



Teacher Competencies in Character Strengthening for Early Childhood

Siti Aisyah¹

Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia¹

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21009/JPUD.172.04>

Accepted: June - October 2023; Published: November 30th, 2023

ABSTRACT: Character education is very basic education for young children to instill moral values to prevent unacceptable behavior. Children can absorb good character if they are in a supportive environment, for this reason, schools should understand and implement character education in the learning process. This research aims to see how teachers apply the character values of responsibility, honesty, discipline, love and affection, caring, courage, independence, hard work, cooperation, courtesy, justice, self-control, and tolerance. This survey method research uses two types of mixed data (Mixed method) with data collection techniques through observations, types of tasks, and performance assessments. The respondents for this research were 49 teachers involving 112 children. The results of research with a regression model of 0.7895 shows that the variables Responsibility, Honesty, Discipline, Caring, Courage, Independence, Hard Work, Cooperation, Politeness, Fairness, Self-Control, and Tolerance can explain the diversity of children's characters by 78.95%. while the rest is explained by other variables outside the model. Character values can be taught optimally in the school environment based on the teacher's ability to implement them. Through character education at school, children can also instill a positive outlook on life.

Keywords: Teacher competency, Character Strengthening, Early Childhood

¹ Corresponding Author:
Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia
Department of Early Childhood Education
Email: sitia@ecampus.ut.ac.id

1 INTRODUCTION

Fearing that in the age of Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence and information technology will take the position of instructors in the classroom, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture organized a discussion on fostering learning innovations by providing teachers with the most expansive role imaginable. Teachers are the leaders of a vast educational system that engages with pupils, which makes this discussion intriguing (Adi et al., 2020). Teachers are learning managers and play a significant part in shaping students' personalities. Teachers can build three extra competencies on the foundation of personality competencies. When considering components of learning theory and the state of knowledge about small social group management, teacher personality is the best place to start (Backman & Barker, 2020).

A human resources-focused development strategy is necessary to create a developed, independent, and successful nation. A nation's ability to adapt to change and promote positive change will depend on the quality of its people resources, which will ultimately determine how well that nation develops. Making smart people is simply one aspect of developing high-quality human resources; it is also important to make sure that these citizens have positive personalities and moral character. Character development is crucial for producing top-notch human resources (Puspitasari et al., 2021).

Character development involves the growth of good behavior, attitude, and demeanor (Rokhman et al., 2014). Children can lay a solid future foundation by developing their character. Character development strives to teach people about moral principles and deter wrongdoing (Coyne, 2009), from an early age, one must develop and nurture good character. Since it enhances children's ability to develop their potential and talents, character development is a fundamental education that should be initiated at a young age (Sudaryanti, 2015). Children need to be in a good and encouraging atmosphere to comprehend and apply character formation. Since families are where children have their first encounters with other people, Sudaryanti (2015) discovered that families are the primary and most significant source of character education for children. Mother, father, and siblings are all possible influences on a child's character development process. When character education is properly implemented in the home, kids can grow up with a good attitude toward life.

Think believe establishing excellent character early on is easier because children's cerebral development and capacity for knowledge absorption are still extremely strong. According to Anggraini (2021) the family plays a significant part in forming a child's character, including their speech and behavior patterns. In addition, schools help youngsters develop their character, especially considering the teachers' dominant role. According to its purpose, the family must take care of its members, give them emotional and material support, and carry out specific household duties (Lestari, 2012, as cited in Children require supportive and helpful parents, especially when it comes to parents' responsibilities as educators, mentors, and helpers.

Children require supportive and helpful parents, especially when it comes to parents' responsibilities as educators and mentors and in assisting kids in overcoming obstacles and challenges (Anggraini, 2021). Children's mental health, well-being, and ability to form relationships with others can all be maintained by helping them develop loving, caring, and forgiving character traits (Haslip et al., 2020). Adults must, however, behave in these roles and model them for kids to assist them in developing these personalities (Haslip et al., 2020). Children and young people need to have the chance to express their thoughts and feelings and accomplish what they want to do, a trustworthy relationship between adults and children is essential for children. Another is tolerating other Children need to adopt this mentality to succeed in their social lives and adapt to their surroundings. Based on the research background and several relevant studies, this research aims to see how teachers apply the character values of responsibility, honesty, discipline, love and affection, caring, courage, independence, hard work, cooperation, courtesy, justice, self-control, and tolerance.

2 THEORETICAL STUDY

There is no denying that teachers have high expectations for their students' success. According to earlier studies, teachers with high expectations have a different influence than those with low expectations for student achievement (Flanagan et al., 2020). Teachers' personalities change throughout their lives because of environmental and genetic factors, including cultural context (Kim & Sasaki, 2017). Effective teaching is influenced by certain personality traits (Fabbro et al., 2020). The personality types of teachers are significantly correlated. The most accurate temperament types to predict teaching effectiveness are intuition-sensing ones (Gordon & Yocke, 1999). Pupils enjoy thinking and intuition during the learning process as well as thinking, feeling, and intuition during the teaching process (Akdeniz, 2016). The effectiveness of experienced teachers is substantially higher than that of less experienced ones. The findings of the earlier research suggest that when selecting models, techniques, and instructional materials, including character education—which is crucial in the digital age—teachers' personalities become a deciding factor. It is important to investigate teachers' personalities and how they affect character education, given these findings and the ways that Generation Z's learning has changed in the disruption era.

Character education is identified with outstanding traits or personality in a person. The Oxford Dictionary defines character education as mental and moral qualities peculiar to a person and the true nature of a person. It is clear from the previous description that personality competence is an attribute of the teacher that represents a mature, strong, respectable, steady, and smart personality. Students will undoubtedly be able to model concepts from a character like this. Students often use their teachers as role models when they have a strong personality. A teacher must lead by example by speaking and acting in a virtuous manner. Students will feel content, at ease, and engaged in the lessons being taught because of the teacher's personality competencies. Ultimately, the teacher's

intention to deliver content will be more readily accepted, and the outcomes will be optimized. The relationship between teacher personality competence and character education will certainly be carried out well if the teacher also has good personality competence. If a teacher possesses strong personality competence, the relationship between personality competence and character education will undoubtedly be successful.

Davidson et al., (2010) suggests that character is a way of thinking and behaving that characterizes everyone to live and work together, both within the scope of family, society, nation, and State. Individuals with good character are individuals who can make decisions and are ready to account for every consequence of the decisions they make. Character education is ethics plus education, which involves reasoning (cognitive), affective (feeling), and action (action). Character education is a system of instilling values to educators, students, and education staff both formal, non-formal and informal which includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to implement values, both towards God Almighty (YME), oneself, others, the environment, and nationality so that they become whole people. Based on the description above, it can be summarized that character education is the education of values, ethics, morals, character, which aims to develop the ability of students to make good and bad decisions, maintain what is good, and realize good in everyday life wholeheartedly.

3 METHOD

The survey method is a method that is deliberately used to collect primary data using oral and written questions. This survey method requires interaction and relationships between researchers and research subjects to obtain the necessary data. The data collection technique uses two types of mixed data (Mixed method) which will be carried out in 2023 through observations, types of tasks, and performance assessments. There were 112 children observed and involved 49 teachers from nine provinces in Indonesia.

3.1 *Character Education Values in Activity Planning*

As a basis for the implementation of character education values in the preparation of lesson plans, ECCE educators need to pay attention to the competence of educators and their students. This needs to be done so that development activities are in accordance with the ability of educators and in accordance with the level of development of students.

Table 1. Competence of ECCE (TK) Educators

Competencies/Sub competencies	Indicators	
1. Personality Competencies	1.1.1	Love children sincerely.
1.1 Behave and behave in accordance with the psychological needs of the child.	1.1.2	Behave patiently, calmly, cheerfully, and attentively.
	1.1.3	Have sensitivity, responsiveness, and humor to children's behavior.
	1.1.4	Presenting oneself as a mature, wise, and wise person.
	1.1.5	Clean, healthy, and neat appearance.
	1.1.6	Behave courteously, respect, and protect children.

Competencies/Sub competencies	Indicators	
1.2 Behave and behave in accordance with the norms of religion, culture, and beliefs of the child.	1.2.1	Respect learners regardless of beliefs, ethnicity, culture, and gender.
	1.2.2	Behave in accordance with religious norms, laws, and social norms prevailing in society.
	1.2.3	Develop students' attitudes to respect other religions and cultures.
1.3 Presenting oneself as a virtuous person	1.3.1	Behave honestly.
	1.3.2	Responsible for duties.
	1.3.3	Behave as an example.
2. Professional Competence		
2.1 Understand the stages of child development.	2.1.1	Understand the continuity of the level of development of children aged 0 – 6 years.
	2.1.2	Understand the standards of the child's developmental achievement level.
	2.1.3	Understand that every child has a different level of developmental achievement speed.
	2.1.4	Understand the inhibiting and supporting factors of developmental achievement levels.
2.2 Understand the growth and development of children.	2.2.1	Understand the physical-motor, cognitive, language, social-emotional, and moral aspects of religious development.
	2.2.2	Understand the factors that inhibit and support the above aspects of development.
	2.2.3	Understand the signs of abnormalities in every aspect of child development.
	2.2.4	Know the nutritional needs of children according to age.
	2.2.5	Understand how to monitor child nutrition, health and safety.
	2.2.6	Knowing the parenting style that is appropriate for the age of the child.
	2.2.7	Get to know the uniqueness of children.
2.3 Understand the provision of educational, nurturing, and protective stimuli.	2.3.1	Recognize ways of providing stimulation in education, parenting, and protection in general.
	2.3.2	Have skills in providing stimulation in every aspect of development.
2.4 Build cooperation with parents in education, care, and child protection.	2.4.1	Recognize the factors of childcare, family socioeconomics, and social society that support and inhibit child development.
	2.4.2	Communicate the institution's programs (education, parenting, and child protection) to parents.
	2.4.3	Increase parental involvement in programs at the institution.
	2.4.4	Increase the continuity of the institution's program with the family environment.
3. Pedagogic competence		
3.1. Planning educational, nurturing, and protective program activities	3.1.1	Prepare plans for annual, semester, monthly, weekly, and daily activities.
	3.1.2	Establish play activities that support the child's developmental achievement level.
	3.1.3	Plan activities organized by age group.

Competencies/Sub competencies	Indicators
3.2. Carry out the process of education, upbringing, and protection.	3.2.1. Manage activities according to a plan drawn up by age group.
	3.2.2. Using learning methods through play according to the characteristics of children.
	3.2.3. Choose and use media that is appropriate for the activities and conditions of the child.
	3.2.4. Provide motivation to increase children's involvement in activities.
	3.2.5. Provide guidance according to the needs of the child.
3.3. Carry out assessments of educational, parenting, and protection processes and outcomes.	3.3.1. Choose ways of assessment that are in accordance with the goals to be achieved.
	3.3.2. Carry out assessment activities in accordance with predetermined methods.
	3.3.3. Processing assessment results.
	3.3.4. Use assessment results for various educational purposes.
	3.3.5. Document assessment results.
4. Social Competence	
4.1 Adapt to the environment.	4.1.1 Adjust to peers.
	4.1.2 Obey the rules of the institution.
	4.1.3. Adjusting to the surrounding community.
	4.1.4. Accommodating to students, parents, peers from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
4.2 Communicate effectively	4.2.1 Communicate empathically with parents of students.
	4.2.2 Communicate effectively with students, both physically, verbally, and non-verbally.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Result*

4.1.1

The total number of teachers who filled out this questionnaire was 49 people. Of the total, 97.96% is dominated by women, while the remaining 2.04% are men (see figure 1). This data shows that ECCE teachers are still dominated by female teachers, even though early childhood education is considered important in gender roles because currently, children begin to act according to gender roles that apply to society. Currently, children begin to learn, understand, and apply roles that are considered appropriate for themselves. Knowledge of gender is very important for the development of children's self-identity in the future. In the process of instilling proper gender identity, a male teacher figure is needed in early childhood education.

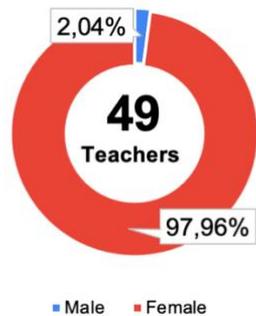


Figure 1. Number of Teachers Filling Questionnaire by Gender

The number of teachers who filled out the questionnaire based on the level of education was dominated by teachers with the last education of S1 / D4, which was 27 people. The second place is teachers with the last education, namely high school / vocational school with a total of 19 people. While the least is a teacher with the last education is S2, which is 3 people. Teacher education background can also be said to be academic qualifications, where qualifications encourage someone to have a special skill or ability. In the world of education, qualifications are understood as special skills or skills in the field of education. The improvement of these qualifications can be improved, among others, through formal education. Data shows that teachers with S1/D4 backgrounds are still dominated, in accordance with government regulations that teachers must have at least S1/D4 qualifications (see figure 2).

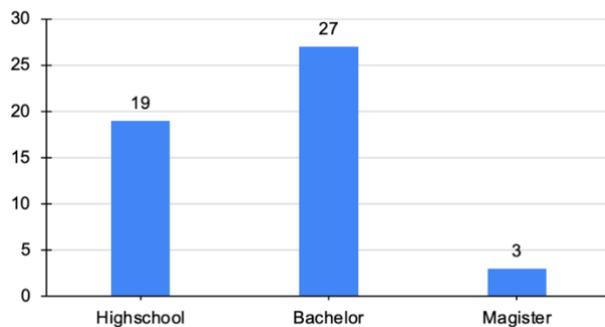


Figure 2. Number of Teachers who filled out the Questionnaire based on Education Level

The highest number of teachers who filled out the questionnaire based on the Teaching Duration Category were teachers who had less than 5 years of teaching experience with a total of 18 people (see figure 3). The second place is teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience with a total of 14 people. Next is a teacher with a teaching duration between 10.1 to 15 years with a total of 11 years. While the least are teachers with long experience teaching 5 to 10 years with a total of 6 people. Teaching experience is the most important part that affects the performance of educators or teachers when carrying out teaching. Teachers who are accompanied by good work experience, are expected to realize good enough performance and vice versa if not equipped with sufficient experience in carrying out their duties, the teacher will experience obstacles in carrying out their duties. The data shows that teachers who teach vary in the length of teaching, but their teaching experience has become a provision in supporting their teaching success.

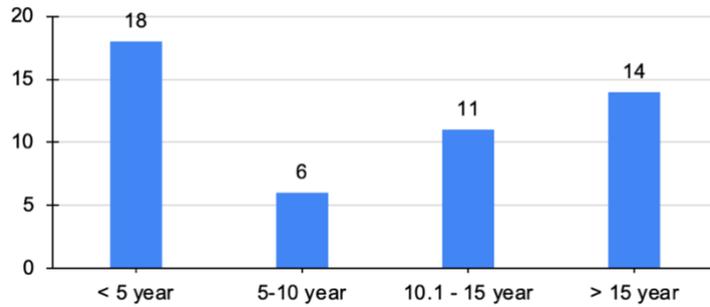


Figure 3. Number of Teachers who filled out the Questionnaire based on the Teaching Duration Category (Year)

The highest number of teachers who filled out the questionnaire based on the province of residence was in West Java Province with 30 people. The second place is Teachers who live in Banten Province with a total of 7 people. While the provinces where there is only 1 person who fills the instrument are the Provinces of Central Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, Riau, West Kalimantan, and DKI Jakarta (see figure 4).

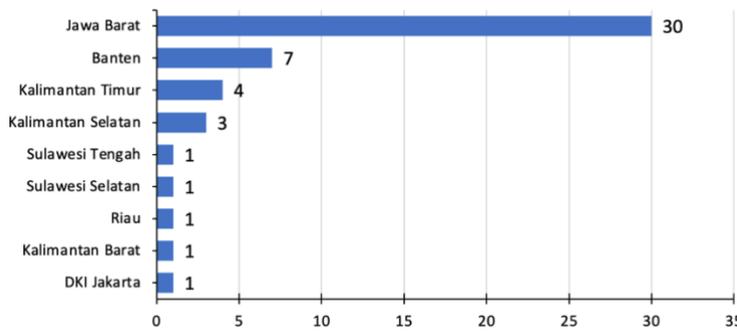


Figure 4. Number of teachers filling out questionnaire based on province of residence.

The total number of children assessed in this questionnaire amounted to 112 children. The number of children by age category is mostly dominated by the age between 6 to 7 years as much as 54%. The second place is children aged 5 to 6 years, which is as much as 23%. Furthermore, as many as 14% are children with the age of more than 7 years. While the least is children aged 3 to 5 years, which is as much as 9% (see figure 4).

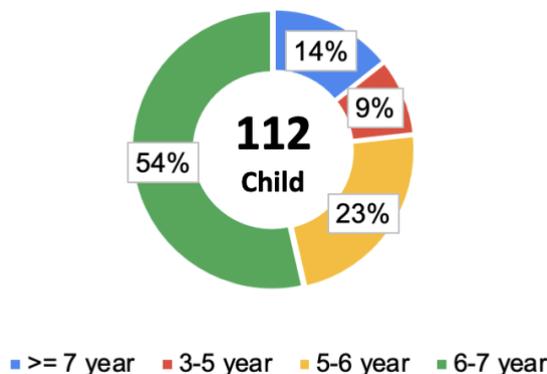


Figure 5. Number of Children assessed by Age Category (Years)

4.2 Analysis of Factors that Influence Children's Character

Analysis of factors affecting the child's character using Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The data used is scored for each indicator variable and then summed to represent each main variable. The results of multiple linear regression analysis can be seen as follows:

Table 2. Results of multiple linear regression analysis

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t State</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	2.604	0.727	3.584	0.001*
Responsibility	-0.157	0.110	-1.427	0.157
Honesty	0.252	0.146	1.723	0.088
Discipline	0.062	0.070	0.898	0.371
Concern	0.378	0.067	5.621	0.000*
Bold	-0.109	0.058	-1.893	0.061
independence	-0.096	0.054	-1.776	0.079
Strive	0.337	0.119	2.821	0.006*
Cooperation	0.498	0.160	3.106	0.002*
Manners	0.006	0.164	0.039	0.969
Justice	0.019	0.154	0.126	0.900
Self-control	0.123	0.124	0.992	0.324
Tolerance	-0.124	0.091	-1.360	0.177

Description: *) significant at 5% significance level

From the results of the analysis above, the variables Caring, hard work, and mutual aid have a p-value of < 0.05 , so the decision is to reject H_0 . Therefore, it can be concluded that care, hard work, and mutual assistance have a positive and significant influence on children's character at a significance level of 5%. In addition to these 3 variables, it does not have a significant effect on the child's character at the level of significance of 5%.

Table 3. Benefits of Multiple Linear Regression Models

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
R Square	0.8123
Adjusted R Square	0.7895
Observations	112

The model goodness test above, it can be seen that the Adjusted R Square value of the regression model is 0.7895. It can be concluded that the variables of Responsibility, Honesty, Discipline, Caring, Courage, Independence, Hard Work, Mutual Assistance, Courtesy, Justice, Self-Control, and Tolerance are able to explain the diversity of children's character by 78.95% while the rest are explained by other variables outside the model.

4.3 Discussion

Even though early childhood education is important for gender roles because it is during this time that children start to act in ways that conform to societal gender norms, the data indicates that female teachers still make up most of ECCE teachers. At this age, kids start to pick up, comprehend, and put into practice roles that are deemed suitable for

them. Children's future self-identity development greatly depends on their understanding of gender. Early childhood education requires a male teacher figure to instill proper gender identity. The learning characteristics of new generation, which comprises junior and senior high school students today, have also led to changes in the personality competencies that teachers today need to possess. This is most likely the result of a paradigm shift in the current generation and how they learn. The changing makeup of the generation that teachers are teaching should motivate them to learn even more. To implement effective learning strategies, they must think about and select them (Jovanović et al., 2017). They also play a significant part in shaping students' personalities (Roth & Christine, 2020). In addition, educators manage learning (Castillo-Gualda et al., 2019). The qualities of teachers account for a significant portion of the variation in teaching quality (Canales & Maldonado, 2018).

The character values in this study are focused on four values, namely honesty, intelligence, toughness, and caring. The four values will then be described in more depth. Honesty can be defined as the act of expressing actual feelings, thoughts, and deeds of either a positive or negative nature, profitable or detrimental. This honest attitude is based on responsibility and the belief that the universe and life follow socially following the law of rational cause and effect. Based on this description, the Honesty indicator can be described as follows, in accordance with reality, rational, objective, as it is, and open. Because being honest means revealing the truth or in accordance with reality. Natural and social laws follow the rational laws of cause and effect. Thus, one of the characteristics of honesty is rational. Every human being has positive and negative sides so honesty must be viewed from two aspects, both positive aspects that are beneficial, and negative aspects that are harmful. Thus, to express objectivity it is necessary for data as it is, not exaggerated or reduced. Covering weaknesses makes the assessment not objective, so to assess honesty there needs to be an indicator of openness.

Teachers in developing student character need to pay attention to the Character Education Method used. There are four-character education learning methods, namely values in the refrigerator, example, facilitation, and skills development. Values in enchantment are the instillation of values indirectly, for example developing values through learning or parenting activities in early childhood. Indeed, the activities carried out for early childhood, both in kindergarten, are full of instilling character values. However, educators or caregivers need to re-establish it by focusing or emphasizing what values will be instilled. At this stage, the child's abilities are only at the stage of knowing well. An example is modeling. Facilitate providing the widest possible opportunities for students to absorb knowledge and examples that they can obtain both from teachers/caregivers and from their peers. At this stage, students are already at the stage of loving goodness.

5 CONCLUSION

Skills development is an effort to improve the character education they already have to a higher level, meaning that students have internalized values in everyday life (acting

well). Based on the data and analysis results, it can be concluded that the variables Responsibility, Honesty, Discipline, Caring, Courage, Independence, Hard Work, Cooperation, Politeness, Justice, Self-Control, and Tolerance can explain the diversity of children's characters by 78.95% while the rest is explained by other variables outside the model. Factors that influence the development of other children's characters can be examined in further research.

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