

## Character Education and The Crisis of National Role Models

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**Abstrak:** Pendidikan karakter adalah elemen penting dalam membangun negara yang bermartabat dan berbudaya. Di tengah krisis panutan yang meliputi bangsa, implementasi pendidikan karakter menjadi semakin mendesak. Penelitian ini menyelidiki implementasi pendidikan karakter dan hubungannya dengan krisis panutan di Indonesia. Metode penelitian yang digunakan bersifat kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi literatur. Data dikumpulkan dari berbagai sumber, seperti jurnal ilmiah dan sumber daya terkait. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor penyebab terjadinya krisis panutan, mengidentifikasi strategi efektif dalam pelaksanaan pendidikan karakter, dan merumuskan solusi komprehensif untuk mengatasi krisis panutan di bangsa kita, meliputi: membentuk gerakan panutan karakter nasional, memperkuat peran keluarga dalam pembentukan karakter, meningkatkan peran sekolah, dan memperkuat peran masyarakat khususnya untuk tidak bersikap permisif dan peduli terhadap pendidikan karakter saat peserta didik tidak berada di rumah dan tidak berada di sekolah.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Karakter, Krisis Pendidikan Tokoh Peran, Krisis Model Peran

**Abstract:** Character education is an essential element in building a dignified and cultured nation. Amidst the crisis of role models encompassing the nation, the implementation of character education becomes increasingly urgent. This research investigates the implementation of character education and its relation to the crisis of role models in Indonesia. The research method used is qualitative with a literature study approach. Data is collected from various sources, such as scientific journals and related resources. This study aims to analyze the factors causing the crisis of role models, identify effective strategies for implementing character education, and formulate comprehensive solutions to address the crisis of role models in our nation, including: forming a national character role model movement, strengthening the role of families in character formation, enhancing the role of schools, and strengthening the role of society especially in not becoming permissive and being concerned with character education when students are not at home and not in school

**Keywords:** Character Education, Crisis of Role Models

## Introduction

The issue of national character, especially among the younger generation today, has once again become the center of attention after several cases that have emerged and even gone viral on social media. A recent case, for example, as cited from the [Republika.co.id](http://Republika.co.id) website on March 2, 2024, reported a group of young people - possibly students - who gathered 'hang out' late into the night, mixing freely between young women and men at a newly established global chain minimarket right next to the Darut Tauhid Islamic Boarding School Mosque. Despite being reprimanded by KH.



Abdullah Gymanstiar, the Head of the boarding school who is also a prominent religious figure, as seen in circulating videos, the young people only responded with laughter as if nothing had happened and seemed to ignore the arrival of a prominent religious figure who was admonishing them for disrupting proper behavior around the boarding school(pesantren) environment.

Besides those cases, there are several other cases related to the declining character of the nation's younger generation at present. Ranging from the prevalence of various forms of violence, from verbal bullying to physical violence that is openly recorded by the perpetrators or their friends and then spread on social media. This should be a collective concern, emphasizing the importance of joint actions by stakeholders to improve the character of the younger generation in alignment with national values, particularly the values of Pancasila as the Philosophical Foundation in national behavior and governance. According to [balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id](http://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id) (2024), a survey of students' character conducted by the Center for Research and Development of Religious and Religious Education in 2021 shows that, on average, the character index has decreased compared to the previous year to 69.52, a two-point drop from the indicative figure of 2020 (71.41). Although it is suspected to be related to distance learning patterns that result in students not receiving direct guidance from teachers, especially in nurturing their character values, this data confirms that there is a serious issue that needs to be promptly addressed in the efforts to improve character in our country.

Such conditions can be influenced by a crisis in role modeling from those who should ideally serve as good examples for the younger generation seeking guidance in the development and strengthening of their character. This is evident in the rampant cases of even mega corruption that have become commonplace today, the recurring drug abuse among celebrity and political figures, and other immoral behaviors exhibited by national leaders, public figures, and even parents. Furthermore, with the emergence of social media influencers whose content does not always align with our national norms, the crisis in role modeling has a negative impact on the younger generation, leading them to mimic such behaviors. Kuntowijoyo (Khotimah, 2022) in his book titled "Selamat Tinggal Mitos, Selamat Datang Realitas" (Farewell to Myths, Welcome to Reality) states that Indonesia is facing a crisis, namely a crisis in role modeling, where sincerity has been replaced by self-interest and altruism by individualism. In such circumstances, character education becomes crucial in building a dignified and cultured nation. Character education is a conscious effort aimed at instilling the noble values of the nation and molding a younger generation with good character. The implementation of character education needs to be comprehensive and ongoing, involving all elements of society, and starting from an early age

## Method

The research was conducted using a literature review method. A literature review is a process of conducting a general overview of previously published works related to various topics. The literature reviewed or studied can refer to non-fiction writings such as scientific papers, theses, dissertations, or non-scientific writings like books, articles, and news from a variety of reliable media sources (print and electronic). A literature review serves to incorporate a study, whether in the form of theory or research data, into a written work and provide relevant context for the readers. Media review is also important here, as one of the sources of ethical development in this generation is predominantly accessed through digital media

## Result and Discussion

According to the National Education Law of 2003, the concept and operational format of education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and teaching process so that students actively develop their potential to possess spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed for themselves, society, nation, and country.

When discussing character, from an etymological perspective, Daniel K. Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez (2007) explain that character originates from the Greek word "charassein," which can be interpreted as carving, painting, sculpting, or engraving. Lapsley indicates that a person's character is a sign of consistency and predictive behavior that is indelible, rooted deeply in the personality, based on organizing principles that integrate behavior, attitudes, and values, pointing to long-lasting tendencies in individual behavior. Furthermore, there are various terminological understandings related to character from several experts.

Ki Hadjar Dewantara (Haryanto:2020) stated that what is called "budipekerti" or character, commonly referred to as "character" in a foreign language, is the "roundness of the human soul" representing a soul based on spiritual law. Individuals possessing budipekerti intelligence constantly contemplate, feel, and always adhere to definite and stable standards, measurements, and foundations. This is why we can distinctly recognize a person's character; because character or budipekerti is indeed fixed and certain. Budipekerti, character, or personality, signifies the unity of thoughts, emotions, and will or desire that generates energy.

Thomas Lickona (Sawa Suryana et al.: 2013) defines character as "an individual's response to moral situations manifested in actions through good behavior, honesty, responsibility, respect for others, and other noble traits." This definition closely aligns with Aristotle's perspective (Roger Crisp: 2000) that character is closely linked to "habit" or behaviors continuously performed. In a similar vein, Jonathan Webber (Mirsa Istiharoh et al.: 2019) explains that Character is an accumulation of several characteristics that manifest in an individual's way of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Furthermore, the Islamic Basic Education Journal Al-Bidayah Volume 7 Number 1 Maemonah (2015) mentions several character terminologies from various figures as follows: W.B. Saunders (1977) explains that character is a real and distinct trait exhibited by individuals, a set of attributes observable in individuals. Gulo W. (1982) describes character as personality viewed from an ethical or moral standpoint, such as someone's honesty, usually associated with relatively stable traits. Kamisa (1997) reveals that character refers to psychological traits, morals, or virtues that distinguish someone from others, nature, character. Having character means having nature, having personality. Koesoema (Maemonah: 2015) states that the term character is the same as personality and personality is considered a characteristic or trait possessed by someone derived from influences received from the environment.

Regarding Character Education, according to Shofa and colleagues (2020), character education is an effort to create an educational environment that emphasizes ethical development, a sense of responsibility, and universal positive values (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). On the other hand, Akbar (2011) proposes that character education is interpreted as an effort conducted by the state and its related apparatuses to shape the Indonesian people into a nation with noble and good characters. Noble and good characters encompass behaviors towards fellow humans, towards God, and towards the environment and nature.

Furthermore, Shofa and colleagues (2020) mention that Character Education in Indonesia, as outlined in the national education system, can be interpreted as two significant aspects: (1) character education involves instilling cultural values and character in the next generation of the nation and (2) the character development process to enhance the quality of future human resources.

Character education according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara (Noor Laila, 2022) is the implantation of moral values in attitudes and behaviors, as well as noble character in religious, societal, and environmental activities in order to become a person of good character. Meanwhile, in Nugraha (2024), character education according to Ibnu Miskawaih solely aims for humans to achieve perfection and happiness. Ibnu Miskawaih mentions that human perfection can be achieved by synchronizing cognitive nature with practical nature. As for the concept of happiness or As-Sa'adah according to M. Abdul Haq Ansari, interpreting As-Sa'adah as just "Happiness" alone is considered inadequate, as the word As-Sa'adah is a comprehensive concept that encompasses several indicators, such as happiness, success, prosperity, pleasure, perfection, and beauty (Rahmaniyah: Nugraha, 2024).

Lickona (Loloagin: 2023) states that character education is a deliberate effort to help a person understand, pay attention to, and practice core ethical values. Furthermore, Lickona specifies that character is related to the concept of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior, which are further renewed with the concepts of Moral Character and Performance Character. From this, it is understood that character education must be carried out comprehensively, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

From the various terminologies above, it can be concluded that Character Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process so that students actively develop their complete characteristics, which include thinking and feelings, manifested in consistent actions required for themselves, society, nation, and country.

In education, the most crucial and effective method is considered to be exemplification, where educators (formal, non-formal, and informal) provide good examples through speech or actions to be emulated by learners, resulting in them exhibiting good speech or behavior (Watson: Munawaroh, 2019). Given that exemplification is widely regarded as the most crucial and effective method in education in general, it is safe to say that it is also the most crucial and effective in character education. This is understandable as character education is a part of education. According to [www.gramedia.com](http://www.gramedia.com), a role model is someone who can serve as a good example in terms of thinking patterns and daily behaviors. An influential individual can become a role model within a company, organization, or the wider community.

Unfortunately, the younger generation currently lacks sufficient exemplary inspiration to serve as a reference in their personal development and behavior formation according to their own interests and their environment. If we look at the variety of media, there are far too many instances of poor role models among figures who should be a positive example for the younger generation.

In the political arena, as mentioned in [www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com) for example, it is stated that the current political elite have not been able to fully exemplify the practice of Pancasila in national life. The political maneuvering in the 2024 elections, repeated and even staggering levels of corruption, extramarital affairs of politicians and state officials that are easily accessible through online media today, will undoubtedly contribute to the lack of exemplary behavior among our younger generation. According to Sudibya (2022), politics as a vocation, politics with virtues, political virtue that generates exemplary behavior, is being pushed back by cunning political behavior, politics limited to a means of livelihood and then self-enrichment, which in turn produces non-exemplary behavior.

In the field of arts and culture, according to Pattipeilohy's research (2015), it is mentioned that artists understand that popularity is the result of talking about oneself in the media. When news in the media contains positive information, the effect is also positive. However, when reversed, a negative effect is achieved. The positive self-image effect of an artist in the media includes increased job offers for performances, opportunities to meet different groups of people, additional sources of income such as advertisements, etc., and a significant increase in the number of fans. Additionally, some effects of a negative self-image of artists in the media include termination of employment relationships with third parties, loss of income opportunities through advertisements, off-air appearances, and others, as well as loss of fans. Artists also strive hard to achieve or maintain the popularity they have gained. However, if there are artists who take shortcuts in social climbing or who go viral despite negative publicity, it is simply a self-defense mechanism to survive in an industry where competition is fierce. Therefore, in emergency situations, many artists prioritize their existence over moral impact, as their most urgent need at that time is their own survival. This is especially true for "small" or novice artists who require exposure to elevate their names and consequently impact their income to sustain their livelihood in the entertainment industry.

Furthermore, in the field of religion, there are also some religious figures who act immorally when leading religious institutions or education. For example, according to data from the Child Protection Commission (KPAI) from January to September 2021, there were at least 5,206 reported cases related to children's rights and Special Child Protection. Within the Special Child Protection data, KPAI recorded a total of 672 cases of child victims of sexual crimes and 955 cases of physical or psychological violence victims (Erni etc., 2022).

The National Commission on Violence Against Women recorded 17,088 cases of sexual violence that occurred between 2016-2018. Among these cases, there were 8,797 rape cases, accounting for 52 percent of the total sexual violence cases. In an online discussion entitled "The Role of Religious Figures in Eliminating Sexual Violence" organized by the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice (APIK), the Coordinator of the Legal Services Division of APIK, Uli Pengaribuan, presented nine reported cases of sexual violence involving religious figures in 2019-2020. The perpetrators included religious teachers, Islamic boarding school owners, and pastors. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection noted 37 cases of violence against children in Islamic boarding schools between 2018-2019, with 67 percent of these cases involving sexual violence. A recent viral case involved 13 children from Islamic boarding schools who experienced sexual violence, with 8 of them giving birth to 9 children. These incidents are not limited to a specific religion but encompass various cases of misconduct by religious figures across different religions in our country. This phenomenon requires serious attention from all parties to prevent recurrence or the emergence of similar cases.

Cited from Savera (2019), it is mentioned that there are several factors causing a moral exemplarity crisis in Indonesia, including:

1. Family environment (disharmonious household conditions, favoritism by parents, presence of violence, lack of family education and knowledge, family members' indifference, infrequent communication among family members, and busyness).
2. Schools and insights (lack of attention from teachers, weak school regulations, inadequate counseling and guidance, limited student insights not followed up on).
3. Religious deviations (lack of faith, lack of belief, and lack of fear of God).
4. Culture and society (excessive openness to foreign cultures, wearing inappropriate attire, adopting foreign lifestyles, and neglecting Indonesian culture and identity).
5. Technological deviations (misuse of technology to access pornographic sites, hacking, making inappropriate comments on social media, and so on).

Some strategies that can be proposed for the implementation of character education in Indonesia include:

1. Strengthening moral and ethical education. This can be done by integrating character education materials into the school curriculum, providing training for teachers and parents, and increasing public awareness of the noble values of the nation.
2. Enhancing the quality of exemplary behaviors from leaders. National leaders, community figures, and parents should set a good example in their behavior.
3. Reinforcing social values. Society should return to noble social values such as mutual cooperation, mutual respect, and tolerance.
4. Utilizing mass media positively. Mass media should be used to disseminate educational content and build the nation's character.

To address the crisis of exemplarity, a comprehensive solution involving all elements of society is necessary. Here are some proposed solutions as presented by Character Education expert, Edi Suresman (2020):

1. Establishing a national Character Education movement. This national movement aims to raise awareness among the entire society, starting from the elite (political, economic, religious leaders, entertainment industry, etc.), middle class, down to the grassroots level about the importance of exemplarity and encouraging everyone to be a role model for the younger generation.
2. Strengthening the role of the family. The family serves as the primary educational environment for children. Therefore, the family's role in instilling character values in children is crucial.
3. Strengthening the role of schools. Schools should be a conducive environment for character education implementation. Teachers and school staff should serve as role models for the students.
4. Strengthening the role of the community. The community should play an active role in supporting the implementation of character education. This can be achieved through organizing positive activities that instill character values in the younger generation

## **Conclusion**

Based on the above study, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education is a crucial effort to address the crisis of role models and to build a dignified and cultured nation. Effective strategies and comprehensive solutions that involve all elements of society are necessary to achieve this goal. With strong cooperation and commitment from all parties, it is hoped that the crisis of role models can be overcome and the young generation of Indonesia can grow into individuals with noble character

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