The role of principal transformational leadership in implementing character education in public Elementary Schools of Kotagede subdistrict

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	A preliminary study found that qualitative findings revealed a gap between expectations and reality in the transformational leadership of school principals in implementing character education. Principals were not consistently setting a good example for students, teachers, staff, or parents, resulting in suboptimal implementation of character education. This study aims to describe the implementation of character education in the Pancasila Student Profile and analyze the principal's role in providing ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. It also identifies the driving and inhibiting factors in the implementation of character education at SDN Kotagede 5. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with validity tested using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The findings show that character education has been well implemented across learning, school culture, and extracurricular activities, covering six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. The study concludes that the principal's transformational leadership plays a strategic role in creating a supportive environment, though challenges remain in student discipline and school coordination. Strengthening teacher appreciation, parental involvement, and student mentoring strategies are recommended to improve effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The national education system in Indonesia aims to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens as mandated in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 Article 3. To achieve this goal, schools as formal educational institutions have the responsibility to shape students' character comprehensively. Schools are formal educational institutions tasked with developing students' potential to achieve optimal development. Schools are responsible for shaping students into individuals who are devout to God Almighty, creative, independent, and accountable (Putri, 2022).

In the era of globalization and digitalization, the challenges in shaping students' character have become increasingly complex. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Research and Development Agency in 2021, the student character index stood at 69.52%, a decrease of two points compared to the previous year's figure of 71.41%. Aditionally, according to the results of the 2024 Indonesian Education Report conducted by the Education Assessment Center, it was found that the character of elementary school students has become accustomed to and consistently applies the values of the Pancasila Student Profile at 58.16%. This data indicates that the majority of elementary school students have not yet become accustomed to and consistently apply the values of the P3 at 41.84%.

The success of a school is closely tied to the principal's leadership. As emphasized by Wahyuni and Desriyandri (2022), the principal plays a decisive role in managing schools and directing policies that determine their success. Likewise, effective leadership is essential in fostering a school environment that supports character education. Mulyasa (2018) states that: "The principal has seven roles, abbreviated as EMASLIM, which include educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader,

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innovator, and motivator." The role of the principal is crucial in determining the success of a school in fulfilling its mission to enlighten the nation and develop the whole person (Seriyanti et al., 2020).

However, not all school principals can perform their roles optimally. According to the 2018-2023 Elementary School Development Report conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, the performance of elementary school principals was 82.79%, a decrease from the previous year. This data indicates that the performance of school principals is still not optimal by 17.21%. This statement is also supported by Sahertian and Effend (2022), who states that the role of school principals in Indonesia is not yet effective. This is reflected in the inability of school principals to involve all stakeholders in determining the school's core values; the inability to provide policies relevant to character assessment involving teachers and parents; the inability to integrate character-building programs into the school's main curriculum; the inability to motivate teachers to integrate character-building materials into teaching; the inability to adopt local values in implementing policies that support student character development; the inability to create a supportive school environment necessary for the development of democratic values, tolerance, and nationalism among students; and the failure to optimally motivate teachers to exemplify noble attitudes as models for students. This situation results in an uneven education system that can threaten the existence, sustainability, competitiveness, and quality of education.

Leadership is generally understood as a process of influence between leaders and followers to achieve shared goals. Rost (1993) (in By 2021) emphasizes leadership as a relationship that drives significant change toward common objectives. Similarly, Olekan, Victoria, and Abraham (2021) view it as an interactive group process, while Thachapanyo, Ruangsanka, and Dhanapañño (2021) highlight its persuasive role in uniting members toward specific aims. In the same vein, Artasya et al. (2024) describe leadership as the capacity to guide, motivate, and mobilize individuals or groups to act in accordance with predetermined goals. Therefore, leadership emerges as a key factor in determining the success of an organization or institution. According to Erlena (2022), the leadership of a school principal is the key to the success of a school. In this matter, the leadership of the school principal is also central to the implementation of effective character education, especially through the Pancasila Student Profile program.

The implementation of character education based on the Pancasila Student Profile has begun at the elementary and secondary levels. By the end of the 2021/2022 academic year, Grade 4 students at SDN 2 Babakancikao had already carried out the Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project by creating and selling products made by the students, as well as teaching the theme of sustainable living to the students during the 2022/2023 academic year. Additionally, there are several activities related to the development of the Pancasila Student Profile character, including greeting all teachers, bringing food and drinks from home to reduce plastic waste, taking turns cleaning the classroom, singing the national anthem before lessons, participating in flag ceremonies and scouting activities, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and religious activities (praying and performing prayers) (Lisnawati et al., 2023).

The implementation of Pancasila Student Profile character education must be effective and continuous in every school because character education can help students develop morality, ethics, and positive values that can guide them in facing challenges and making good decisions in their personal and social lives. Additionally, character education can build a harmonious, fair, and cultured society, as well as promote sustainable and environmentally conscious development. Pancasila Student Profile character education is implemented so that students can take concrete actions in overcoming challenges in accordance with their learning stages and needs. P5 is a learning platform that encourages students to behave competently, have good character, and act according to Pancasila values (Purnawanto, 2023). P5 plays a crucial role in shaping a young generation that cares about Pancasila values, the environment, and society (Veronika et al., 2023). This program also has long-term impacts in strengthening Indonesia's national identity with Pancasila as the state ideology (Muktamar et al., 2024).

The implementation of character education is one of the efforts that must be made to improve school quality. In this case, the role of transformational leadership of the principal is crucial. The success of implementing character education depends on the leadership role of the principal. As a leader, the

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principal must be a role model, provide motivation, encourage the realization of a shared vision, stimulate intellectual thinking, and develop human resources. Indawati et al. (2022) explain that the principal is a top leader who is very influential in determining the progress of the school. The principal has an important role in the successful implementation of character education in schools, especially in coordinating, mobilizing, and harmonizing all available resources. Sudarwanto and Hidayati (2024) also state that the principal plays an important role in implementing character education in schools. In the effort to implement character education, all school members must be involved. Therefore, the principal's role is crucial in involving and encouraging all school components to become role models for students.

The results of research conducted by Budi (2021) explain that the transformational leadership style of school principals reached 62.79%. With these results, it can be said that transformational leadership style is still not optimal, at around 37.21%. The school principal is not yet fully trusted and respected as a role model for teachers, does not communicate the vision and mission in every meeting with teachers, often makes inappropriate decisions, and lacks creativity and innovation. Additionally, the principal rarely provides guidance or advice to teachers who make mistakes.

Based on the results of a preliminary study conducted on October 1, 2024, at SDN Kotagede 5, researchers observed that character education had not been implemented effectively due to several minor violations committed by students, such as engaging in other activities during prayer time, violating class agreements, arriving late to school, and arriving late for ceremonies. Additionally, school attire such as hats, socks, belts, and school logos were not fully worn. The school principal has made efforts to set a good example for teachers and students through both words and actions, such as arriving at school on time, dressing neatly and completely according to the scheduled attire, and participating in Dhuha and Zuhr prayers. However, these efforts have not been fully effective, as one or two students still commit violations. The principal also stated that he has not been able to set the best example, but he will strive to do so. This is further supported by the initial survey results, which indicate that the principal frequently sets an example for students, teachers, and staff, with a percentage of 77%. These survey results suggest that the principal has not maximized his role as a role model by 23%. Similarly, the principal frequently demonstrates disciplined behavior by arriving on time at school, with a percentage of 70%. This finding explains that the principal has not maximized his disciplined behavior by 30% to serve as a role model. Overall, the implementation of the principal's transformational leadership style reached a percentage of 72%. This finding shows that the implementation of transformational leadership style is still not maximized by approximately 28%, and respondents feel dissatisfied with the principal's transformational leadership style, thus requiring further attention.

After conducting a preliminary study, it was found that 23% of the data was quantitative, while qualitative data showed a gap between expectations and reality in the transformational leadership of school principals in implementing character education. School principals did not set a good example for students, teachers, staff, or parents. This resulted in the implementation of character education in schools not running optimally. Therefore, this research is important to conduct a thorough examination of the role of transformational leadership of school principals in implementing character education. The researcher is interested in conducting further research with the title "Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Implementing Character Education in Public Elementary Schools in Kotagede District." Specifically, this study aims to describe the implementation of character education in the Pancasila Student Profile and analyze the principal's role in providing ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the principal's transformational leadership in implementing character education at SDN Kotagede 5. According to Taherdoost (2022) qualitative research discusses how to do something and the results of something that is done. Qualitative research aims to address the scientific and practical problems of society by using naturalistic and inquiry approaches. This research can generate new insights, ideas, and theories.

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The research informants consisted of the principal, one class teacher, and three students at SDN Kotagede 5. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to determine the informants. The researcher selected 1) principals who have experience leading the implementation of character education in schools, 2) teachers with experience teaching, instilling, and guiding character education in the classroom and outside the classroom, and 3) students as implementing subjects who experience character education. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique in which the researcher intentionally selects subjects who have certain characteristics to the research objectives. This technique is used to obtain rich and in-depth information about a case. Purposive sampling is a sample selection technique carried out in such a way that the sample composition approaches the characteristics of the population that is the subject of the research. With purposive sampling, researchers can ensure that the data collected is consistent, reliable, and useful for research analysis (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024; Thomas, 2022).

Data collection includes various techniques adapted from the social sciences to understand individual experiences and perspectives in depth consisting of observations, interviews, and the study of documentation (Bazen et al., 2021). Data were collected through 1) non-participant & unstructured observations of learning activities, school culture, school facilities, and principals' interactions with the school community; 2) semi-structured in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and students to understand the strategy of implementing character education through principals' transformational leadership and paying attention to the technical and non-technical facilities supporting the interview process; 3) documentation study in the form of analysis of policy documents, character education programs, and school activity reports.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) (in Adler 2022) explain to assess qualitative research not with scientific measures but based on data validity. Data validity must be evaluated by looking at credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. 1) Credibility is tested by triangulating sources, triangulating techniques, and using reference materials. Source triangulation is done by comparing data from principals, teachers, and students, while technique triangulation compares interview results with observation and documentation. The use of reference materials in the form of photos and school documents supports the validity of the data; 2) transferability is guaranteed through the preparation of detailed, systematic, and appropriate reports, thus enabling the application of research results in other contexts; 3) dependability is tested by a thorough audit of the research process through guidance with supervisors at every stage, as well as detailed recording of field activities; 4) confirmability is done by ensuring the conformity of research results with principals, teachers, and students, so that the data obtained is objective.

In conducting data analysis, researchers used an interactive model including data collection, data condensation, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification (Miles et al., 2018). 1) data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation for three months, starting with a preliminary study to understand research problems; 2) data condensation was carried out by selecting, summarizing, and eliminating irrelevant data. The results of the interviews were coded to obtain more structured information; 3) data presentation was arranged in the form of concise descriptions, charts, pictures, and tables to make it more effective and easy to understand; 4) conclusion drawing and verification were carried out based on research findings associated with supporting theories, and supported by valid and reliable observations, interviews, and documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Character Education at SDN Kotagede 5

1. Believing, Fearing God Almighty, and Having Noble Character

Character education implementation strategies can be done through habituation activities. Habituation has the core of making an experience a habit which then materializes as an action. This habituation method must be applied by principals and teachers in the character education process to accustom students to show good character and noble character. Therefore, this method is inseparable from exemplary. When there is habituation, there is exemplary, and vice versa (Khobir et al., 2021). The implementation of character education for faith, fear of God, and noble character at SDN Kotagede

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5 is carried out through habituation activities. 1) Dzuhur prayer in congregation. Every time the call to prayer is called, the teachers direct the children to pray in the congregation. Because there is only one mushola that can accommodate one class, while the number of students reaches 167 people, the prayer arrangement is carried out in turns. Some students pray in the mushola, while others pray in the classroom. In addition, the congregational dzuhur prayer is also informed by using a microphone, so that all students can follow the prayer activities uniformly and regularly. The zuhr prayer starts at 12:30 pm, and at 12:21 pm or after lunch, an announcement via speaker will be made to each class to instruct students to pray in congregation at the mosque around the school. Teachers will direct students to the mosque for zuhr prayer. After the prayer, there is a group dhikr and reading of the parents' prayer led by one of the grade 6 students. 2) Religious infaq every Friday: Students are taught to share through infaq which is held every Friday. 3) Sacrificial activities ahead of Eid al-Adha. 4) Tadarus together every Friday. On Fridays, tadarus activities are carried out before the lesson starts or after the bell rings. The tadarus is led by two representatives from grades 4, 5, and 6, who go to the office to lead the tadarus together. Each class is equipped with a speaker so that all students can follow the tadarus simultaneously. In this way, students' memorization will not collide with each other and everyone can memorize together in an orderly manner. 5) Memorization of Juz 30 Letters. Students from grade 1 to grade 6 are targeted to memorize Juz 30 letters. In grade 1, every year there is a target letter memorization with the hope that by the end of grade 6, all students have memorized all the targeted letters. This memorization is also incorporated into classroom learning. 6) Zakat fitrah and social service training. Students are trained in zakat fitrah, the funds for which are taken partly from student infaq and used for social service activities. This activity has been carried out three times, twice at Pondok Madani and once at Bantul Ridha.

According to Henderson (2025), imitation is a good act because it involves moral thinking, moral emotion, and moral action in the process. Aristotle emphasized that moral modeling in education is very important because it allows students to reflect on their shortcomings and be encouraged to improve through the process of imitation (Henderson, 2025). Role models are used as a tool for students to discover themselves by understanding that there is a difference between simply imitating someone and becoming like the person being modeled. To be effective, the main focus in the use of role models should be on the values or good traits displayed rather than the role model himself. This model helps children understand good character by involving three important aspects: cognitive to understand, affective to arouse emotions, and conative to encourage motivation to develop themselves according to the example given. Principals and teachers as role models have a huge influence on the growth and development of students' personalities as well as a source of inspiration and motivation for students. With mentors, students can gain a deeper understanding when they know the context in which the role model is located, which can only happen effectively with the people they see around them (Khobir et al., 2021; Osman, 2024). Character education at SDN Kotagede 5 is implemented through the example of the principal, teachers, and staff. All school members participate in the Dzuhur prayer in congregation with a rotation system. The principal and teachers take turns accompanying each class to pray while male teachers take turns being the prayer imam because there are male teachers. For grades 5 and 6, the prayer imam usually comes from male students.

2. Global Diversity

Global diversity is one of the main characteristics of the Pancasila Student Profile. With the formation of these character values, Indonesian students are expected to be able to preserve the nation's culture, identity, and noble values, while remaining open to interacting with other cultures. This statement is in line with the fact that Indonesian students must maintain their local wisdom and identity while remaining open-minded toward other cultures. Thus, there will be a sense of mutual respect and the possibility of the birth of a new positive culture without contradicting the noble values of the nation (Agustina et al., 2023; Laghung, 2023). The implementation of global diversity character education at SDN Kotagede 5 is carried out through various activities such as 1) P5 activities on the topic of traditional food. The principal invites resource persons, who can come from the student's parents or residents, to explain Kotagede's traditional foods such as kembanglaru cake (a cake usually made by kings in the past) and makipos. For the kembanglaru cake, the resource person comes directly to the school to give an explanation and students practice making the food. Some students also help serve the

finished food. However, for makipos, the resource person could not be present at the school so the principal arranged for students to visit the factory where makipos are made. 2) Market Day activities after the End of Semester Assessment (PAS), where students sell products that they have made or provided. 3) Carnival activities are held to commemorate the birthdays of SDN Kotagede 5 and Yogyakarta City, which usually fall on October 1 and October 7. Each class chooses its theme for the carnival, such as the theme of typical Jogja clothing. 4) Fashion show activities held on October 3, 2024, by the Yogyakarta City Government. 5) Language month activities, parents work together to prepare a reading corner competition in each class which is then judged on October 4, 2024.

One of the sub-elements in the Pancasila Student Profile that is oriented towards global diversity is the ability to communicate interculturally in interacting with others. This ability includes the awareness to pay attention, understand, accept, and appreciate the uniqueness of each culture as a rich perspective. Thus, creating mutual understanding and empathy between individuals. Through gathering activities, regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, or customs, the values of mutual respect and honor can be further strengthened. Because education is centered on student character, students' experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs are included in the learning process. In this case, educational strategies need to encourage closer relationships between teachers and students. Gathering activities is one way to strengthen these relationships to make them warmer and more meaningful (Jamaludin et al., 2022). Meanwhile, regarding global diversity character education in learning, principals teach students to respect each other in class regardless of differences such as skin color, religion, or social status (including differences in students' economic levels). Teachers also teach these values by visiting children who are sick and ensuring that there is no discrimination against them. According to the grade 5 teacher, in her class, there is learning about Indonesia's cultural diversity which is recorded in books. In addition, local cultures are also introduced to students. For example, when asked about the traditional food of Jogja or questions related to traditional arts and games some students have not been able to give the right answers. The values contained in traditional games are very important to teach emotional control. Unfortunately, today many students are more interested in digital games or gadgets.

Based on the results of interviews with three grade 5 students as well, they conveyed that they only partially knew about languages, traditional clothing, and special foods in Indonesia and participated a little in cultural activities. The three students know and recognize languages such as Sundanese, Javanese, and Madurese. Regarding traditional clothing, they know gagrak from Yogyakarta, kebaya from West Java, and Papuan traditional clothing. Then, they also know typical food from various regions such as soto betawi from Jakarta, soto malang from Malang, gudeg from Yogyakarta, and Kerak Telor from Jakarta. In addition, they participated in cultural activities such as dancing and short dramas both for the Indonesian Independence Day event and school assignments.

3. Mutual Cooperation

Mutual Cooperation is a community habit of helping each other in various social activities, whether based on kinship, neighborhood, or other practical reasons. In its implementation, mutual cooperation includes various aspects, such as guiding, educating, directing, protecting, and assessing character properly and effectively, especially by teachers. Thus, education of mutual cooperation values has become part of the tradition passed down to the younger generation (Khasanah & Setiawan, 2022; Sunaryati et al., 2023). The attitude of cooperation needs to be applied to elementary school students to build the character of Pancasila such as class picket activities, clean Friday, community service, deliberation, and group study (Sunaryati et al., 2023). According to Muttaqin and Rohyana (2023), forms of cooperation behavior that can be applied in elementary school student learning include various aspects such as sharing sustenance (giving alms) and praying for each other as taught in the Daqu method. In addition, cooperation between students is also seen in class cleaning activities (class picket) as well as joint cleaning activities in the school environment such as in the Clean Friday program. Solidarity in completing group assignments is an important part, where students work together to find solutions to problems. Respect for the results of deliberation and discussion in learning is also always instilled so that students can socialize well in the classroom.

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The implementation of cooperation character education at SDN Kotagede 5 is carried out through various activities such as joint cleaning activities and class pickets, Sunday morning recitation of student guardians, and extracurricular drumband activities. First, joint cleaning activities and class pickets are carried out, although not on a fixed schedule. Joint cleaning is often held when there are socialization activities from outside parties such as anti-corruption education by the Yogyakarta State Attorney, nutrition campaigns by the DIY Provincial Resilience Agency, and health programs from the Puskesmas. On such occasions, the school uses classrooms 2, 3, and 4 as venues, and before the events begin, the principal asks teachers and students to help rearrange tables and chairs. Second, every two months the school holds a Sunday morning recitation for parents of students from grades 1 to 6, in collaboration with the students' families. Third, in the extracurricular drumband program, the principal involves parents in preparation for competitions. Parents support in various ways, such as preparing food and drinks or helping with costumes. The drumband has become one of the school's signature activities, involving around 70 students, and has achieved recognition, including winning first place in a competition in early 2011. The success of this activity cannot be separated from the spirit of cooperation instilled in every training and preparation process.

Meanwhile, the implementation of cooperation character education among 5th-grade students can be seen in their daily classroom activities. These include sharing food with classmates, helping explain lessons or assignments (such as Math, IPAS, and Bahasa Indonesia), sharing ideas, and working together on group projects. Such activities demonstrate that cooperation is not only practiced in formal programs but also becomes part of students' daily interactions and learning processes.

4. Independent

According to Steinberg (1995) (in Khobir et al. 2022), independence is a concept regarding a person's ability to organize and control himself. Psychosocial independence consists of three main dimensions, namely: 1) emotional independence, which includes changes in the closeness or emotional attachment of individuals, especially to parents; 2) independence of action, related to the ability of individuals to make decisions independently and be responsible for them; and 3) independence of values, which reflects a person's freedom in interpreting a set of principles regarding right and wrong, obligations, truth, and priorities. An independent attitude can be formed by providing knowledge and examples that students can understand and imitate. Thus, students can learn and get used to doing various tasks independently. Students who have independent character will always be responsible for every action taken (Piesesa & Camellia, 2023; Rosadi & Hasan, 2024).

The implementation of independent character education is carried out through class agreements, homework or school assignments, and choosing seats in class. First, the class agreement is made at the beginning of the school year, involving all parties and assigning responsibilities. If the agreement is violated, there are consequences that must be faced. Although some students sometimes break the rules, this process becomes a part of learning. For instance, during the flag ceremony, students with incomplete uniforms or attributes are asked to come forward voluntarily, showing their independence in recognizing mistakes. Other violations, such as incomplete assignments, are followed by consequences such as singing or doing extra problems.

Second, students are also taught to complete homework and classwork with full responsibility without depending on others. In grade 1, some students already demonstrate independence in completing assignments, while others are still developing this ability. Those with reading difficulties, for example, still need assistance from parents at home. At this stage, students have also started using their textbooks such as mathematics and Indonesian books, gradually strengthening their independence.

Third, independence is fostered in seating arrangements. Although seats may be determined by the teacher, in some cases students are allowed to choose their own. At this school, tolerance is highly valued, and seating is rotated regularly. For example, in Grade 1, every Monday students sit according to their arrival time, and weekly shifts are also applied to avoid monotony. Students with visual impairments are placed at the front as recommended by the health center. These seating policies aim to encourage independence while accommodating students' needs.

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The application of independent character education for grade 5 students can be seen more clearly in their ability to complete assignments in subjects such as science, Indonesian, mathematics, IPAS, and English. In addition, they begin to recognize and manage their own emotions such as happiness, sadness, and anger, along with identifying causes and ways to overcome them. This demonstrates that independence in learning is closely linked to self-awareness and emotional regulation.

5. Critical Reasoning

Critical reasoning is the skill of students in asking questions, analyzing, interpreting, assessing, and evaluating information they read, hear, speak, or write. This ability is very important so that in the future students do not just accept information without first considering and examining its truth. Critical reasoning skills can lead students to think openly so that they do not have a selfish attitude and respect others, and the decisions taken are also beneficial for themselves and society (Kiska et al., 2023; W. Setiawan et al., 2023). Critical thinking is the ability to assess whether information is reliable or not. After assessing, a person can adjust their level of confidence before using the information to make decisions or act. According to Facione and the American Philosophical Association, six critical thinking skills can be measured, including: (1) interpreting information; (2) analyzing information; (3) making conclusions; (4) evaluating the strength of the information; (5) providing explanations; and (6) self-organizing (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023).

The implementation of critical reasoning character education in schools is carried out through several strategies. First, teachers often give essay questions because these encourage students to think critically and find open-ended answers. For example, in IPAS lessons, essay questions are relatively easier, while in mathematics, story problems are more common. However, there are still cases where students provide unexpected answers, such as calculating the length instead of the width of a rectangle. Second, teachers often start lessons by posing triggering questions to stimulate critical thinking from the very beginning. Third, classroom discussions provide students with opportunities to express their opinions freely, exchange ideas, and practice critical reasoning. In grade 5, students are particularly encouraged to voice their perspectives openly, allowing them to share both academic insights and personal experiences.

In addition, critical reasoning is reflected in students' independent learning behaviors. Many students seek various learning resources such as teachers, books, Google, YouTube, and parents. They are also trained to formulate opinions supported by evidence, such as solving mathematics problems step by step by referring to books, asking teachers, or searching online. These practices show that critical reasoning not only occurs during classroom activities but also becomes an integral part of students' broader learning processes.

6. Creative

Creativity is an attitude and behavior that reflects an effort to create something new, unique, and different from what already exists. The results of creativity give a special and unusual impression. Creative students must be able to develop new ideas and produce something original, meaningful, useful, and impactful. One form of creativity can be seen in drawing activities (Gunadi et al., 2024; Latifah et al., 2021; Lilihata et al., 2023). The implementation of creative character education at SDN Kotagede 5 is reflected in cultural arts activities in the curriculum, participation in drawing and coloring competitions, and teacher creativity in teaching. 1) Creative character education is taught through cultural arts subjects that involve activities such as music, batik, and painting. In these art lessons, children are invited to be creative themselves. For grades 1 to 4 they learn coloring while in grades 5 and 6 they learn painting. Coloring also requires creativity, as there are children who are faster or slower in completing the task. For example, if a child dares to color the ground red, it is a form of creativity. Every child has a unique way of being creative. The grade 5 teacher also stated that the application of creative character education in this school is integrated in several subjects, especially in Cultural Arts and Crafts (SBDP) lessons, where students' creativity is developed through art and music, especially in the upper grades. 2) Every year some students successfully win drawing and coloring competitions such as grades 2 and 5. 3) Teachers are creative in using various fun learning methods and props such as the Game Based Learning method which allows students to learn while playing and makes them happier to participate in learning. The application of students' creative character education is seen from students

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being able to find other ways when doing assignments such as from Google, YouTube and making different works of art from others such as creating novels or stories on writing applications, and participating in drawing and coloring competitions.

Principal's Transformational Leadership

1. Ideal Influence

Exemplary education is an intuitive method that has proven effective in shaping and preparing students morally, spiritually, and socially. This method is considered the most effective way to foster and develop character in schools, both through the role of principals and teachers (Nasution, 2018; Nurjanah et al., 2024). The results of research by Haryanti, Sutama, and Fathoni (2024) showed that the principal's exemplary role influences the attitudes and behavior of teachers in the school environment. As a leader, the principal carries out his duties by setting a good example for teachers. The principal also emphasized that the school's vision and mission include attitude and character building, which is further strengthened by a character-based education approach. Meanwhile, research by Embu (2022) highlighted that the principal's exemplary role contributes significantly to teacher discipline, especially in terms of class attendance, as evidenced by 80% of respondents who agreed that the principal's example greatly improved teacher discipline.

At SDN Kotagede 5, the principal demonstrates exemplary behavior in daily life that reflects the character values taught to students. The principal shows discipline by arriving on time each morning, adhering to the dress code as required by the school agreement and the Education Office, and actively participating in religious activities such as leading Dzuhur prayers, accompanying students during worship, and ensuring these activities are carried out properly. The principal also takes part in Sunday morning recitations with student guardians, which are held every two months. These events involve guardians in preparing speakers, venues, and meals, reflecting strong community awareness that allows the activities to run smoothly without burdening the school budget.

In addition, the principal supports teacher and staff development in line with the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers and school staff are encouraged to be more independent in seeking information and participating in relevant training. Support is provided through the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM) and various online workshops, such as assessment training or training aimed at making learning more enjoyable. Information about these trainings is often shared through WhatsApp or Telegram groups, and principals also motivate staff to join programs organized by the Education Office or regional teacher associations in East Jogja and Kotagede. These training sessions, usually conducted online in the evenings, typically last one to three days and contribute to continuous professional growth.

2. Inspirational Motivation

The head of SDN Kotagede 5 motivates and inspires teachers and staff to be actively involved in the character education program through a clear division of tasks. Each planned program has an executive leader, so every teacher and staff has a role in running the character education program. Regular evaluations are conducted to ensure the program runs well and achieves the expected goals. According to Yuliesie, Narni, and Rosmilawati (2024) by implementing effective delegation, principals can ensure that every teacher and staff feels valued and has a crucial role in realizing the school's vision and mission. The trust given to teachers and staff in making decisions and carrying out their job duties not only strengthens the sense of responsibility but can also encourage broader leadership development. In addition, the principal also motivates and inspires by sharing information about interesting activities carried out in other schools. Principals often provide examples of successful activities that can be used as references to be implemented in our school. For example, one example of an inspiring activity is an art show or exhibition at the end of the semester. By showing examples of useful activities, principals encourage teachers and staff to participate in character education programs with enthusiasm and creativity. Based on Marjani and Madjiani Tahir (2024), research principals who actively initiate knowledge-sharing programs can create a collaborative environment among teachers through discussion forums, workshops, and online platforms that facilitate the exchange of ideas and good practices. This program is considered an important factor in improving the quality of learning by allowing teachers to inspire and learn from each other. Principals' knowledge sharing can stimulate the

exchange of experiences among teachers. Meanwhile, principals who are active in knowledge sharing can also demonstrate a high level of openness and transparency regarding school policies and changes. By providing a clear understanding of school goals and policies, principals create a strong foundation for staff and stakeholder engagement.

3. Intellectual Stimulation

Principal transformational leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on teacher creativity. Principals who can inspire, support, and provide opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making tend to create a more innovative environment in designing and implementing learning (Sariwardani, 2025). Based on the results of the interview, the principal instructs teachers to learn independently through the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM). In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are required to develop their competencies independently through various available learning resources. The principal plays a role in motivating teachers to participate in available training activities organized by the ministry, education office, and learning community (kombel). Each training that teachers participate in also provides certificates that can be uploaded to PMM and used in the principal's performance assessment. In addition, the school holds regular kombel activities as a forum for teachers to share knowledge and experience. In kombel, teachers who have attended training share information and insights with colleagues, resulting in an exchange of ideas and thoughts that can enrich learning methods. Initially, this activity was held every Friday after Friday prayers, but due to many obstacles, starting in October this activity was shifted to Monday from 13.30-15.00. Kombel at school is held once a week and includes classroom reflection, discussion of learning problems, and sharing information about training that teachers have attended. In addition, there is also a parallel combo involving teachers from different grades, such as the combo at SDN Kotagede 5, which provides a forum for teachers to continue developing their insights and creativity in implementing character education. The principal also ensures that all teachers have the opportunity to attend various trainings that are relevant to their fields. If there is special training, such as strengthening early childhood education, grade 1 teachers are usually appointed. Meanwhile, for training related to ASN materials, the grade 5 teacher participates. In general, however, principals encourage equal opportunities for all teachers to improve their competencies. Schools also support training in two versions, namely online through facilitators from BBGP DIY, PPG arts, LPMP, and Widyaiswara, or offline by inviting resource persons. If inviting resource persons, the school must prepare a budget, while for training at BBGP Kalasan the school only needs to provide consumption for participants.

Principals play an active role in encouraging innovation and critical thinking in the learning process. Principals give teachers the freedom to utilize technology and develop innovative teaching methods, thus creating a more creative and dynamic learning atmosphere. With this support, teachers feel more empowered to experiment with new approaches that have a positive impact on the quality of learning in the classroom. In addition, principals encourage teachers to think critically and creatively by providing a safe environment for teachers to test new teaching methods and find solutions to challenges. As transformative leaders, principals not only expect teachers to carry out routine tasks but also to think more deeply about creating educational innovations (Crisvin et al., 2023; Nailan & Nugraha, 2024). The principal of SDN Kotagede 5 encourages teachers to create varied learning models. For example, for ecosystem material, students are invited to see the surrounding environment directly. However, if there is material that cannot be found in the surrounding environment such as goats that are not in the school area, teachers are asked to use pictures or videos as an alternative to conveying the material.

4. Individualized Considerations

Transformational leadership encourages the development of teachers' and staff's intelligence which in turn increases creativity and effectiveness in learning. The principal's role in fostering the school community is done through the natural development of potential and the improvement of certain abilities. Principals involve teachers in training to improve teachers' insights, guide them in the implementation of learning tasks, and create a work environment that is free from coercion. Principals also hold meetings with teachers, one of which aims to monitor and improve teacher performance (Aulia Fitri et al., 2022; Rifki Solana & Mustika, 2023). Principals develop the ability of teachers and staff to

support the implementation of character education in schools by conducting competitions, assessing and evaluating teacher performance, and involving all school members in school programs.

The Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbudristek) invites schools and teachers to share knowledge and discuss through learning communities. To support this initiative, the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) and the Learning Community (Kombel) were developed. Kombel is a group of teachers and staff who continuously learn and collaborate with clear and measurable goals to improve the quality of learning, thus having a positive impact on student learning outcomes. In addition, this community also plays a role in facilitating reflection, learning, and sharing experiences in understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Learning communities can be formed with teachers at the education unit level, regional level, or in the form of online communities. Learning communities have proven to play an important role in improving the quality of teaching as well as teachers' professional development. Research shows that involvement in these communities gives teachers access to the latest resources and teaching methods. Through interaction and collaboration, teachers can receive constructive feedback and share teaching strategies that have proven effective. In addition to renewing insights into learning methods, learning communities also help teachers deal with classroom challenges more effectively (Novita & Radiana, 2024; Samu, 2024). Based on the results of the interview, the Head of SDN Kotagede 5 organizes Kombel activities which are held every week, usually on Monday after students go home. The material discussed in Kombel can come from the Merdeka Mengajar Platform or related agencies, as well as problems at school including suggestions and responses from teachers. Sometimes, in this activity, there are also joint learning sessions, where younger teachers help older colleagues in completing assignments or reports. However, if there is a fund or bill report task that must be made by the finance admin, the admin does not participate in Kombel because he has to complete his duties. This activity is more often followed by the teachers.

In assessing teacher performance, the principal conducts direct monitoring through classroom visits or walking around the school every morning. Although not all classes are visited in one day, the principal arranges a rotating schedule. The evaluation stage is not only conducted at the end of the program but also in the middle of the program implementation while monitoring is still ongoing. This approach aims to identify obstacles early so that they can be minimized before the program ends. When conducting monitoring and evaluation activities, several stages of time are monitored, namely in teaching preparation, implementation of learning programs, and post-learning with each indicator that has been determined. The indicators assessed in the teaching preparation stage include the completeness of lesson plans, the education calendar, the suitability of learning methods with predetermined objectives, and the use of learning media and other aspects that support the effectiveness of the teaching process (Dongoran et al., 2023). The head of SDN Kotagede 5 develops the ability of teachers and staff to support the implementation of character education by evaluating and assessing teachers. This evaluation is conducted to determine the extent to which character education materials are delivered in the classroom, both by self-assessment and by other teachers. Teacher performance evaluation is conducted at least once a semester, usually in the middle of the month such as March. The purpose of this evaluation is not only to assess teacher performance but also to develop student character.

The principal empowers the whole school community by fostering an environment of cooperation and delegating responsibilities that increase the involvement of the school community in the school program. This collaborative approach not only improves teacher and staff morale but also contributes to a shared vision for educational excellence (U. Setiawan et al., 2022). The principal makes activities relevant to the school's vision and mission and there is involvement of all school members in carrying out these activities. In this school, there is 14 staff who are regularly involved in school activities including school guards, financial admin staff, and sarpras staff. All staff are involved in school activities so that each individual has the opportunity to develop and contribute to supporting the implementation of character education in the school.

Every year, the principal selects the best teachers based on the results of the performance evaluation. Teachers who are selected usually get awards in the form of certificates and prizes as a form of appreciation. The purpose of this award is to motivate other teachers to continue improving their performance. Principals see that giving awards can have a positive impact on improving teacher

performance, making teachers more excited and enthusiastic in carrying out and developing the tasks that have been entrusted (Asiah et al., 2021). Principals reward teachers, staff, and students who successfully implement character education programs in a simple but meaningful way. Principals reward teachers and staff with certificates of appreciation and thanks for their dedication in carrying out their duties well and motivating themselves in the field of character education. This is also in line with the grade 5 teacher's statement that the principal gives certificates of appreciation for the most innovative teachers. All teachers get certificates but with different categories. This year, this kind of award has not been given, but in the previous year, this activity was carried out. The principal also gives praise to successful teachers such as congratulating teachers who pass the PPG.

Encouraging and Inhibiting Factors for Principals in Implementing Character Education at SDN Kotagede 5

Encouraging and inhibiting factors are two interrelated aspects that are always present in every activity. The success of an activity can be achieved if the supporting factors are fulfilled and the inhibiting factors can be overcome properly. Supporting factors act as elements that support the success of an activity, which can also be interpreted as a reason or motivation for someone to do something. In contrast, inhibiting factors are challenges or obstacles that need to be resolved so that the objectives of the activity can be achieved. Obstacles often start from small problems that are often considered trivial. If left without a solution, these small problems can accumulate and develop into major obstacles that hinder the course of an activity. Thus, inhibiting factors can be interpreted as reasons or causes for someone not or not to take an action (Ramadhan et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2022). In this case, the researcher describes in detail the driving and inhibiting factors of school principals in implementing character education. The driving factors for school principals in implementing character education are as follows:

1. **Adequate Human Resources**

The school has teachers with diverse educational backgrounds such as three teachers with master's degrees and the others mostly with bachelor's degrees. Although there is one teacher with a D2 degree, the teacher still has high competence and is skilled in teaching, especially in the field of language. Although her diploma has not met the standard, her competence has met expectations.

2. **School Facilities are Adequate with a 30% Budget Allocation from BOS for the Procurement of Needed Facilities**

The principal and staff discuss the lack of facilities and infrastructure, develop plans and proposals, and carry out procurement according to the available budget.

3. **Teacher and Staff Support**

Teachers and staff have supported each other and become a complementary unit in implementing character education. They work well together, supporting existing initiatives, although sometimes there are differences of opinion, such as regarding certain ideas or policies.

4. **Principal's Enthusiasm**

The principal is passionate about implementing character education. However, there are challenges in coordinating staff as not all teachers immediately agree with all the ideas proposed. The principal still tries to encourage activities that focus on character development, although there are obstacles in the implementation.

5. **Support from Parents and the School Committee**

Support from the school committee also plays a role in the implementation of the character education program. For example, the calendar-making activity that involves parents has their full support, even though the management of the activity falls under the committee program.

While the inhibiting factors for school principals implementing character education include:

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a. Student Discipline Problems, Such as Forgetting to Bring Books

This is one of the obstacles that occurs quite often, although only in some students. In addition, the tardiness of students and teachers is also an obstacle although this incident rarely occurs. These delays are usually caused by certain interests and can be resolved immediately thanks to the cohesiveness of all parties in the school.

b. Lack of Effective Communication

Sometimes there is a delay in the delivery of information from the principal to teachers and staff. For example, information regarding the wearing of Gagrak traditional clothes every Wednesday Pon often changes without clear notice.

c. Sudden Delivery of Information

Principals often deliver information abruptly, making it difficult for teachers and staff to adjust. For example, notifications about teacher assignments are often given suddenly because the principal has many activities.

d. Untimely Coordination

Sometimes the principal forgets to inform important activities because of the many agendas that must be taken care of. For example, information about a workshop that was supposed to start at 08.00 WIB was only sent to the WhatsApp group at 09.00 WIB, so teachers who were late in getting information had to find out from other schools that had participated in the activity since the beginning.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the implementation of character education at SDN Kotagede 5 has been running well, covering the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile through learning, school culture, and extracurricular activities. The principal's transformational leadership is important in integrating character education by providing role models, motivating teachers and students, and creating innovations in character education strategies. Factors driving success include internal and external support, school facilities, and the enthusiasm of principals and teachers. However, there are obstacles such as student discipline problems and a lack of communication and coordination between internal school parties. The results of this study confirm that principals have a strategic role in creating a supportive environment for character education. Teachers need to integrate character values in learning, while the government and community should collaborate in supporting policies and creating a social environment conducive to students' character building. To improve the effectiveness of character education, principals are advised to strengthen appreciation for teachers, increase parental involvement through regular socialization, and develop mentoring strategies for students who need special attention. In addition, there needs to be a reward system for students in terms of discipline and a more effective communication mechanism between principals and teachers.

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