

Strengthening Character Development Through Moral Values Education in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT : Moral values education plays a crucial role in fostering children's character development during early childhood, a critical period for establishing lifelong moral behaviour. Although previous studies have emphasized the importance of character education, limited empirical evidence explains how moral values are systematically integrated into early childhood learning through collaboration among teachers, families, and schools. This study aims to examine the implementation of moral values education and its contribution to children's character development in an Indonesian kindergarten. A qualitative case study design was employed at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the principal and teachers, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, supported by triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. The findings indicate that moral values, including honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, respect, and generosity, are effectively integrated into daily learning through teacher role modelling, play-based learning, storytelling, collaborative activities, and continuous habituation. The implementation is further strengthened by active parental involvement and a supportive school environment, although inconsistent family support and limited instructional resources remain significant challenges. This study contributes to the literature by proposing a holistic framework that integrates classroom instruction, school culture, teacher exemplification, and family engagement as interconnected components for strengthening character development in early childhood education.

Keywords: Moral Values Education, Character Education, Early Childhood Education, Teacher's Role, Kindergarten.

INTRODUCTION

Character education and moral development constitute the foundation for nurturing a generation with integrity, ethical values, and noble character (Mulyasa, 2021). In early childhood education, the cultivation of moral values is particularly important because children experience a critical developmental stage known as the golden age, during which fundamental aspects of personality and character are formed (Daradjat, 2015). Character education extends beyond the acquisition of cognitive knowledge by emphasizing the development of attitudes, behaviors, and moral responsibility that prepare children to become responsible members of society. In the context of globalization and rapid social transformation, challenges to children's

moral development have become increasingly complex. Consequently, early childhood education institutions, particularly kindergartens, play a vital role in instilling moral values from an early age.

Islam provides comprehensive guidance for moral and character education through the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Al-Ghazali, 2011). Qur'an Surah Luqman (31:13) emphasizes the importance of instilling faith (tawhid) and moral values during childhood, while Surah Al-Ahzab (33:21) presents Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the ideal role model for moral excellence. Likewise, a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim states that the Prophet possessed the highest standard of moral character (Al-Bukhari & Muslim, Hadith No. 626). These Islamic teachings highlight that effective character education should be grounded in exemplary conduct and balanced instruction that integrates spiritual, moral, and social values.

Al-Maraghi (2000) explains that effective education is achieved through compassionate guidance and close personal interaction between educators and learners, with the cultivation of tawhid serving as the foundation of moral development. Similarly, Al-Suyuti (2003) emphasizes that educators must embody the values they seek to teach, as exemplary behavior is essential for successful character formation. From this perspective, moral education extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to encompass the internalization of values through authentic experiences in both family and school environments.

From a policy perspective, character education is firmly embedded within Indonesia's national education system. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education is intended to develop learners' potential while fostering individuals who are faithful, morally upright, creative, responsible, and capable of contributing to a dignified national civilization (Ministry of National Education, 2003). This commitment is further strengthened by Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 on Strengthening Character Education, which emphasizes the integration of character education across all educational levels, including early childhood education, through collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

From the perspective of educational psychology, Kohlberg's theory of moral development explains that children progress through sequential stages of moral reasoning, beginning with obedience and punishment orientation (Bandura, 1986). Erikson, as discussed by Mayar (2015), further argues that children between the ages of three and five experience the stage of initiative versus guilt, during which they begin developing initiative, responsibility, and moral awareness. These theoretical perspectives suggest that early childhood represents a particularly sensitive period for

fostering moral values through structured, developmentally appropriate, and engaging learning experiences.

The rapid advancement of globalization and digital technology has introduced new challenges to children's character development. Social media, digital games, and various forms of online entertainment often present values that may conflict with traditional moral principles (Banks, 2015). In addition, changes in family structures, urbanization, and socioeconomic conditions have altered parenting practices, resulting in schools assuming greater responsibility for children's moral education. Inconsistencies between values taught at home and those promoted in educational settings further complicate efforts to cultivate children's character effectively.

In Enrekang Regency, particularly at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, the implementation of character education presents distinctive challenges. Many parents work as farmers or civil servants, limiting the amount of time they can devote to direct supervision and moral guidance. Consequently, many children are cared for by grandparents or other caregivers who may not consistently reinforce moral values (Muhaimin, 2022). Although local cultural traditions continue to support the development of positive character traits, the influence of modernization requires schools to adopt innovative and contextually relevant approaches to character education.

Given these circumstances, investigating the implementation of moral values education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, is both timely and significant. This study aims to examine how moral values education is implemented within an Islamic educational framework, identify the factors that facilitate and hinder its implementation, and formulate strategies to strengthen character education in early childhood settings. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more systematic, contextually relevant, and meaningful character education programs and to serve as a valuable reference for other early childhood education institutions seeking to enhance moral development among young learners.

METHODS

This study was conducted at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research site was selected because of its relevance to the study's focus on the implementation of moral values education among young children. In addition, the site was chosen based on its accessibility, the researcher's previous involvement in government educational programs conducted at the school, and the availability of comprehensive data sources (Sugiyono, 2017). The study was carried out over a four-month period, from October 2025 to January 2026, allowing sufficient time for an in-depth examination of character education practices within the school setting.

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design. According to Darna (2016), qualitative research is grounded in a post-positivist paradigm that investigates phenomena in their natural settings, with the researcher serving as the primary research instrument. A case study design was selected because it facilitates an intensive, detailed, and context-specific investigation of the implementation of moral values education, enabling a comprehensive understanding of complex educational practices (Moleong, 2017). The study was guided by pedagogical, theological, and sociological perspectives. The pedagogical perspective focused on instructional methods and teaching practices, the theological perspective was grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the sociological perspective viewed the school as a dynamic social institution within the broader community (Banks, 2015).

In qualitative research, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument responsible for determining the research focus, selecting participants, collecting data, interpreting findings, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2017; Muliawan, 2018). To obtain comprehensive and credible data, multiple data collection techniques were employed, including participant observation, unstructured interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to examine children's behavior and classroom learning activities directly, while unstructured interviews were carried out with the principal, teachers, and children's caregivers to obtain in-depth perspectives regarding the implementation of moral values education (Hasanah, 2019). Documentary evidence, including school records, photographs, administrative documents, activity reports, and other relevant materials, was also analyzed to complement the primary data.

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman, as described by Idrus (2017). The analytical process consisted of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved continuously organizing, selecting, and simplifying field data to emphasize information relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the data were presented in a narrative format to facilitate interpretation and the identification of emerging themes. Conclusions were developed through an iterative and reflective process, with continuous verification conducted throughout the study to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings.

The trustworthiness of the data was established through several strategies to enhance credibility, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. Prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to observe educational practices repeatedly until sufficient depth and data saturation were achieved. Persistent observation ensured careful and systematic examination of important

events and interactions within the research setting. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentary evidence across different participants and occasions, thereby strengthening the validity and credibility of the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Sugiyono, 2017).

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly through observations and interviews with the principal, teachers, and children. Secondary data were collected from official school documents, administrative records, activity reports, and scholarly literature related to the implementation of moral values education. Through this comprehensive qualitative approach, the study sought to provide a holistic understanding of character education practices at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, while identifying the factors that support and hinder the effective implementation of moral values education in early childhood settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

A. Implementation of Moral Values Education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency

The findings indicate that the implementation of moral values education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, plays a fundamental role in fostering children's moral, social, and emotional development during early childhood. As a critical stage in human development, early childhood provides an important opportunity for establishing positive character traits that influence future behavior. The study found that moral values education is regarded as an integral component of the school's educational program rather than as a separate instructional subject. According to the school principal, values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation are systematically introduced from an early age to help children develop into individuals with strong moral character. Character development is promoted through teachers' exemplary behavior, the creation of a supportive learning environment, and the integration of moral values into everyday classroom activities.

Teachers explained that moral values are embedded throughout daily learning experiences rather than being taught explicitly in isolated lessons. Values such as sharing, helping others, respecting differences, and demonstrating kindness are incorporated into routine classroom interactions and collaborative activities. Instruction is delivered through engaging and enjoyable learning experiences that encourage children to internalize moral values naturally without experiencing pressure or coercion. In addition to formal classroom instruction, teachers utilize storytelling and traditional folktales as educational media for moral development. One teacher

explained that every story presented to children contains meaningful moral messages relevant to everyday life, while teachers consistently model positive behaviors to encourage children to imitate appropriate conduct.

The development of moral values is further strengthened through children's social interactions during collaborative learning activities. Group-based activities encourage children to cooperate, communicate effectively, solve problems collectively, and respect one another's perspectives. These experiences provide authentic opportunities for children to practice cooperation, mutual respect, empathy, and generosity in real-life situations. All participants agreed that character development should begin during early childhood and should be integrated throughout all aspects of school life. The moral values emphasized include honesty, respect, empathy, caring, responsibility, cooperation, and generosity.

The findings also reveal that moral values are taught through creative and comprehensive instructional approaches. The school principal explained that these values are introduced through both structured activities, such as collective prayers and morning assemblies, and creative learning experiences, including games, collaborative projects, and classroom activities that encourage children to cooperate, share, and assist one another. Teachers reinforce positive behavior by serving as role models and providing praise and positive reinforcement whenever children demonstrate desirable moral conduct. Additional instructional strategies include singing, dancing, role-playing, and guided discussions based on moral stories. These approaches enable children to understand and internalize moral values through enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

A variety of school activities have been designed specifically to strengthen children's moral development. These include collective prayer sessions, environmental clean-up activities, cooperative games, "Sharing Day" programs, role-playing activities, and discussions of traditional folktales. Each activity is intended to cultivate honesty, empathy, responsibility, respect, and concern for others. The findings indicate that children responded positively to these learning experiences, as evidenced by their willingness to imitate positive behaviors, remind peers to behave appropriately, and apply moral values during everyday interactions.

The study also identified noticeable improvements in children's behavior following the implementation of moral values education. Teachers observed significant positive changes in children's cooperation, empathy, honesty, and sense of responsibility. Children became more willing to help their classmates, demonstrated greater responsibility for completing assigned tasks, and were increasingly prepared to acknowledge mistakes and offer sincere apologies when appropriate. These

behavioral changes suggest that the implementation of moral values education has contributed meaningfully to children's character development during early childhood.

Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also identified several challenges associated with implementing moral values education. Teachers reported difficulties in maintaining consistency in moral instruction, sustaining children's attention, and presenting moral concepts in ways that remain engaging and developmentally appropriate. In addition, influences from children's home environments and the broader community occasionally conflicted with the moral values promoted at school. Consequently, participants emphasized the importance of strengthening collaboration between teachers and parents while continuously developing innovative instructional strategies to ensure that moral values are reinforced consistently across different learning environments.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of moral values education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, is carried out through a comprehensive and integrated approach. Moral values are embedded within formal instruction, creative learning activities, and children's everyday social interactions, enabling positive character traits to develop naturally through authentic experiences. The positive responses exhibited by the children, together with the observable improvements in their behavior, indicate that the systematic implementation of moral values education effectively supports character development during early childhood.

B. Teachers' Role in Implementing Moral Values Education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency

The findings indicate that teachers play a central role in implementing moral values education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency. During early childhood, teachers serve as influential role models who contribute significantly to children's moral, social, and emotional development. According to the school principal, teachers are expected to exemplify positive character traits because children's moral learning is strongly influenced by observing adults' behavior. Values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation are introduced and reinforced through teachers' daily interactions with children. In addition to delivering instruction, teachers are responsible for creating a learning environment that consistently promotes positive moral behavior.

Interviews with teachers revealed that they view moral education as an integral part of everyday teaching rather than as a separate instructional component. Teachers facilitate children's moral development through enjoyable learning experiences, including educational games, storytelling, collaborative activities, and classroom discussions that incorporate moral messages. Rather than relying solely on verbal explanations, teachers provide opportunities for children to practice moral

values directly in authentic situations. Various creative instructional methods, such as role-playing, storytelling, singing, and experiential learning activities, are employed to help children understand and internalize moral values in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways.

The findings further demonstrate that teachers' personal example constitutes one of the most influential aspects of moral values education. Teachers consistently model behaviors that reflect the values they seek to cultivate, including respect, empathy, responsibility, honesty, and kindness. During everyday classroom interactions, teachers actively guide children in resolving conflicts, making appropriate decisions, and interacting respectfully with their peers. Positive reinforcement is provided whenever children demonstrate desirable moral behaviors, encouraging them to repeat these actions in future situations. This direct and interactive approach enables children to learn moral values through observation, participation, and continuous practice.

Despite their important role, teachers also encounter several challenges in implementing moral values education. Participants reported that maintaining consistency in character education, designing engaging learning experiences, and addressing the influence of external environments remain significant concerns. Children's family backgrounds and community experiences sometimes expose them to behaviors that differ from the moral values promoted at school. Consequently, teachers must exercise patience, creativity, and flexibility while adapting instructional strategies to meet children's diverse needs. Close collaboration with parents is also considered essential to ensure that moral values are reinforced consistently both at school and at home.

The effectiveness of teachers' efforts in fostering moral values is reflected in observable improvements in children's attitudes and behaviors. Teachers reported noticeable progress in children's empathy, cooperation, honesty, responsibility, and ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively. Children increasingly demonstrated concern for their peers, accepted responsibility for their actions, and displayed greater willingness to communicate respectfully and honestly. These behavioral changes indicate that integrating moral values education into children's daily experiences effectively supports character development during early childhood while strengthening the social competencies required for positive relationships with others.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke serve not only as classroom instructors but also as facilitators, mentors, and moral role models who ensure that moral values are consistently introduced, practiced, and reinforced throughout children's daily experiences. Through creative, interactive, and

experiential teaching approaches, teachers create meaningful opportunities for children to develop positive character traits that support their moral growth and social development during the early years of education.

C. Factors Supporting and Hindering the Implementation of Moral Values Education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency

The findings identified several factors that support and hinder the implementation of moral values education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency. These factors influence the effectiveness of character education and determine the extent to which moral values can be successfully internalized by young children.

One of the primary supporting factors is parental involvement. Parents play an essential role not only in raising their children at home but also in reinforcing the character education provided at school. The findings indicate that effective communication between teachers and parents, together with active parental participation in children's educational activities, strengthens the development of moral values such as honesty, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. The school promotes this partnership by organizing regular parent meetings, educational workshops, guidance sessions, and joint school activities involving both parents and children. These initiatives foster effective collaboration between families and educators, creating greater consistency in children's moral development across home and school environments.

A second supporting factor is the positive school environment. The findings show that a safe, supportive, and caring school climate provides children with opportunities to practice moral values in meaningful ways. Adequate learning facilities, together with activities such as collaborative projects, educational games, storytelling, environmental clean-up programs, and "Sharing Day" events, encourage children to develop empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others. These authentic learning experiences enable children to apply moral values in their daily interactions rather than simply learning about them theoretically.

Another important supporting factor is teachers' professional development. Teachers at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke regularly participate in professional training related to character education, child psychology, and play-based learning. These professional development opportunities enhance teachers' knowledge and instructional skills, enabling them to design creative, interactive, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. As a result, teachers become better prepared to integrate moral values into classroom activities in practical and engaging ways that are appropriate for young children's developmental needs.

Despite these strengths, the study also identified several factors that hinder the effective implementation of moral values education. The first challenge concerns

limited parental understanding of character education. Some parents continue to prioritize children's academic achievement over moral development and may not fully recognize the importance of reinforcing character education at home. Consequently, the moral values introduced at school are not always consistently supported within the family environment. To address this issue, the school organizes regular meetings, parent workshops, guidance materials, direct communication, and collaborative activities involving both parents and children to increase parents' awareness of their role in supporting moral development.

A second challenge involves the influence of children's social environments outside school. Children's interactions with peers, extended family members, and the broader community may expose them to behaviors and values that differ from those promoted within the school. When these external environments do not reinforce positive moral values, children may experience difficulties applying the character traits they have learned in the classroom. To minimize this challenge, the school creates a positive classroom climate, provides counseling and group activities, and strengthens collaboration with parents to ensure that children receive consistent moral guidance across different environments.

The third challenge relates to limitations in instructional time and educational resources. Teachers reported that the demands of the curriculum and limited educational facilities sometimes restrict the amount of time available for explicit character education activities. To overcome these constraints, teachers integrate moral values into everyday classroom routines, educational games, collaborative projects, and other learning activities. This integrated approach enables children to engage continuously in character development despite constraints related to time and available resources.

Overall, the findings suggest that the successful implementation of moral values education at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke depends on the interaction between supportive and challenging factors. Strong partnerships with parents, a nurturing school environment, and ongoing teacher professional development significantly enhance the effectiveness of character education. At the same time, addressing challenges related to parental awareness, external social influences, and resource limitations requires sustained collaboration among schools, families, and the wider community to ensure that moral values are consistently reinforced throughout children's daily lives.

DISCUSSION

Early childhood education is widely recognized as a holistic process that supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development (Slavin, 2020; Berk, 2018). Within this context, moral values education should be integrated into

children's everyday experiences because early moral development is strongly influenced by habituation, social interaction, and adult role modeling (Damon, 2013; Jensen, 2005). The findings of this study indicate that moral values at TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, Enrekang Regency, are systematically incorporated into daily routines through collective prayers, cooperative play, environmental clean-up activities, and other classroom experiences. These practices reflect the principles of contextual learning by connecting moral concepts with children's authentic experiences.

The findings further demonstrate that values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and respect are cultivated through a comprehensive approach to character education. This approach aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Nucci (2001) and Gibbs (2014), who argue that effective character education encompasses three interconnected dimensions: moral knowledge, moral emotions, and moral behavior. At TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, children are encouraged not only to understand moral concepts but also to experience, express, and practice these values during their daily interactions. Consequently, moral values education simultaneously promotes children's cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and behavioral development, consistent with the perspectives of Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000).

The instructional strategies employed by teachers—including role-playing, storytelling, singing, and cooperative games—are consistent with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that children actively construct knowledge through direct experience (Piaget, 1972; Fosnot, 2013). These approaches are particularly appropriate for early childhood learners, whose development is enhanced through exploration, play, and social interaction. By engaging children in meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences, moral values are internalized naturally rather than being imposed through direct instruction. This finding suggests that moral values education becomes more effective when children actively participate in learning situations that reflect real-life experiences.

Teachers' role modeling emerged as one of the most influential factors in promoting children's moral development. This finding supports Social Learning Theory, which proposes that children acquire behaviors through observation and imitation of significant adults (Bandura, 1997; Brophy, 2010). Teachers who consistently demonstrate patience, empathy, honesty, respect, and responsibility provide authentic examples that children readily imitate in their daily interactions. The study therefore highlights that the effectiveness of moral values education depends not only on instructional methods but also on teachers' consistency in exemplifying the values they seek to cultivate.

The findings also demonstrate that teachers play an essential role in guiding children through social conflicts and interpersonal challenges. By encouraging

dialogue, helping children understand others' perspectives, and facilitating collaborative problem-solving, teachers promote children's social-emotional competence. These practices are consistent with theories of social-emotional development proposed by Denham et al. (2012) and Thompson and Lagattuta (2006), which emphasize that emotional competence develops through supportive interactions with caring adults. Through these experiences, children learn to regulate emotions, develop empathy, and resolve conflicts constructively, thereby strengthening the internalization of moral values.

Parental involvement was identified as another important factor supporting the successful implementation of moral values education. This finding is consistent with ecological systems theory, which emphasizes that children's development is shaped through interactions across multiple environments, particularly the family and school (Tudge et al., 2009). Active collaboration between parents and teachers reinforces consistency in children's moral learning, ensuring that the values introduced at school continue to be practiced at home. Such continuity enhances children's opportunities to internalize positive moral behaviors across different social contexts.

The study further demonstrates that a safe, supportive, and caring school environment functions as a form of hidden curriculum, through which children acquire moral values indirectly from the school's culture and everyday practices. This finding supports the work of Lipscomb (2007) and Elias et al. (1997), who argue that school climate, interpersonal relationships, and institutional culture play significant roles in character development. At TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, the positive learning environment, classroom routines, and respectful interactions among teachers and students collectively contribute to children's moral development beyond formal classroom instruction.

Despite the positive outcomes observed, several challenges remain in implementing moral values education. External social influences, limited instructional time, and resource constraints continue to affect the consistency of character education. These findings are consistent with the perspectives of Fullan (2001) and Hattie (2009), who emphasize that educational change requires continuous adaptation to contextual challenges. In response, the school integrates moral values into everyday learning activities, creates a supportive classroom environment, and actively collaborates with parents to reinforce children's character development. Overall, the findings suggest that an integrated, role model-based, collaborative, and contextually grounded approach enables moral values education to contribute effectively to children's character development despite existing challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the successful implementation of moral values education in early childhood depends on the integration of classroom instruction, teacher role modelling, school culture, and active family involvement. At TK Pertiwi 1 Cakke, moral values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, respect, and generosity are not taught as isolated concepts but are systematically embedded within daily learning activities, play-based experiences, collaborative interactions, and school routines. This integrated approach enables children to internalize moral values through authentic experiences that are developmentally appropriate and socially meaningful.

The findings contribute to the literature on early childhood character education by providing empirical evidence that moral values education is most effective when viewed as a holistic educational process rather than as a stand-alone instructional programme. The study extends constructivist learning theory, Social Learning Theory, and ecological systems theory by demonstrating that children's moral development is shaped through the continuous interaction between teachers, peers, parents, and the broader school environment. This integrated perspective offers a practical framework for understanding how multiple educational contexts collectively support sustainable character formation during early childhood.

From a practical perspective, the study highlights the importance of strengthening teachers' capacity to integrate moral values into everyday learning, promoting consistent collaboration between schools and families, and creating supportive school environments that reinforce positive behaviour through habituation and meaningful social interaction. Educational policymakers may also consider these findings when designing character education policies, teacher professional development programmes, and early childhood curricula that emphasize collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

This study is limited by its focus on a single kindergarten and the use of a qualitative case study approach, which may limit the transferability of the findings to different educational settings. Future research is therefore recommended to include multiple early childhood institutions across diverse geographical and socio-cultural contexts, employ comparative or mixed-methods designs, and investigate the long-term impact of moral values education on children's behavioural development. Such studies would enrich the evidence base for developing more comprehensive and sustainable character education models in early childhood education.

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