

Adult Character Education: An Analysis of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory

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ABSTRACT: In today's complex modern life, character education has become crucial to shape individuals who have social responsibility and strong moral values. Therefore, this study will explore the importance of character education for adults, by adopting Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach. The research found that individuals' subjective experiences play a central role in understanding and implementing character education. Effective learning methods, such as understanding, awareness, practice, and collaboration, are indispensable to ensure individuals not only receive information, but are also able to apply values in daily life. In addition, this research emphasizes the need for social awareness and responsibility towards the community. Thus, the results of this study make a significant contribution to the development of more relevant and contextualized character education programs for adults, as well as offer new insights in creating a more harmonious and equitable society.

KEYWORD: Character Education, Adults, Phenomenological Theory

INTRODUCTION

Adult character education has become an important issue in modern society (Halawa & Tariga, 2025). In everyday life, good character traits such as responsibility, honesty, and empathy are necessary to create social harmony. This phenomenon is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Imran verse 110, namely:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِمَّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

Meaning: "You (Muslims) are the best people born to mankind (so long as) you enjoin the good, forbid the evil, and believe in Allah.

Had Ahl al-Kitab believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them believed, but most of them were unbelievers."

This verse explains that Muslims are the best people issued to mankind, with the duty to invite to goodness and prevent evil (Billah, 2022). When it comes to character education, especially adult character, it shows that adults have the responsibility to be role models for the next generation (Halawa & Tariga, 2025). Through Schutz's phenomenological approach, adults are able to understand the meaning behind these roles based on life experiences.

However, social reality shows that many adults do not have adequate character education (Laurensiu et al., 2022). Phenomena such as corruption, interpersonal conflicts, and other unethical behaviours are still often found in various layers of society. This shows that formal education alone is not enough to form individuals with strong character (Suryani et al., 2024). Social and cultural environments also influence adult character development, often in negative ways (Auliarrahma et al., 2024). The lack of awareness of the importance of moral values in everyday life is a major challenge in the effort to build a better society (Ramadhan et al., 2024). Thus, a new approach to understanding and improving adult character is needed.

Previous research has shown the importance of character education in various contexts. For example, research by Auliarrahma et al., (2024) highlights how religious character education can help individuals understand and apply moral values in their lives. Research from (Armini, 2024) also shows that the integration of character education into the school curriculum can have a positive impact on learners' behaviour. However, most of these studies focus on children and adolescents, while studies on character education in adults are still very limited. This suggests a gap in the research literature that needs to be filled. The phenomenological approach offers a unique perspective to understand individuals' subjective experiences of character education (Kafiyahya et al., 2024). Alfred Schutz's phenomenological theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning of one's life experiences through each person's point of view (Schutz, 1971; Wita & Mursal, 2022). This approach allows researchers to dig deeper into how adults interpret moral values in everyday life. Thus, the phenomenological approach can be a powerful tool to explore the dynamics of character building in adults.

This study was conducted due to a gap in the literature on character education in adults. Although many studies have been conducted on other age groups, there is a lack of focus on adults. In addition, most character education approaches tend to be

Adult Character Education: An Analysis of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory

normative without considering the subjective experiences of individuals. This study aims to fill the gap by using Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach to understand how adults interpret character education in the context of life. By using a phenomenological approach, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding of character education in adults. This study will not only reveal individuals' subjective experiences but also provide new insights into how moral values can be effectively applied in everyday life. In addition, the results of this study are expected to serve as a basis for the development of more relevant and contextual character education programs for adults in the future.

METHOD

The method used in this research uses a descriptive qualitative approach because this research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of adult character education which will be associated with Alfred Schutz's phenomenological theory. Literature research is used to explore various literature relevant to the research topic, such as books, journals, articles, and other documents related to ecological piety collaborated between education so as to achieve the objectives of the study (Ahmad & Muslimah, 2021). The data collected through the literature study was critically analysed to identify patterns, themes, and perspectives that support a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of character education in adults as a form of concrete example that will pass down to the next generation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Alfred Schutz's Theory of Phenomenology

Alfred Schutz's phenomenological theory offers an in-depth approach to understanding the subjective experiences of individuals and the meanings embodied in social interactions (Hilayati et al., 2025). Schutz, inspired by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, developed the concept that social reality is shaped through individual perspectives, where each person has a unique way of interpreting and giving meaning to the world around them (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). In his work, Schutz highlights how everyday experiences and social contexts influence the way people interact and communicate, as well as the importance of understanding the perspectives of others to build an understanding of social life (Olifia et al., 2024).

Biography Alfred Schutz

Supraja & Akbar (2021) in his book tells the complete biography of a phenomenologist Alfred Schutz. In this study, researchers present a brief biography of Alfred Schutz who was born on April 13, 1899 in Vienna, Austria-Hungary and died on May 20, 1959 in New York, New York, United States. Alfred Schutz was an Austrian philosopher and social phenomenologist, whose works bridged the sociological and phenomenological traditions (Arianto & Bektı, 2024). Schutz was gradually recognized as one of the leading philosophers of social science in the 20th century. Alfred Schutz connected the work of Edmund Husserl to the social sciences, using it to develop the philosophical foundation of Max Weber's sociology, in his major work entitled *Phenomenology of the Social World*. However, most of his influence came from the publication of his *Collected Papers* in the 1960s (Supraja & Akbar, 2021).

Schutz was born as an only child into an upper-middle-class Jewish family. After graduating from high school, he was drafted into the Australian Army and quickly rose through the ranks to become a second lieutenant, equivalent to the rank in America (Edrisy & Dinata, 2022). His army regiment was sent to fight in a series of fierce battles on the Italian front. In 1918, Schutz enrolled at the University of Vienna, where he earned a law degree. Then Schutz also enrolled at the Vienna Academy of International Trade from 1919 to 1920, specializing in international law (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). During his time at the University of Vienna, attending lectures given by Max Weber, Schutz came to the conclusion that Weber had left the issue of meaning unexplained. As noted by Eberle (2022), Schutz's interest in this issue was a result of his experiences in combat, combined with his return to a starving and economically devastated Vienna.

Schutz married Ilse Heim in 1926. Partly due to the few academic positions available, he developed an established and prominent career in international banking. Schutz became chief financial officer for Reitler and Company, a Viennese banking firm. His academic work was done in his spare time. Schutz was once described by Edmund Husserl as a banker by day and a philosopher by night (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). In 1933, the threat of Adolf Hitler's rise in Germany caused Schutz and other Viennese intellectuals to flee Austria and seek asylum in allied countries. Schutz and his family moved to Paris in 1938 in political exile. Schutz continued to work for Reitler and Company as an international lawyer. Schutz moved to the United States in 1939, where Schutz became a part-time faculty member at The New School. There, Schutz taught sociology and philosophy, and served as chair of the Philosophy department. Schutz received much help from his wife, Ilse, who transcribed his working notes and letters from his recorded dictations.

Alfred Schutz was heavily influenced by thinkers such as Ludwig von Mises, Henri Bergson, William James, Edmund Husserl, and Max Weber. Schutz's main goal was to create a philosophical foundation for social science through phenomenology (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). He was critical of George Herbert Mead's behaviouristic approach. In 1932, Schutz published his first book, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (The Meaningful Structure of the Social World), who proposed that social science should be based on the analysis of 'natural attitudes' that shape everyday perceptions and actions. He

Adult Character Education: An Analysis of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory

defended Weber's concept of value neutrality in social science and used the bracketing technique of Husserl phenomenology to go beyond the limitations of idealized type analysis.

Schutz focuses on how people understand the consciousness of others in the individual's own stream of consciousness, as well as the concept of intersubjectivity relating to the social world (Edrisy & Dinata, 2022). Schutz emphasizes the importance of the "life world" where social reality is shaped by existing social and cultural factors. Schutz also believes that humans tend to categorize people and objects to understand the social world (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). His correspondence with Talcott Parsons discussed the meaning of "social action," showing the fundamental differences between their thinking. This discussion highlights the different orientations in social scientific thought between Schutz and Parsons.

phenomenology Theory

Phenomenology comes from the Greek, namely "*Phainoai*," which means "to reveal," while "*phainomenon*" refers to "that which appears." The term was introduced by Johann Heirinch, although Edmund Husserl is considered the pioneer of the phenomenological school (Adian & Gahrial, 2019). In more depth, phenomenology comes from the word "phenomenon," which means visible reality, and "logos," which means science. Thus, phenomenology can be understood as a science that aims to explain visible reality (Maulana & Budiyo, 2024). It seeks to understand how humans construct meanings and concepts from personal and social experiences.

Next, social phenomenology is concerned with the way people use everyday interactions to create a sense of reality and intersubjectivity. Schutz's works largely focus on the methods used to construct reality through everyday experiences (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). The social construction of reality and ethnomethodology are disciplinary developments that go beyond the social phenomenology proposed by Alfred Schutz. As explained by Atmaja (2022), phenomenological sociology is characterized by its highly subjective nature, as it emphasizes understanding reality from the perspective of the acting subject, not through the point of view of a scientific observer.

Instead of trying to uncover and document the social structures that influence the social world, Schutz and other phenomenological sociologists seek to identify the content of consciousness related to the concept of social reality in everyday life, as well as how this reality is formed (Supraja & Akbar, 2021). Basically, Schutz and social phenomenologists are interested in events in everyday life, which Schutz calls the life world, namely "the intersubjective world in which individuals create social reality, limited by social and cultural structures inherited from their predecessors." In this world, the relationship between the social and the natural is often questioned (Adian & Gahrial, 2019). Although there is meaning at play, many people accept the world as it is without questioning the concept or issue of meaning. Schutz also investigated specific relationships, such as the difference between intimate face-to-face interactions and distant, impersonal relationships (Supraja & Akbar, 2021).

2. Educational Dynamics in a Phenomenological Framework

The phenomenological approach developed by Alfred Schutz provides a rich framework for understanding educational dynamics. Here are some key aspects of educational dynamics in the context of Schutz's phenomenological theory:

- a. **Focus on Subjective Experience.** According to Schutz, individual experience is central to social understanding (Schutz, 1971). In education, this means that each learner brings unique life experiences, perceptions and contexts to the learning process. Educators need to be aware that learning is not only about delivering information, but also about how learners understand and internalize that information based on learners' backgrounds (Surawan et al., 2022).
- b. **Social Interaction and Intersubjectivity.** Schutz emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity, which is how individuals construct shared meanings through interaction (Surawan et al., 2022). In the context of education, interaction between learners and educators is essential (Monalisa 2022). Discussion, collaboration and interaction in the classroom allow learners to share perspectives and build a collective understanding of the subject matter.
- c. **The World of life (Lebenswelt).** Schutz's concept of "lifeworld" refers to the social and cultural context in which individuals live and interact (Schutz, 1971). In education, learners' life worlds include values, norms and experiences that shape the way they see and understand reality. Educators need to consider learners' life worlds to create relevant and meaningful learning experiences (Jannah et al., 2022).
- d. **The construction of meaning.** Schutz's phenomenology focuses on how individuals construct meaning from learners' experiences (Arianto & Bekt, 2024). In education, this means that learners do not just passively receive information, but actively construct meaning from what they learn. This approach encourages educators to create an environment that supports exploration, reflection and discussion (Suryana et al., 2022).
- e. **Experience and reflection.** Learners' everyday experiences inside and outside the classroom play an important role in the learning process. Schutz emphasizes that reflection on these experiences is key to understanding and internalizing knowledge (Schutz, 1971). Educators can facilitate this process by encouraging learners to reflect on experiences and relate them to the subject matter (Saksono et al., 2023).
- f. **Appreciation for Diversity.** Each learner has different experiences and perspectives (Hikmah et al., 2022). Appreciating this diversity is essential to creating an inclusive learning environment. A phenomenological approach allows educators

Adult Character Education: An Analysis of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory

to understand the needs and expectations of individual learners, so that educators can adapt teaching methods to meet these various needs (Schutz, 1971).

The above statement can be seen that the dynamics of education in the phenomenological framework according to Alfred Schutz emphasizes the importance of subjective experience, social interaction, and the construction of meaning. By understanding and considering these aspects, educators can create a more immersive and relevant learning environment for students, thus supporting a more effective and meaningful learning process.

3. Application of Phenomenological Theory in Adult Character Education

The application of phenomenological theory in adult character education can provide an in-depth and personalized approach in understanding and shaping character. Phenomenology, developed by Edmund Husserl and further influenced by the thoughts of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, emphasizes understanding individuals' subjective experiences and how they make meaning of their world (Kamaluddin, 2022). In the context of adult character education, phenomenology can be used to explore the life experiences, perceptions, and meanings formed by each individual involved in the learning process:

The Purpose of Adult Character Education

Adult education focuses not only on individual development, but also on contributing to the community and society as a whole (Judrah et al., 2024). Adults should prepare themselves to actively participate in society, develop interpersonal skills, and understand relevant social issues (Alamsyah et al., 2023). According to Nabila, (2020) the purpose of education according to phenomenological theory focuses on understanding and appreciating individual subjective experiences. Meanwhile, value according to Sutarti, (2022) is the belief in a person that the behaviour that appears is the existence of the ultimate goal of self and social which is better than behaviour without being based on the ultimate goal. The objectives of education in general are as follows:

a. Building Subjective Understanding.

The first goal of education according to phenomenology is to help individuals understand their own subjective experiences (Kusumawati, 2023). Each person has a unique way of interpreting the world and the events they experience. Therefore, phenomenological education aims to provide space for individuals to explore and understand their views and feelings regarding their life experiences (Rozi et al., 2024). For example, in education, a student or learner is invited to express their feelings and perceptions about a certain topic or experience, to better understand how these experiences shape the way they see the world.

b. Increasing Self-Awareness

Phenomenology encourages individuals to recognize and be aware of their inner experiences (Pertiwi, 2022). The goal of education in a phenomenological perspective is to increase learners' self-awareness, so that they can be more sensitive to the feelings, values, and worldviews that shape their actions and decisions (Santika et al., 2023). For example, in character education, learners can be encouraged to reflect on their actions, find out the reasons behind each decision, and how it relates to their personal values.

c. Developing Empathy and Understanding of Other Perspectives

The way to recognize and understand moral and ethical values in each adult can be done by providing space for reflection on the values held, and how these values influence daily actions (Toron, 2024). Through this reflection process, it is possible to understand and evaluate the principles espoused, and to see their impact in social interactions. In addition, education also teaches how to apply moral values in everyday situations and decision-making (Tuturop & Sihotang, 2023). Phenomenology also focuses on understanding the experiences of others. In education, this means that the goal of education is to open learners' understanding to other people's worldviews and perspectives (Muhtarom et al., 2024). This will strengthen empathy and awareness of the diversity of human experience (Ali, 2024). For example, in a group discussion or case study, learners are invited to listen attentively to others' experiences and try to understand how these experiences shape their views and actions.

d. Achieving Self-Transformation

With opportunities for exploration and continuous learning, this education can help foster skills and knowledge that are relevant to the demands of the times (Hamdanah et al., 2024). Education according to phenomenology aims to enable personal transformation. Through a process of deep reflection on life experiences, individuals are expected to change the way they see the world and themselves, resulting in better personal growth and development (Rasjid et al., 2024). For example, a person following a phenomenology-based education might undergo a process of introspection that promotes changes in their values or outlook on life, for example in terms of attitudes towards life, social relationships, or work.

e. Valuing the Uniqueness of Each Individual's Experience

Phenomenological education recognizes that each individual brings unique and valuable life experiences. The goal of education is to provide space for individuals to appreciate the uniqueness of their experiences and find meaning

in those experiences, without judgment that leads to rigid standards or norms. For example, in phenomenology-based education, students or learners are not forced to follow a certain mindset or worldview, but are invited to explore their own experiences and worldview in an authentic way.

f. Person-Centered Learning

Character education for adults encourages individuals to continue learning and developing personally through trainings, workshops, and new experiences (Nurhayati & Lahagu, 2024). In addition, it is important to provide tools and resources that can help individuals evaluate progress and set personal development goals (Ilham, 2024). As such, individuals can actively monitor the journey, respond to challenges, and continuously adapt in an effort to reach their full potential. The goal of education within a phenomenological framework is to create person-centred learning, where the focus is on the experiences and meaning-making processes experienced by learners. This aims to make learning more relevant to participants' personal lives and enable them to construct knowledge and skills based on their own experiences. In person-centred education, for example, an educator might adapt teaching methods to meet the unique needs of students, by providing opportunities for students to express their experiences and relate them to the material being studied.

g. Promoting Social Awareness and Community Responsibility

Character education for adults teaches the importance of involvement in community activities and contribution to the common good (Judrah et al., 2024). In addition, this education can also encourage understanding and appreciation of diversity, as well as empathizing with various perspectives within the community. Thus, it not only becomes an active actor in society, but also strengthens the sense of understanding and solidarity among people (Wibowo & Safitri, 2024).

Methods of Adult Character Education

Learning methods have an important position in achieving educational goals because methods are a means of meaningfulness of material in learning (Fatmawati, 2021). Along with the change in the educational paradigm, from teaching to learning, the concept of teaching has been abandoned and replaced with learning, whose main focus is to pay attention to students (Mascolo, 2009). In this regard, serious and systematic efforts are needed to explore several learning methods that are relevant to the adult learning environment. In adult character education, various methods can be used to help individuals develop sustainable positive values, attitudes and behaviours. These methods aim to facilitate change and character development effectively, taking into account the life experiences and needs of the individual. Here are some types of methods often used in adult character education:

a. Self-Reflection Method

Self-reflection is one of the effective methods in adult character education. Through self-reflection, individuals are asked to reflect on their experiences, actions and decisions and how they reflect their values and character. This process encourages participants to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and formulate self-development goals. Therefore, the role of reason becomes very important because adults like to use their minds to think, therefore adults feel satisfied if the knowledge gained is known to its source, legal basis, and rationale (Farkhin, 2024). Examples of the application of this method include: Personal journals, (where individuals write about their daily experiences and evaluate how their actions are in line with the values they want to develop) or sharing sessions where learners can share their life experiences and reflections on their character.

b. Group Discussion Method

Group discussion is a very effective method for developing character, especially in building social skills and empathy. This method involves working together in a group to achieve a common goal. By collaborating, adults learn to respect the opinions of others, increase empathy, and develop social skills that are important in society (Rahman et al., 2025). In group discussions, learners are invited to share their views and perspectives on character-related topics, such as honesty, hard work, or responsibility. This method also provides space for participants to listen to others' views and learn from their experiences. Examples of application include discussing case studies or real-life situations related to moral or ethical issues, then analysing how best to handle the situation based on the desired character values. It could also be a debate or discussion session that allows participants to express their opinions on social and ethical issues, which can foster respect for different perspectives.

c. Experiential Learning Method

Experiential learning focuses on learning that occurs through direct experience. The experiential learning method is needed for the application of understanding and awareness methods. Because from understanding will come awareness and awareness becomes the basis for practice. Through real practice, individuals can apply learned values in daily life situations, strengthening skills and character (Nasarudin, 2024). In the context of adult character education, this method invites participants to experience situations or challenges that require decision-making or reflection on their values. Experiential learning provides opportunities to apply theory in real situations and see the impact on character development. Examples include project-based activities that involve individuals in social or community service tasks, so they can

Adult Character Education: An Analysis of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory

experience first-hand the importance of values such as social responsibility, empathy and cooperation. It is also through training programs or simulations that create situations where participants have to face ethical dilemmas and make decisions based on the values they want to develop.

d. Social Learning Method

This method focuses on learning through social interaction with others. It aims to increase individual awareness of moral and ethical values. Through reflection and discussion, learners are expected to realize the importance of character in daily life and its impact on others (Ndruru & Lawalata, 2023). Adults can learn character values through observation and imitation of the behaviour of others whom they perceive as role models. This is particularly useful in the context of character education, as individuals tend to mimic the behaviour of those they perceive as role models. An example of such an application is mentoring, where a more experienced individual models for a younger or less experienced adult. In this process, the more senior adult demonstrates the desired positive values and behaviours. It is also through role-modelling programs that involve figures who can be used as role models in carrying out character principles, such as integrity or cooperation.

e. Coaching and Mentoring Method

Coaching and mentoring are two methods often used in adult character education. They provide a more personalized and individualized approach to character development. In coaching, a coach helps individuals to discover their potential, set goals, and overcome barriers to self-development. Whereas mentoring involves a long-term relationship where the mentor provides guidance, advice and support. For example, in a coaching setting, an individual works intensively with a coach to identify areas for character improvement, such as communication, empathy or leadership skills, and then sets concrete steps for further development. Or through a workplace mentoring program where a mentor guides an employee to develop professional values such as integrity, perseverance, and work ethics.

f. Simulation and Role-Playing Method

Simulation and role-playing methods give participants the opportunity to practice dealing with certain challenging situations in character development. Through this approach, adults can act out various scenarios that reflect the character values they want to develop, such as moral decisions, leadership, or conflict management. For example, through role-playing, learners can role-play situations that require making decisions that reflect their character, such as leading a team or facing moral dilemmas at work or simulating conflict management at work or in personal life to practice skills in resolving problems in an empathetic and fair way.

g. Feedback Method

Providing constructive feedback is an important method in character education. Feedback helps individuals to understand their actions, both those that are positive and those that need improvement. It provides an opportunity to increase self-awareness and improve behaviour, as well as reinforcing the positive values to be developed. For example, during training or self-development sessions, learners are given feedback on their behaviour and how they interact with others, which helps them evaluate the extent to which their behaviour reflects the desired character values. Or during self-assessment followed by feedback from peers or superiors to improve communication skills, collaboration or work ethics.

h. Values Education Method

This method aims to teach certain values that are considered important in character education. Value education involves teaching about basic principles such as honesty, hard work, responsibility and respect. This method can be used in a variety of educational settings and is particularly relevant in adult character building. An example of implementing a value education program that focuses on topics such as ethical leadership, integrity, and a sense of social responsibility. It could also be during community-based activities that promote values such as cooperation, caring for others, and social solidarity.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the importance of character education for adults in the ever-evolving modern life. Through Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach, this research emphasizes that individuals' subjective experiences are important in understanding and shaping character. Character education for adults needs to integrate cognitive, emotional and social aspects, including the development of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes that support constructive social interactions. Each individual brings a unique background and life experience, so character education should consider the social and cultural context to create relevant learning experiences. The methods used in character education focus on understanding, awareness, practice and collaboration so that it can be ensured that not only receive information but are also able to apply character values in daily life. In addition, character education not only focuses on individual development, but also encourages social awareness and responsibility towards society, essential for building a more harmonious and equitable community. Thus, this study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of character education in adults and offers guidance for the development of more contextual and relevant education programs.

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