

## Implementation of Ethics in Fostering Student Character in Schools

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### ARTICLE INFO

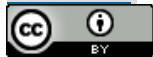
*Keywords:* Ethics, Character, Students, School

*Received* : 09, June

*Revised* : 11, July

*Accepted* : 13, August

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### ABSTRACT

In today's educational landscape, schools play a crucial role not only in academic instruction but also in developing students' character. This study investigates the integration of ethical values into classroom activities and its impact on student character development. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through observations, interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of school documents related to value-based education. The findings reveal that values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and respect significantly influence students' behavior when consistently applied. Teachers serve as key moral role models by embodying ethical behavior and applying empathetic teaching practices. A positive school environment marked by clear rules, safety, and respectful relationships further supports character growth. The study concludes that embedding ethical values into educational practices is an effective approach to nurturing morally upright and intellectually capable students.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the midst of increasingly advanced times, the world of education is not only faced with challenges in improving academic aspects, but also in forming students who have strong character and ethics. Globalization, technological advances, and socio-cultural changes have a major influence on the mindset and behavior of today's younger generation. Students are now increasingly influenced by external values that come from outside the home and school environment, such as digital media, popular culture trends, and lifestyles that are instantaneous and often far from moral values (Tutuop, 2023). Various problems begin to appear in the educational environment, such as reduced respect for teachers, increased bullying, lack of social care among students, and weak responsibility in carrying out school assignments. This situation reflects that the education process has not been able to fully develop aspects of character, especially in terms of ethical and moral values that should be the main foundation.

Ethics itself is an important element in the formation of student character. It includes principles and values that serve as guidelines for behavior, both in academic, social, and spiritual contexts (I, 2021). However, the implementation of ethics in schools is often not carried out properly. In practice, ethics education is only inserted into certain subjects without reinforcement through real activities that can shape students' habits. This problem is increasingly complex when some educators are not fully aware of their role as role models in instilling ethics, and the character development program that is carried out continuously in schools is not optimal. In fact, ethics-based character education is very much needed to produce a generation that is not only intellectually superior, but also has moral integrity and emotional stability. The main goal of character education is to instill good values that include moral, social, emotional, and spiritual realms. (Deak and Mengga 2023) These values are expected to shape students into individuals who are honest, responsible, disciplined, tolerant, and respectful of others. Character is not formed in a short time, but through habituation that is carried out continuously in a

conducive learning environment. (Deak and Mengga 2023) However, there are still real challenges in implementing character education in schools. Not all schools have policies or programs that are directed at character development, and not a few teachers are not equipped with special skills in teaching ethical values applicably. Therefore, more planned and sustainable steps are needed so that schools are truly able to carry out their function as shapers of student character.

In recent years, the issue of weakening character of students in Indonesia has continued to be in the spotlight of the wider community. Negative behaviors that emerge, both in and outside of school, reflect the suboptimal understanding and practice of ethical values by students. Various research reports and news in the mass media show a decrease in awareness of moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and respect for others (Marpaung, 2023). One of them is the problem of bullying which also reflects the weak character of students. According to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), in 2022 it was recorded that 22% of complaints of child violence occurred in educational environments, either by other students or teachers. The forms of bullying that occur include teasing, social exclusion, physical violence, and verbal violence. This shows low empathy and a lack of mutual respect among students, in addition to another worrying phenomenon is the misuse of social media by students. Many videos circulating show students being rude to teachers, creating negative content, and even recording acts of violence to share in order to gain public attention. This shows the importance of learning digital ethics in facing the challenges of rapid technological and communication developments.

Research on the application of ethics in the formation of student character in the school environment has a high urgency, especially when looking at the current condition of education which is faced with complex moral challenges. Although the national education system continues to develop, both in terms of curriculum and teaching methods, the reality on the ground shows that the character aspect has not fully received proportional attention. Through research on the application of ethics in character education, it is hoped that a broader understanding of how moral values such as honesty, discipline, tolerance and responsibility can be integrated in various school activities, both in the classroom and in social interactions between students can be obtained. This research is also important to assess the extent to which the role of teachers as role models can help students apply these values in their daily lives and how the school environment as a whole can support the growth of positive character. (Purnama, Deak, and Siwalette 2022).

Therefore, the cultivation of student character through the application of ethics includes values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect. These values become the basis in forming individuals who have integrity and are able to play a positive role in social life. When ethical values are consistently applied in the learning process and daily interactions at school, students will develop not only academically, but also emotionally and morally. However, the application of ethics in education is still faced with a number of obstacles, such as the lack of role models from educators, the lack of social supervision, and the lack of maximum implementation of character education programs. With the proper and sustainable application of ethical values, schools are expected to produce young people who not only excel in knowledge, but also have noble character and are socially responsible. Therefore, the integration of ethics in the education process is the main foundation in developing students' character that is resilient and able to compete in the midst of global challenges.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive type. This approach was chosen to understand in depth how ethical values and student character are applied in the school environment. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, views, and processes that occur in the formation of student character as a whole by considering the social and cultural aspects of the school as the background of the study. The location of the study was at a high school in the SMA Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli Utara area, which was chosen because the school has an active and organized character building program.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Implementation is the stage of carrying out a plan, policy, program, or system that aims to realize previously designed targets. (Deak, Didin Wahidin<sup>2</sup>, and Rita Sulistini 2022) This process involves changing ideas or concepts into practical steps that can be applied. In practice, implementation does not only focus on technical aspects, but also considers support from various elements such as manpower, funds, technology, and cooperation between related parties. The level of success of implementation is greatly influenced by the quality of planning and execution, as well as the ability to adapt to various obstacles and changes that may occur during the process. (Simanjuntak 2023).

Ethics is a part of philosophy that studies values and norms as a basis for humans in taking attitudes and acting. In terms of language, the term "ethics" comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means habits, traits, or lifestyle. In the development of its meaning, ethics is now known as a science that traces human actions in terms of good or bad, as well as the moral reasons behind these assessments. In general, ethics does not simply assess an action as right or wrong, but also traces the reasons behind the assessment. Ethics is a reference for humans to evaluate their actions, both in personal and social life. Therefore, ethics can be seen as a logical thinking process that seeks to understand the moral principles that guide human life, and how these principles can be realized in everyday behavior.

According to experts, Franz Magnis-Suseno stated that ethics is a form of deep reflection on human actions, which aims to enable humans to understand the values that must be used as a guideline for life, Aristotle views ethics as part of philosophy. According to him, ethics is rooted from good habits formed through continuous practice, to becoming part of a person's character in living a moral life. Immanuel Kant He introduced the concept of "categorical imperative", which is the principle that ethical actions are universally applicable (Marzuki., 2011). Depending on the outcome or consequences of such actions, Socrates sees ethics as an attempt to find the true good in human life. is a person who does not know what is right, K. Bertens also emphasized that ethics is a science that investigates morality, that is, whether human actions are in harmony with ethical norms or not. think to determine whether a behavior is morally justifiable (Sari, 2020).

In terms of origin, the term "character" comes from the Greek word *kharakter*, which means "sign" or "stamp" (Tuturop H., 2023). Over time, this meaning has developed into a term to indicate a distinctive identity that distinguishes a person from other individuals, both in the way they think, feel, and act. Character does not appear suddenly, but is formed through a long process influenced by various factors, such as education, family environment, culture, social interaction, and life experiences. Character can also be interpreted as a combination of various attitudes, values, traits, and habits that grow within a person and are reflected through real actions in everyday life. Character reflects a person's identity, especially in terms of morals, ethics, and how to live life that is carried out consistently and continuously. In the world of education, character not only concerns intellectual abilities, but also touches on the emotional and moral realms, which play a major role in shaping the personality and integrity of students (Nainggolan, 2021). In character are contained fundamental values such as honesty, sense of responsibility, cooperation, empathy, discipline, tolerance, and respect for others. These values are the foundation in forming positive

behavioral patterns, and are very important to be realized in community life, besides that, character is also often juxtaposed with the concept of integrity, namely the harmony between what is thought, said, and done. In other words, character is an essential element in a person that is formed from the process of understanding and applying good values.

Students are individuals who are undergoing formal education, especially at the elementary to secondary education levels such as Elementary School (SD), Middle School (SMP), to Senior High School or Vocational School (SMA/SMK). In general, the term student is used to refer to learners who are actively involved in the learning process in the school environment and are usually in the age group of children to adolescents. Based on the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, students are pupils who are officially registered in elementary and secondary education units to participate in organized learning activities (Purwanto, 2017).

In the realm of education, students are not only considered as recipients of learning materials, but also as the main actors in the learning process. Students are expected to be able to develop all their potential, including intellectual, emotional, spiritual intelligence, and social skills. Education does not merely function to convey knowledge, but also plays a role in forming attitudes and personalities that become provisions in students' lives. Therefore, the educational approach to students must cover all important aspects of humans, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Etymologically, the word "school" comes from the Latin *schola* and Greek *scholé*, which originally meant free time or activities for learning and thinking (Wikipedia, 2018). In further developments, school refers to a place or institution where the formal education process is carried out, with a structured curriculum, teaching methods, and levels of education.

In a broad sense, schools are formal educational institutions that are systematically organized to support the learning process for students. Schools not only function as a place to gain knowledge, but also as a social space where students learn to live together, appreciate differences, and develop national and humanitarian values. At school, students are taught to communicate, work together, make decisions, and solve problems, both individually and in groups. Schools are also an important place in character formation, because here students are taught to be disciplined, value time, respect others, and be responsible. Schools are divided into several definitions:

Formal education refers to the educational process that is carried out regularly and in stages, starting from elementary school to higher education. Learning activities in this education are carried out in official institutions such as schools and universities, following the national curriculum that has been determined by the government. The evaluation process is carried out through an assessment and examination system, and students who successfully complete the level of education will receive a diploma as an official sign of graduation. This system is handled by professional educators and runs according to national education standards (T. Lestari, 2020).

Non-formal education is a learning activity that is carried out outside the formal education system and has a more flexible nature. This education is usually organized by community institutions, organizations, or certain groups to help participants acquire practical skills, such as computer courses, job training, or equivalency education (Syaadah, 2022). Even though they do not attend formal education, participants can still get certificates as recognition of their participation and success in the program. The main focus of non-formal education is to support functional abilities, especially for community groups that are not served by formal education.

Informal education is a learning process that takes place informally and naturally, usually occurring in the context of everyday life, especially in the family and social environment. This education is not organized by official institutions, does not have a fixed curriculum, and does not provide certificates or diplomas. However, through interaction with parents, friends, or media such as television and the internet, a person can acquire various values, attitudes, and basic knowledge that are important in life (Kusmiran, 2022).

### ***Informal Education Plays a Major Role in Shaping the Character and Habits of Individuals from an Early Age***

It is a training institution organized by the government, private parties, or social institutions that focus on developing work skills for the community. The main target of this institution is individuals who are looking for work or who want to improve their professional skills. The training programs offered by BLK are technical and practical, covering various skills such as automotive, computers, refrigeration engineering, make-up, welding, sewing, and so on (Nuraeni, 2023). Training materials are generally adjusted to national competency standards and the needs of the industrial sector. After completing the training, participants will receive a skills certificate that can be used to apply for jobs or start a business independently.

Non-Formal Education (PLS) is a form of education that takes place outside the formal education system and is flexible in nature, not following a certain level. Its main objective is to provide learning opportunities to all levels of society so that they are able to develop their potential, improve their quality of life, and actively participate in social development. PLS includes various activities, including literacy eradication programs, equal education such as Packages A, B, and C, life skills training, skills courses, counseling, and community-based learning activities such as those carried out at PKBM (Community Learning Activity Centers) and TBM (Community Reading Parks). This program is intended for those who are not

covered by formal education, including school dropouts, adults who do not yet have the ability to read and write, housewives, and other marginalized community groups. This education plays an important role in encouraging equal access to education and empowering communities through learning that is relevant to real life.

### ***The Relationship Between Ethics and Character Values in Fostering Student Character in Schools***

The relationship between ethics and character in education is very closely intertwined because ethics provides a value base which is then internalized and lived by individuals as character. For example, someone who understands ethically that honesty is a good thing, will be encouraged to make honesty part of his character, and act honestly in everyday life. In other words, ethics becomes the foundation of thinking, while character becomes the real reflection of the application of ethical values in life. In the context of education, the combination of ethics learning and character building is very important. Schools are no longer just a place to transfer knowledge, but also a social institution that shapes the personality and morality of students. Ethics education can be delivered through formal lessons such as Pancasila Education, religion, and citizenship, but what is more important is how these values are integrated in all aspects of school life, including interactions between teachers and students, and school policies (Deak, 2022).

### ***Implementation of Ethical Values in Developing Students' Character in Schools***

The implementation of ethics in schools refers to the application of moral principles and ethical values in all aspects of school life, both in the learning process, interactions between individuals, and policies implemented by the school (Deak, Implementation of the Code of Ethics in Improving the Professionalism of Christian Religious Education Teachers, 2023).

The purpose of the implementation of ethics in schools is to create an environment that supports the moral and social development of students, while forming good character, such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and empathy.

One way to implement ethics in schools is through the curriculum taught to students. Subjects that focus on ethical values, such as Pancasila Education, religious education, and citizenship, provide a basic understanding of the importance of acting in accordance with the values of truth and justice. However, the implementation of ethics in schools is not limited to teaching materials alone. Schools also serve as places of learning through example. Teachers in schools are expected to set a good example in applying ethics in their daily lives. Teachers' exemplary behavior is crucial because students tend to mimic the behaviors and attitudes they observe around them. Therefore, teachers must demonstrate fairness, honesty, responsibility, and respect for students' rights in every interaction. At a broader level, collaboration between schools, parents, and the community is also essential in applying ethics in schools. Good communication between schools and parents can ensure that the ethical values taught at school are also applied at home, making ethics an integral part of students' daily lives supported by family and community. (Guntur Mukti, Victor Deak, Shania Chukwu 2020) Overall, the implementation of ethics in schools aims to create an environment that supports not only students' academic intelligence but also their moral character development. By incorporating ethical values into various aspects of school life, it is hoped that students will grow into responsible, honest, fair, and caring individuals who can contribute positively to society (Deak V., 2022).

### ***The Impact of the Implementation of Ethical Values on Student Character in Schools***

The influence of ethical education in schools on the character development of students is significant and encompasses various aspects of personal growth. One of the most noticeable effects of ethical education is the emergence of moral awareness in students (Simanjuntak et al. 2021). Through education that teaches the importance of values such as honesty, a sense of responsibility, mutual respect, and concern for others, students begin to understand the meaning of acting rightly not out of fear of punishment, but out of a moral awareness that grows from within themselves (Deak V., *The Role of Christian Religious Education in Maintaining Social Interaction in Multicultural Society in Indonesia*, 2022). The ethics instilled in the school environment help students make these values part of their identity, so that students can determine their attitudes based on the standards of goodness they have understood. Additionally, the application of ethics in schools also contributes to building students' ability to establish good social relationships. Through learning and example, students learn to accept differences and act fairly. Therefore, the application of ethics in schools not only shapes positive behavior during the educational period but also serves as a strong foundation for the overall development of students' character. The ethical values instilled in them will serve as a guide in making decisions, behaving, and interacting at every stage of life.

### ***Obstacles to the Implementation of Ethical Values in Fostering Student Character in Schools***

One of the main obstacles is the lack of exemplarism from educators and education personnel and also the weakening of the integration of ethical values in the curriculum and teaching methods. The development of technology and social media also presents its own challenges, many students spend time on social or other digital media that do not always present content that is in accordance with ethical values. In addition, schools

that are too oriented towards academic achievement tend to pay less attention to character education.

So in overcoming this obstacle, it is necessary to cooperate between educators and educators by taking a sustainable approach so as to create a supportive environment, instill value consistently, and involve all elements of education that are able to make a real contribution. (Tatang and Deak 2022).

#### **Interview Results**

Title: Application of Ethics in Shaping the Character of Students at SMA Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli Utara

Activity Date: Thursday, May 8, 2025

Resource person: Mrs. Yuliana Zega, S.Pd.Guru BK

Interviewer: Susi Erni Wati Zega

Based on the results of the interview, Mrs. Yuliana said that the implementation of ethics at SMA Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli Utara is an integral part of the educational process. Ethical values are not only given theoretically in certain subjects, but are instilled in various aspects of school life. Through school culture, routine activities, and interactions between students and teachers, values such as responsibility, discipline, and politeness continue to be formed and maintained, in that case teachers also have an important position in the application of ethical values because they become direct examples for students. Exemplary in daily behavior, both in terms of time discipline, way of speaking, and responsibility in assignments, became a model that was indirectly imitated by students.

In addition, the school consistently prioritizes moral values such as honesty, respect for others, and empathy. These values are integrated into activities such as flag ceremonies, character building every Monday, and various extracurricular activities. One of the flagship programs is "Ethical Friends", which is a student discussion forum that aims to strengthen positive habits and increase awareness of the importance of ethical behavior in daily life. In dealing with students who face difficulties in the application of ethics, the approach used is educational and fostering. Instead of harshly sanctioning, schools encourage reflective dialogue to help students recognize mistakes and understand

their impacts, as well as guide them towards more appropriate attitudes.

Furthermore, Mrs. Yuliana also emphasized the importance of cooperation between schools and parents in shaping students' character. The school regularly holds meetings with students' parents to evaluate student development, both academically and behaviorally. This synergy is important so that the values instilled in schools are also supported by the family environment.

Based on the results of the interview, it can be concluded that the application of ethics at SMA Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli Utara has been integrated in all aspects of school life. Teacher examples, character activities, educational coaching patterns, and cooperation with parents are important elements in forming students who are not only intelligent, but also have high morals. The school hopes that graduates of SMA Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli Norte will be able to become ethical, responsible, and ready to face life's challenges with a positive attitude.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the application of ethical values and student character in schools is carried out comprehensively and planned through various coaching programs initiated by the school. Schools have a very important role in instilling these values both through formal and non-formal learning activities, which aim to shape students' attitudes, behaviors, and personalities in accordance with applicable social norms. The implementation of these ethical and character values not only brings changes to students' behavior in the school environment, but also has a positive impact on their social relationships outside of school.

The findings of the study indicate that the successful implementation of ethical and character values is greatly influenced by the role of teachers who are active as facilitators and role models, who guide students with patience and example. In addition, a supportive school environment, including firm and consistent policies, is an important factor in building students' character comprehensively. However, in practice, there are a number of obstacles

such as the diversity of student backgrounds, limited facilities, and lack of parental participation which sometimes hinders the process of character formation to the maximum.

In general, the application of ethical and character values in schools makes a significant contribution to creating an educational atmosphere that not only focuses on the academic aspect, but also on the moral and personality development of students. The success of this process requires the cooperation of all components of the school, including teachers, students, principals, and parents, so that character building can take place effectively and sustainably. (Napitupulu, Theresia, and Deak 2022) Thus, schools are a strategic place in preparing the young generation who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have integrity and have strong personalities based on upheld ethical values.

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