

Building Students' Strong Personality through Character Education in Schools Under The Implementation of The Merdeka Curriculum: A Strategy for Preventing Demoralization

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Abstract. Character education in schools plays a strategic role in shaping resilient and integrity-driven personalities to prevent the growing phenomenon of demoralization among students in the era of disruption and global value transformation. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the importance of integrating character education into the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as to identify an effective conceptual model for strengthening students' moral development. Employing a qualitative literature review method, this research examines a wide range of recent scholarly sources, including books, journals, and research reports relevant to the themes of character education and the Merdeka Curriculum. The synthesis of literature indicates that systematically integrated character education within the Merdeka Curriculum makes a significant contribution to preventing demoralization through the reinforcement of Pancasila Student Profile values. This study proposes the Integrative Model of Character Education within the Merdeka Curriculum (IM-CE2M), which consists of four key components: (1) project- and experience-based contextual learning that cultivates the values of faith, collaboration, and independence; (2) consistent habituation and self-development programs that foster moral discipline and positive habits; (3) synergistic collaboration among schools, families, and communities as the three centers of value-based education; and (4) strengthening teachers' capacities as moral role models and primary facilitators of character-based learning. The implementation of IM-CE2M demonstrates that character education not only serves as a means of preventing demoralization but also forms the foundation for developing students who are faithful, critical, creative, and ethical embodying the ideals of the Pancasila Student Profile. Thus, integrating character education within the Merdeka Curriculum represents a transformative strategy to cultivate a young Indonesian generation with strong character, global competitiveness, and steadfast commitment to universal moral and humanitarian values.

Keywords: Character Education; Merdeka Curriculum; Demoralization; Resilient Personality; Pancasila Student Profile

INTRODUCTION

Demoralization is a crucial topic in the field of education. It is considered one of the key factors contributing to the decline of a nation, as deviant behaviors often emerge within communities where school-aged children live (Supranoto, 2015). In the educational context, demoralization not only affects the quality of learning but also poses a threat to the future of younger generations both socially and morally (Asrori, 2016). In today's era of globalization, the process of humanization in life, particularly in education, has significantly diminished, leading to the erosion of students' moral character from the values they are expected to embody (Siagian, 2023). Therefore, building a strong moral foundation through education is an essential effort to overcome this phenomenon. One effective way to mitigate the negative impact of globalization is by preparing individuals through Character Education (Oktari & Kosasih, 2019).

Character education serves as the central foundation of education in shaping resilient and strong individuals. (S. Anshori, 2016). Moral and ethical foundations guide students in facing everyday life challenges, helping them develop into resilient individuals (Salsabilah et al., 2021). In the school context, character education functions to shape students' morality, integrity, and positive attitudes (A.H. Haris, 2017). The role of character education in schools is to develop students' behavior and attitudes through the cultivation of moral values such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect, enabling them to grow into strong individuals who can face challenges and are not easily influenced by external factors (Muslich, 2022).

Komara (2018) stated that in today's digital and modern era, education plays a crucial role in shaping the character of the nation's future generations. In line with Komara, R. R. Dewi et al. (2021) explained that the current moral crisis can be addressed through education. Students are not only expected to possess high intellectual abilities but also to develop strong and ethical personalities (Setiawati, 2017). Character education can be integrated into all learning materials and school activities, providing students with opportunities to continuously develop a strong and well-rounded character (Wisada & Sudarma, 2019).

As time progresses and technology advances, the challenge of shaping students' character has become increasingly complex. One of the efforts that can be undertaken to develop character is through school intervention, as schools being formal educational institutions with a strategic role in character development can implement this through curricula, extracurricular programs, and policies that support the formation of positive behavior (W.N. Sari, 2021). Furthermore, the implementation of the current curriculum, namely the Independent Curriculum, provides opportunities and flexibility for schools to design and conduct learning activities that align with students' needs and characteristics (Sawitri et al., 2023).

Developing students' character and competencies to foster resilient, integrity-driven individuals who can contribute to society is the key focus of the Independent Curriculum (Rahma et al., 2023; Hanipah, 2023). Hasanah (2017) emphasized in her research that character education, when implemented consistently, systematically, and continuously, can build students' resilience, positively influence their moral development, and also enhance their academic achievement.

In this study, the focus of the research is on exploring how to build resilient character through character education in schools to prevent demoralization, with the aim of contributing to the development of strong personal character. Additionally, the study seeks to identify effective

strategies for integrating character values into the implementation of the Independent Curriculum to prevent moral degradation.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative literature review method for data collection. According to Fink (as cited in Surani, 2019), a literature review is defined as research that critically, systematically, clearly, and comprehensively describes a topic by discussing issues explored in previous studies as well as other references examining the subject, object, methods, and research findings. The purpose of the literature review conducted in this study is to present and analyze data and information obtained from books, journals, news articles, and other credible references related to the research topic or issue, in order to strengthen the validity of the data and findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of Character Education

Character education essentially refers to a systematic process of instilling moral values, shaping attitudes, and developing behaviors that reflect noble values in everyday life. Recent studies indicate that the concept of character education in Indonesia encompasses three main dimensions: moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action, which are developed within the context of the nation's cultural and religious values (Rahmawati & Setiawan, 2023). Furthermore, findings from Undiksha (2024) emphasize that character education is a multi-aspect effort that not only develops academic abilities but also fosters the personality and morality of students across all levels of education (Sukmawati, 2024). Other studies also highlight that the concept of character education requires collaboration among teachers, families, and the social environment to nurture individuals with integrity and a strong sense of national identity (Nurhayati, 2023). Thus, character education does not merely emphasize "what is taught" but also "how the values are applied" in every aspect of students' lives.

Furthermore, education is essentially a series of interactive activities between teachers and students aimed at achieving optimal maturity, independence, and well-being within a sociocultural context (Salsabilah et al., 2021). In this context, character plays a central role as it reflects an individual's personality through traits, morals, ethics, and habits that distinguish one person from another (Makkawaru, 2019). The main goal of character education, as stated by Nantara (2022), is to develop values, attitudes, and positive

behaviors formed through a conscious and well-planned process, thereby nurturing individuals of noble character in accordance with societal norms of decency. Thus, the implementation of character education serves as a fundamental basis for students' personal growth and development toward complete moral and social maturity.

Research by Kartika & Umbu (2024) emphasizes that character education integrated into the curriculum has a significant impact on preventing student demoralization. Character education in Indonesia is rooted in national culture as an effort to shape and develop children into the nation's next generation who meet societal expectations (Perdana, 2018). According to Pranajaya (2024), a strong personality is built through awareness and adherence to ethical and moral values that are consistently practiced in daily life. This is further supported by Aini et al. (2023), who argue that character development must be carried out comprehensively, both through academic learning and non-academic activities, to ensure that students have a solid moral foundation in facing the challenges of demoralization.

Moreover, in today's highly advanced era, moral values are increasingly being eroded by rapid changes and societal dynamics (Rohani et al., 2023). Morality is no longer viewed as a primary life priority, while intellectual achievement is often considered more important (Sumarto, 2020). Many young people have lost sight of the importance of education and have become trapped in deviant behaviors (Bahtiar, 2023). The main cause of juvenile delinquency lies in the lack of supervision and guidance from various stakeholders, particularly the insufficient parental role in monitoring children's behavior (Arianti et al., 2024). Religious education also serves as a key factor in restoring and strengthening deteriorating character; through religious activities, lost moral values can be revived and continually reinforced (Tutuk, 2015).

According to Kusnoto (2017), character-based learning provided to students must be comprehensive and aimed at shaping them into good, virtuous, and well-charactered individuals. This goal can be achieved through collaboration among all parties involved in educational activities to guide students toward positive development (H. Haris, 2020). Education is a shared responsibility between schools, parents, and the community, which is manifested through the three centers of education (Kurniawan, 2015). Parents, the community, and schools must actively participate in the continuous and sustainable implementation of character education (Nurjanah et al., 2023). It is essential to establish mutually supportive cooperation between schools and parents in instilling character values in students (Adha & Ulpa, 2021). Moreover, the implementation of character education in

schools must also be supported by a family environment that is conducive and nurturing for students (Omeri, 2015).

The collaboration between schools and parents aims to ensure that character education is not only implemented at school but also continued at home (Syahroni, 2017). Without parental support, the formation of students' character at school will not reach its optimal outcome (Triwardhani et al., 2020). Schools that involve parents in the character education process through effective communication, shared activities, and mutual support will create a conducive environment for students' moral development (Budiyono & Harmawati, 2017).

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Hartinah et al. (2024) explain that the role of parents in the context of character education innovation includes three key aspects. First, parents actively participate in school activities such as parent-teacher meetings, school events, or parent committees which provide opportunities for them to better understand and support the character education approaches implemented at school. Second, parents apply character values at home by serving as role models, offering moral encouragement, and maintaining open communication with their children about these values. Third, parents collaborate with teachers and schools through open communication to share understanding of the approaches used and the best ways to support their children's character development. This collaborative effort encourages every school to educate students in character formation as part of realizing the national movement for mental revolution, in accordance with the aspirations of the nation and the state (Japar et al., 2018).

In addition to parents and schools, teachers also play a crucial role in shaping students' character (Salsabilah et al., 2021). Teachers are not only educators but also role models who exemplify core values and serve as primary figures for students at school (Nantara, 2022). When teachers demonstrate character values in their daily interactions, students are more likely to imitate and internalize those behaviors. Indeed, teachers are among the

key figures in schools who guide, educate, and nurture students' moral character (Agustin & Maryani, 2021).

Teachers' attitudes and behavior in guiding students are also key factors in the successful implementation of character education in schools (Setiawati, 2017). Building positive relationships based on trust and respect between students and teachers can strengthen students' moral values through warm and supportive interactions (I. Anshori, 2017). Establishing good communication and meaningful interaction with students fosters a sense of affection between teachers and students, creating warmth and harmony within the learning environment (Yestiani & Zahwa, 2020). Therefore, the role of teachers is essential and serves as a crucial effort in motivating students' character growth, improving the quality of education, and shaping students' personalities for the better.

2. Challenges in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Integrating the Character Values of the Pancasila Student Profile into Learning and Personal Development

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) presents both opportunities and challenges in strengthening students' character through the integration of Pancasila Student Profile (P5) values. Several studies indicate that the main challenges lie in teachers' readiness to understand the concepts and philosophy of the Independent Curriculum, as well as in designing contextual and meaningful teaching materials and P5 based projects (Syifa, 2025; Hanifah, 2025). In addition, limitations in educational infrastructure and learning facilities particularly in underdeveloped and border regions hinder the implementation of project-based learning that requires cross-disciplinary collaboration (Sari, 2024; Fathurrozi et al., 2025). The lack of continuous professional development, low digital literacy among teachers, and heavy administrative workloads further slow down the learning transformation envisioned by the Independent Curriculum (Diningtyas et al., 2025). These conditions emphasize that the success of curriculum implementation depends not only on policy design but also on the readiness of human resources and systemic support at the school level.

On the other hand, the integration of Pancasila Student Profile (P5) values into learning activities and personal development still faces various conceptual and practical challenges. Giska (2025) found that the integration of P5 values in elementary schools often remains formalistic and has yet to effectively foster genuine character formation. Similar obstacles are evident in Civics Education and Religious Education subjects, where teachers' understanding of character dimensions is often limited to the cognitive domain rather than

the affective and psychomotor domains (Mardin & Zarkasih, 2025; Adriana & Nawawi, 2025). Furthermore, assessing students' character development remains challenging due to the lack of authentic assessment instruments and valid rubrics (Hanifah, 2025; Indo-MathEdu, 2025). Therefore, strategies to strengthen teacher capacity, promote cross-subject collaboration, and implement value-oriented policy support are essential to ensure that the integration of P5 values can be carried out holistically and sustainably within the national education system.

One of the government's efforts to address these challenges is the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) a curriculum that prioritizes the integration of character education across all school subjects (Fauzi, 2022). This new curriculum provides teachers with greater flexibility to design learning activities that are more relevant to students' needs and characteristics (Nugraha, 2022). With this flexibility, teachers have the opportunity and autonomy to develop learning modules and integrate character values in ways that align with the local context and students' cultural backgrounds (Iskandar et al., 2023).

Education in Indonesia is oriented toward developing a generation that is knowledgeable and has strong character by nurturing the potential of each student (YK Sari, 2019). Therefore, as educators, it is essential to prepare students who are qualified, competitive, and possess good character through the integration of values in learning activities (Arviansyah & Shagena, 2022). Character education is a process that cultivates individuals to practice virtuous values and avoid disgraceful ones, enabling them to understand and apply principles for living a good and meaningful life (Jalil, 2016). The ultimate goal of education is to shape individuals with noble character by guiding them and providing knowledge about which actions are permissible and which are not (Kadir, 2015).

Schools that implement the Independent Curriculum effectively tend to be more successful in shaping students with resilient personalities (Ningrum & Suryani, 2022). This is attributed to the use of more collaborative learning approaches that emphasize character development (Fadhli, 2022). Students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process, enabling them not only to acquire knowledge but also to internalize character values through direct experience (Munawwaroh, 2019). Character education is also integrated into learning activities by fostering social character, cognitive character, knowledge, tolerance, justice, and cooperation through project-based learning, discussions, and collaborative activities, allowing students to gain a deeper understanding of character values (Ali et al., 2017).

The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) strengthens character education through the pillars of the Pancasila Student Profile (Ulandari & Rapita, 2023). The Pancasila Student Profile serves as a graduate profile that reflects the expected character of students who embody Pancasila values in the millennial generation (Mulyani et al., 2023). The Pancasila Student Profile aims to develop graduates who are committed to upholding the core values of Pancasila (Kurniawaty et al., 2022). The Pancasila Student Profile consists of six key dimensions: faith and devotion to God Almighty, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity (Kurniawaty et al., 2022). These dimensions can be categorized into several domains of intelligence: moral intelligence, which includes faith, devotion, and noble character; social intelligence, encompassing cooperation and global diversity; intellectual intelligence, reflected in creativity and critical reasoning; and practical intelligence, represented by independence (Mery et al., 2022). The Pancasila Student Profile represents an ideal learner one who excels academically, learns continuously throughout life, possesses strong character, demonstrates global competence, and behaves in accordance with Pancasila values (Hamzah et al., 2022). The implementation of these Pancasila values is carried out through learning activities, habituation programs, personal development, and the Pancasila Student Profile project activities (Irawati et al., 2022).

Through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile, teachers can apply various strategies such as project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and habituation activities (Asiati & Hasanah, 2022). Differentiated instruction is tailored to students' interests, talents, potentials, and characteristics to achieve learning objectives, while project-based learning refers to thematic projects within the Independent Curriculum that focus on enhancing students' character and competencies. In addition, habituation activities can also help strengthen students' character in alignment with the Pancasila Student Profile (Purnawanto, 2023). Hartinah et al. (2024) explain that improving understanding of character values can be achieved by adapting to complex situations, facing challenges and unexpected circumstances, and encouraging students to actively participate in extracurricular activities that support character development.

Schools are required to design programs that can foster students' character development through both classroom and extracurricular learning activities (Khamalah, 2017). The integration of character education is also carried out through personal development and learning activities, such as daily routines, role modeling, and extracurricular programs (Manasikana & Anggraeni, 2018). Personal development activities serve as efforts to shape

students' character and personality through learning experiences and career development programs implemented in extracurricular activities, aimed at enhancing students' competencies and positive habits (Prasetyo et al., 2024).

Extracurricular activities are curricular programs carried out by students outside regular class hours under the guidance and supervision of the educational institution. These activities aim to optimally develop students' potential, talents, interests, abilities, personalities, teamwork, and independence in order to support the achievement of educational goals (Dahliyana, 2017). Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that extracurricular activities are expected to serve as a bridge to meet students' diverse developmental needs morally, attitudinally, cognitively, and creatively in fostering and cultivating character values that align with the Pancasila Student Profile and the aspirations of the nation.

Extracurricular activities and structured daily habituation practices have a significant impact on building students' character (Salima, 2024). Routine activities such as maintaining environmental cleanliness, student involvement in organizations, and habituation practices like discipline during flag ceremonies, maintaining school hygiene, and character-based extracurricular programs such as scouting can strengthen moral values like responsibility and cooperation among students (Sofannah et al., 2023). Consistently implemented habits can reduce students' tendency to engage in acts of demoralization (Putra & Fathoni, 2022). Students need to be accustomed to demonstrating positive behavior, acquiring meaningful and valuable skills, and being guided to develop a constructive mindset that transforms these traits into habits allowing positive behavior to emerge naturally without significant difficulty (Gantini & Fauziati, 2021).

As a means of strengthening students' character, the habituation of performing Dhuha prayer in congregation is carried out as an effort to develop students' morals both in their relationship with Allah SWT and with fellow human beings (Siswanto et al., 2021). In addition, other examples of religious habituation, such as short religious talks (seven-minute sermons), congregational prayers, and Qur'an recitation, are forms of character education culture implemented in schools (Dini, 2022). These religious habituation practices serve as educational activities that foster students' spiritual intelligence and moral integrity (Fahmi & Susanto, 2018).

The importance of instilling religious values in schools lies in their ability to deeply influence students' inner character and be passed down through generations, ultimately becoming a

firmly rooted culture that naturally internalizes moral and character values into students' daily lives (Siswanto et al., 2021). Habituation, in essence, has deeper implications than merely teaching students how to act or speak (Azizah et al., 2023). Through interactive activities such as extracurricular programs, students can develop a sense of empathy and care for their peers (Wahidin, 2017). The importance of instilling and shaping character education among students is so crucial that educators must take actions that go beyond theoretical knowledge transfer. It requires practical implementation through setting good examples, fostering positive habits, and nurturing students' character within the environments of school, family, and community (Suprayitno & Wahyudi, 2020).

3. The Preventive Effect of Demoralization on the Development of Strong Student Character

The prevention of demoralization among students plays a crucial role in strengthening resilient character and personality through value formation strategies, social support, and the integration of character education within schools. Such preventive efforts have proven effective in maintaining students' moral and psychological stability, particularly amid high academic and social pressures. Structured character education programs have been shown to enhance the internalization of values such as responsibility, empathy, and perseverance, which are positively correlated with students' moral resilience (Mawaddah, Haumahu, & Korlefura, 2024). In addition, the implementation of character-based inclusive education management can minimize the risk of demoralization by fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment (Al-Karimah, 2024). Other studies also indicate that teacher professionalism in applying character education contributes to improving students' intrinsic motivation and preventing the emergence of demoralization symptoms (Harjanti, 2024). Similarly, Pabbajah (2020) asserts that academic demoralization can be mitigated through strategies that strengthen moral values within a humanistic curriculum and learning practices.

The implementation of broader demoralization prevention strategies encompasses the development of a positive school culture, the strengthening of anti-bullying programs, and professional teacher training aimed at fostering students' psychological resilience. Such a comprehensive approach has been shown to reduce anxiety levels, enhance prosocial behavior, and reinforce students' moral identity (Ikhrom et al., 2023). Research conducted by Rosmiati (2023) indicates that character education models in elementary schools can effectively prevent demoralization and deviant behavior among children through the

cultivation of strong moral and spiritual foundations. Similarly, Suresman et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of developing discipline and character through positive habituation in elementary schools to build resilient personalities. Furthermore, a review by What Works Clearinghouse (2023) highlights that evidence-based character education interventions are effective in strengthening students' moral integrity and emotional resilience, thereby enabling the systematic optimization of demoralization prevention efforts at the school level.

In line with these efforts, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) serves as a strategic step to strengthen students' character and morality through student-centered learning. The primary goal of the Independent Curriculum is to develop students' critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills, with the expectation of creating a more efficient and effective learning process (Akhmadi, 2023). However, challenges continue to arise in implementing character education within the framework of the Independent Curriculum (Rahim & Ismaya, 2023). Character formation at the elementary school level faces several obstacles, such as limited school resources, insufficient teacher and staff training, restricted instructional time, and low parental involvement in the educational process (Mustoip, 2023). Additional barriers include the lack of parental participation and the limited material support capacity of schools (Warsihna et al., 2023). Moreover, teachers' difficulties in understanding the Independent Curriculum coupled with inadequate guidance and clarity from school principals have created uncertainty in the practical implementation of the curriculum's key characteristics (Deti et al., 2024).

In addition, teachers still face difficulties in integrating character values into the learning process (Sahroni, 2017). Many teachers encounter challenges, particularly those related to technological advancement and the lack of facilities that support more efficient and effective learning (Kusnoto, 2017). Furthermore, limited school infrastructure also hinders the implementation of character-oriented project-based learning (Farida, 2016). According to Muslich (2022), several solutions can be implemented to address the challenges associated with character education in the application of the Independent Curriculum, including the following:

- a. Providing guidance, training, and professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their readiness and understanding of the Independent Curriculum.
- b. Increasing student empowerment and promoting self-directed learning programs to help students become more independent and active in the learning process.

- c. Encouraging collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to create a supportive character education environment.
- d. Ensuring adequate access to digital resources that support the development of students' character and positive values.
- e. Offering continuous training and mentoring for teachers to improve their understanding and skills in integrating character values into learning.
- f. Strengthening cooperation between schools, parents, and the.

4. Conceptual Visualization of the Relationship between Character Education, the Independent Curriculum, and Demoralization Prevention

As a result of the literature synthesis, the relationship between Character Education, the Independent Curriculum, and Demoralization Prevention can be conceptually illustrated as shown in the following figure.

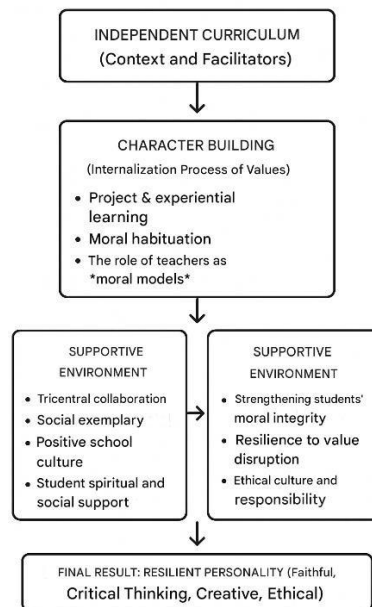


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Character Education Integration in the Independent Curriculum as a Strategy for Demoralization Prevention

The conceptual diagram above illustrates the mechanism by which Character Education plays a role in minimizing demoralization through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), as explained below:

- a. The Independent Curriculum serves as the context and facilitator, providing teachers with the flexibility to integrate the values of the *Pancasila Student Profile* into the learning process.

- b. Character Education functions as the core process, in which moral values are internalized through project- and experience-based learning, moral habituation, and teachers' exemplary roles as moral models.
- c. This internalization process is reinforced by a Supportive Environment, namely the collaboration among schools, families, and communities (*the tri-center of education*). This collaboration fosters a positive culture and strengthens the continuity of moral values both inside and outside the classroom.
- d. The synergy among these three elements leads to Demoralization Prevention, which encompasses the strengthening of moral integrity, resilience against value disruption, and the cultivation of ethical and responsible behavior.
- e. The final outcome is the development of a Resilient Personality learners who are faithful, critical thinkers, creative, and ethical aligned with the spirit of the *Pancasila Student Profile*.

Thus, the diagram demonstrates a causal and integrative relationship between curriculum design, character education processes, and their impact on students' moral stability. This model also emphasizes the conceptual contribution of this article in enriching approaches to Character Education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of character education within the context of the *Merdeka Curriculum* has proven to function as a preventive mechanism against moral decline through the internalization of values in a systemic, holistic, and sustainable manner. Character education operates not only on the cognitive level but also on the affective and psychomotor domains through habituation, role modeling, and project-based learning oriented toward the *Pancasila Student Profile*. This mechanism enables students to undergo a reflective process on moral values such as responsibility, empathy, discipline, and honesty, which are then manifested in real-life behavior. In other words, character education serves as a moral buffering system that resists the penetration of negative values brought by globalization and strengthens students' personal integrity in facing social and digital disruptions.

Character education also functions as a social system that involves three centers of learning: the school, the family, and the community. This tri-center collaboration strengthens the continuity of values and creates an educational ecosystem that fosters collective morality. Within the context of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, the role of the teacher as the primary facilitator

becomes the key to the success of this process, as teachers not only transmit values but also create a “moral space” in which students learn through practice and everyday life experiences.

The specific contribution of this article lies in the development of the Integrative Character Education Model within the Merdeka Curriculum (MI-PK2M), which emphasizes four synergistic components: contextual project-based learning, continuous moral habituation, cross-educational-environment collaboration, and the strengthening of the teacher’s role as a moral model. This model offers a new conceptual framework for primary education institutions in Indonesia to systematically and measurably strengthen students’ character, as well as serve as a policy foundation for preventing moral decline in an era of value disruption.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study is limited by its literature-based nature and has not yet explored empirical field data regarding the effectiveness of MI-PK2M implementation across different school contexts. Therefore, future research is recommended to:

1. Conduct field studies or educational experiments to measure the direct impact of the MI-PK2M model on reducing signs of moral decline among students.
2. Develop more authentic character assessment instruments to evaluate students’ affective and moral dimensions longitudinally.
3. Examine differences in implementation across various educational levels and socio-cultural contexts to gain a comprehensive understanding of adapting character education models in Indonesia’s diverse settings.

With these directions, future research is expected to enrich the practice of character education based on the Merdeka Curriculum and strengthen the moral foundation of Indonesia’s younger generation in facing global moral challenges.

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