positions educators as figures who provide support and encouragement from behind so that students can develop independently. The meaning-making process is carried out through various activities, such as daily reflection, writing character journals, group discussions, and thematic projects. The results of the study indicate that meaning-making carried out jointly between the school and parents can shape students' characters stronger so that they are not easily influenced by the negative impacts of their surroundings. This finding aligns with Supian's (2022) view that education that integrates spiritual and religious values into students' daily activities will produce individuals who possess moral strength from within themselves, not simply obeying external rules. Narvaez and Lapsley (2009) in their study of character psychology emphasized that internalizing character values through a continuous process of reflection and meaning-making is key to the formation of authentic and stable character in students. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) also stated that meaningful character education must be able to touch the dimensions of the heart and consciousness of students, not just external behavior, so that character values are truly believed in and experienced as part of self-identity.

Family Integration in Character Building

The family is the first and foremost center of education in Ki Hajar Dewantara's Three Centers of Education concept. Based on research at the Muaro Bungo Nature School (SAMO) and the Insan Rabbani Nature Madrasah, the role of families, especially parents, in strengthening students' character is not merely passive as recipients of information from the school, but rather active and programmed. Parents are systematically involved through the Character Parenting Program held once a month. In this program, parents receive training on the character values being developed at school, how to implement character habits at home, and positive communication strategies with children. The SAMO Principal stated that "the success of character education will not be optimal if it is only carried out at school, without continuity at home. Therefore, we ensure that parents understand and carry out their role as the child's first educators." Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) emphasized that parental involvement in children's education is influenced by their understanding of their role as educators, their confidence in helping children, and the invitations and expectations conveyed by the school, so that a structured parenting program is very

important to optimize this role. Epstein (2010) also found that systematically designed school-family partnership programs were able to improve the quality of parental involvement and had a significant positive impact on children's academic and character development.

In addition to the Character Parenting Program, both schools also developed the Inspirational Parents Program, which invites parents to come to school as resource persons or facilitators for character-based learning activities. Through this program, parents share their life experiences, work skills, and local wisdom with students. This activity is held every two weeks and has proven to have a positive impact in terms of increasing students' respect for their parents, growing motivation to learn, and developing the values of hard work, simplicity, and gratitude. Furthermore, there is a School-Family Character Partnership Program that creates synergy through a daily character book, where teachers and parents record each other's character development daily, both at school and at home. This book serves as a two-way communication medium that ensures consistency of character values between the school and family environments. Sianturi et al. (2022) found that intensive two-way communication between teachers and parents is a key factor in building strong partnerships, especially in educational contexts that emphasize holistic character development. Henderson and Mapp (2002) in their comprehensive study concluded that family involvement programs that focus on children's learning and development have been consistently proven to improve academic achievement as well as positive character formation in students at various levels of education.

School Integration in Character Building

Schools are the second center within the Tri Center of Education framework, having primary responsibility for designing, implementing, and evaluating structured and sustainable character-building programs. At Muaro Bungo Nature School (SAMO) and Insan Rabbani Nature Madrasah, all school members, from the principal, teachers, to educational staff, are actively involved as agents of character formation. This is realized through the Character-Friendly School Program, which serves as the umbrella for implementing all character education activities in both institutions. This program includes designing a value-rich physical school environment, such as installing murals containing character values, arranging school gardens that facilitate group gardening activities, and providing open reading corners that encourage a love of reading and a culture of literacy in students. Watson (2014) in his research on school ecology stated that the physical environment and school culture that consistently reflect character values have a significant influence on the internalization of student character, because the environment implicitly conveys moral messages to every individual within it. Berkowitz et al. (2017) also found that schools that successfully developed a strong character culture were generally characterized by visionary leadership from principals, committed teachers, and a school climate that was conducive to the growth of positive values.

In addition to the Character-Friendly School Program, the school also developed a Nature Friends Program that specifically utilizes the natural environment as a medium for character development. In this program, students are encouraged to regularly engage in various nature-based activities, such as gardening, caring for plants, observing ecosystems, and recycling waste. The values developed include responsibility, discipline, environmental awareness, and teamwork. Teachers act as facilitators, accompanying and guiding students in each activity, while also modeling behavior that reflects the character values being developed. Meanwhile, the principal plays a role in creating school policies conducive to the growth of a character culture, including establishing a daily character activity schedule, supervising program implementation, and periodically evaluating student character development. Miller et al. (2022) found that nature-based

activities in schools significantly increased student engagement, responsibility, and environmental awareness, and contributed to positive socio-emotional development. Supriyoko et al. (2022) also showed that a nature school curriculum that combines nature learning with character values can provide a space for meaningful learning freedom while simultaneously building students' ecological and moral awareness.

Community Integration in Character Building

Community is the third center in the Tri Pusat Pendidikan concept, which often does not receive adequate attention in the implementation of character education in schools. However, in the two Nature Schools studied, community involvement has been systematically designed as an integral part of the character education ecosystem. Community leaders, such as religious scholars, farmers, local craftsmen, and traditional leaders, are involved in learning activities through the Friday Sharing Program. This program is held every Friday by presenting community leaders as resource persons who share knowledge, life skills, and local wisdom with students. The values developed include gratitude, mutual cooperation, social awareness, and respect for local wisdom. Putnam (2000) stated that social capital built through active community involvement in educational institutions can create an environment that supports the holistic development of children's character. Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his ecological theory of human development also emphasized that children develop optimally when all levels of their social environment, from family, school, to the wider community, support each other and provide consistent experiences.

In addition to the Friday Sharing Program, both schools also implement a Community Service Program that directly involves students in social activities. This activity is carried out every semester and includes community service activities such as cleaning the school environment, visiting orphanages, raising funds for residents in need, and planting trees in public areas. Through this program, students learn directly about the values of social care, empathy, responsibility, and independence in the context of real-life in the community. Social organizations in the surrounding area of the school, such as youth organizations and farmer groups, are also active partners in the implementation of this program. Meanwhile, strategic partners of the school, such as religious institutions and the local education office, provide support in the form of program mentoring and validation of character values developed to align with social norms and local values of the local community. Kolb (1984) in his experiential learning theory emphasizes that direct experience in a real-life context is the strongest foundation in the formation of a person's values and character, because it involves the process of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing, and experimenting in a continuous cycle. Berkowitz and Grych (2000) also found that community-based services and involvement in social activities consistently contributed to the development of prosocial character, empathy, and civic responsibility in children and adolescents.

"Learning to Follow the Example" Exemplary Program

The "Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodho" Exemplary Program is a core program designed to embody Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophical values, stating that leaders and educators must be role models. This program aims to shape students' character through the process of emulating and internalizing positive values consistently demonstrated by teachers, parents, and community leaders. It is implemented through three integrated sub-programs. First, Teacher Exemplary: every teacher is required to arrive on time, dress neatly and in an Islamic manner, greet students with compassion, and demonstrate honest, patient, and responsible behavior in every aspect of their duties. The character values developed include discipline, honesty, responsibility, and politeness. A class teacher at Madrasah Alam Insan Rabbani stated that "we strive to be a mirror for the children. What we show them every day is what they absorb and apply in their lives."

Second, Parental Exemplary Behavior: parents are encouraged to be role models at home by making it a habit to read the Qur'an together after Maghrib, pray in congregation, eat together while discussing life values, and avoid excessive use of gadgets in front of their children. A SAMO parent said that "since joining the Character Parenting Program, we are more aware that our daily behavior is the most tangible lesson for our children." Third, Community Figure Exemplary Behavior: through the Friday Sharing Program, community figures are present as role models who share inspiring stories about the values of hard work, honesty, simplicity, and community service. These three forms of role modeling strengthen each other and create a holistic character education environment, where students see the consistency of the same values at school, at home, and in the community. Thornberg (2023) suggests that the consistency of values displayed by various authority figures in a child's life, whether teachers, parents, or community figures, has a significant positive correlation with the internalization of moral values and the reduction of negative behavior in children and adolescents. Ameli (2022) also shows that the involvement of various parties in a nature-based educational ecosystem creates a cohesive learning community and mutually strengthens character values in a multilateral manner.

Character Building Program

The Character Building Program is designed based on the Ing Madya Mangun Karsa philosophy and aims to shape students' character through structured and consistent repetition of positive behavior in three educational environments, namely school, home, and community. In the school environment, habituation is implemented through a programmed daily routine, including: (1) nature-based morning assembly which begins with morning dhikr and recitation of the Asmaul Husana, followed by the recitation of the character pledge and delivery of daily motivation by the teacher; (2) gardening activities together every Tuesday and Thursday which teach responsibility, patience, and concern for the environment; (3) congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers which build discipline and spiritual appreciation; (4) class duty and cleanliness of the school environment which trains responsibility and independence; and (5) the 3S culture (Smile, Greet, Say Hello) which is implemented consistently by all school residents to build polite character and social awareness. Aristotle in his educational philosophy stated that character is formed through habits, and habits are formed through consistent repetition of actions, which was then adopted again in modern education by Lickona (1991) who emphasized that character formation through habit formation or habituation is one of the most important pillars in effective character education. Sakti et al. (2024) also found that an ethnopedagogical approach that integrates local wisdom into daily habits in schools is able to revitalize cultural values while strengthening the character identity of students.

At home, character building is strengthened through a shared commitment agreed upon between the school and parents in the School-Family Character Partnership Program. Habits at home include: reading the Quran after Maghrib, praying in congregation with the family, helping with household chores according to the child's ability, praying before and after meals, and avoiding using gadgets for more than one hour per day. The development of these habits is recorded by parents in a character development book, which is then reviewed by the teacher weekly. In the community, habits are strengthened through the Community Service Program and the Friday Sharing Program, which provide students with real-life experiences to practice character values in a broader social context. Interviews with SAMO class teachers revealed that "the results of the habits implemented consistently for three months are starting to show. Children are getting used to greeting teachers first, disposing of trash in the proper place without being asked, and reminding each other to pray on time." Dahl et al. (2022) in their research on the formation of children's

prosocial behavior found that consistent positive behavioral habits applied in stages across various environments, especially schools and families, significantly accelerated the internalization of moral values in elementary school-aged children. Qushwa et al. (2025) also emphasized that teacher exemplary behavior integrated into daily learning routines has a far more effective impact on building the character of the madrasah generation than mere verbal instruction.

Character Meaning and Reflection Program

The Character Meaning and Reflection Program is the deepest dimension of the character education strengthening process at Sekolah Alam, which is based on the Tut Wuri Handayani philosophy. This program aims to help students understand the meaning of each character experience they undergo, so that character values are not merely practiced, but truly internalized and believed as part of their identity. The program is implemented through four main activities. First, Daily Reflection: at the end of each learning day, students are invited to sit in a circle for a five-minute reflection session with the teacher. Students are asked to answer guiding questions such as: "What character values have you implemented today?", "What made it difficult for you to do?", and "What do you want to improve tomorrow?" This session builds students' metacognitive abilities and brings them closer to self-awareness, the foundation of true character.

Second, Character Journal: Students in third grade and above are required to complete a weekly character journal containing notes about their character experiences, feelings that arise, lessons learned, and plans for future improvement. This journal is read and responded to in writing by the teacher, thus becoming a medium for rich pedagogical dialogue between students and teachers. Third, Character Group Discussion: Every two weeks, students engage in small group discussions guided by the teacher on a specific character theme, such as honesty, courage, or caring. This discussion uses a storytelling approach in which students share their real-life experiences related to the character theme discussed, then together draw lessons and values that can be learned. Fourth, Thematic Character Project: Each semester, students carry out a thematic project that integrates character values in a real-life context, such as a waste recycling project, a project sharing food with neighbors in need, or a project documenting local wisdom of the surrounding community. The involvement of parents and community leaders in this project makes it a tangible manifestation of the synergy of the Three Centers of Education in the process of character development of students. Gibbs (2003) in his theory of moral development stated that moral discussions based on students' real-life experiences are an effective method for encouraging the development of moral reasoning, because they encourage students to consider others' perspectives and reflect on the ethical consequences of their actions. Haddon et al. (2019) also found that community-based projects involving in-depth reflection significantly increased students' moral maturity and prosocial commitment compared to character programs that were one-way and instructive.

The Synergy of Three Education Centers in Shaping Student Character

The success of strengthening character education at Muaro Bungo Nature School (SAMO) and Insan Rabbani Nature Madrasah is inseparable from the strong synergy between the three educational centers: family, school, and community, as mandated by Ki Hajar Dewantara in the concept of the Three Centers of Education. The results of the study indicate that these three educational centers do not work separately, but rather form an integrated, mutually supportive, and mutually reinforcing character education ecosystem. This integration is realized in a continuous three-way collaboration pattern: the school designs programs and provides character value training to students and parents; the family implements and reinforces these values in the home environment; while the community provides real context and local wisdom that enrich the

students' character experiences. A third-grade SAMO student innocently stated, "The teacher said to be honest, Mom and Dad also said to be honest, and the Ustaz at the mosque also said to be honest. So I know this is very important." This statement is clear evidence that the consistency of values conveyed by the three educational environments is able to form strong character beliefs in students. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that a child's character development is influenced in layers by the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, so that the alignment of values between these environmental layers is a crucial factor in the formation of consistent and sustainable character. Eccles and Harold (1993) in their study of family and school involvement emphasized that the alignment of values between school and family significantly increases a child's intrinsic motivation and strengthens the formation of a positive moral identity.

Overall, the synergy pattern of the Three Centers of Education in both Nature Schools can be described as follows: The Exemplary Program "Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodho" serves as a foundation that ensures every educational agent, whether teachers, parents, or community leaders, acts as a consistent character model. The Character Habituation Program provides a daily routine structure that ensures character values are repeatedly practiced throughout the students' lives. The Character Meaning and Reflection Program ensures that the practiced values are truly internalized, understood, and believed by students as part of their identity. The Character Parenting Program and the School-Family Character Partnership build a strong communication bridge between schools and families. Meanwhile, the Friday Sharing Program and Community Service Program connect students' character experiences with the realities of community life. The integration of all these programs within the framework of Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy makes both Nature Schools a model of character education based on the Three Centers of Education that is holistic, contextual, and sustainable. Davidson et al. (2007) emphasized that comprehensive character education must encompass three dimensions simultaneously: knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good. All three can only be realized if supported by an integrated educational ecosystem between schools, families, and communities. Lapsley and Yeager (2013) also concluded that the most successful character education programs are those that are able to synergistically integrate various approaches into all aspects of school and community life, rather than those that rely on a single intervention.

Discussion

The main findings in this study indicate a strong and planned collaboration between the school and parents in an effort to strengthen the character education of students at the Nature School. This collaboration is not done spontaneously or occasionally, but is part of the school policy that is systematically designed in a curriculum based on the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara through the Tri Pusat Pendidikan approach. Research by Cai et al. (2024) also explains that the active involvement of parents in character education has a significant influence on the development of positive character in children, especially if the relationship between teachers and parents is well-established and harmonious. In the Indonesian context, Mawadha et al. (2024) with Muhammad Sofwan found that the contribution of Pancasila values as the foundation of character education in elementary schools is highly dependent on the synergy between schools and families, because the character values instilled in schools need to be strengthened and consistent in the home environment.

Role modeling is the most important element in character development for students at Nature Schools because students more easily understand and instill values through observing and imitating the behavior of adults they trust. Teachers at Nature Schools demonstrate authentic role

models because they truly believe in the values they teach, creating a congruence between words and actions that can be directly felt by students and parents. Research by Rifki et al. (2023) shows that instilling character values through sincere and consistent teacher role modeling can produce more profound changes in student behavior than conventional learning methods that are merely instructional. These findings are reinforced by Asrial and Syahrial et al. (2024) who examined science teacher textbooks as a means of strengthening elementary school students' character values and concluded that role modeling reflected through learning materials rich in character values has a significant influence on the formation of positive student behavior. Supian (2022) also added that a teacher who is a true role model not only possesses good academic abilities but also possesses moral and spiritual integrity that is reflected in every word and action they say to their students.

The habituation and meaning-making program implemented in Nature Schools is an integrated, complementary strategy in directing character values, starting from the cognitive stage of understanding, affective appreciation, to their application in real behavior in the psychomotor domain. Sakban and Sundawa (2023) emphasized that the process of building a complete national character requires synergy between various educational components, including the curriculum, school environment, family, and community. This is in line with the findings of this study, which proves that the simultaneous involvement of all three elements of the Tri Pusat Pendidikan produces far more optimal results than relying solely on the role of the school. Research by Mann et al. (2022) through a systematic review of 147 studies shows that outdoor nature-based learning can increase student engagement, develop social skills, and build a positive self-identity, all of which are important foundations in character formation for students. Syafitri and Sholeh et al. (2024) also emphasized that students will be more vulnerable to experiencing negative character changes due to the influence of technology and an uncontrolled environment if not supported by a structured and sustainable character education ecosystem. Therefore, the continuous implementation of a cycle of role models, habituation, and meaning-making involving collaboration between schools, parents, and the community, as implemented in the Nature School, can form a character education ecosystem that is complete, relevant, and rooted in local wisdom in accordance with the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that the success of character education is not solely the responsibility of the school, but rather the result of real synergy between the three centers of education as conceptualized by Ki Hajar Dewantara. The family provides the foundation of values and the first role model; the school builds the program structure and character competencies; and the community provides an authentic context and enriches students' character experiences in social reality. Musengamana (2023) in his systematic study concluded that parental and community involvement in the education ecosystem consistently correlates positively with learning outcomes and children's character formation. This finding further confirms that the integrated model of the Three Centers of Education implemented in the Nature School is the right answer to the challenges of character education in the increasingly complex modern era.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, character education strengthening at the Nature School is implemented through three main programs: exemplary behavior based on Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, habituation based on Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and interpretation based on Tut Wuri Handayani. These three programs are implemented in an integrated manner through collaboration between schools and parents within the framework of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Three Centers of

Education. This approach has proven to be effective in shaping students' strong, consistent character, rooted in local wisdom values. The results of this study provide a practical contribution to the development of an integrative character education model and can serve as a reference for other schools in developing comprehensive and sustainable character strengthening programs. Syahrial et al. (2022) and Rahmawati and Sofwan (2025) emphasized that a local wisdom-based approach and the consistent application of positive behavioral habits are important factors in the success of character education in elementary schools, as seen in the results of this study at the Nature School. Thus, the combination of national educational philosophy, local wisdom values, and nature-based learning approaches needs to be continuously developed as a comprehensive and sustainable character education model.

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