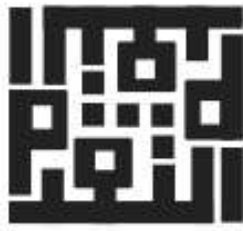


Analysis of Teachers as Role Models in Strengthening the Character of Elementary School Students: Phenomenological Study at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and analyze the profile and process of teachers who act as models in strengthening students' character, as well as to identify their weaknesses and strengths in performing this role. The research is relevant to current educational issues concerning the importance of character education and the need for teachers to serve as moral exemplars for students. This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach conducted at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, involving six teacher participants selected purposively. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using NVivo software. Data validity was ensured through confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability. The findings indicate that teachers' profiles as role models in character education are reflected in habituation programs, active learning, and continuous reflective approaches supported by professional competence and integrity. The process of character strengthening is carried out systematically and sustainably through multifaceted roles and techniques applied both inside and outside the classroom. Challenges experienced by teachers include limited facilities, family environmental influences, and emotional pressure in balancing academic and moral responsibilities. Meanwhile, teachers' strengths lie in their consistency as role models, close relationships with students, the use of persuasive discipline, creative learning approaches, and the holistic integration of character values supported by the school's vision and mission. From a phenomenological perspective, the study highlights how teachers interpret their experiences as moral models, viewing character education as a reciprocal process of learning and reflection rather than a one-way teaching effort.

Introduction

The role of teachers in strengthening character education for students is very important, as teachers must be role models for their students. Teachers are considered trusted figures whose actions and words are emulated by students. In the current situation, where violence, the use of abusive language, lack of respect for parents and teachers, and low individual responsibility are on the rise, character education has become a priority that must be strengthened. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) in 2023 recorded more than 11,000 cases of violence against children, many of which occurred within educational settings, showing the urgency of strengthening moral and ethical formation among students. Similarly, a 2022 survey by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) found that 41% of students reported having experienced bullying at school. These findings indicate that moral and ethical education still needs greater attention. Currently, the education sector seems to focus more on improving academic performance rather than on students' character development (Widyaprada Utama Directorate of Elementary School Teachers, 2022).

From the initial observations, the researchers observed the habits, learning and teaching activities, and interactions between teachers and students at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi. It was found that good character building comes from the role of teachers as role models for their students. If students are not presented with teachers as positive role models, then character building will not be implemented properly. Research on the role of teachers in shaping students' character has been extensively conducted. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Kollo et al. (2024), emphasize the importance of the Character Education Strengthening Program which involves various aspects such as physical education, emotional education, moral education, and intellectual education, with the support of schools, families, and the community (Jumatullailah et al., 2024).

To further understand how teachers' roles influence the formation of students' character, it is essential to refer to established theoretical frameworks. Theories such as Lickona's character education theory and Bandura's social learning theory provide

a strong foundation for explaining how moral values are developed and internalized through modeling, guidance, and consistent practice within the school environment.

1. As stated by Thomas Lickona in his book *Educating for Character*, the history of moral or character education has always been closely related to education itself. The primary goal of education is to guide the younger generation to become intelligent and behave with noble character (Lickona, 1991). Meanwhile, Albert Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes that learning occurs through observation and imitation of others' behaviors, especially those of influential figures such as teachers (Bandura, 1986). In the context of this phenomenological study, these theories help to interpret the lived experiences of teachers in shaping students' character. Lickona's theory provides the philosophical and moral foundation for understanding the purpose and values underlying teachers' efforts, while Bandura's theory explains the mechanism through which those efforts—particularly through modeling and example—are internalized by students. Thus, the combination of both perspectives enables a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive, experience, and enact their roles as character models in everyday school life.

Existing research shows the importance of teachers' role as models in character building, but there is still a gap between the ideal and reality. Many teachers have not fully played the role of consistent role models in the character building of their students. This study delves deeper into this perspective by focusing on the actual implementation of teachers' roles as models at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, as well as identifying how character values are integrated into teaching and learning activities and daily life at school. This study differs from previous research in several important aspects. First, this study focuses on phenomena occurring around SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, providing a more local and contextual phenomenological focus on elementary schools in the surrounding area. Unlike previous studies that emphasized character education programs or the general role of teachers, this study will examine in depth how teachers at the school practice their role as character models in the daily lives of students, both inside and outside the classroom.

Based on the research context described above, the main focus of this study is to explore the role of teachers in the modeling stage of character building among elementary school students. This study employs a phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand and interpret teacher's lived experiences in performing their roles as role models in shaping students' character. Through this approach, the researcher aims to reveal the meanings, perceptions, and reflections that teachers attach to their daily practices in guiding students' moral and behavioral development. To support this main objective, the researcher formulated several sub-focuses as follows: (1) To describe the profile of teachers who serve as role models in the process of strengthening the character of elementary school students. (2) To analyze the processes undertaken by teachers in fulfilling their role as models to reinforce students' character, including the approaches, strategies, and techniques applied within the elementary school environment. (3) To identify the challenges and weaknesses experienced by teachers in carrying out their role as character models, both in terms of personal challenges and institutional or environmental constraints. (4) To explore the strengths and successful practices of teachers in acting as role models for character building, which can serve as inspiration and guidance for other teachers' professional development.

The novelty of this study lies in its holistic approach and in-depth analysis of the role of teachers as role models in the specific context of SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, which has not been explored in previous research. This school presents a unique **socio-cultural** and educational setting, as it is located in an urban area with a diverse student population coming from various economic and family backgrounds. Such diversity creates distinctive challenges and opportunities in the implementation of character education. Moreover, SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi is known for its active involvement in community-based and extracurricular programs that emphasize moral values, discipline, and cooperation, making it a compelling case to understand how teachers' roles as moral exemplars are practiced in everyday school life. Therefore, this specific context provides meaningful insights into how character education can be effectively integrated and modeled within heterogeneous elementary school environments. Previous

observations show that teachers at this school can be key role models in strengthening the character of their students. This study not only focuses on how teachers convey character values through learning but also investigates concretely how teachers' daily interactions with students influence the development of their character. Additionally, it is based on the holistic approach of Thomas Lickona, a renowned educator and psychologist in the field of character/moral education theory, and Albert Bandura, a psychologist known for his social learning theory, which has not been extensively applied in the specific context of education, particularly elementary schools.

Literature Review

1. Strengthening Character Education

Character education encompasses three main components: knowing what is good (moral knowing), loving what is good (moral feeling), and doing what is good (moral behavior). Character education does not merely teach the difference between right and wrong, but also instills the habit of doing good so that students actively understand, feel, and practice good behavior. Even in his book *Character Matters*, Thomas Lickona states, "*Character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue—that is, objectively good human qualities—that are good for the individual person and good for the whole society.*" Character education aims to cultivate virtue, which is not only beneficial for the individual but also for society as a whole. Thus, character education should be viewed as a deliberate and intentional effort to shape moral values, both for the individual and for the entire society (Lickona, 1991).

2. The Role of Teachers as Primary Models

Teachers have a responsibility to reinforce positive behavior through rewards, reinforcement, and reflection. By recognizing students' good actions, teachers motivate students to continue doing the same. This is in line with efforts to instill good habits as emphasized by Lickona and Ki Hadjar. Character education can only be successful if it is carried out in a conducive environment. Teachers are responsible for creating a classroom climate that supports the development of moral values, such as respect, cooperation, and empathy. This environment encourages students to not only

understand values but also apply them in their daily lives (Sauri, 2021).

The following are some important points regarding the role of teachers in schools:

1) Educator; 2) Mentor; 3) Evaluator and Assessor; 4) Facilitator of Learning; 5) Researcher; 6) Professional Development; 7) Role Model and Inspirer (Jumatullailah et al., 2024).

To optimally fulfill their role in improving the quality of learning and actively strengthening the character of students, elementary school teachers are not only required to understand their multifaceted duties and roles, but also to possess adequate competencies. These competencies serve as the main foundation for teachers in implementing each role they perform, both inside and outside the classroom. These competencies include, first, Pedagogical Competence: Elementary school teachers need to master various approaches, strategies, methods, and learning techniques that are appropriate for the characteristics of early childhood students in order to create an effective and enjoyable learning process (Crisnawati et al., 2022). Second, Professional Competence: Elementary school teachers are required to master various subjects and be able to integrate material thematically to align with the curriculum and students' needs (Pasla et al., 2024). Third, Personal Competence: Elementary school teachers must demonstrate high integrity and professional ethics, and serve as role models in their daily behavior to foster positive character development in students. Fourth, Social Competence: Elementary school teachers must be able to build harmonious and collaborative relationships to create a conducive learning environment that supports students' holistic development (Rosni, 2021).

In addition to these four competencies, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has developed an integrated teacher competency model aligned with the independent curriculum, which adds two additional competencies: fifth, leadership competencies in learning, which involve the ability to lead and manage classrooms, schools, or educational programs effectively. Sixth, educational technology competencies, which involve the ability to use information and communication technology in learning, including the use of relevant educational software and

applications. The ability to develop and implement new ideas, approaches, and innovative teaching methods to enhance the effectiveness of learning through (Perdirjen GTK No. 2626/B/HK.04.01/2023).

In carrying out their roles and applying their competencies, elementary school teachers are not only required to be competent in their field, but must also have a strong personality. A teacher's personality serves as the foundation for strengthening character education among their students. Admiration for an object is a form of emotion in which the object is considered worthy of acceptance. Thus, the character values demonstrated by educators can serve as role models for students, who then emulate them through their admiration for the teacher. Character education is a process in which moral and religious values are applied to students through learning and then implemented in daily life. The personality of elementary school teachers plays a very important role as a model for strengthening character education in students. Teachers not only act as instructors of subject matter but also as role models and examples for students in shaping their character and morality (Nur at al., 2020).

3. Character Strengthening Process by Teachers as Models

The role of teachers in this modeling process can be described through several aspects of behavior that reflect real examples of positive character demonstrated by teachers to their students. The results of the analysis of Bandura's (1986) and Lickona's (1991) theories are as follows:

- 1) Consistency in Behavior
- 2) Use of Good and Polite Language
- 3) Role Modeling through Action
- 4) Building Positive Relationships
- 5) Reinforcement of Positive Behavior
- 6) Consistency in Modeling Frequency
- 7) Reflection through Meta-Cognitive Learning
- 8) Building Emotional Bonds and Character Modeling
- 9) Integrating Academic and Character Teaching Simultaneously

These nine aspects reflect the holistic nature of teachers' roles as moral exemplars who influence students not only through instruction but also through everyday interactions. From a phenomenological perspective, teachers' experiences in embodying these aspects reveal a

deep process of self-awareness and continuous reflection. Many teachers experience internal challenges such as emotional fatigue, moral dilemmas, or conflicts between institutional demands and personal values. However, through these struggles, teachers often undergo a transformation of consciousness—realizing that being a role model is not merely about teaching good behavior, but about living out moral integrity, empathy, and consistency in all dimensions of school life. This reflective process strengthens teachers' understanding that character education begins within themselves, and their authenticity becomes the most powerful medium through which students learn values and virtues.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, which is considered appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of teachers in carrying out their roles as character models. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply understand the meanings, values, and personal reflections that teachers attach to their daily practices in guiding and shaping students' character. Rather than focusing solely on observable behaviors, this approach seeks to uncover the essence of teachers' experiences—how they perceive, interpret, and internalize their roles as moral exemplars within the school environment. Through this lens, the study aims to reveal the authentic consciousness and transformative processes that occur as teachers strive to embody and model positive character for their students.

This study collects relevant data in accordance with the focus of the study, namely the role of teachers as models in strengthening the positive character of students in elementary schools. Data were obtained through observation and direct, face-to-face interviews with four teacher informants, specifically classroom teachers of grades 4 and 5. The selection of informants was carried out based on several main criteria, including their possession of relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic, availability of time to participate, willingness to share information and experiences, and understanding as well as agreement to research ethics. Additional considerations included having direct experience with the phenomenon under study, the ability to think critically about events that occur, effective communication skills, and awareness of the social and cultural context of the

school environment.

The interview process was conducted face-to-face with the informants, where the researcher asked questions aligned with the sub-focus of the study. From these interviews, the researcher obtained the necessary data to answer the research questions (Moleong, 2013:155). Supporting data were also collected through documentation such as photos of activities, notebooks, archives of student violation points, school regulations, teacher duty schedules, and the school's vision and mission. This documentation served to complement and validate the information obtained from observations and interviews. Furthermore, triangulation was applied to ensure data validity by combining multiple data collection techniques and sources. The field research was conducted over a seven-month period, from October 2024 to April 2025, allowing the researcher to observe, record, and analyze the teachers' modeling processes in a comprehensive and sustained manner.

1. Data Collection and Recording

Creswell, in his book *A Data Collection Circle* (2015), provides a comprehensive concept that serves as a guide for the data collection process in phenomenological research. The researcher adopted and applied these steps in this study, which include the determination of research location and informants, approach to informants, informant selection strategy, data collection techniques, data recording, dealing with field issues, data storage, and reporting. In this research, the location and informants were determined based on the relevance of SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi as the study site and the selection of four classroom teachers from grades 4 and 5 who met the established criteria. The approach to informants was conducted at the beginning of the semester through classroom observations and informal interactions, allowing the researcher to build trust and establish rapport before conducting in-depth interviews. Data collection was carried out through observations, interviews, and documentation aligned with the study's sub-focus. The researcher maintained systematic data recording by keeping field notes, voice recordings (with consent), and reflective journals to capture nuances of teachers' experiences. Challenges in the field, such as scheduling constraints and ensuring data accuracy, were managed through flexible arrangements and

continuous communication with the participants. All collected data were securely stored in both digital and physical formats to maintain confidentiality and reliability. Finally, the reporting process was conducted by organizing the data into thematic categories that reflected the essence of teacher's lived experiences in modeling character education.

2. Research Stages

According to Moleong (2013), there are three stages in qualitative research, namely the pre-field stage, the field work stage, and the data analysis stage. In this study, these stages were implemented to capture the lived experiences of teachers in modeling character education. During the **pre-field stage**, the researcher selected SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi as the research location because of its active implementation of character education programs. The research design was prepared by aligning interview guidelines and observation focuses with the phenomenological approach to explore teachers' personal experiences. Research permits were arranged through coordination with the school principal, followed by initial field exploration to understand the school's culture and teaching atmosphere. The researcher also identified and selected four informants—teachers from grades 4 and 5—who met the established criteria, and prepared observation sheets, recording devices, and reflective journals as field equipment.

In the field work stage, the researcher began by understanding the school's social and academic background through informal participation in teacher activities and classroom routines. Entering the field involved establishing trust with teachers through daily interactions and presence in class before conducting formal interviews, ensuring a comfortable environment for authentic sharing of experiences. The researcher then participated in data collection through in-depth interviews, observations of classroom interactions, and documentation of teachers' daily practices as role models. Through this process, the researcher was able to experience and interpret the meanings teachers attach to their behaviors, challenges, and reflections in modeling students' character—consistent with the phenomenological paradigm that prioritizes lived experience and the essence of human understanding.

3) Data Analysis Stage

At this stage, the data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation—which had reached a saturation point—were analyzed in depth with the assistance of **NVivo** software to process qualitative descriptive data. The analysis was conducted systematically to uncover the essential meanings of teacher's lived experiences in carrying out their roles as character models. The steps of the analysis process included: (a) importing all interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation into NVivo; (b) reading and familiarizing with the entire dataset to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research context; (c) conducting *coding* by labeling meaningful units derived from teachers' narratives and field notes; (d) comparing and exploring relationships between emerging codes; (e) presenting the results through thematic visualizations such as node trees and word clouds; and (f) drawing conclusions and developing interpretations from the identified themes.

Within this phenomenological framework, the *coding process* was performed in several stages to discover the essential meaning of teachers' experiences. During the *open coding* phase, the researcher identified key words, phrases, and statements that reflected teacher's lived experiences in modeling character education. This was followed by *axial coding*, which grouped related codes into broader themes representing teachers' awareness, values, and reflections about their roles. Finally, through *selective coding*, the researcher synthesized these themes to capture the essence of the phenomenon—the deep understanding of how teachers perceive and internalize their experiences as character models in the school environment. Thus, the analysis was not merely technical but also reflective and interpretive, aligning with the phenomenological paradigm that emphasizes understanding the essence of human experience.

2. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, several verification techniques were employed (Sugiyono, 2022; Moleong, 2013), including *confirmability* (objectivity of the research), *credibility* (trustworthiness of findings) through source, method, and theory triangulation, *transferability* (applicability in other contexts), and *dependability* (reliability and consistency of the research process).

Result and Discussion

In this chapter, the discussion is organized based on the results of data analysis processed using NVivo software, following the analytical procedures previously described. While NVivo facilitated the organization and visualization of qualitative data through Hierarchy Charts and Data Mapping Charts, the interpretation in this section goes beyond mere technical description. The emphasis is placed on uncovering the phenomenological meanings that emerge from teachers' lived experiences in embodying and modeling character values within the school environment. Through these visualizations, the researcher was able to identify not only the frequency and relationships among themes but also the essence of teachers' consciousness, reflections, and transformative experiences as moral exemplars in their daily interactions with students. Thus, the presentation of findings in this chapter aims to interpret the inner meanings behind teachers' actions, attitudes, and perceptions, in alignment with the phenomenological paradigm that seeks to understand the essence of human experience rather than merely its external form.

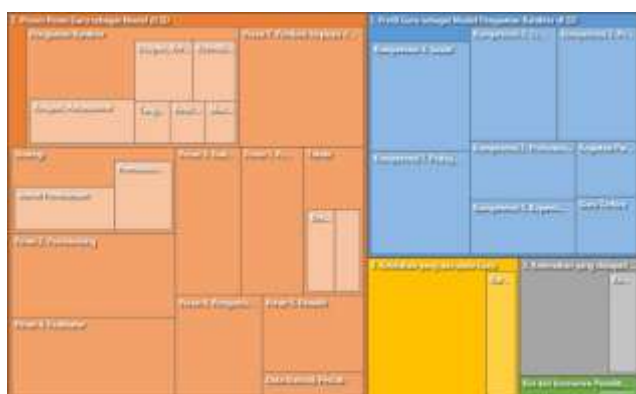


Figure 1. Hierarchy Chart or Mapping of Research Data Results at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi for Discussion on Research Focus and Subfocus

Following the data mapping shown in Figure 1, the subsequent figures illustrate the detailed process of data coding conducted using NVivo. Figure 2 and Figure 3 present the visualization of the coding stages after all data collected from the field or research setting were imported and thoroughly reviewed, providing a clearer picture of how the researcher identified and organized key themes and patterns within the qualitative data.



Figure 2. Display in NVivo of the Data Coding Process after Importing and Reading All Data Collected from the Field / Research Setting

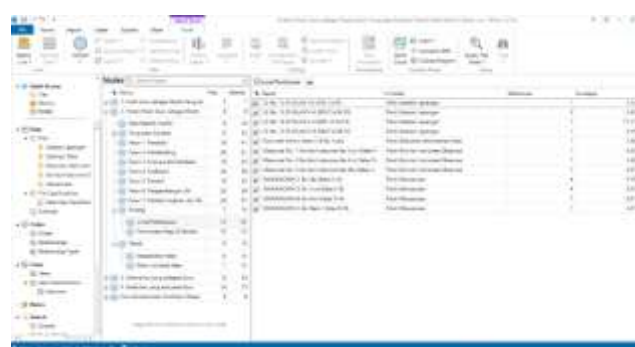


Figure 3. Display in NVivo of the Data Coding Process after Importing and Reading All Data Collected from the Field / Research Setting

1. Profile of Teachers Who Act as Models in the Character Building Process of Elementary School Students

The current definition of teachers according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (2023) emphasizes a more dynamic role in the modern education system, especially in the Independent Curriculum. The role of teachers in character education is becoming increasingly important amidst the moral challenges faced by today's young generation, such as violence, use of harsh language, and low respect for parents and teachers. However, attention to character building is still lacking compared to the focus on academic achievement (Widyapradha Utama, Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2022). Therefore, teachers must play an active role as role models in shaping the character of students through exemplary behavior in daily attitudes and actions. The following are some aspects that describe the current profile of teachers in carrying out their role as character models for students:

a. Current Teachers for Character Building in Elementary Schools

1) Exploring the Potential and Talents of Students

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi are actively engaged in recognizing and developing their students' potential. For many teachers, this process brings a deep sense of fulfillment, as they witness students' hidden abilities gradually unfold. However, they also express emotional challenges in balancing attention among students with varying abilities, often reflecting on how patience and empathy become essential virtues in their daily teaching practice.

2) Designing Personalized Learning

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi not only apply conventional learning methods but also design flexible approaches that align with each student's character and learning needs. This personalization process requires teachers to constantly reflect on their teaching identity—how to balance academic expectations with the emotional and developmental realities of each child. Teachers describe this as both demanding and rewarding, as it helps them grow in sensitivity and understanding toward students' individuality.

3) Encouraging Creativity and Independence

At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, teachers encourage students to actively participate in academic and non-academic activities. Beyond the visible outcomes of creativity, teachers often find personal meaning in watching students gain confidence and initiative. They perceive this process as a reminder that education is not merely about transmitting knowledge, but about nurturing independence and resilience through authentic experiences.

4) Strengthening Character and Ethics

Teachers act as role models in shaping the character and ethics of their students. Observations and interviews reveal that they consistently instill moral values through daily habits, such as using polite language, modeling discipline, and fostering positive social interactions. Many teachers describe a sense of moral responsibility and self-awareness, realizing that their attitudes and behaviors profoundly influence students. This awareness sometimes brings emotional tension, as teachers strive to remain consistent between what they teach

and how they act.

5) Connecting Learning with Local Context

Learning at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi extends beyond academics and integrates local cultural values and students' daily lives. Teachers express that connecting lessons with real-life and cultural contexts deepens their emotional bond with students and their community. Through this process, they feel that teaching becomes more meaningful, as they help students appreciate their roots while developing a sense of moral and cultural identity.

b. Teacher Activities in Character Building in Elementary Schools

At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, teachers play a central role in shaping the character of students through various activities carried out systematically and continuously. Based on the results of observations made, it was found that teachers not only focus on academic teaching, but also actively become models in instilling character values in students. This is manifested in various routine activities, both in the classroom and in the school environment. According to research by Nuraini Alkhasanah et al., teachers not only teach character values theoretically, but also provide examples through consistent daily behavior. The role of teachers as guides, directors, and evaluators is very important in shaping the character of students in elementary schools (Alkhasanah et al., 2023).

c. Teacher Competence as a Model in Character Building in Elementary Schools

In the context of strengthening the character of students in elementary schools, teachers not only act as teachers, but also as models who reflect moral and ethical values in every aspect of learning (Jumatullailah et al., 2024). Based on the Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel (Perdirjen GTK) No. 2626/B/HK.04.01/2023 concerning the Teacher Competency Model, a teacher must have competencies that include aspects of knowledge, skills, and behavior that support the implementation of their professional duties. This competency model refers to six main aspects, namely (1) Pedagogical Competency, (2) Professional Competency, (3) Personal

Competency, (4) Social Competency, (5) Leadership Competency, and (6) Educational Technology Competency, all of which play an important role in shaping teachers as role models for students.

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 have gone through the implementation of these six competencies, for that teachers are expected not only to teach academic concepts but also to be a profile in instilling moral and ethical values in every interaction with students. This is in line with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, where teachers act as facilitators in developing students' potential holistically, and ensuring that the learning process is not only oriented towards academic results, but also on the formation of strong and positive characters.

2. The Process Carried Out by Teachers in Carrying Out Their Role as Models in Efforts to Strengthen Students' Character in Elementary Schools

a. Process with the Approach of Teachers Carrying Out Their Multifaceted Roles as Models in Strengthening Students' Character in Elementary Schools

1) Role as Educators

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi carry out their roles as educators and character models through consistent, persuasive, and reflective approaches. In practice, they do not merely transfer knowledge but also embody and transmit moral values through daily actions and behavior. Teachers expressed that maintaining consistency between words and actions is not easy—there are moments of fatigue and moral dilemmas, especially when dealing with challenging student behavior. However, through these experiences, they realize that being a true educator means continuously nurturing patience, honesty, and integrity within themselves.

2) Role as Mentors

As mentors, teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi adopt humanistic, persuasive, and reflective approaches to shape students' character. They strive to understand each student's background and emotional condition, ensuring that their guidance touches the students' human side. In their reflections, teachers often feel deeply moved when

witnessing positive transformations—students who were once difficult becoming more disciplined and empathetic. From these experiences, teachers perceive their mentoring role not merely as a task but as a spiritual journey that strengthens compassion and sincerity in their profession.

3) Role as Assessment Evaluators

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi conduct assessments comprehensively and reflectively, covering knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They evaluate not only outcomes but also students' moral and behavioral development. Reflectively, teachers admit that maintaining fairness in evaluation is challenging, especially when considering each student's personal circumstances. This process teaches them the moral sensitivity and empathy needed to ensure that assessment becomes a constructive learning experience rather than a judgmental process.

4) Role as Facilitators

As facilitators, teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi design interactive, collaborative, and experience-based learning environments to foster students' character. They guide rather than dominate the learning process, allowing students to discover moral values through experience. Teachers reflect that being a facilitator requires trust—trusting students to grow and letting go of excessive control. This experience brings them deep joy when they see students develop independence and responsibility through their own learning journey.

5) Role as Researchers

As emphasized by Jumatullailah (2024) and Saputri et al. (2024), teachers who act as researchers continuously develop effective learning methods and strategies to strengthen students' character. At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, teachers fulfill this role through observation, analysis, and evaluation of student interactions. Reflectively, teachers feel that this role cultivates curiosity and a sense of renewal. They realize that by constantly researching and reflecting on their own teaching practices, they become more aware of the impact their actions have on students' moral growth.

6) Role as Self-Development

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi engage in ongoing self-development by continuously improving their competence and strategies for

character education. This process is not limited to professional growth but also includes personal and spiritual development. Teachers reflect that being a role model requires lifelong learning—learning from experiences, mistakes, and successes. They feel that every positive change within themselves resonates in the classroom and influences students' behavior and attitudes.

7) Role as Inspirators and Role Models

As inspirers and role models, teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi demonstrate consistency in attitude, communication, and real action. They instill values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social awareness through behavioral modeling, respectful communication, and involvement in positive daily habits. Reflectively, teachers realize that being a role model means being in a constant state of becoming—striving to improve oneself continuously. They describe a sense of pride and moral responsibility knowing that students observe and imitate their behavior. In this awareness, teachers find the deepest meaning of their profession: that every small action they take becomes a living lesson in character education.

b. Process with Strategies Implemented by Teachers in Acting as Models in Strengthening Students' Character in Elementary Schools

The following are 2 main strategies for the role of teachers as models in the process of strengthening students' character in elementary schools based on researchers' analysis of existing data, namely:

1) Morning Habits

Habituation is the process of forming relatively permanent and automatic attitudes and behaviors through repeated learning, whether carried out collectively or individually. This activity fosters positive behavioral patterns that eventually become internalized moral habits. As Jasmana (2021) explains, habituation is a key element of character education characterized by permanence, repetition, and the formation of automatic moral responses to specific stimuli. At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, morning habits serve as the main strategy for shaping students' character before formal academic activities begin. These include the flag ceremony on Mondays, group exercise on Tuesdays, Scouting on Wednesdays, literacy and talent showcases on

Thursdays, and spiritual guidance on Fridays. In addition, a study by Responsive Classroom (Allen-Hughes, 2013) found that Morning Meetings strengthen social-emotional skills and foster positive teacher–student relationships, which aligns with what occurs at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi. Teachers actively participate by leading exercises, guiding prayers, and accompanying literacy and reflection sessions. Even the shared breakfast following these activities is designed to ensure that students begin their day with physical readiness and emotional stability. From a phenomenological perspective, teachers describe this morning routine as more than just a schedule—it becomes a moral ritual that nurtures a sense of togetherness, discipline, and mutual respect. They reflect that through this daily repetition, both teachers and students internalize values of responsibility and community. Teachers express that these habits cultivate their own awareness as role models, realizing that moral education happens not through instruction but through living examples. This aligns with Lickona's habituation theory, which emphasizes that moral character grows through the repeated practice of virtue until it becomes second nature. Thus, morning habits at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi represent a living manifestation of habituation as moral cultivation..

2) Habitual Journal

A habitual journal is a tool used to record and monitor students' positive behaviors and daily routines. It allows teachers to provide feedback and encouragement for continuous self-improvement, supporting the internalization of character values (Gantini & Fauziati, 2021). At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, the habitual journal is part of the 7 Habits of Great Indonesian Children program, which includes habits such as Enjoying Sports, Enjoying Saving, and Enjoying Worship. This journal trains discipline, honesty, and self-reflection, and teachers guide students to fill it out sincerely while understanding its deeper meaning. The journal also serves as a communication bridge with parents through WhatsApp Groups (WAG), ensuring the continuity of character formation between home and school. This strategy integrates reflection with academic activities such as morning exercises, literacy, and project-based learning. By connecting documentation with lived experience, habituation becomes an ongoing and reflective process of moral formation (Niman, 2024). Teachers evaluate the

journals regularly to identify areas of improvement and provide constructive feedback (Maharsiwi & Sutama, 2024). From a phenomenological standpoint, teachers perceive the habitual journal not only as a monitoring instrument but as a mirror of students' moral growth and their own mentoring journey. They describe moments of emotional connection when students honestly reflect on their behavior, expressing pride, guilt, or gratitude. Teachers interpret this as a sign that students are beginning to develop moral awareness—a process that Lickona (1991) refers to as the internalization of virtue through reflection and repetition. Through this practice, teachers themselves experience a deepened understanding of their educational mission: to guide moral development not by control, but by shared reflection and trust..

c. Process with Techniques Implemented by Teachers in Acting as Models in Strengthening Students' Character in Elementary Schools

The following are 2 main techniques for the role of teachers as models in the process of strengthening students' character in elementary schools, the results of researchers analyzing and triangulating existing data, namely:

1) Class Agreement

The class agreement is a technique in which teachers and students jointly determine the rules and consequences that apply in the classroom. This approach encourages students to understand moral values such as discipline, responsibility, and respect. According to research by Prihatiningsih, Maryani, and Muryanto (2024), the implementation of positive discipline through class agreements has proven effective in shaping the moral values of fifth-grade elementary school students. The study showed that 88% of students felt that class agreements influenced changes in their moral values and attitudes. At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, class agreements are implemented as a strategy for building students' character through joint discussions at the beginning of each semester. The agreements include aspects such as discipline, responsibility, order, respect, cleanliness, and cooperation — all aimed at instilling positive values and increasing students' involvement in maintaining classroom norms. Teachers ensure that these

agreements are not only written statements but also practiced consistently in daily routines. This implementation is reinforced through systems of rewards and consequences, such as awarding extra points to disciplined students or providing reminders for those who break the rules. Additionally, teachers adopt a student-centered learning approach, allowing students to actively choose learning methods, organize discussion groups, and participate in classroom activities. Through these agreements, teacher-student relationships become more egalitarian, based on shared responsibility and mutual respect. Teachers are not merely supervisors but also serve as living role models who embody the agreed-upon values in their behavior. Reflectively, teachers perceive class agreements as a means to cultivate collective moral awareness rather than merely enforcing discipline. In their view, effective character formation occurs when students feel ownership of and responsibility for the moral culture they help build together

2) Break Time (Learning Break between Teachers and Students)

At SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, break time is not simply seen as a pause from learning activities, but as a meaningful social interaction space between teachers and students. During this time, teachers continue to serve as role models by directly engaging with students, monitoring them, and demonstrating positive behavior through everyday actions. Some teachers choose to stay near the students during breaks to ensure a conducive atmosphere, providing a safe and supportive environment for social and emotional development. For example, teachers engage in casual conversations, share meals, or listen to students' stories. This approach allows teachers to understand their students more personally and to instill character values through natural interactions. Teachers also use break time for positive activities such as group singing, *ice breakers*, maintaining classroom cleanliness, or sharing food to strengthen solidarity. Teachers who consistently display discipline, care, and integrity become living examples for students, helping them form positive habits naturally and sustainably. As stated by Özkal (2020), break time provides important opportunities for students to develop social skills, regulate emotions, and build healthy relationships with peers and teachers. From teachers' reflections,

informal interactions during break time are perceived as the most authentic moments for character development. As one teacher expressed, “When I sit with them, laugh, or listen to their simple stories, I feel that our relationship is no longer just teacher and student, but humans learning to understand each other.” Through these informal and emotional connections, teachers feel more deeply bonded with their students and begin to see character education as a reciprocal process, rather than a hierarchical act of teaching. From a phenomenological perspective, teachers interpret break time as a reflective space — a moment where moral values are embodied in genuine human relationships, empathy, and lived experience.

3. Weaknesses or Challenges Faced by Teachers Acting as Models in the Process of Strengthening Students' Characters

In this study, it was found that during the process of strengthening character education at SDN Tegal Alur, teachers often faced several challenges or found weaknesses in carrying out their role as character models. This is divided into two, including the following:

a. Personal Challenges for Teachers

In the context of the teacher's role as a model in strengthening students' character, one of the main challenges faced is maintaining consistency in instilling positive values, such as the use of polite language. Although teachers have tried to cultivate polite speech habits in the classroom, some students still display inappropriate behaviors, such as using harsh words when interacting with peers. This finding aligns with Munawarah (2023), who explains that one of the key obstacles in character formation lies in the gap between the values taught by teachers and the behaviors shaped by students' social environments. Teachers are therefore required to act as consistent and wise role models in responding to social changes, including the influence of digital media, in order to guide students to remain grounded in strong moral and religious values amidst the fast-paced and open flow of information. In addition, Nurlayli (2019) highlights that a less supportive learning environment—such as a lack of social control or insufficient attention from families—can negatively influence students' habits, including their use of language. In such cases, rude or disrespectful speech often arises due

to the influence of external environments that do not align with the moral values promoted in schools.

Teachers also experience emotional dilemmas in navigating these challenges, as revealed in an interview with one of the informants who stated:

“...Tetapi jika kita juga duduk sabar rileks menghadapi berbagai macam karakter peserta didik tersebut terbangunlah hubungan di kelas ini yang baik dan harmonis. Atau kesulitan-kesulitan ketika peserta didik mengganggu pembelajaran dan butuh teguran khusus jangan malah dibawa ke lain ruangan atau diasingkan karena akan membuat peserta didik semakin ketakutan dan hubungan yang ada malah makin renggang. Jadi semua upaya yang kita lakukan ini sih sebenarnya capek ya mau membenarkan karakter anak itu capek. Ngebenerin anak sendiri 1 orang saja capek apalagi ini 30 anak, tapi kalo kita sabar, konsisten, dan berintegritas peserta didik itu pasti bisa ditanamkan karakter yang positif dan pembelajaran yang lancar di kelas dan bahkan peserta didiknya yang membantu kembali mengingatkan kebiasaan-kebiasaan yang sudah ada diinisiasi oleh guru yang berperan sebagai model.”

“...But if we also sit patiently and stay relaxed in dealing with the various characters of the students, a good and harmonious relationship will be built in the classroom. And when there are difficulties, like when students disrupt the lesson and need a special warning, don't take them to another room or isolate them, because that will only make them more afraid and the relationship will become even more distant. So all these efforts we make are actually exhausting, fixing a child's character is tiring. Fixing our own child, just one, is already tiring, let alone 30 children. But if we are patient, consistent, and have integrity, students can definitely be instilled with positive character and the learning process in the classroom will run smoothly, and even the students themselves will help remind each other about the habits that have been initiated by the teacher who serves as a model.”

This reflection illustrates the emotional tension teachers experience—the dilemma between the moral demands of being an ideal role model and the social realities they face in everyday classroom interactions. As Muallifah and Sriyanti (2025)

further note, teachers must manage personal emotional challenges while adapting to rapid technological developments. They must continuously enhance their personal and professional competencies to remain relevant and wise exemplars for their students.

b. Barriers to the Educational Environment

According to Daryanto and Karim (2020), an uncondusive school environment—such as inadequate facilities and lack of control over classroom use—can significantly hinder the sustainability of character-building programs. Managing a physical environment that supports the internalization of character values is therefore essential (Ratri et al., 2023). In the specific context of SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi, which operates under a shared building system (one building used by morning and afternoon sessions), teachers face unique challenges. Facilities or learning media that have been prepared to support character education are sometimes damaged or misplaced by students from different sessions, disrupting the continuity of the planned programs. This condition requires teachers to take on dual roles—not only as educators but also as managers of a safe, clean, and orderly classroom climate. Yamin and Saputra (2021) emphasize that student indiscipline during transition periods reflects weak social control within the school environment, thereby highlighting the need for systematic supervision and the creation of a sustainable culture of order (Nurhikma et al., 2025). Despite these obstacles, teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi consistently strive to cultivate students' character through meta-cognitive reflection, peer tutoring, and classroom habituation programs. However, support from the school and parents remains a crucial factor in ensuring the success of these efforts. When parental involvement in character formation at home is lacking, teachers bear a heavier burden in maintaining consistency. As Suryana and Susanto (2022) underline, collaboration between teachers and parents is vital in character education. Unfortunately, many parents still do not fully understand their essential role in reinforcing children's moral development (Nugraha et al., 2024). Likewise, Sari and Lestari (2021) highlight that while reflective practices and peer tutoring effectively nurture students' internal awareness of moral values, the success of such programs depends heavily on cooperation among schools, families,

and communities (Dewi et al., 2024). These institutional and social barriers also create emotional and moral dilemmas for teachers, as reflected in the statement of one informant who expressed:

"...Sekolah dengan sistem 1 gedung 2 sekolah yaitu Pagi-Petang susah sih ya ka. Maka dari itu, saya selaku wakil kepala sekolah sebenarnya sangat setuju untuk diadakannya re-grouping untuk lebih mengonsistensikan pemodelan dalam berperilaku kepada peserta didik. Tadi dikarenakan masih bergantian gedungnya jadi sebenarnya untuk frekuensi pemodelannya sama saja yaitu dengan konsisten di setiap harinya ketika bertemu dengan para peserta didik. Namun, terkendala dengan ruang kelas yang dipakai bersama dengan sekolah petang terkadang membuat frekuensi berantakan karena bantuan dari proses pemodelan ini terganggu juga. Seperti ketika kita sudah membersihkan kelas bersama namun di pagi keesokan harinya kotor kembali itukan bukan karena kurang penguatan karakter positif dari peserta didik kami, melainkan diganggu oleh pihak lain. Jadi, apabila sudah gedung atau ruangan milik sendiri kan lebih leluasa dalam guru berperan dalam proses pemodelan ini karena lebih bisa untuk berekspresi menanamkan karakter positifnya dengan misalnya, menyiapkan pojok membaca, poster-poster motivasi, hasil karya peserta didik, dan juga bahan refleksi bersama di ruang kelas ini. Jadi, sudah pasti setiap harinya guru berusaha konsisten berperilaku positif untuk diikuti pula oleh peserta didik dalam upaya mengembangkan karakter anak menjadi lebih baik ke depannya."

"...A school with the 'one building, two schools' system—morning and afternoon shifts is actually difficult. That's why, as the vice principal, I really agree that regrouping should be implemented to make the behavioral modeling for the students more consistent. Since we still have to take turns using the building, the frequency of the modeling is actually the same being consistent every day when we meet the students. However, the issue is that the classrooms are shared with the afternoon school, and sometimes this disrupts the frequency because the modeling process gets disturbed too. For example, when we have cleaned the classroom together, but the next morning it is dirty again not because our students lack positive character reinforcement, but because it is affected by others. So, if we had our own building or rooms, teachers would have more freedom in carrying out the modeling process, because they could express themselves more freely in instilling positive

character, such as preparing a reading corner, motivational posters, students' work displays, and shared reflection materials in the classroom. So, it's certain that every day teachers try to consistently show positive behavior so that the students will also follow it as an effort to develop their character for a better future."

This reflection reveals the inner tension teachers experience between the moral ideal of consistently modeling positive character and the social realities that limit their ability to do so. Teachers often feel torn between their commitment to moral guidance and the structural constraints of their working environment. Nonetheless, such reflections embody the essence of phenomenological understanding—teachers' lived experiences of perseverance, frustration, and hope as they continuously strive to maintain the integrity of character education amidst imperfect conditions.).

4. Strengths or Advantages of Teachers Acting as Models in the Process of Strengthening Students' Characters

Teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi demonstrate various advantages in shaping students' characters through a systematic and innovative approach. The following are the main points of the advantages that can inspire other teachers to take on the role of models in strengthening students' characters, especially in elementary schools, namely:

a. Consistency in Being a Role Model

Teachers actively demonstrate attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and cooperation through routine habits, daily journal reflections, and role models in students' daily lives. According to Hakim (2019), teachers as role models are individuals who pay attention to basic attitudes, speaking styles, lifestyles, ways of thinking, and behaving, and are able to be role models for students. This role model is important because students tend to imitate the behavior of teachers in their daily lives (Arfaiza et al., 2024).

b. Building Close Relationships with Students

Teachers act as mentors and friends, using warm communication, deep talk, and involvement in student activities to build trust and comfort. As in the study by Humaerah et al. (2020) showed that the role of teachers as mentors and friends in the

implementation of character education in elementary schools is very important to form positive relationships with students.

c. Reinforcement of Positive Behavior

Teachers use appreciation and awards, such as verbal praise, stickers, and small rewards to encourage students to maintain positive character without creating social jealousy. As according to a study by Yamin and Saputra (2021), reinforcing positive behavior through awards can increase students' motivation to behave well and strengthen the desired character (In'am et al., 2021).

d. Flexibility in Learning Methods

Teachers implement peer tutoring, project-based learning, and the use of digital technology (reflection journals in Canva) to adjust the approach to the needs of students. In line with the statement that the application of flexible learning methods, such as peer tutoring and the use of digital technology, allows teachers to adjust the approach to the needs of students (Sutisna et al., 2019).

e. Effective Discipline Strategy

Teachers use a persuasive approach in giving reprimands, involve parents in character building, and implement a class agreement system to increase student responsibility. So with an effective discipline strategy involving good communication between teachers, students, and parents to create a conducive learning environment (Humaerah et al., 2020).

f. Instilling Reflective Habits

Students are invited to reflect on learning experiences through daily journals, peer tutoring activities, reflective discussions, and character-based evaluations, so that they better understand the impact of their own actions. Inviting students to reflect on learning experiences through daily journals and reflective discussions can help understand the impact of their own actions. As a study by Sari and Lestari shows that reflection and peer tutoring as character education strategies can increase students' awareness of character values (Panggabean, 2022).

g. Integration of Character Education in Academics

Teachers insert character values in academic learning, such as emphasizing discipline in

Mathematics, saving habits in procedural texts, and cooperation through project-based learning. As according to research by Benninga et al. (2003), the integration of character education into the academic curriculum can improve academic achievement and character development of students simultaneously.

In summary, the teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi internalize their roles as moral exemplars by transforming everyday teaching routines into reflective moral practices grounded in empathy, discipline, and a sincere commitment to holistic character education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions that have been carefully analyzed and explained previously, this study concludes that the role of teachers as moral models is not only seen through structured programs and strategies but also through the deep personal meaning they attach to their daily teaching experiences. The profile of teachers at SDN Tegal Alur 08 Pagi as character models is reflected in habituation programs, active learning, and continuous reflective practices—supported by competence, integrity, and emotional commitment. The process of character strengthening is carried out systematically through multidimensional roles, including habituation strategies (such as morning activities and reflection journals) and approaches that emphasize empathy, patience, and consistency in guiding students' behavior.

However, the study also finds that teachers experience inner dilemmas and emotional challenges—between the moral ideals they uphold and the social realities they face, such as limited facilities, shared school buildings, inconsistent student behavior, and the influence of the home environment. These challenges are not only technical but also existential, shaping teachers' awareness of their own limitations and responsibilities as moral exemplars.

Amidst these challenges, teachers interpret their role not merely as a professional obligation but as a meaningful moral vocation. They see every act of patience, every reflective dialogue, and every small behavioral change in students as evidence of moral growth—both for the students and for themselves. This reflective awareness illustrates the essence of the teacher's phenomenological experience: being a model means continuously learning, adapting, and embodying the values they wish to instill.

Thus, this study not only describes the strategies and programs implemented but also highlights the

teacher's lived experiences and meaning-making processes in embodying their role as moral exemplars. This phenomenological understanding reinforces the link between findings and research objectives and underscores the scientific contribution of this study in illuminating the reflective dimension of teachers' roles in character education at the elementary school level.

Recommendation

Here are some suggestions that researchers can convey:

1. For Prospective Teachers and Teachers

Teachers are expected to be more innovative in implementing character-based teaching methods, as well as increasing consistency in instilling moral values through a more communicative and persuasive approach.

2. For parents of students

Parents need to be more active in accompanying their children at home by implementing good habits that have been taught at school so that character education can run harmoniously in various environments.

3. For further researchers

Further researchers are expected to be able to develop this study with a wider scope, for example by comparing the implementation of the role of teachers in strengthening character at various school levels or different regions. In addition, researchers can explore in more depth the impact of the role of teachers as character models on changes in student behavior in the long term, or examine cross-sector involvement such as the community and government in supporting the strengthening of character education in elementary schools.

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