

Student Character Education Model Based on Social Activities in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT: This research seeks to develop a model of student character education grounded in social activities at State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City. Employing a qualitative method with a case study design, data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data were processed through three stages: condensation, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the character education model based on social activities in elementary schools operates through five sequential phases: (1) planning, (2) preparation, (3) implementation, (4) reflection on moral values and attitudes, and (5) evaluation along with character strengthening. The application of this model effectively cultivates students' responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and social awareness through direct engagement in school and community contexts. These findings highlight the significance of embedding social activities within contextual learning as a strategic approach to nurturing character formation among elementary school students.

KEYWORDS: character education, social activities, character development, elementary school

I. INTRODUCTION

Character education represents a core foundation in shaping students to become individuals of integrity, moral virtue, and empathy toward others. Within the national education framework, character formation has been positioned as a major priority in human resource development, as outlined in the Character Education Strengthening Policy (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter, PPK) issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2022). This initiative stresses that educational success should not be assessed solely through academic performance but also through students' capacity to internalize and apply moral and social values in everyday life.

The dynamics of technological progress, globalization, and changing cultural norms have introduced new challenges to character development among young learners. A noticeable decline in empathy, social solidarity, and personal responsibility has become a significant concern within the education sector (Santrock, 2021). As formal learning institutions, schools hold a central role in embedding moral principles, ensuring that students grow not only in cognitive competence but also in emotional and ethical maturity.

Sumardi (2023) emphasizes that instructional design at the elementary level should be systematically developed to incorporate the values of Pancasila and social responsibility within each learning experience. Similarly, Kurniawansyah (2022) asserts that the effectiveness of character education is largely determined by the leadership of school principals and the commitment of teachers in nurturing students' religious values and social consciousness through consistent modeling and habituation.

One of the most effective strategies for cultivating students' character is through engagement in social activities. These activities create authentic opportunities for learners to interact with their surroundings and draw lessons from direct experiences. Participation in community service, charity work, and environmental programs enables students to foster values such as responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and social care (Aulia, 2023). Within such activities, character values are not merely conveyed verbally but are practiced through concrete actions that strengthen the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior, as conceptualized by Lickona (1991) in *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*.

Previous research (Astamal, Firman, & Rusdinal, 2021; Devita, 2018) has shown that students' involvement in social activities enhances interpersonal competence, social sensitivity, and environmental responsibility. However, in many schools, these activities are still viewed as supplementary or extracurricular components, not systematically integrated into the curriculum and seldom evaluated rigorously. As a result, the process of character development tends to be inconsistent and lacks sustainability.

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In the local context, State Elementary School 17 Pane in Bima City actively incorporates social activities as part of its character education initiatives. Based on school documentation for the 2023/2024 academic year, activities such as thrice-monthly environmental clean-ups, social fundraising, and recycling programs are regularly implemented. Besides benefiting the community, these programs foster students' empathy and social solidarity. Yet, despite these consistent practices, the implementation model for social activities has not been formally documented or examined through academic research.

This situation reveals a gap between the practice of social activities and the absence of a structured model for character-based learning. Therefore, this study aims to design and construct a student character education model rooted in social activities at the elementary level. The objective is to transform social engagement into a planned, measurable, and sustainable strategy for character formation.

The study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the advancement of character education in elementary schools, particularly through contextual social experiences. Moreover, the findings are anticipated to serve as a basis for developing character education models that reflect local cultural values and promote social engagement within the school community.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design. The approach was selected to enable an in-depth exploration of the process of character development through social activities within the natural setting of an elementary school. Creswell (2018) explains that qualitative research is intended to uncover meanings and understand phenomena as experienced by individuals or groups in their real-life contexts. Similarly, Moleong (2019:6) states that qualitative inquiry seeks to understand phenomena holistically through descriptive accounts expressed in words and language, within a natural context, and by employing a variety of scientific methods.

A case study design was deemed suitable because the research focused on a single site State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City which actively carries out social activities as part of its character education initiatives. This design enabled the researcher to describe and analyze in detail how social activities can function as the foundation for shaping students' character in the school environment. According to Yin (2018:15), case studies are particularly appropriate when researchers aim to understand a phenomenon within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined.

The study was conducted at State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City, during the even semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The school was chosen because of its consistent implementation of various social activities, such as environmental clean-up programs, social fundraising, and environmental awareness campaigns. The participants in this study included the principal, teachers from grades I to VI, students from the same grades, and several parents who were actively involved in the school's social programs. Participant selection employed a purposive sampling technique, in which informants were chosen based on their direct involvement and comprehensive understanding of the school's social activities. As noted by Sugiyono (2022:138), purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria to ensure that the information gathered is relevant to the research objectives.

The data collected in this research consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and field notes, while secondary data were drawn from school documents such as activity reports, photographs, schedules, and student character evaluation results for the 2023/2024 school year. Moleong (2019:157) emphasizes that in qualitative research, words and actions represent the primary sources of data, while documents and photos serve as supporting evidence to strengthen findings.

Three main techniques were employed for data collection: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, students, and parents to gather information about the implementation of social activities and the character values cultivated through them. Observations were made during social activities to examine student participation, interaction, and social behavior within both the school and the surrounding community. Documentation served to complement these data by providing photos, reports, and evaluation records related to social activities. All three methods were used triangulatively to ensure data accuracy and consistency (Creswell, 2018).

Data were analyzed interactively using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and focusing on relevant information derived from interviews, observations, and documentation. The reduced data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to make the emerging patterns more comprehensible. The final stage, conclusion drawing, entailed interpreting the meaning of the data to identify the stages of the student character education model based on social activities. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014:12) emphasize that data analysis in qualitative research is an iterative and cyclical process that continues throughout the study until valid and meaningful conclusions are reached.

To ensure data validity, both source and technique triangulation were applied. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from principals, teachers, students, and parents, while technique triangulation compared the results of

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interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, the researcher conducted member checking confirming interview data and interpretations with participants to verify their accuracy and ensure alignment with field realities (Sugiyono, 2022). Through these validation processes, the collected data were considered credible, reliable, and reflective of the actual implementation of social activities in elementary schools as a means of character development.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The research conducted at State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City, reveals that the implementation of student character education through social activities is carried out systematically and involves the entire school community. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis, it was found that the character education model through social activities consists of five interconnected stages: (1) planning of social activities, (2) preparation, (3) implementation, (4) reflection on social values and experiences, and (5) evaluation. These stages form a continuous and complementary process, each emphasizing different aspects of involvement and focus. The implementation of these stages not only habituates students to engage in social actions but also strengthens moral values through direct, experience-based learning in daily school life.

1) Planning Stage of Social Activities

Findings indicate that each social activity at State Elementary School 17 Pane begins with a collaborative planning process that involves the principal, teachers, and students. Planning is usually carried out through school meetings or classroom discussions, allowing all participants to contribute ideas regarding the types of activities relevant to community needs.

Teachers act as facilitators, guiding discussions and encouraging students to actively share opinions, consider benefits, and set priorities for planned activities. Based on school documentation from the 2023/2024 academic year, planned programs include Clean Friday, fundraising for local residents in need, tree-planting activities, and classroom cleanliness initiatives.

The planning process also involves a clear distribution of responsibilities among the principal, teachers, and students. Teachers handle coordination and supervision, while students act as the main executors. During this process, students learn to set objectives, recognize social benefits, and develop a sense of shared responsibility.

Planning is not merely a formal stage; it serves as a learning arena where students practice discussing, listening, and reaching collective decisions. All plans are documented in a structured social activity plan that becomes the foundation for subsequent implementation.

2) Preparation Stage of Social Activities

The preparation stage begins once the activity plans have been finalized. Observations show that both teachers and students work together to prepare logistics, facilities, and task distribution. Preparation is organized and involves students from grades I to VI according to their abilities and levels of responsibility.

Teachers provide technical guidance, arrange schedules, and ensure material readiness, while students are responsible for collecting tools and preparing the required items. During this process, collaboration across grade levels is evident as older students assist younger ones in handling preparations.

Documentation shows that preparation activities emphasize teamwork and efficiency. For example, during environmental clean-up programs, senior students help distribute tools and organize work areas for lower grades. The principal and school committee also provide logistical support, including transportation and materials supplied by parents.

This stage is crucial for fostering discipline and independence. Students learn to manage time, follow schedules, and carry out tasks systematically. Moreover, preparation reflects a spirit of cooperation within the school, demonstrating that social programs are a shared responsibility rather than an individual task.

3) Implementation Stage of Social Activities

The implementation phase serves as the core of the character education model at State Elementary School 17 Pane. Observations indicate that social activities are routinely and consistently executed. Activities include Clean Friday programs, tree planting, community clean-up, and fundraising for students in need.

Students actively participate with enthusiasm and demonstrate a strong sense of duty. They work in groups led by classroom teachers under the supervision of the principal. Throughout these activities, students display positive interactions that foster teamwork and solidarity.

Teachers serve not only as supervisors but also as role models. By directly participating in the activities, they exemplify discipline, perseverance, and environmental concern. Students tend to emulate these positive behaviors, strengthening character formation through observation and imitation.

Field notes reveal that the impact of social activities extends beyond environmental cleanliness. Students show improved attitudes, such as increased orderliness, care for peers, and initiative in maintaining cleanliness without instruction. Teachers also report that previously passive students now participate more actively and show greater social awareness.

The implementation phase also nurtures values such as empathy, cooperation, and mutual assistance. Students readily help one another and display concern for shared responsibilities, fostering a positive school culture sustained through consistent practice.

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4) Reflection Stage on Values and Social Experiences

The reflection stage takes place after the completion of social activities. Based on interviews, teachers typically conduct reflection sessions in class either on the same day or at the end of the week. These sessions include class discussions, sharing experiences, and simple journal writing.

Teachers encourage students to express their feelings and experiences during the activities, including challenges faced and lessons learned. Students identify moral values such as responsibility, cooperation, and empathy. Through reflection, they learn to evaluate their own actions and relate them to moral understanding.

Several teachers noted that reflection effectively deepens moral awareness. Students who initially joined activities out of obligation begin to internalize the values behind them. Teachers often use open-ended questions such as “What did you learn from today’s teamwork?” to prompt self-awareness and emotional understanding.

Reflection also strengthens communication between teachers and students. Teachers can observe moral development through students’ responses, while students recognize that social activities contribute to personal growth beyond mere school duties.

5) Evaluation Stage of Social Activities

The final phase of the model involves evaluating the effectiveness of social activities in shaping student character. According to interviews with teachers and the principal, this stage aims to assess behavioral changes and the degree of character development among students. Evaluations are conducted continuously through direct observation, student character journals, and attitude assessments.

Teachers monitor students’ progress in terms of discipline, empathy, teamwork, and responsibility. Through regular observations, they identify behavioral improvements such as students becoming more organized, responsive, and cooperative in social programs.

Additionally, the principal holds reflective meetings with teachers to review the program’s outcomes and plan future improvements. This evaluation is formative, emphasizing continuous refinement and the reinforcement of positive character traits. School documentation indicates that evaluation results have helped strengthen positive behaviors and embed social values into the school’s ongoing culture.

Thus, the evaluation phase not only measures performance but also consolidates the values of empathy, responsibility, and social care through repeated practice. It ensures that these values are deeply internalized as part of students’ daily lives.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the social activity based character education model at State Elementary School 17 Pane operates effectively because all stages are carried out systematically and involve the entire school community. Each phase contributes uniquely to character formation: planning promotes responsibility and awareness; preparation builds discipline and cooperation; implementation reinforces empathy and solidarity; reflection deepens moral understanding; and evaluation ensures sustainability of positive behavior. The model successfully establishes a school culture that integrates character values into everyday practice, making social activities not merely routine programs but essential components of moral and social education in elementary schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the student character education model based on social activities at State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City, is systematically structured through five stages: planning, preparation, implementation, reflection, and evaluation. Each stage represents a moral learning process grounded in social experience and the active engagement of the entire school community. This model underscores that character formation cannot rely solely on verbal instruction but must be developed through structured social experiences. As Lickona (1991:51) explains, character education is a deliberate effort to help students understand, feel, and act upon moral values—encompassing moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

These results align with Sumardi et al. (2022), who note that social and collaborative learning activities effectively enhance students’ sense of responsibility and social awareness. Students’ participation in social programs serves as a practical medium for developing empathy and moral behavior. Similarly, Karta (2021) highlights the significance of contextual and culture-based learning that embeds social and emotional values through firsthand experiences. Accordingly, social activities in elementary education can be viewed as a contextual learning model that connects moral principles with students’ daily realities.

1) Planning Stage: Cultivating Moral Awareness and Responsibility

The planning phase underscores collective participation in designing purposeful social programs. Teachers and students work together to determine the types of activities, their timing, and the social objectives to be achieved. This stage represents the initial process through which students develop moral awareness and a sense of responsibility toward their community.

Lickona (1991:51) posits that moral awareness forms the foundation of sound character, as students learn to distinguish right from wrong through moral reasoning. Student engagement in planning promotes ethical thinking and shared responsibility. Dewey (1938:35) similarly argues that moral learning must be embedded in democratic social interactions. Through active participation in planning, students enhance reflective thinking and learn to respect others’ perspectives.

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This process also reflects Piaget's (1952:123) constructivist view, which holds that children build understanding through active interaction with their environment. By taking part in designing social activities, students are not merely following directions they are constructing moral meaning through dialogue and negotiation. Hence, the planning stage fosters independent thought, moral awareness, and social responsibility, forming the cornerstone of character education at the elementary level.

2) Preparation Stage: Fostering Discipline and Social Cooperation

The preparation stage emphasizes discipline, teamwork, and shared commitment in organizing social programs. According to the findings, teachers and students collaboratively arrange materials, schedules, and task distributions in a structured manner. This process enhances students' cooperative abilities and reinforces the understanding that collective success depends on individual responsibility.

This stage corresponds with the habit formation theory proposed by Narvaez and Rest (2008), which suggests that character develops through consistent moral practice accompanied by value awareness. Preparation activities train students to manage time, fulfill duties, and value collaboration. Bandura's social learning theory (1977:23) also explains that children acquire moral behavior through observation and imitation of positive models. Teachers' consistent discipline and exemplary conduct thus become key stimuli in shaping students' positive behavior.

From Vygotsky's (1978:86) sociocultural perspective, character development occurs through guided social interactions within the zone of proximal development. In this stage, collaboration between teachers and students creates a cooperative learning environment that strengthens togetherness and enhances students' social and moral competencies.

3) Implementation Stage: Internalizing Values Through Experience

The implementation stage constitutes the central process of student character formation through social activities. The study found that programs such as Clean Friday, charity drives, and environmental care initiatives provide students with opportunities to apply moral values in concrete actions.

This process illustrates Lickona's (1991:53) concept of moral action, in which individuals act upon their understanding of goodness. Social activities thus transform abstract moral ideals into practical experiences, reinforcing both social and emotional dimensions of character. Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984:41) also asserts that direct experience is the most effective form of learning. Through hands-on participation, students experience cooperation and compassion firsthand, rather than merely learning about them conceptually.

Dewey (1938:67) further emphasizes that social interaction and reflective experience enable students to understand the consequences of their actions. In this light, social activities function as a moral laboratory where students practice values such as responsibility, empathy, and care in real-life contexts. Therefore, this stage embodies the internalization of moral values through cognitive, affective, and behavioral integration.

4) Reflection Stage: Deepening Moral Understanding and Empathy

Reflection plays a pivotal role in transforming experience into moral insight. According to the findings, reflection is conducted through class discussions, Q&A sessions, and writing exercises following social activities. These practices encourage students to analyze their experiences and assess the values expressed in their behavior.

Kolb (1984:42) identifies reflection as a key stage in experiential learning, allowing individuals to convert experiences into meaningful understanding. Within social activities, reflection helps students connect their actions with underlying moral principles. As Lickona (1991:52) notes, reflection strengthens moral feeling the emotional capacity to sense goodness and empathize with others.

Goleman's emotional intelligence theory (1995:109) also supports this view, emphasizing that reflection enhances self-awareness and emotional regulation. Through reflective dialogue, students recognize positive emotions derived from prosocial acts and learn to align thought, feeling, and behavior. Thus, reflection transforms social activities from routine participation into affective moral learning experiences that nurture empathy and self-understanding.

5) Evaluation Stage: Ensuring Consistency of Moral Behavior

The evaluation phase focuses on assessing how effectively social activities promote students' moral growth. Evaluations are conducted through behavioral observations, teacher assessments, and parental feedback, emphasizing behavioral consistency over academic results.

Miles and Huberman (1994:278) argue that reflection and evaluation form an ongoing cycle of improvement that reinforces moral learning. This aligns with Lickona's (1991:54) view that strong character emerges through consistent moral practice and continual assessment. Through evaluation, teachers can monitor student progress and reinforce positive behaviors.

Skinner's reinforcement theory (1953:69) further explains that desirable behaviors can be strengthened through positive feedback. At State Elementary School 17 Pane, evaluation functions not only as an assessment tool but also as a form of moral reinforcement—acknowledging and rewarding students' good deeds to sustain moral development.

The five stages of the social activity-based character education model planning, preparation, implementation, reflection, and evaluation demonstrate that character formation is a structured, experiential process involving awareness, habituation, action, and

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reflection. This framework integrates key educational theories, including Lickona's (1991) character education, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning, and Dewey's (1938) learning by doing.

This study confirms that character education is most effective when students actively participate in meaningful social contexts, reflect on the moral values involved, and receive consistent reinforcement. Social activities therefore serve not merely as extracurricular programs but as integral pedagogical strategies for nurturing empathy, responsibility, and social awareness.

As noted by Karta (2021) and Diksani (2022), strengthening students' character through social engagement must be supported by value-based cultural approaches and contextualized experiences to ensure that empathy, social responsibility, and care develop sustainably within the school environment.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that character education implemented through social activities at State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City, operates effectively and systematically. The student character formation model is structured into five key stages planning, preparation, implementation, reflection, and evaluation each serving a distinct function in cultivating moral awareness, social responsibility, discipline, cooperation, empathy, and behavioral consistency.

Students' active engagement in social programs such as community service, charity fundraising, and environmental initiatives not only enhances their empathy and social competence but also fosters a school culture that integrates moral values into everyday life. The findings affirm that character education becomes more impactful when students learn through authentic experiences, reflective thinking, and continuous behavioral reinforcement, rather than solely through verbal instruction.

This model aligns with the theoretical perspectives of Lickona's character education, Kolb's experiential learning, and Dewey's philosophy of learning through action. The results demonstrate that social activities can serve as a holistic pedagogical approach to cultivating responsible, empathetic, and socially conscious learners. Moreover, this model provides both theoretical insight and practical contribution to the ongoing development of character education practices in elementary schools.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author sincerely extends gratitude to the Principal of State Elementary School 17 Pane, Bima City, along with the teachers, students, and parents, for their support and active involvement throughout the implementation of this study. Deep appreciation is also conveyed to the University of Mataram, particularly the Master's Program in Elementary Education, for the academic guidance and direction provided during the research process. Special acknowledgment is given to the supervisors and colleagues whose constructive feedback and insightful suggestions greatly contributed to the refinement and completion of this work.

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