Systematic Management of Morality Development in Strengthening Elementary School Character Education

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Abstract
Character education constitutes a fundamental mandate in contemporary education systems, yet systematic management approaches remain insufficiently examined. This study investigates morality development management in strengthening character education at elementary schools facing resource constraints. Employing qualitative case study design, this research examined SDN Tegalmerak and SDN Pagermaneuh in Tanggeung District through interviews with principals, teachers, students, and parents (n=52), participatory observations, and documentation analysis. Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model, applying George R. Terry's management framework. Findings reveal systematic implementation across four management functions: (1) collaborative planning integrating character values into curriculum and activities; (2) clear organizational structures with specialized coordination teams; (3) diverse implementation strategies including religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and extracurricular engagement; and (4) multi-layered monitoring through classroom observations and stakeholder feedback. Measurable improvements included increased attendance (87% to 94%), reduced disciplinary incidents (43% decrease), and spontaneous moral behavior demonstration by 78% of students. However, students with strong parental involvement showed 67% greater behavioral improvements, underscoring ecological factors' critical role. Results validate classical management theory's applicability to character education while revealing that effectiveness depends substantially on home-school value consistency rather than school efforts alone. Findings suggest character education requires coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches addressing resource constraints through adaptive strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Character education has emerged as a critical priority in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in addressing the moral challenges faced by young learners in an increasingly complex social environment (Khoury, 2017; Arif et al., 2024). The formation of students' character is not merely an ancillary educational objective but constitutes a fundamental mandate embedded within national education policy frameworks. In Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System explicitly emphasizes the cultivation of noble character alongside intellectual development, positioning character education as an integral component of holistic student formation. This legislative framework reflects a broader recognition that educational institutions must transcend purely cognitive outcomes to nurture individuals who embody ethical principles, social responsibility, and moral integrity (Ering & Mandey, 2024; Chen et al., 2023).

Despite this policy commitment, empirical evidence reveals a concerning deterioration in moral values among elementary school students, manifesting in behavioral patterns that deviate from societal expectations and educational standards. Globally, juvenile delinquency has increased dramatically, with the delinquency population rising from 18 million to 250 million between 1992 and 2007 (Gogineni et al., 2023). Research indicates that poor school performance, truancy, and early school leaving are strongly connected to juvenile delinquency, with serious violent delinquents experiencing significantly more school-related problems than nonviolent children (Loeber & Farrington, 2000). This alarming trend

underscores the urgency of strengthening character education mechanisms within schools. The phenomenon is further compounded by the pervasive influence of digital media and shifting socio-cultural dynamics that expose young learners to values potentially incongruent with traditional moral frameworks (Alshare et al., 2019). Studies have documented that excessive social media use correlates with decreased empathy, increased cyberbullying, and threats to teenagers' moral values, affecting their language patterns, dress codes, and social life activities (Amalia et al., 2024). Consequently, educational institutions face the imperative of developing robust, systematic approaches to moral guidance that can effectively counteract these negative influences while fostering positive character development.

Existing scholarly literature has documented various dimensions of character education implementation, yet significant gaps remain in understanding the systematic management of morality development programs in elementary schools. Maharani et al. (2025) identified inconsistencies in the integration of character values across elementary education settings, revealing a disjuncture between policy intentions and classroom realities. Similarly, Nugraha (2020) highlighted critical deficiencies in teacher capacity and family support systems as primary impediments to effective character education delivery. The detrimental impact of social media on students' moral development has been further substantiated by Kristanti et al. (2025), who documented how digital exposure accelerates moral erosion among young learners. While these studies illuminate important challenges, they predominantly focus on pedagogical methods and isolated character-building interventions without comprehensively examining the managerial frameworks that underpin sustainable moral development programs (Soonyeekhun et al., 2024; Sobry, 2022).

Previous research has demonstrated the efficacy of specific character-building practices in educational settings. Teacher role modeling has proven particularly influential, with studies documenting substantial improvements in student moral behavior when educators consistently demonstrate ethical conduct and serve as moral exemplars (Lickona, 1991). Research at various educational institutions has confirmed that teachers function as primary shapers of character, serving not merely as instructors but as enablers and navigators of moral development (Walker et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies have shown that structured activities such as morning assemblies, congregational practices, and periodic evaluations contribute significantly to moral behavior formation (Sobry, 2022). The importance of parental participation has also been emphasized, with research indicating that family involvement strengthens the internalization of character values among students (Hakim et al., 2023). However, these investigations primarily address programmatic elements rather than the comprehensive management systems—encompassing planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling functions—necessary for ensuring systematic, measurable, and sustainable moral guidance. This represents a critical knowledge gap: while individual interventions show promise, the organizational and managerial architecture required to institutionalize and sustain character education remains insufficiently theorized and empirically examined (Chen et al., 2023).

This study addresses this lacuna by investigating the management of morality development in strengthening students' character education at SDN Tegalmerak and SDN Pagermaneuh in Tanggeung District. The selection of these schools is methodologically strategic, as their location in semi-urban contexts presents heterogeneous socio-cultural dynamics that reflect the complex realities facing many Indonesian elementary schools. By applying George R. Terry's (1972) management framework—encompassing planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling functions—this research provides a systematic analysis of how schools structure and execute moral guidance programs. The study examines not only the formal management processes but also the roles of school principals, teachers, parents, and community members in creating an integrated ecosystem for character development (Sholeh, 2023).

The significance of this research extends beyond descriptive documentation to offer practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, it provides educational administrators and policymakers with evidence-based insights into effective managerial strategies for character education, identifying both successful practices and persistent challenges that require systemic intervention. Contemporary

research emphasizes that effective character education requires not only well-designed curricula but also strategic management approaches that integrate planning, resource allocation, and continuous evaluation mechanisms (Arif et al., 2024). Theoretically, it contributes to the development of contextually appropriate management models for character education that align with Indonesian socio-cultural values and national educational aspirations. By elucidating the relationship between management effectiveness and character education outcomes, this study advances scholarly understanding of how organizational leadership and systematic planning influence the moral development of elementary school students (Lubis et al., 2025), thereby enriching the broader discourse on educational management and moral education in developing country contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design to explore the management of morality development in strengthening character education. The qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate because it enables in-depth investigation of complex social phenomena within their natural contexts, allowing researchers to capture the nuanced meanings and processes underlying character education management practices (Creswell, 2016; Moleong, 2017). The case study design facilitated intensive examination of morality development management at two selected elementary schools, providing rich, contextualized insights into how these institutions plan, organize, implement, and monitor character education programs.

The research was conducted at SDN Tegalmerak and SDN Pagermaneuh, both located in Tanggeung District. These schools were purposively selected based on several criteria: their semi-urban location reflecting heterogeneous socio-cultural dynamics, active implementation of character education programs, and willingness to participate in the research. The research subjects comprised school principals, teachers, students, and parents who were directly involved in character education activities. Specifically, the study included two school principals, twelve classroom teachers, three homeroom coordinators, twenty students selected through purposive sampling to represent various grade levels, and fifteen parents who actively participated in school programs. This diverse participant pool ensured comprehensive perspectives on morality development management from multiple stakeholder viewpoints.

Data collection employed three complementary techniques to ensure methodological triangulation and enhance data credibility. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers, students, and parents to elicit detailed information regarding planning, implementation, and evaluation of moral guidance programs. The interview protocol was developed based on George R. Terry's management functions framework and validated through expert judgment from two educational management specialists. Participatory observation was undertaken to directly witness character education activities, teacher-student interactions, and daily routines that reflected moral guidance implementation. Observation sessions were systematically documented using field notes and observation checklists. Documentation analysis complemented these methods by examining school policies, curriculum documents, lesson plans, character education program reports, and student behavior records. The triangulation of these three data sources enhanced the validity and reliability of findings, as recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), encompassing three concurrent phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, collected data were systematically coded, categorized, and focused on elements relevant to the research objectives, specifically management functions in character education. Data display involved organizing information into matrices, narrative descriptions, and thematic networks to facilitate pattern recognition and relationship identification. Conclusion drawing proceeded iteratively, with preliminary interpretations continuously verified against empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks. To ensure trustworthiness, member checking was performed by presenting findings to participants for validation, and peer debriefing sessions were conducted with colleagues to minimize researcher bias.

This rigorous analytical process aligned with principles of qualitative inquiry articulated by Creswell and Poth (2018), ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in empirical data while maintaining theoretical coherence with management and character education literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research findings at SDN Tegalmerak and SDN Pagermaneuh reveal comprehensive implementation of morality development management across four fundamental management functions. Data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation analysis provide detailed insights into how these schools systematically approach character education strengthening.

Planning Function in Morality Development Management

The planning phase demonstrates collaborative and comprehensive approaches to character education program design. Data from school documentation and interviews with principals indicate that both institutions develop their character building programs through participatory processes involving teachers, school committees, and parents. The schools' vision and mission documents explicitly emphasize character development, discipline, religiosity, literacy, and numeracy as foundational elements for student character formation. As stated by the principal of SDN Tegalmerak during interviews: "We conduct annual work meetings involving all stakeholders to formulate our character education roadmap, ensuring that moral values are integrated not only in the curriculum but also in every school activity."

Table 1 presents the key components identified in the planning documentation across both schools:

Table 1. Components of Character Education Planning

Planning Component	SDN Tegalmerak	SDN Pagermaneuh	Implementation Strategy
Vision-Mission Integration	Religious character, discipline	Moral values, academic excellence	Collaborative meetings with stakeholders
Character Values Focus	Honesty, responsibility, tolerance	Religiosity, discipline, integrity	Integration into curriculum and activities
Needs Analysis	Student behavioral assessment	Family background survey	Annual evaluation and adjustment
Resource Allocation	BOS funds prioritization	Community partnership development	Budget planning for character programs
Activity Planning	Religious routines, literacy programs	Extracurricular activities, P5 projects	Scheduled implementation timeline

The planning documents (RKJM and RKAS) examined during the documentation study reveal systematic allocation of resources specifically designated for character education initiatives, including procurement of character-based learning materials, teacher training programs, and infrastructure supporting moral development activities. However, an unexpected finding emerged regarding budget constraints: both schools allocated only approximately 8-12% of their operational budgets specifically for character education programs, significantly below the national recommendation of 20%, necessitating creative resource optimization strategies.

Organizing Function in Morality Development Management

The organizational structure for character education implementation demonstrates clear division of responsibilities and collaborative mechanisms. Field observations and organizational charts analysis reveal hierarchical yet participatory frameworks where principals serve as program leaders, teachers function as implementers and role models, homeroom teachers coordinate daily moral guidance activities, and school committees facilitate community involvement.

Interview data with vice principals indicate the formation of specialized teams for character education coordination. As explained by the vice principal of SDN Pagermaneuh: "We established a

Character Education Coordination Team consisting of senior teachers from various grade levels, ensuring consistent implementation across all classes while allowing flexibility for age-appropriate approaches." This organizational structure includes designated coordinators for religious activities, discipline enforcement, literacy programs, and parent-school communication.

Observational data from committee meetings revealed active parental participation in school governance, with parents contributing not only through financial support but also through volunteer involvement in school activities. Documentation analysis showed that both schools utilize partnerships with local religious institutions, youth organizations, and community leaders to strengthen moral guidance programs, exemplifying multi-stakeholder collaboration in character education.

Implementation Function in Morality Development Management

The implementation phase encompasses diverse concrete activities designed to internalize moral values in students' daily behavior. Observational data collected over three months documented consistent patterns of character-building activities across both schools. Morning routines include congregational Dhuha prayers, national anthem singing, and brief motivational messages from teachers or principals, establishing positive behavioral expectations at the start of each school day.

Table 2 summarizes the primary implementation activities observed:

Table 2. Character Education Implementation Activities

Activity Category	Specific Programs	Frequency	Observed Impact
Religious Habituation	Dhuha prayer, Dzuhur prayer	Daily	85% student participation, improved discipline
Literacy Development	15-minute pre-class reading	Daily	Enhanced reading interest, vocabulary development
Teacher Role Modeling	Greeting students, punctuality	Continuous	Positive teacher-student relationships observed
Extracurricular Programs	Scouting, arts, sports	Weekly	Development of teamwork and leadership skills
P5 Projects	Community service, environmental care	Quarterly	Practical application of moral values
Parental Involvement	Home-school communication, parenting sessions	Monthly	Consistency between school and home values

Interview data from teachers reveal intentional integration of character values into subject instruction. A fourth-grade teacher at SDN Tegalmerak explained: "When teaching mathematics, I incorporate honesty through discussions about accurate calculations; in social studies, I emphasize tolerance through lessons about cultural diversity. Character education is not separate from academic learning—it permeates every lesson."

An unexpected discovery emerged during observations of student interactions during break times. Without teacher supervision, 78% of students observed demonstrated consistent application of taught moral values, including orderly queuing at canteens, respectful peer interactions, and proper waste disposal. This spontaneous demonstration of moral behavior suggests successful internalization beyond mere compliance with adult supervision.

Participatory observations during extracurricular activities revealed differentiated approaches based on student developmental levels. Lower-grade students received more structured guidance with immediate feedback, while upper-grade students were given increased autonomy to make moral decisions independently, reflecting developmentally appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Controlling Function in Morality Development Management

The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms demonstrate systematic approaches to ensuring program effectiveness and continuous improvement. Data from supervision records and evaluation

reports indicate multiple layers of control processes. Principals conduct weekly classroom observations focusing specifically on teacher role modeling and character value integration in instruction. Documentation analysis revealed standardized observation instruments assessing six key dimensions: teacher punctuality, positive language use, fair treatment of students, integration of moral values in lessons, classroom climate, and student behavioral patterns.

Monthly teacher meetings serve as reflective evaluation forums where educators discuss challenges, share successful strategies, and collaboratively problem-solve character education implementation issues. Interview data from these meetings reveal teachers' growing awareness of their pivotal roles in moral development. As one senior teacher articulated: "These regular reflections have transformed our practice. We've become more conscious of how every interaction with students either strengthens or undermines the moral values we're trying to instill."

Table 3 presents the multi-dimensional evaluation framework employed:

Table 3. Character Education Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Dimension	Instruments	Frequency	Responsible Parties
Student Moral Behavior	Observation checklists, anecdotal records	Daily	Homeroom teachers
Academic-Character Integration	Lesson plan review, classroom observation	Weekly	Principals, supervisors
Program Effectiveness	Student surveys, parent feedback	Semester	Character education coordinators
Teacher Professional Development	Self-assessment, peer evaluation	Monthly	All teaching staff
Stakeholder Satisfaction	Questionnaires, focus group discussions	Annual	School committees

Student behavioral development records document quantitative and qualitative changes over time. Data from these records indicate measurable improvements: attendance rates increased from 87% to 94% over one academic year, disciplinary incidents decreased by 43%, and teacher-reported positive behaviors increased substantially. Parent feedback forms analyzed during documentation study revealed 89% parental satisfaction with perceived improvements in their children's moral behavior at home.

An unexpected finding relates to the differential effectiveness across student subgroups. Students from families actively involved in school programs demonstrated 67% greater behavioral improvement compared to students whose families had minimal school engagement, underscoring the critical importance of home-school continuity in character education effectiveness.

Challenges in Morality Development Management

Despite systematic management approaches, both schools confronted significant obstacles affecting program implementation quality. Interview and observational data identified six primary constraint categories. First, infrastructure limitations persist, with both schools lacking adequate facilities such as well-equipped libraries, laboratories, and dedicated character education spaces. Second, financial constraints severely limit program scope, particularly as both schools serve predominantly low-income communities and receive minimal BOS funding due to small student populations (127 students at SDN Tegalmerak, 143 students at SDN Pagermaneuh).

Third, human resource challenges emerged prominently. Several teachers, particularly those nearing retirement, demonstrated resistance to new character education methodologies, preferring traditional academic-focused instruction. As revealed in candid interviews, some teachers viewed character education as additional burden rather than core responsibility. Fourth, limited technological competencies among staff hindered utilization of digital resources for character education enhancement. Fifth, inconsistent parental support emerged as critical impediment. Observational data from parent-teacher meetings showed only 45-60% parental attendance rates, with socioeconomic factors (working parents, low educational backgrounds) contributing significantly to limited home-school collaboration.

Finally, frequent policy changes from education authorities created implementation instability. Teachers reported confusion and frustration adapting to shifting requirements. One teacher stated: "Just as we master one approach, new regulations introduce different frameworks, making sustained, coherent implementation nearly impossible."

Solutions and Adaptive Strategies

Both schools implemented creative, resource-conscious solutions addressing identified constraints. Documentation analysis and interviews revealed four primary adaptive strategies. First, intensive stakeholder discussions prioritized essential character education activities within existing resource limitations, focusing on high-impact, low-cost interventions such as daily moral habituation routines and teacher role modeling rather than expensive infrastructure-dependent programs.

Second, environmental optimization transformed school surroundings into learning laboratories. Schools utilized outdoor spaces for environmental care projects, local community members as resource persons for moral education, and everyday situations as teachable moments for character development. Third, both principals actively pursued external funding through government assistance programs and corporate social responsibility initiatives, supplementing limited BOS allocations. Fourth, incremental technology integration occurred through simple digital tools like Google Forms for evaluation and PowerPoint for instructional materials, accompanied by peer-led technology training among teachers.

Interview data indicate these adaptive strategies yielded measurable improvements despite resource constraints. The principal of SDN Pagermaneuh noted: "We learned that effective character education depends less on expensive facilities and more on committed, creative educators who consistently model moral values and seize every opportunity to guide students toward noble character."

Discussion

The findings of this study substantially align with George R. Terry's (1972) management framework, which posits that effective organizational achievement requires systematic planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions. Terry defined management as "a process consisting of planning, organizing, actuating and controlling performed to determine and accomplish the objectives by the use of people and resources," emphasizing the cyclical and integrated nature of management processes (Terry, 1977). The implementation of morality development management at SDN Tegalmerak and SDN Pagermaneuh demonstrates faithful application of these four functions, albeit with contextual adaptations necessitated by resource constraints and socio-cultural particularities.

The planning function observed in both schools exemplifies Terry's emphasis on forward-thinking integrated approaches harmonized across organizational strata. The collaborative development of vision-mission statements integrating character values reflects participatory planning principles. However, the research reveals tension between ideal planning frameworks and resource realities—a phenomenon Terry acknowledged when discussing the importance of planning within available resources. The finding that only 8-12% of school budgets specifically target character education, despite its stated priority, illuminates the persistent gap between policy aspirations and resource allocation in developing country contexts (Mulyadi, 2022).

The organizing function demonstrates clear structural arrangements aligning with Terry's definition of organizing as "the determination, grouping, and arrangement of various activities necessary to achieve objectives" and "the assignment of people to these activities." The establishment of specialized character education coordination teams, clear role delineation among principals, teachers, and committees, and multi-stakeholder partnerships reflect sophisticated organizational design. Yet, the study also reveals organizational challenges stemming from teacher resistance and limited capacity—issues Terry's framework acknowledges but does not fully address in terms of change management and capacity development strategies.

The actuating (implementation) function most directly demonstrates the integration of character education into daily school life. Terry conceptualized actuating as efforts to ensure all group members willingly strive toward objectives aligned with managerial planning. The diverse implementation activities

observed—from religious habituation to extracurricular engagement to teacher role modeling—represent concrete actualization of planned character values. Significantly, the finding that 78% of students spontaneously demonstrate moral behavior without direct supervision suggests successful internalization, validating Terry's emphasis on creating conditions where organizational members independently pursue collective goals.

The controlling function, manifested through multi-layered monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, aligns with Terry's definition of control as "the process of determining what is being accomplished, evaluating performance, and taking corrective measures." The systematic use of observation instruments, regular reflective meetings, and data-driven adjustments exemplifies effective control processes. However, the finding regarding differential effectiveness across student subgroups—particularly the 67% greater improvement among students with strong parental involvement—highlights a control challenge Terry's framework underemphasizes: the difficulty of controlling outcomes when critical variables (parental engagement) lie partially outside organizational boundaries.

The findings strongly resonate with Thomas Lickona's (1991) comprehensive character education framework emphasizing moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action as interconnected components of character development. Lickona articulated that "good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good" (Lickona, 1991, p. 51), with these three dimensions operating synergistically rather than independently. The implementation activities observed at both schools address all three Lickonan dimensions, though with varying degrees of sophistication.

The moral knowing dimension receives substantial attention through curriculum integration and explicit moral instruction. Teachers consciously incorporate character values into subject matter instruction, providing students with cognitive understanding of moral principles. However, observations suggest this dimension receives disproportionate emphasis compared to moral feeling and moral action, reflecting a common pattern in character education where cognitive transmission dominates over affective and behavioral cultivation (Soonyeekhun et al., 2024).

The moral feeling dimension, which Lickona identified as the bridge between moral judgment and moral action, manifests through the schools' emphasis on empathy development, self-esteem building, and conscience formation. The daily religious practices, teacher-student relationships characterized by warmth and respect, and peer collaboration activities contribute to emotional engagement with moral values. The unexpected finding that students spontaneously demonstrate moral behaviors during unsupervised periods suggests successful cultivation of moral feelings—students not only know what is right but genuinely desire to act rightly, even absent external monitoring.

The moral action dimension, encompassing moral competence, moral will, and moral habit, receives explicit attention through repeated practice opportunities and habituation strategies. Lickona emphasized that character education must provide "many and varied opportunities to apply values such as responsibility and fairness in everyday interactions" (Lickona, 2012). The observed implementation activities—from daily prayer routines to extracurricular engagements to community service projects—provide precisely such opportunities. The progressive increase in student autonomy across grade levels reflects developmentally appropriate scaffolding of moral action capabilities.

The finding regarding differential effectiveness across student subgroups illuminates a critical insight aligned with Lickona's emphasis on ecological consistency. Lickona argued that character education effectiveness depends substantially on value consistency across the multiple environments children inhabit—schools, families, and communities. The 67% greater behavioral improvement among students with strong parental involvement validates this theoretical proposition empirically. Students experiencing coherent moral messages across contexts demonstrate superior character development compared to students encountering contradictory values across home-school boundaries. This finding underscores the necessity of what Lickona termed "comprehensive character education" involving coordinated efforts across all spheres of children's lives.

The findings both corroborate and extend existing scholarly literature on character education management in elementary schools. Maharani et al.'s (2021) identification of inconsistent character

value integration receives partial validation through this study's documentation of systematic integration approaches at both research sites, suggesting that inconsistency may reflect institutional rather than inherent implementation barriers. Unlike Maharani et al.'s findings of haphazard integration, the schools in this study demonstrate structured, intentional integration mechanisms. However, the finding regarding limited budget allocation (8-12% versus recommended 20%) supports Maharani et al.'s broader argument about resource inadequacy undermining character education quality.

Nugraha (2020) emphasis on teacher capacity deficiencies and minimal family support as primary impediments receives strong empirical corroboration. The documented teacher resistance, limited technological competencies, and inconsistent parental engagement directly validate these scholars' concerns. However, this study extends their analysis by revealing that capacity deficiencies manifest heterogeneously—some teachers demonstrate exceptional commitment and innovation while others resist change, suggesting that wholesale capacity development strategies may prove less effective than differentiated, targeted interventions addressing specific teacher subgroup needs.

Kristanti et al.'s (2025) documentation of social media's detrimental impact on student moral development finds indirect support through interview data revealing teachers' concerns about students' digital exposure. However, neither school in this study implemented systematic digital literacy or media ethics programs, representing a significant gap in their character education portfolios. This omission is particularly noteworthy given documented evidence that contemporary character education must explicitly address digital moral challenges (Alshare et al., 2019).

The study's findings regarding teacher role modeling effectiveness resonate with previous research documenting substantial behavioral improvements attributable to educator exemplarity (Walker et al., 2015). However, this study reveals a more nuanced picture: while teacher role modeling demonstrates clear positive effects, its impact is mediated by student perception of teacher authenticity. Observational data suggest students distinguish between genuine moral commitment and performative compliance, with only authentic role modeling yielding sustained behavioral change. This finding problematizes simplistic assumptions about teacher modeling, suggesting that character education effectiveness depends not merely on teachers demonstrating desired behaviors but on students perceiving those demonstrations as authentic expressions of genuine values rather than obligatory performances.

The research both confirms and challenges existing literature regarding extracurricular activities' role in character development. Previous studies emphasize extracurricular engagement as critical for moral value internalization (Sobry, 2022). This study corroborates this finding through documented improvements in teamwork, leadership, and prosocial behavior among participating students. However, an unexpected finding emerged: extracurricular participation rates differed substantially across socioeconomic groups, with students from lower-income families participating at only 43% the rate of higher-income peers. This participation disparity, attributable to financial constraints (uniform costs, transportation expenses) and family obligations (childcare responsibilities, economic necessity), means extracurricular-based character education inadvertently reproduces socioeconomic inequalities, providing enhanced moral development opportunities to already-advantaged students while excluding disadvantaged students who arguably need such support most urgently.

This study generates significant theoretical contributions to character education scholarship. First, it empirically validates the applicability of classical management theory (Terry, 1972) to character education contexts, demonstrating that systematic management approaches enhance program effectiveness. While character education literature often emphasizes pedagogical and curricular dimensions, this research underscores organizational and managerial architectures as equally critical determinants of success. The documented improvements—attendance increases, disciplinary incident reductions, positive behavior enhancements—occurred not primarily through innovative pedagogical techniques but through systematic management enabling consistent, sustained implementation. This finding suggests that character education research should devote greater attention to organizational management variables rather than focusing predominantly on instructional methodologies.

Second, the study advances understanding of ecological factors mediating character education effectiveness. The finding regarding differential outcomes across student subgroups based on parental involvement empirically substantiates ecological systems perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) applied to moral development. Character formation cannot be understood as isolated school-based intervention but must be conceptualized as complex developmental process influenced by nested, interactive contextual systems. This theoretical insight has profound implications for program design, suggesting that schools cannot achieve character education goals through internal efforts alone but must invest substantially in building partnerships with families and communities, creating value consistency across contexts.

Third, the research illuminates tensions between standardized management frameworks and contextual particularities. While Terry's management functions provided useful analytical lenses, their application required substantial adaptation to accommodate resource constraints, cultural contexts, and institutional realities characterizing developing country elementary schools. This finding contributes to broader debates about universality versus contextual specificity in management theory, suggesting that while fundamental management principles may be broadly applicable, their operationalization must be highly contextualized to generate practical utility.

Practically, the study offers concrete guidance for educational administrators and policymakers. The documented adaptive strategies—priority setting, environmental optimization, external resource mobilization, incremental technology integration—provide replicable models for resource-constrained schools seeking to implement robust character education programs. The finding that effective character education depends more on committed, creative educators than expensive infrastructure challenges prevailing assumptions that quality improvement requires primarily financial investments. While adequate resources certainly matter, this study demonstrates that strategic management enabling maximal utilization of existing resources may yield greater impact than resource increases absent systematic management.

The research also highlights specific intervention points for policy support. The documented challenges—limited budgets, inconsistent parental engagement, teacher capacity deficiencies, policy instability—indicate where governmental and organizational interventions could generate substantial improvements. Increasing dedicated character education budgets from current 8-12% toward recommended 20% levels, providing systematic teacher professional development in character education methodologies, creating stable policy frameworks reducing implementation uncertainty, and supporting schools in building effective family partnerships represent high-leverage policy actions with potential for significant impact.

Several limitations circumscribe this study's scope and generalizability. First, the research examines only two schools within a single district, both characterized by similar socioeconomic contexts and semi-urban locations. Findings may not generalize to urban schools serving more affluent populations, rural schools facing even greater resource constraints, or schools in regions with markedly different cultural contexts. The purposive sampling strategy, while appropriate for in-depth case study investigation, inherently limits generalizability beyond the specific research sites.

Second, the study employed relatively short-term data collection spanning one academic year. Character formation constitutes gradual developmental process occurring over extended time periods. The documented improvements in student behavior, while encouraging, may reflect temporary compliance rather than deep, enduring character transformation. Longitudinal research tracking students over multiple years would provide stronger evidence regarding sustainable character development outcomes and could identify potential long-term effects invisible in short-term investigations.

Third, while the research utilized methodological triangulation to enhance credibility, it relied primarily on self-reported data from participants who might present socially desirable responses regarding character education implementation. Although observational data provided some triangulation, the extent of social desirability bias remains difficult to assess. Future research might

incorporate more objective behavioral measures or third-party assessments to complement participant self-reports and reduce potential reporting biases.

This investigation demonstrates that systematic management of morality development significantly strengthens character education in elementary schools, even under resource-constrained conditions. The integration of classical management theory (Terry, 1972) with character education frameworks (Lickona, 1991) yields practical, implementable approaches generating measurable improvements in student moral behavior. The four management functions—planning, organizing, implementing, controlling—provide conceptual scaffolding enabling schools to transform diffuse character education aspirations into concrete, sustained programmatic realities.

The research illuminates the ecological complexity of character formation, revealing that school-based interventions, however well-designed and managed, cannot single-handedly ensure student character development. Effective character education requires coordinated efforts across multiple contexts—schools, families, communities—creating value consistency and mutual reinforcement. This ecological insight suggests that future character education initiatives must move beyond school-centric models toward comprehensive, community-based approaches engaging diverse stakeholders in collective moral socialization efforts.

Several promising directions for future research emerge from this investigation. First, longitudinal studies tracking students over multiple years could assess long-term character development outcomes and identify factors predicting sustained moral growth. Second, comparative research examining character education management across diverse school types, geographic contexts, and socioeconomic settings could illuminate how contextual factors mediate management effectiveness, generating nuanced understanding of where particular approaches work best. Third, experimental or quasi-experimental designs testing specific management interventions could strengthen causal inference regarding which management practices most powerfully impact character outcomes. Fourth, research explicitly addressing digital moral challenges could inform contemporary character education addressing 21st-century ethical dilemmas students navigate in digitally mediated environments. Finally, investigation of how to effectively engage reluctant parents in character education partnerships could address the critical family involvement gap documented in this study, potentially generating practical strategies for bridging home-school divides undermining character education effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that systematic morality development management significantly strengthens character education in elementary schools, even under resource-constrained conditions. The implementation of George R. Terry's management functions—planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling—at SDN Tegalmerak and SDN Pagermaneuh successfully enhanced student moral behavior, evidenced by increased attendance rates (87% to 94%), reduced disciplinary incidents (43% decrease), and spontaneous demonstration of moral values by 78% of students without direct supervision. The research validates that effective character education depends not solely on pedagogical innovations but fundamentally on systematic organizational management enabling consistent, sustained implementation. This study contributes theoretically by empirically validating classical management theory's applicability to character education contexts and demonstrating the critical mediating role of ecological factors, particularly parental involvement, which generated 67% greater behavioral improvements among students from engaged families. These findings advance understanding that character formation requires coordinated efforts across multiple contexts rather than isolated school-based interventions. Practically, the documented adaptive strategies—priority setting, environmental optimization, and external resource mobilization—provide replicable models for resource-constrained schools. However, several limitations circumscribe generalizability, including the study's focus on only two semi-urban schools within a single district and relatively short-term data collection spanning one academic year. Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking students across multiple years, conduct comparative studies across diverse school contexts and socioeconomic settings, and

investigate strategies for effectively engaging reluctant parents in character education partnerships. Additionally, research explicitly addressing digital moral challenges would inform contemporary character education approaches. By integrating management theory with character education frameworks, this research provides evidence-based foundations for developing contextually appropriate, sustainable models that align with national educational aspirations for producing academically competent and morally grounded students.

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