

## The Application of Character Values in Indonesian History: Contextual Approaches and Their Implementation to Strengthen Students' Character

Mira Puspita<sup>1</sup>, Azmi Fitrisia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia; mierapuspita7@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia; azmifitrisia@fis.unp.ac.id

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### ABSTRACT

History education holds strategic potential in shaping student character by integrating values essential to national identity, such as nationalism, integrity, tolerance, and empathy. However, recent revisions to Indonesian History learning materials have not sufficiently emphasized these character-building elements. This gap presents a challenge in transforming history education from mere knowledge transmission into a medium for character development. This study employed a qualitative approach using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Data were collected through document analysis, in-depth interviews with educators, and classroom observations. The analysis focused on identifying discursive patterns in history teaching materials and the nature of educator-student interactions during lessons. The study revealed that current history materials lack consistent integration of character values. Educators often rely on traditional narratives that fail to engage students with contextual or ethical dimensions of historical events. Additionally, classroom practices rarely encourage reflective or empathetic discussions that could foster character development. These findings highlight the need to reframe history learning as a platform for character education. Strategies such as incorporating value-based narratives, promoting student-centered discussions, and aligning content with contemporary social issues are discussed. The study proposes a responsive pedagogical framework tailored to the challenges of globalization and evolving educational priorities. This research offers practical recommendations for enhancing Indonesian History curricula to better support character education. It contributes to the broader discourse on curriculum reform and underscores history's role in shaping morally grounded and socially responsible citizens.

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**Corresponding Author:**

Widiawati

Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia; [widiawati@fip.unp.ac.id](mailto:widiawati@fip.unp.ac.id)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

History education has a strategic role in shaping the character of students, because it not only functions as a means to understand the past, but also as a tool to instill values that are relevant to the life of the nation and state. History is not only about facts and events, but also about moral learning that can

shape an individual's understanding of important values such as nationalism, integrity, and empathy. As expressed by (Tilaar, 2021), history learning in the era of globalization must be able to foster awareness of the nation's identity in the midst of rapid social change. In this case, history has a dual role: as a discipline and as a moral vehicle that teaches character values, so the learning of history must be more than just an introduction to facts, but also includes strengthening character relevant to the needs of the nation.

However, although history learning in Indonesia has great potential to shape the nation's character, in reality, many of the materials delivered in schools emphasize more on memorizing historical facts than on understanding deeper character values. History learning that focuses only on memorization and exams results in students having less opportunity to reflect on the moral lessons contained in historical events. Nugroho and Riyadi (2020) highlight that many students only study history to meet the demands of exams, not to explore and understand values that can be applied in daily life. This shows that the learning of history in schools has not fully optimized its role in character formation.

On the other hand, there has been a significant change in national education policy that requires the integration of character education into various subjects, including history. The government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) emphasizes the importance of integrating character values in history learning as part of efforts to achieve the Pancasila Student Profile. This shows the awareness to create a generation that is not only cognitively intelligent, but also has a strong character, integrity, and a high sense of nationality. The integration of character education in history learning is expected not only to make students understand historical events, but also to enable them to internalize the character values contained in them to be applied in their lives. Thus, history is expected to function as a vehicle for strengthening national values needed in facing increasingly complex global challenges.

However, although the policy of integrating character values in history learning has been outlined, there are still a number of challenges that educators must face in practice. One of the main challenges is the limited teaching materials that have not accommodated the teaching of character values optimally. History learning that still focuses on mastering knowledge of historical facts, without considering the moral and affective dimensions contained in them, makes students' characters less formed. As explained by Fauzi (2021), teachers often find it difficult to present material that directly connects historical facts with character values. In addition, limited training for teachers in integrating character education in history subjects is also an obstacle.

This research aims to analyze in depth how character values can be effectively integrated into Indonesian history learning materials and practices. The main objective of this study is to explore the ways in which history learning not only serves to transfer historical knowledge to students, but also as a tool to instill character values that can shape their positive attitudes and behaviors in daily life. The main focus of this research is how Indonesian history can be used as an example to instill character values such as nationalism, integrity, responsibility, and empathy in the younger generation. It is important for students not only to understand historical events, but also to understand the moral meaning contained in them.

This study aims to provide a clearer picture of effective methods and strategies in applying character values in learning Indonesian history. In this case, this study will try to find concrete ways that educators can apply to ensure that history learning can run holistically, focusing on cognitive aspects and involving important character dimensions. This research will also identify the challenges faced by educators in implementing this approach and seek practical solutions to overcome these challenges.

The significance of this research is very important in contributing to the development of a history education curriculum that is more integrated with character values. The results of this research are expected to provide valuable input for policy makers, curriculum makers, and educators in compiling teaching materials that not only prioritize the aspect of knowledge, but also pay attention to the formation of students' character. Thus, the results of this research can be an important reference in formulating a more holistic and comprehensive education policy, which is able to create a generation that is not only intelligent but also has integrity and a high sense of responsibility.

Overall, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how history education can play a greater role in shaping students' character. The findings resulting from this study are expected to provide new insights into learning strategies that can be applied in daily educational practices. By strengthening the role of history in character education, this research also contributes to strengthening the position of history as one of the subjects that not only provides knowledge about the past, but also as a tool to instill values that will shape a better future for the nation.

## 2. METHOD

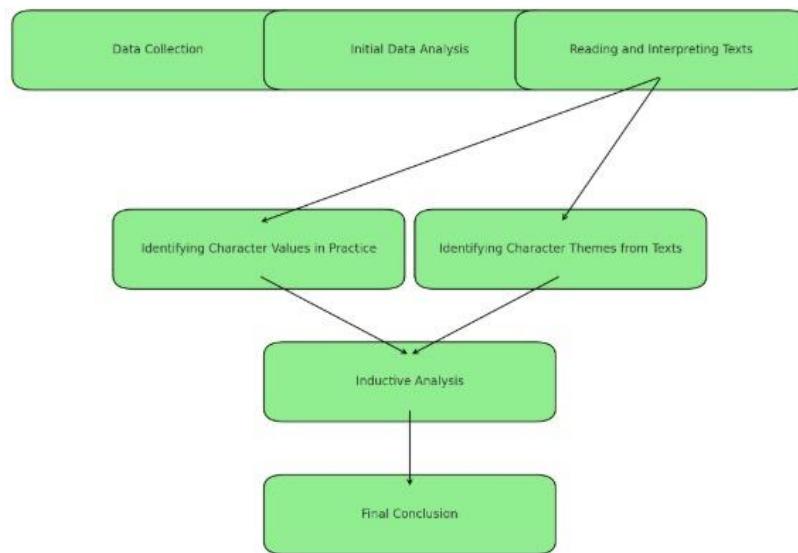
This study uses a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis method to explore how character values are integrated in the learning of Indonesian history at the secondary school level. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to delve deeper into the meaning, context, and dynamics of learning, especially in terms of how character values are reflected through teaching materials, material delivery processes, and classroom interactions. Critical discourse analysis is used to analyze how historical texts as well as discursive practices in the classroom shape, maintain, and transmit values such as nationalism, integrity, and tolerance.

The subjects in this study consisted of two main groups, namely learners and educators involved in history learning in four different secondary schools. The total participants consisted of eight educators and thirty-two students. Educators are selected based on purposive sampling criteria, namely at least five years of history teaching experience, adequate understanding of character education, and active involvement in the history learning process. Students are also selected purposively by paying attention to their social background, level of participation in class, and ability to reflect character values. The selection that considers the diversity of contexts aims to provide a representative and contextual understanding of how history learning can be a vehicle for character strengthening in the secondary education environment.

The data collection process was carried out for three months, from January to March 2025, using three main techniques: document study, in-depth interviews, and classroom observation. The study of documents is carried out by examining history teaching materials, textbooks, and lesson plans (Learning Implementation Plan) used by educators. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight educators lasting between 60–90 minutes for each session, using semi-structured guidelines designed to explore the experiences, views, and challenges they face in integrating character values. Classroom observations were carried out twice with each educator (a total of 16 observations) to obtain direct data on the practice of conveying character values and students' responses in history learning situations.

The instruments used in this study include interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis formats. The interview guidelines are compiled based on the indicators of the integration of character values in the Independent Curriculum and have been validated by two education experts to ensure the validity of the content. Observation sheets were developed to systematically record how educators convey character values and how students respond to them in classroom interactions. The reliability test was carried out using the inter-rater reliability method by two independent observers, with a minimum agreement rate of 80%. Document analysis instruments are focused on identifying character themes in textbooks and learning tools, especially on the content of values that are explicitly and implicitly constructed through historical texts.

The data analysis technique in this study refers to the critical discourse approach of the Norman Fairclough model, which consists of three dimensions: text analysis, discourse practice, and social practice. The analysis process begins with reading and understanding historical texts and interview data and observations to identify character themes. Furthermore, identification of the application of character values in learning practices and the construction of meaning that develops in the classroom is carried out. Analysis is done inductively, that is, by allowing patterns and themes to emerge naturally from the data, without being controlled by rigid theoretical assumptions.



**Figure 1.** Data Analysis Techniques Chart

This chart shows that the analysis process starts from collecting data through interviews and observations, which are then analyzed in advance to find important information. The next stage is to read and understand the history teaching document or text to deepen the context. From there, two parallel lines of analysis are carried out, namely identifying how character values are applied in practice and how the themes of character values are revealed in the text. These two pathways were then analyzed inductively to find significant patterns, before the entire results were synthesized into a comprehensive conclusion. Thus, this research method is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of how character values such as nationalism, integrity, and tolerance can be integrated in Indonesian history learning, as well as to identify challenges and strategies that can be applied in strengthening students' character through value-based history education.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, the following findings were obtained:

#### 3.1 The Importance of Integrating Character Values in Indonesian History Learning

The results of the study show that many teachers realize the importance of integrating character values in learning Indonesian History as part of efforts to form a young generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has personalities based on morals and ethics. Teachers understand that history learning has great potential to be an effective medium in instilling positive values such as honesty, responsibility, national spirit, and respect. These values are considered relevant because they can help students to understand and appreciate the importance of maintaining the integrity of the nation, appreciating the services of heroes, and practicing attitudes that are in accordance with the nation's culture.

According to Alwisol (2013), learning history can be used as a means to instill character values because history contains strong moral lessons through the stories of the struggles and sacrifices of national figures. In this context, history is not just knowledge of the past, but also a mirror that reflects the values that need to be lived by the current generations. This is in line with the opinion of Lickona (1991), who states that character education must include moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Therefore, integrating character values in history learning is very important, because history

can provide examples of noble values that are the basis for the formation of students' character. As a concrete example, the spirit of nationality can be instilled through the introduction of the story of the creation of the national anthem Indonesia Raya. This song was created by Wage Rudolf Supratman during the colonial period with challenges and risks. Despite facing threats from the colonizers, Supratman managed to make this song a symbol of struggle and national unity. This song was first sung at the Second Youth Congress in 1928, an important moment in the history of the Indonesian nation. This story teaches students about the meaning of courage, love for the homeland, and the importance of uniting to achieve a common goal. In the implementation in schools, this national spirit can be realized by singing the Indonesia Raya song before learning starts every morning. However, time constraints are often an obstacle, so these activities are not consistently carried out.

Despite this awareness, the implementation of character values in history learning often does not go as expected. The teachers involved in this learning revealed that they try to integrate these values in various ways. Most teachers rely on examples of historical events, such as the struggle for independence, heroic stories of national figures, or important events that reflect the noble values of the nation. These examples are used to inspire students to apply these values in their daily lives. However, the big challenge that teachers face is that the integration of these character values is more often done in an implicit and poorly structured way. Many teachers tend to add character values to the main material rather than the main focus of planning lessons. This results in character values being only conveyed sporadically and not systematically coordinated. As conveyed by Nasution (2016), the character values taught in learning are often limited to the introduction and appreciation of historical figures without emphasizing the internalization of these values in the real lives of students. In addition, there are other obstacles that also affect the effectiveness of integrating character values, namely limited time and demands to complete the curriculum according to schedule. Teachers often feel that the available time is more focused on achieving the basic competencies set out in the curriculum, so that the integration of character values becomes less optimal.

To overcome this obstacle, teachers can implement several solutions. Where teachers can include the activity of singing the Indonesia Raya song as part of history learning. For example, before starting material on the independence struggle, teachers can ask students to sing a song while discussing the historical context behind its creation. In this way, students not only sing songs but also understand the values contained in them. Teachers can also take advantage of digital media such as interactive videos that combine historical stories with the national anthem. This video can be watched together at the beginning of the lesson, so that even though it is short, students still get a meaningful experience. Teachers can also provide independent assignments such as finding information about national figures relevant to the theme of the song and presenting it in class. If singing a song every morning is not possible, the school can create a rotation schedule. For example, the national anthem singing is carried out two or three times a week before the lesson starts. This approach still instills the value of the spirit of nationality without interfering with the allocation of learning time. Teachers can also direct students to create creative projects related to the national anthem, such as creating posters, documentary videos, or short plays about the history of its creation. The project not only strengthens students' understanding of history but also engages them in activities that foster a spirit of cooperation and nationality.

In support, a study by Berkowitz & Bier (2005) stated that character education programs that are explicitly designed and integrated into the curriculum are able to improve students' morality and prosocial behavior. With these steps, history learning can play a greater role in shaping the next generation of the nation who have a strong character, a high spirit of patriotism, and responsibility for their social environment. Integrating character values such as the spirit of nationality through structured, interesting, and relevant activities is expected to have a positive impact on the formation of students' character as a whole.

### **3.2 Application of Character Values in the Curriculum**

The data from class observations show that the application of character values in the Indonesian History curriculum shows significant challenges, even though some teachers have begun to associate historical material with character values. However, its implementation tends to be sporadic and has not been completely consistent and systematic. In many cases, character values such as courage, togetherness, nationalism, and sacrifice are more often conveyed separately or simply as a complement to the history learning process, rather than as an integrated part of the overall learning. Most teachers use examples of historical figures or historical stories to illustrate these character values. For example, when discussing Indonesia's independence struggle, teachers often emphasize the value of the persistence and sacrifice of heroes. However, the application of these values is often inconsistent in every part of history learning. According to Suryana (2012), the integration of character values in education, including in history learning, is very important to help students not only understand historical events but also internalize the values contained in them.

In practice, many teachers have difficulty in relating aspects of character to all the historical material that must be taught. This is due to several factors, such as the lack of clear guidelines or frameworks on how to integrate character values in the learning of history. As expressed by Prasetyo (2015), the application of character values in the history curriculum is often hampered by limited resources, lack of special training for teachers, and lack of awareness of the importance of character development in the historical context. Based on observations, one of the main causes of the irregularities in the application of these character values is the lack of clear guidelines on how to relate character values to more complex historical material. Teachers often find it difficult to relate character values to historical topics that are considered more complicated, such as political or economic events, which require a deep understanding.

In an effort to address these challenges, it is important to design a more holistic curriculum that focuses not only on the mastery of historical knowledge but also on the development of students' character. For example, when discussing the struggle for Indonesian independence, teachers can introduce important figures such as Soekarno, Hatta, and Sutan Sjahrir, who not only highlight their physical struggle, but also their moral characters such as leadership, the spirit of nationalism, and courage. Teachers can invite students to analyze these figures through class discussions or creative projects that involve reflection on the character values they have shown in Indonesian history. In classroom activities, for example, teachers can divide students into groups to discuss the struggle for independence by highlighting values such as courage, togetherness, and sacrifice. Students can be asked to choose historical figures and associate the actions of these figures with certain character values, such as the fighting spirit or the spirit of togetherness in building the country.

According to a study by (Lickona, 2015) it was stated that the integration of character education in history subjects not only helps students understand the historical context, but also provides an opportunity to internalize the moral values contained in every historical event. Lickona emphasized the importance of developing a curriculum that not only emphasizes the cognitive aspect but also the affective aspect, namely character formation through the understanding of moral values that exist in history. This research shows that a systematic and targeted approach in teaching character values can improve the quality of education, where students not only learn about history but also develop strong moral character. Overall, despite efforts to integrate character values in history learning, the challenges faced are still quite large, both in terms of clear guidelines, resources, and adequate understanding from teachers. Therefore, it is important to develop a more holistic curriculum and provide better training for teachers, so that they can be more effective in integrating character values in every aspect of history learning.

### 3.3. Challenges in Integrating Character Values

The main challenge found in this study is the lack of adequate training for teachers in teaching character values through history learning. Although many teachers recognize the importance of character education, they reveal that they do not have sufficient skills or knowledge to effectively integrate those values in history learning. Without proper training, teachers often have difficulty in combining historical content with character values that must be instilled in students. According to Wahyuningsih (2016), special training on how to teach character values in the context of history learning is very important so that teachers can convey these values systematically and deeply. For example, teachers who have been trained with an integrative approach will find it easier to relate historical events to values such as honesty, courage, or a sense of responsibility. In the absence of adequate training, teachers will struggle to make students understand the relationship between historical facts and expected character development, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of learning itself. The solution to overcome this challenge is to hold continuous training that can improve teachers' competence in teaching character education, either through seminars, workshops, or special training programs that focus on integrating character values in history learning.

In addition, the limitation of resources such as teaching materials relevant to character education is also the main obstacle in implementing character values in history learning. Many teachers complain about the difficulty in finding teaching materials that can combine history learning with character development in an interesting and beneficial way for students. Nasution (2014) stated that inadequate teaching materials can limit teachers' ability to relate historical events with the character values to be conveyed. For example, in learning about historical events such as the struggle for Indonesian independence, if the teaching material only focuses on dates, figures, and events without exploring character values such as fighting spirit and unity, then students may not be able to understand deeply the meaning of the event. Teachers are often stuck in monotonous and less creative learning, which ultimately makes students less interested and unable to internalize character values properly. Therefore, it is necessary to develop more diverse and creative teaching materials, such as modules that include stories of historical figures that reflect moral values or project-based approaches that allow students to relate historical events to character values in everyday life. The use of technology and interactive media, such as documentary videos or character-based learning applications, can also be a solution to improve the quality of existing teaching materials.

Another external factor that is a major challenge is the pressure to complete learning materials that are in accordance with national exam standards. Many teachers feel compelled to focus more on teaching materials that are directly related to exams, thus ignoring character building as part of the learning objectives. Prasetyo (2015) emphasized that the pressure to meet academic targets, including national exams, often distracts teachers from the importance of teaching character values. Teachers who are focused on the exam may find it difficult to include material about the character that is not directly related to the preparation for the exam. In fact, the integration of character values in history learning is very important to form students who are not only intelligent in terms of knowledge, but also have good morals and ethics. To address this problem, there needs to be a policy that provides greater space for character teaching in the curriculum without sacrificing academic standards. For example, in countries like Finland, character and academic learning are done in parallel, where student character development is considered an integral part of the broader educational goals. Policies like this can be adapted in Indonesia to provide opportunities for teachers to teach character values in more depth.

According to Lickona (2015), the integration of character education in history subjects not only helps students understand the historical context, but also provides an opportunity to internalize the moral values contained in every historical event. Lickona emphasized the importance of developing a curriculum that not only emphasizes the cognitive aspect but also the affective aspect, namely character formation through the understanding of moral values that exist in history. This research shows that a systematic and targeted approach in teaching character values can improve the quality of education, where students not only learn about history but also develop strong moral character. Overall, although

there are efforts to integrate character values in history learning, the challenges faced are still quite large, both in terms of teacher training, the development of relevant teaching materials, and educational policies that provide space for the teaching of character values. Therefore, it is important to develop a more holistic curriculum and provide better training for teachers, as well as design policies that better support the integration of character in every aspect of education.

### **3.4. Critical Discourse Analysis on the Integration of Character Values in Indonesian History Learning**

In an effort to understand how character values are integrated in the learning of Indonesian History, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach is used to analyze not only the content of teaching materials, but also teaching practices in the classroom and the social context behind them. CDA according to Fairclough (1992) encompasses three main dimensions, namely textual analysis (how language is used concretely), discursive practice (how discourse is produced and consumed), and social practice (how discourse is connected to power structures and ideologies in society). In the text dimension, it is found that narratives in history textbooks tend to convey character values explicitly, but in a normative way. For example, the sentence "National heroes are people who are willing to sacrifice for their homeland, like Soekarno who continued to fight for independence even though he had to be imprisoned," contains a construction of heroism and patriotism discourse that does not give space for the reader—in this case students—to interpret critically or relate to his social experience. According to Van Dijk (1993), educational discourse like this often forms an ideological understanding that is considered neutral, even though it is loaded with certain socio-political interests.

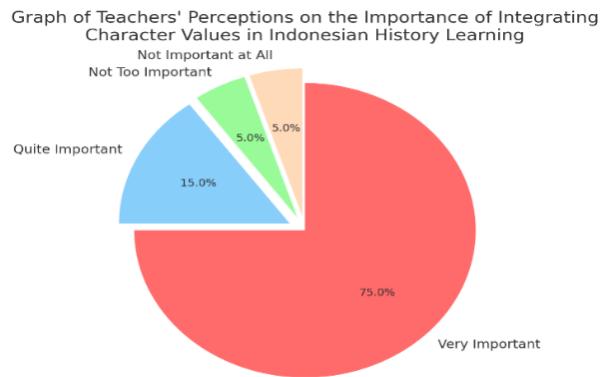
In terms of discursive practice, classroom observation shows that some teachers have begun to build a dialogue space in history learning. In one of the class interactions, the teacher asked, "Why do you think Soekarno was able to remain firm in fighting for independence despite being arrested by the Dutch?" to which the student replied, "Because he has a love for the homeland, ma'am." The teacher then responded, "Good, that means there is a spirit of nationalism. Well, how can we emulate him today?" This dialogue pattern shows a more participatory and reflective process of constructing meaning. According to Mercer (2000), this kind of interaction reflects exploratory talk, which is a type of conversation that is able to develop deep understanding through collaborative discussion. However, this kind of practice has not taken place evenly, because there are still many teachers who convey character values in one direction without involving students in the process of critical reflection.

In social practice, the CDA approach helps uncover how character values in history learning are framed by the dominant national educational ideology. Discourses about nationalism, heroism, and sacrifice are conveyed through large narratives that do not always open up space for criticism or the context of students' daily lives. As stated by Giroux (2004), critical education should encourage students to understand history as an ideological battlefield, not just a series of events that must be memorized. In this case, teachers play an important role as cultural workers who not only reproduce dominant discourses, but also help students reinterpret character values in their social and cultural contexts. For this reason, a history learning design is needed that not only conveys the narrative of the past, but also builds a relationship between these values and contemporary social challenges. Students, for example, could be involved in a project of writing reflective narratives about how the spirit of nationalism can be embodied in their current lives, or analyze historical figures through the perspective of values and morals. This is in line with the view of Lickona (1991) that effective character education must touch on the aspects of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action at the same time.

Thus, the CDA approach provides a robust framework for evaluating and reconstructing how character values are instilled in history learning. CDA allows us to not only see how texts and classroom interactions are formed, but also how they operate within a broader network of educational ideologies. Through this approach, teachers can strengthen their role as facilitators of dialogue, not just narrative conveyors, so that character values are not only preached, but constructed critically, contextually, and meaningfully by students.

### 3.5. Drawings, Tables and Schematics

#### 3.5.1 Teacher's Perception on the Importance of Integrating Character Values in Indonesian History Learning



**Figure 2.** Teacher Perception Graph

Most teachers (75%) agree that integrating character values in history learning is essential, although only 50% feel that its implementation is done consistently in the classroom. This discrepancy shows that although awareness of the importance of character-based learning is already high, its implementation still faces various challenges. In fact, history not only teaches the facts of the past, but also conveys values that are relevant to shaping the character of today's students, such as courage, love for the homeland, and the responsibility that can be taken from the struggles of national heroes. To be more effective, teachers need to connect history learning with students' daily lives. For example, the value of unity in the Youth Pledge can be an important example of encouraging students to face social challenges in the modern era. Thus, the study of history becomes not only an academic lesson, but also a tool to build strong and relevant character, which will help students become individuals of integrity and contribute positively to society.

#### 3.5.2. Table of the Application of Character Values in Indonesian History Courses

**Table 1.** The Application of Character Values in Indonesian History

History Topics	Emphasising Character Values	Percentage of Use in Learning (%)
The Struggle for Indonesian Independence	Nationalism, Courage, Unity	60%
The Struggle of Historical Figures	Honesty, Responsibility, Perseverance	45%
Social Revolution	Empathy, Social Justice	30%
Historical Political Events	Leadership, Independence	50%

This table shows that character values such as nationalism, courage, and unity are most emphasized on the topic of Indonesia's independence struggle (60%). For example, in classroom learning, teachers can invite students to conduct a simulation of the BPUPKI session to understand the spirit of cross-cultural and ethnic cooperation in formulating the basis of the state. This activity not only makes students understand history in depth, but also instills the importance of unity and tolerance in their lives today. On other topics, such as the struggle of historical figures (45%), teachers can encourage students to read biographies of figures such as Ki Hajar Dewantara or RA Kartini, then discuss how their honesty,

responsibility, and perseverance can be applied in daily life. In addition, for social revolution (30%), students can be invited to create a group project that analyzes the impact of social revolution on current social justice, which teaches them the importance of empathy and concern for the surrounding community. In this way, the learning of history becomes not only the memorization of facts, but also a learning experience that instills character values in the context of modern life.

### 3.6. Challenge Scheme in Integrating Character Values in History Learning

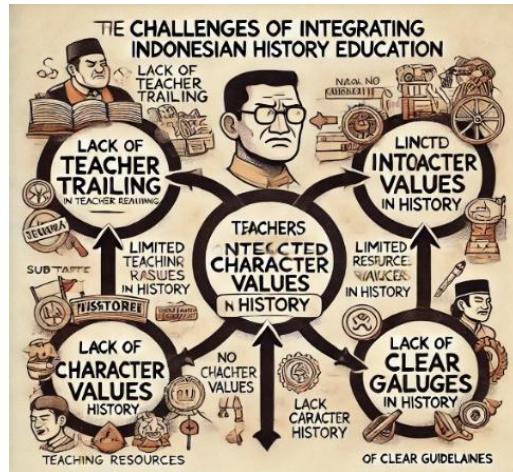


Figure 3. Teacher Perception Graph

The challenges in integrating character values in the learning of Indonesian History, as illustrated in the diagram, include several main factors. Lack of teacher training leads to a lack of understanding of how to teach character values in history. Limited learning resources, such as inadequate teaching materials, make it difficult for teachers to provide concrete examples of the application of these values. In addition, the absence of clear guidelines regarding the integration of character values into history results in teaching being directionless and less effective. A curriculum that focuses too much on historical knowledge alone also hinders character integration, while unsupportive assessment instruments make the evaluation of character value difficult. All of these factors influence each other, creating a great challenge for teachers to effectively teach values such as honesty, tolerance, and nationalism in history learning.

### Discussion

Teachers perceive the teaching of Indonesian history as a powerful vehicle for character education. Historical narratives of national heroes such as Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, R.A. Kartini, and Prince Diponegoro are not only presented as chronicles of the past but also as sources of inspiration that communicate essential values like nationalism, integrity, courage, and tolerance. These historical figures serve as moral exemplars, with their stories often linked to contemporary issues. For instance, Kartini's advocacy for women's rights is frequently connected to present-day discussions on gender equality in schools, helping students draw relevance between past struggles and current societal challenges (Nugroho & Pratama, 2022). In this way, history is reframed by educators not merely as a record of events but as a meaningful conduit for instilling ethical principles and civic responsibility.

Despite these efforts, teachers frequently encounter significant challenges in making historical content resonate with students. A major issue is the perception among students that history is limited to memorization of dates, names, and facts—an approach that often renders the subject disengaging and disconnected from their lived experiences (Yulianti et al., 2021). The lack of engaging instructional media and reliance on traditional, lecture-based methods further limit students' ability to internalize the moral lessons embedded in historical narratives (Fitriani et al., 2020). Teachers must therefore go

beyond rote instruction to ensure that the ethical dimensions of historical figures and events are not just delivered but deeply understood and absorbed by learners.

To address these pedagogical challenges, educators have adopted a variety of creative, reflective, and student-centered teaching strategies. Reflective discussions, for instance, encourage students to critically engage with historical material and relate it to current moral and social issues. Historical simulations, such as reenactments of the Indonesian Proclamation or the Youth Pledge, allow students to embody the roles of historical actors, promoting not only content knowledge but also collaborative skills and empathy (Sari & Permana, 2023). Theme-based projects, like post-lesson campaigns promoting unity or tolerance, offer additional platforms for students to apply character values in real-life contexts. Moreover, the integration of multimedia resources—including documentaries, biographical films, and digital storytelling—along with reflective journaling practices, deepens students' emotional connection to historical content and fosters personal reflection on values such as perseverance, justice, and sacrifice (Wibowo & Kurniawati, 2021).

Overall, teachers see the integration of character education into history instruction as a vital component of holistic student development. It aims not only to enhance cognitive understanding of national history but also to cultivate moral resilience and a sense of civic duty. Although constraints such as limited resources and student disengagement persist, contextual and participatory teaching approaches have shown promise in transforming history lessons into impactful character-building experiences. When effectively implemented, history education does more than recount the past—it prepares students to confront the future with integrity, empathy, and a well-rooted national identity (Putra et al., 2022).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that while the integration of character values into Indonesian history education holds significant promise for shaping students' moral development, its current implementation remains fragmented and underdeveloped. Although many educators acknowledge the importance of imparting values such as nationalism, courage, and responsibility through historical narratives, the application of these principles is often inconsistent due to the absence of structured frameworks, insufficient teacher training, and a curriculum that prioritizes content knowledge over character formation. A notable limitation identified in this research is the lack of explicit pedagogical guidelines that clearly demonstrate how moral values can be meaningfully connected to specific historical events. Without such guidance, character education risks being treated as an optional supplement rather than an essential component of history instruction. The findings also emphasize the need for creative, student-centered strategies—such as project-based learning, interactive media, and historical simulations—which have shown potential in making historical content more engaging and values-based. However, this research is limited in scope, focusing primarily on qualitative insights without measuring long-term impacts on student behavior or outcomes. Therefore, future research should explore the effectiveness of professional development programs in equipping teachers to integrate character values more systematically, as well as investigate the role of educational technology in enhancing interactive and reflective history learning. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the sustained impact of character-based history education on students' attitudes, behavior, and civic responsibility. These directions will contribute to a deeper understanding of how history instruction can foster the development of a morally resilient and socially responsible young generation.

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