THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT IN SHAPING THE CHARACTER OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The family environment has a strong influence on shaping student's character, especially at the junior high school level where students are going through early adolescence. In today's rapidly changing world, character education is becoming increasingly important and cannot rely only on schools, but also on families as the first place where children learn values and behavior. This study aims to examine how the family environment contributes to student's character development through a literature review approach. The study applies a qualitative library research design by analyzing relevant books, journal articles and previous studies. The findings indicate that the family serves as the initial foundation for character building by introducing moral values that shape how students think, behave, and interact with others. At the same time, external environments such as schools and communities also influence whether these values are strengthened or weakened. For this reason, effective character education requires close cooperation between families and schools to maintain consistency in moral guidance. This study offers both theoretical insight into the ecological perspective of education and practical suggestions for improving collaboration between parents and school.

Keywords: Family Environment, Student Character, Junior High School, Social Environment.

1) INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the educational context has faced increasingly complex challenges that extend beyond academic achievement. Students are no longer assessed solely based on their cognitive abilities but are also expected to demonstrate positive character traits in their daily lives. However, various issues among adolescents such as declining discipline, low empathy, and weak responsibility indicate that character development has not yet been optimally achieved and still requires serious attention. This situation highlights the urgency of strengthening character education, particularly within the family as the closest environment in students' lives. (OECD, 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Berkowitz et al., 2022).

Character education has been widely recognized as a fundamental component of holistic education rather than merely a complementary aspect of schooling. Lickona (1991) conceptualizes character as consisting of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, all of which must be developed through continuous guidance and consistent role modeling. Similarly, Kohlberg (1984) explains that moral development progresses through stages, requiring supportive environments to help adolescents reach higher levels of moral reasoning. Without such support, students may face difficulties in internalizing moral values, which can lead to behavioral problems. Recent studies further emphasize that integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into education significantly enhances students' empathy, responsibility, and engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015).

From a theoretical perspective, children's character development is strongly influenced by their interactions within immediate social environments. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasizes that the family, as part of the microsystem, plays the most direct and lasting role in shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Daily experiences at home such as communication patterns, parenting styles, and emotional support form the foundation for how children learn values and regulate their behavior. This perspective is reinforced by Bandura (1977), who argues that children acquire behavior through observation and imitation, particularly from significant figures such as parents. More recent research also confirms that positive parenting practices are strongly associated with children's social competence, emotional regulation, and moral development (Sari et al., 2023; Putri & Rahman, 2024). Other environments such as schools and communities also contribute to character development. A positive school climate, supportive teacher-student relationships, and structured learning environments have been shown to foster discipline, responsibility, and cooperation among students (Azis et al., 2024; Wanti & Darmawan, 2024). Furthermore, community interactions provide opportunities for students to practice social values through peer relationships and social activities (Putri et al., 2025). Recent studies also highlight that students who are supported by collaborative environments where schools, families, and communities work

together tend to demonstrate stronger character traits and better social behavior (OECD, 2022; Berkowitz et al., 2022).

However, despite the growing body of research on character education, previous studies tend to examine the roles of family, school, and community environments separately rather than as integrated systems. This fragmented perspective limits a comprehensive understanding of how consistency and alignment across these environments influence students' character development. In practice, students simultaneously engage with these contexts, and inconsistencies between them may lead to confusion in value internalization. Therefore, there remains a need for a more integrative perspective that explains how these environments interact in shaping character. This study offers a novel contribution by providing an integrative perspective on character education through the combined roles of family, school, and community environments. While previous studies tend to examine these contexts separately, this study emphasizes their interconnectedness and highlights the importance of consistency across environments in shaping students' character. By synthesizing recent and classical literature, this study also proposes a more comprehensive understanding of how collaborative interactions among these environments contribute to effective character development. Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the role of the family environment in shaping students' character while also emphasizing the importance of collaboration between family, school, and community environments. By synthesizing existing literature, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how consistent interactions across different environments contribute to effective character development.

2) METHODS

This study applied a qualitative approach through a library research design to explore the role of the family environment in shaping students' character. Instead of gathering primary data from the field, the research concentrated on examining and integrating findings from existing literature related to character education. This approach was selected because it enables the development of a comprehensive understanding grounded in established theories and empirical studies, particularly those highlighted in the introduction regarding the central role

of the family and its interaction with school and community contexts (Snyder, 2019; Putri et al., 2025).

The data sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and relevant research reports. The literature was obtained through systematic searches in academic databases such as Google Scholar and other indexed platforms using keywords like "family environment," "character education," "student character development," and "social-emotional learning." After reviewing the existing literature, thousands of articles were identified as relevant to this study. To maintain relevance and up-to-date insights, the selected sources were limited to publications from 2015 to 2025. Approximately 10 – 15 studies were included based on specific criteria, namely their relevance to the research focus, clarity of results, and academic reliability. This number was considered sufficient to identify recurring themes and ensure depth of analysis. Studies that did not directly address the link between family environment and character formation were excluded from the analysis.

Data collection was carried out using documentation techniques, which involved identifying, selecting, reviewing, and organizing information from the chosen sources. Within this study, the family environment was treated as the independent variable, student character as the dependent variable, and the social environment such as school and community as the intervening variable. This categorization reflects the conceptual framework outlined in the introduction, which emphasizes that character development is shaped by the interaction of multiple environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lickona, 1991; Azis et al., 2024; Wanti & Darmawan, 2024).

The data analysis employed qualitative content analysis. This process included identifying key concepts, grouping recurring themes, comparing findings across different studies, and interpreting patterns found in the literature. Through this method, the study was able to identify consistent relationships between family practices, school support, and community influence in shaping students' character. Moreover, the analysis highlighted the importance of alignment among these environments in strengthening the internalization of values and promoting consistent behavior. This approach allowed the researcher to construct

a more systematic and integrated explanation of the role of the family, while also emphasizing the importance of collaboration between family, school, and community in supporting character education (Bandura, 1977; OECD, 2022; Hammond et al., 2020).

3) RESULTS

The findings of this study were obtained through an analysis of selected literature focusing on the role of the family environment in shaping students' character. The results are organized based on several key themes that emerged consistently across the reviewed studies.

At the beginning, the literature consistently indicated that the family environment exerted a substantial influence on students' character development. A number of studies highlighted that parenting style, emotional support, and patterns of communication within the household played a direct role in fostering values such as responsibility, discipline, and empathy. Families that maintained consistent discipline and demonstrated positive role modeling tended to nurture children with stronger moral awareness and more controlled behavior. In addition, the findings emphasized the importance of parenting style as a determining factor in character formation. Research showed that authoritative parenting, which combines warmth with firm supervision, was closely associated with the development of positive traits, including self-discipline, respect, and social competence. On the other hand, parenting practices that were inconsistent or neglectful were often linked to behavioral issues and a lower sense of responsibility among students.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the school environment also played a meaningful role in supporting character development. A positive school climate marked by constructive teacher-student relationships and clearly defined rules was found to encourage discipline, cooperation, and responsibility. Schools that implemented well-structured character education programs and social-emotional learning (SEL) activities generally reported more positive student behavior and greater engagement in the learning process. Moreover, the community environment was found to function as a reinforcing factor in shaping students' character. Involvement in social activities, interactions with peers, and participation in community programs contributed to the development of cooperation, social awareness, and responsibility.

Supportive peer influence and constructive community norms were also associated with improved behavioral outcomes among students.

Finally, the analysis demonstrated that collaboration among family, school, and community environments strengthened the overall outcomes of character development. When the values introduced at school were consistently reinforced at home and within the community, students tended to internalize these values more effectively and exhibit more consistent behavior. In contrast, a lack of alignment among these environments often resulted in confusion and hindered the development of character. Overall, the findings suggest that students' character development is shaped by the interaction of multiple interconnected environments, where the family serves as the primary foundation, while school and community contexts provide essential support.

4) DISCUSSION

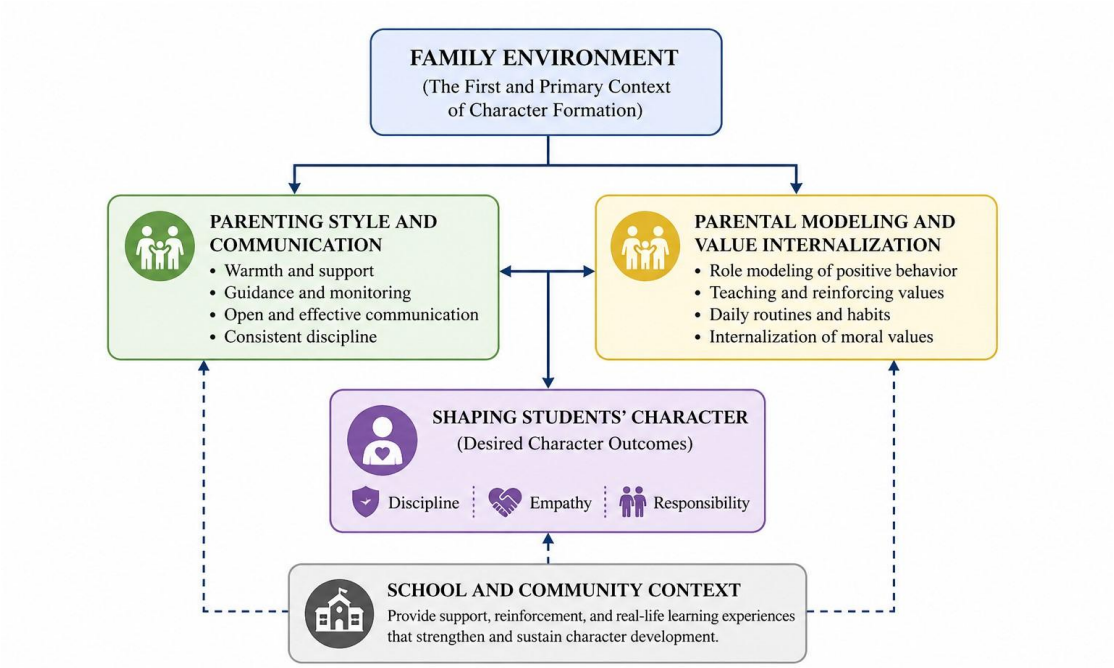


Figure 1. The Role of Family Environment in Shaping Students' Character

This study examined how the family environment shapes students' character, while also considering the role of school and community. The results show that the family has the most

important role as the main foundation of character development. Parenting style, emotional support, and communication at home greatly influence values such as responsibility, discipline, and empathy. This means that children first learn good behavior and values from their family.

Furthermore, the alignment between character education in schools and in families has been identified as a key factor in achieving sustainable outcomes. Reports from the OECD (2022) emphasize that collaboration between parents and schools can enhance students' moral development and reduce behavioral problems. When families actively reinforce the values taught in schools, students are more likely to internalize and apply them in real-life situations. Conversely, inconsistencies between school expectations and family practices may weaken the effectiveness of character education programs. Therefore, strengthening the role of the family in character development is not only relevant but also essential in addressing contemporary educational challenges. Through positive parenting practices and a supportive home environment, families can make a significant contribution to shaping students who are not only academically competent but also morally responsible and socially aware individuals.

Within the Indonesian educational framework, the concept of *ing ngarso sung tulodo* highlights the centrality of exemplary behavior, indicating that effective character education involves not only moral instruction but also sustained role modeling (Dewantara, 1930; Lickona, 1991). Research findings further demonstrate that supportive family settings and positive parent–child interactions significantly influence the development of empathy, responsibility, and emotional regulation (Coatsworth et al., 2010; Weissberg et al., 2015). Beyond the family, character development is shaped by wider social contexts, where schools and communities function as structured environments that reinforce moral values and facilitate prosocial behavior (Azis et al., 2024; Wanti & Darmawan, 2024; Putri et al., 2025). Consequently, integrating character education across family, school, and community domains is essential to ensure consistency and maximize developmental outcomes (OECD, 2022).

This issue becomes more significant when linked to earlier findings that describe character development as a complex process influenced by multiple social contexts. From an ecological perspective, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that the relationship between

different microsystems such as family and school, which form the mesosystem, plays an important role in maintaining consistency in children's development. When both environments support similar values and expectations, children are more likely to experience stability. In contrast, differences between home and school may create confusion and make it harder for students to fully understand and internalize moral values. In addition, this idea is supported by social learning theory. Albert Bandura (1977) states that children learn behavior by observing and imitating people around them. If what they see at school does not match what they experience at home, they may receive mixed messages that reduce the effectiveness of character education. On the other hand, when both environments provide consistent examples, children are more likely to adopt and apply positive values in their daily behavior.

Furthermore, research findings show that cooperation between families and schools has a strong impact on students' character development. OECD (2022) reports that collaboration between parents and schools can improve students' social-emotional skills, such as empathy, responsibility, and self-control. Likewise, Thomas Lickona (1991) emphasizes that character education becomes more effective when moral values are consistently reinforced across different environments, especially at home and at school. Therefore, improving communication and cooperation between families and schools is an important step to address the gaps found in previous studies. Through regular interaction, shared understanding, and joint programs, both environments can build a more unified approach to character development. As a result, students will have a clearer understanding of values and be more consistent in applying them in their everyday lives.

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations. First, this research is based solely on a literature review and does not involve primary data collection, which may limit the depth of empirical validation. Second, the study relies on selected sources within a specific time range, which may not fully represent all existing perspectives on character education. Third, the analysis focuses on general patterns across studies without examining specific contextual differences such as cultural or institutional variations. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate empirical methods, expand the scope of data sources,

and explore contextual factors to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of character development.

5) CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that students' character is shaped by multiple environments, with the family serving as the primary context through early value internalization, consistent guidance, and everyday interactions. However, character development is not limited to the family; it is reinforced through the interaction of school and community environments, where structured learning experiences and social engagement strengthen moral values. The alignment of these contexts is therefore essential to ensure consistency in behavioral expectations and value formation.

The findings highlight the importance of an integrated approach to character education, in which parents, educators, and the broader community collaboratively create supportive and cohesive environments. This implies that strengthening collaboration across these contexts should become a key focus of educational practices and policies. Such synergy is crucial for fostering students' moral integrity, social responsibility, and long-term developmental outcomes, while also providing direction for future research on effective strategies to enhance cross-context collaboration.

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