

Silent Architects: Why Parents Are the Key to Character, and the Risks When They Fail

Annisa Husnul Khotimah^{1*)}, Ayatullah²⁾

^{1,2)} Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Kependidikan, Universitas Mohammad Husni Thamrin

Correspondence author : annisa.khusnulhotimah@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37012/jipmht.v10i1.3475>

Abstract

This study explores the critical role of the home environment as the primary site for child and adolescent character development. It emphasizes that children develop foundational traits through the long-term observation and imitation of their parents, identifying parental affection and positive role modeling as the most influential factors in psychological growth. The research highlights a growing disconnect in modern parenting, where challenges such as digital media influence, professional demands, and a lack of pedagogical preparedness lead to emotional neglect and toxic domestic dynamics. Such neglect often results in "invisible trauma," manifesting as behavioral issues and academic difficulties within the school setting. Conversely, a stable, nurturing family environment fosters resilience and emotional intelligence, providing a necessary buffer against complex social pressures. The findings suggest that the well-being of the next generation depends on parents fulfilling their psychological mandate through consistent engagement and self-improvement. Ultimately, the study underscores that effective character building requires a collaborative synergy between the home and school, rooted in the parents' commitment to being credible primary educators.

Keywords: Character Development, Home Education, Parental Role Modeling, Emotional Neglect, Behavioral Psychology.

ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengeksplorasi peran penting lingkungan rumah sebagai tempat utama pengembangan karakter anak dan remaja. Studi ini menekankan bahwa anak-anak mengembangkan sifat-sifat dasar melalui pengamatan dan imitasi jangka panjang terhadap orang tua mereka, mengidentifikasi kasih sayang orang tua dan teladan positif sebagai faktor paling berpengaruh dalam pertumbuhan psikologis. Penelitian ini menyoroti kesenjangan yang semakin besar dalam pola pengasuhan modern, di mana tantangan seperti pengaruh media digital, tuntutan profesional, dan kurangnya kesiapan pedagogis menyebabkan pengabaian emosional dan dinamika keluarga yang tidak sehat. Pengabaian tersebut seringkali mengakibatkan "trauma tak terlihat," yang bermanifestasi sebagai masalah perilaku dan kesulitan akademis di lingkungan sekolah. Sebaliknya, lingkungan keluarga yang stabil dan penuh kasih sayang menumbuhkan ketahanan dan kecerdasan emosional, memberikan perlindungan yang diperlukan terhadap tekanan sosial yang kompleks. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kesejahteraan generasi mendatang bergantung pada orang tua yang memenuhi mandat psikologis mereka melalui keterlibatan dan peningkatan diri yang konsisten. Pada akhirnya, studi ini menggarisbawahi bahwa pembentukan karakter yang efektif membutuhkan sinergi kolaboratif antara rumah dan sekolah, yang berakar pada komitmen orang tua untuk menjadi pendidik utama yang kredibel.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan Karakter, Pendidikan di Rumah, Peran Teladan Orang Tua, Pengabaian Emosional, Psikologi Perilaku.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a world that is ever-present in every era, both at home and in formal institutions. In informal education people learn from family, peers, community programs and daily experiences. In formal education people learn from structured institutions like school and universities. Education is a crucial field in improving the lives of the next generation, especially in building character.

This also applies to teaching students with diverse characters. In the world of education, as teachers, we often encounter students who struggle academically and behaviourally while it is education that helps individuals understand world and navigate life. There are students who dominate by acting excessively during class time so that all class participants can see them, and there are also students who don't want to appear or speak even though they are capable or not capable. University Center for Advancement of Teaching (2009) released a report which says it is almost inevitable that in each class there are students who tend to talk too much and dominate discussions, which can have a negative impact on the participation of other students (para. 2). However, Georgii (2009) stated that these dominating students or frequent class participators know their material and are totally engaged (para. 2). Sometimes a dominant student can set a good example of class activity, but when they misbehave, they become a problem for their peers. Quiet students, if they've already become introverted, may not be affected, while adaptive students will imitate bad behaviour and become an additional burden for teachers. In some cases, students at school behave impolitely, such as answering with incoherent words, refusing teacher assignments and using a high tone of voice. Troublesome students may hinder the learning environment through disruptive behaviors (e.g., being loud or unpunctual), show rudeness toward teachers and peers via sarcasm and arguing, and poor academic integrity (unpreparedness, demanding special favour), all of which harm learning, stress teachers, and create negative environments, stemming from lack of understanding, inconsistent rules, or outside influences. Classes with heterogeneous students in terms of abilities and character are certainly a challenge for teachers. Findings in Kazak and Kovuncu (2021) showed that effects of undesired behaviors encountered in classrooms are followings:

- Decrease in teacher's motivation, energy and mood
- Loss of concentration and distraction of teacher
- Teacher's unwillingness to teach
- Having difficulty in teaching efficiently

- Teacher's loss of confidence
- Teacher's unwillingness to go to class
- Teacher's anger
- Discomfort in class for teachers
- Student's distraction and loss of concentration
- Difficulty of students to follow the lesson

Teachers, regardless of their profession, also need the support and cooperation of parents at home. Regardless of the diverse backgrounds of the parents and the economic class the student comes from, the child's first education is at home, where they see the habits and character of their parents which they will emulate.

Problems also arise when children cannot communicate well, starting with their family members and cannot socialize normally in social environments outside the home. There are some reasons for this problem, such as stress all day at school, unmet needs, attention-seeking, testing boundaries to get away with, emotional regulation and imitation seen elsewhere. Lack of attention to these factors, for which parents should be responsible, results in unnatural behaviour and character in children.

In this study, we will explore how natural character is easily shaped by the roles and examples that parents display daily at home, with several cases of children and their performance at school.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research conducted by qualitative approach which is a non-numerical research method that focuses on an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, subjective experiences, meanings, and human motivations by collecting descriptive data (words, pictures) through interviews, observations, or document studies to answer the questions "why" and "how". John (2009) stated qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honour an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (adapted from Creswell, 2007).

This research analysed phenomenologically to uncover the core meaning of a phenomenon by examining the lived experiences of those who have encountered it. Consequently, identifying the root causes of these behaviors and mitigating their impacts emerges as a more viable approach. In this process, the researcher brackets or sets aside his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Nieswiadomy, 1993). The subjects of this research are the students and objects of this research are all things that accompany them, including activities, habits and examples that they observe every day, especially outside of school influencing their characters.

To get deeper understanding of the subject, the author uses the following methods to collect and process data:

1. Interview: Interviews help researchers find the right problems to study at the start and allow them to get deeper, more personal answers from people later on.
2. Observation: The study employs a non-participant observation strategy, wherein the researcher maintains an objective distance and does not engage directly with the subjects or environment.
3. Literature Study: Data collection for this study is facilitated through a literature search, focusing on reference books that provide context to the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parental Attention

Let's take the example of the lives of teenagers here. There are many of them who are very vulnerable in their social interactions and lifestyle decisions. Khoirina (2022) stated adolescents are individuals who will enter adulthood and are just getting to know what is right and wrong, besides that, adolescents are individuals who begin to have an interest in the opposite sex, understand their role in the social world, begin to accept their identity and are able to develop the potential that exists within themselves. Digital media proficiency has become a fundamental necessity for everyone. Because the digital era presents both advantages and risks, parents and educators share the vital responsibility of supervising and guiding the content teenagers consume.

Many teenagers are misguided in their life paths due to exposure to content that undermines natural human instincts. Excessive digital media use has become the common phenomenon among children's lifestyle, and its influences on the plausible accompanying psychological and

behavioral problems are gradually investigated (Qu, 2023). When confronted with proper norms, they rebel, while a prolonged lack of parental guidance has already shaped these mistakes. Parental guidance extends beyond schooling to motivation and monitoring. Several studies indicate a link between a less than ideal father role or a disharmonious parental relationship and a tendency to become homosexual. Evidence suggests that parental preoccupation, inadequate supervision, and fractured familial communication represent significant risk factors in the development of non-normative sexual orientations in children. These dynamics often result in emotional deprivation, prompting adolescents to seek identity validation outside the domestic sphere. When parents face significant issue in country with a Muslim majority and Eastern culture, such as LGBT socialized from today's social circles, entertainment children like and social media. Solutions are difficult to implement, especially if the issue is deeply ingrained in the child's character and involves human rights. This situation reflects the lived experience of the author within a highly educated household, wherein the parents' professional obligations and external commitments result in a notable domestic absence. This is the root cause of the gradual destruction of a generation.

Parents' lack of time to meet their children's age-appropriate needs due to busy work schedules lead children to seek attention outside the home, often uncontrollably. We often see married couples who are not ready to become parents and raise their children well. When children come home with poor morals, parents are unable to accept this, further exposing the distance between parent and child. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall stated that "adolescence is a time of "storm and stress" which means, adolescence is a time full of "storms and mental stress", namely a time when there are major physical, intellectual and emotional changes in someone who cause sadness and doubt (conflict) in the person concerned, as well as cause conflict with environment (Seifert & Hoffnung in Jannah, 2016). That's where the child's character appears to be inappropriate and not well guided. In addition, Fontaine (2009) stated that conflicts that are not resolved properly can lead to deviant behavior and even psychotic disorders. Children may struggle with a wide array of painful emotions, ranging from deep sadness and debilitating guilt to persistent feelings of loneliness, anger, and shame. These youths often battle a sense of worthlessness and inadequacy, accompanied by a profound lack of confidence and overwhelming anxiety about their own competence. As a result of these feelings, someone with this mental illness often exhibit avoidance behaviour from work, spending all day at home, reading books, avoiding interaction with other people, distancing themselves from the environment, choosing to be alone,

being unable to control themselves, being unable to build social relationships and being unable to work (Çuhadar & Çam, 2014). Innate character will be influenced by family conditions, especially if the child is not a resilient type, accompanied by the absence of parental affection and support.

The family unit's psychological role encompasses the provision of affection and a secure environment, nurturing interpersonal attention, facilitating the maturation of individual personalities, and establishing a cohesive family identity. The absence of parental guidance and affection (emotional loneliness) is also a factor in children seeking attention outside. Gibson (2015) stated that the loneliness of feeling unseen by others is as fundamental a pain as physical injury, but it doesn't show on the outside. Emotional neglect creates a primary suffering equivalent to physical trauma, but because it is internal, its damage is not easily seen by others. The experience of feeling emotionally alone is private and ill-defined, difficult to observe or put into words. Sense of emptiness is likely the result of a lack of emotional connection with your parents. They often escape their circumstances by accelerating their entry into adulthood, which can manifest as getting jobs early, becoming sexually active, marrying young, and joining society service. Instead of feeling tough and mature enough even though there are many things they need to learn, they become too hasty and less careful in looking for solutions to the problem of lack of parental affection. The family should be the place where children get enough attention as Retnoningias et al. (2019) found that the psychological function of the family is to provide affection and a sense of security, provide attention among family members, foster the maturity of the personalities of family members, and provide family identity.

The vulnerability of modern adolescents is exacerbated by the convergence of digital media risks, shifting social norms, and a decline in cohesive parental guidance. As teenagers navigate the "storm and stress" of identity formation, the absence of emotional connection and supervision at home often leads them to seek validation in potentially harmful environments, including digital spaces that may promote lifestyle choices contrary to their cultural or religious values. Emotional neglect within the family unit functions as a form of "invisible trauma," driving youths toward deviant behavior, mental health struggles, and impulsive decisions to enter adulthood prematurely as an escape mechanism. Ultimately, the preservation of the next generation depends on the family's ability to fulfill its psychological mandate—providing a secure, affectionate, and attentive environment that fosters resilience and prevents the internal emptiness that triggers social and behavioural dysfunction.

Role model parents

Character building begins in the home, making the family the first and most influential educational setting for any child. Siegel (2011) found that recent discoveries in neuroscience reveal that the brain is "plastic" and can be reshaped throughout life based on experiences. Positive parenting creates rewarding experiences that help develop an integrated brain, increasing emotional intelligence and resilience, and vice versa for negative parenting outcomes. According to the author's inquiry, an early childhood student disclosed a tendency to replicate parental behaviours and verbal expressions, specifically citing instances of criticism, harassment, and physical aggression. For example, children will imitate parents who don't readily appreciate efforts and show empathy for others, especially family members, friends, and teachers. In observations of elementary school children, a certain quietness and tendency towards resignation were noted by the author. Further inquiry into the children's backgrounds indicated similar characteristics in their parents.

If parents give up easily, so will children when they are struggling, they should be tough. However, if parents consistently are resilient in facing all challenges and situations, acknowledge every situation with kind and positive words and accept differences with open arms, children will emulate these behaviours and become more adaptable in life at every stage of adulthood. Parents have a significant influence on their children's characters by using various parenting styles (such as authoritative, neglectful, or toxic), acting as behavioural models (for values and gender identity), and engaging in specific types of communication. To create a strong character and soul good on child, inside family, needed the creation of a harmonious and dynamic family atmosphere, this can be created if strong two-way coordination and communication are established between parents and children (Hyoscyamina, 2011). Cultivating a strong supportive system requires active listening, honest conversation, collaborative problem-solving, and shared quality time, ensuring all members feel heard and appreciated. When parents fail to build character in their homes due to various factors, whether it's busy work, a lack of communication skills with children or life burden, it will be difficult to instil moral education and strengthen compassion in children, which slowly influences the child's character over time without him realizing it, with the influence he gets from outside the home or social circles.

Khoirina (2022) stated character education can also be referred to as moral education, value education, affective world education, moral education, or character education. When people aren't ready to be good parents, they sometimes act like children who should be setting a good

example, guiding them patiently and maturely. A survey in Jakarta (UI, 2018) found that 70% of parents felt unprepared, and WHO (2016) stated that 50% of global parents felt the same way. When children need their rights, these immature parents fail to understand and act selfishly, scolding them without seeking the cause. This leads the child to believe that anger is the solution to problems. Parents sometimes use verbal abuse or cruel words power to intimidate child mistake. Juliana (2024) stated that children who frequently experience verbal abuse tend to face mental health issues, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and even depression. Additionally, they often lack self-confidence, which can affect their ability to interact with others and cope with life's challenges. They will feel that all their good efforts are not appreciated and ignored, so that sometimes they will be confused about what is right or wrong in the future.

The impact of this neglect can produce stubborn children who unintentionally imitate their parents' harsh character. Sometimes the strict character of parents who feel they have to be right made it difficult for children to understand and this also provides an example of this character to children, making it difficult for them to change for the better. Forward (1989) stated Godlike" parents—those who believe their word is law and they are never wrong—create a "power struggle" dynamic. It explains that such parents do not provide children with the tools for self-improvement; instead, they model a character that equates authority with being right, making it difficult for the child to break free from these learned patterns. This character trait grows within the home over time and becomes deeply ingrained in the child's personality in various situations and settings where they socialize. When children feel they are right, they become stubborn, unwilling to accept input from others and find it difficult to learn or be taught, even by their mentors.

Kazak and Koyuncu (2021) stated that the primary causal factors can be listed respectively as parents, students, schools, and teacher. Students' misbehaviour at school is very obvious when they are unable to display normal manners when interacting. When the class teacher discovers this situation, they will take appropriate action against the student and determine the cause. If the majority of students behave normally, the suspicion is that it's due to factors outside of school, is home, the child's first school where he imitates the character and nature of his parents.

In one case of a child misbehaving in a school, the primary factor was found to be the parents' character. After the teacher communicated about the child's problem, the parents were found to have poor manners in responding to the situation, failing to recognize their limitations in parenting and supporting the child and blaming the school, even though their child was the only

one with problems compared to the entire class. The family serves as the fundamental architect of a child's personality and the primary foundation for their character development. Khoirina (2022) stated that parents play a very important role, teaching character education from an early age so that individuals or children behave in accordance with applicable norms. Creating an effective two-way communication discussion between parents and children so as to form a harmonious relationship.

The family unit is undeniably the foundational environment for character development. Neuroscience confirms that parental interactions directly shape a child's developing brain and emotional resilience. Effective character education relies on parents serving as positive role models, demonstrating traits like empathy and resilience, and fostering open, supportive communication within a harmonious family atmosphere.

A lack of preparedness for parenthood, coupled with demanding work schedules and poor communication skills, often leads to negative parenting styles, such as the use of verbal abuse or an authoritarian "Godlike" approach. These toxic dynamics model unhealthy behaviors, such as anger as a conflict solution, and can result in children developing stubbornness, mental health issues like anxiety and low self-esteem, and an inability to accept guidance from others. When a child misbehaves in school, the root cause can often be traced back to these parental shortcomings and a failure to take responsibility for the child's moral development. The cultivation of a child's positive character is a direct reflection of the quality of parenting they receive at home.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significant impact of the home environment on a child's character development. Children learn primarily through long-term observation and imitation of their parents, some of whom may be unprepared for the role of primary educator. The most influential factors are parental affection and positive role modelling. Neglecting a child's psychological and emotional needs leads to negative behavioural consequences, which often manifest in a school setting. Conversely, a strong character fostered by effective parenting supports academic learning and facilitates positive cooperation between parents and teachers for the child's future well-being. Ultimately, anyone who assumes the role of a parent or educator must continuously strive to develop their own character to effectively guide children, starting within the home. The well-being and character development of children and adolescents fundamentally rely on a

stable, nurturing family environment. The synthesis of modern challenges—such as the pervasive influence of digital media and complex social pressures—with foundational character-building needs underscores the crucial role of parental engagement. When parents fail to provide adequate affection, supervision, and positive behavioural modelling due to factors like work demands or a lack of parenting skills, the resulting emotional neglect and exposure to negative dynamics (like verbal abuse or authoritarian control) can lead to significant psychological distress, behavioural issues, and vulnerability to external negative influences.

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