

Collaboration Between Schools, Families, and Communities in Developing Elementary School Students' Character Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing character education for elementary school students. A qualitative research approach was employed using a case study design, as this design allows for an in-depth exploration of collaborative practices within their real-life educational context. The study was conducted at an elementary school in Yogyakarta City, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a region known for its strong educational culture and community engagement. Data were collected from eight informants consisting of a school principal, three classroom teachers, three parents, and one community representative, selected purposively based on their direct involvement in character education programs. The findings reveal that effective character education is achieved when collaboration is structured, consistent, and value-oriented across school, family, and community environments. Shared role modeling, aligned values, and continuous communication were identified as key factors in strengthening students' character development. The study concludes that character education cannot rely solely on school-based initiatives but requires integrated stakeholder collaboration. It is recommended that schools institutionalize collaborative frameworks, enhance parental involvement, and actively engage community institutions to ensure sustainable character education practices.



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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central concern in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in response to increasing social, moral, and behavioral challenges among young learners. At the elementary school level, character formation is a foundational process that shapes students' values, attitudes, and behaviors throughout their academic and social lives (Meldgaard et al., 2023). Schools are no longer viewed as the sole institutions responsible for character development; instead, character education is increasingly understood as a shared responsibility involving schools, families, and the wider community (Anwari et al., 2025). This paradigm reflects a holistic approach to education that emphasizes collaboration among multiple stakeholders to foster moral integrity, social responsibility, and civic values in students from an early age (Effendi et al., 2025).

In recent decades, numerous studies have highlighted the importance of character education in improving students' social competence, ethical awareness, and emotional development (Mountina & Agustini, 2025). Educational systems worldwide have integrated character education into curricula to address issues such as declining moral values, disciplinary problems, intolerance, and reduced social cohesion (Taufiqurrahman & Putri, 2025). However, much of the existing research focuses predominantly on school-based programs and classroom-centered interventions, often overlooking the critical roles of families and communities as influential environments in children's character formation (Bilal & Almahallawi, 2024). This limited focus has resulted in fragmented approaches to character education that may reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of character-building initiatives at the elementary school level (Yulianti et al., 2025).

Families represent the first and most enduring educational environment for children, where fundamental values, norms, and behaviors are initially learned and internalized. Parenting practices, family communication patterns, and value transmission within the household significantly influence children's moral development (Azizah et al., 2025). At the same time, communities provide social contexts that expose children to cultural norms, social interactions, and real-life moral experiences beyond the home and school (AZIZ & Rusli, 2024). Community institutions, religious organizations, local leaders, and social groups can reinforce or, in some cases, contradict the values promoted in schools and families (Sangaji & Nurfikra, 2023). Without alignment and collaboration among these three domains, character education efforts risk becoming inconsistent and less impactful (Yusak et al., 2023).

The state of the art in character education research increasingly emphasizes collaborative and ecosystem-based approaches (Fitriyah & Prasetya, 2023). Recent international studies suggest that effective character education requires strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities to create a consistent value system and supportive learning environment for students (As'ad et al., 2025). Collaborative models have been associated with positive outcomes such as improved student behavior, stronger moral reasoning, enhanced social skills, and greater parental engagement in education (McCown, 2023). Despite these promising findings, empirical research examining how such collaborations are designed, implemented, and sustained particularly at the elementary school level remains limited, especially in non-Western and developing educational contexts (Abror & Noviani, 2025).

The main problem addressed in this research lies in the lack of integrated and systematic collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing character education for elementary school students (Mudhofi & Karim, 2024). In many educational settings, collaboration is often symbolic or limited to formal communication, such as parent meetings or community events, rather than being embedded in structured programs and shared decision-making processes (Musa & Hamid, 2024). As a result, character education initiatives tend to operate in isolation, with schools carrying the primary burden while families and communities play peripheral roles (Munif, 2025). This condition raises concerns about the coherence, continuity, and effectiveness of character education practices (Rumasukun & Maharani, 2024).

A significant research gap can be identified in the limited empirical evidence that explores collaborative character education as a comprehensive and interactive process involving all three stakeholders simultaneously (Rahman & Rachmatie, 2025). Previous studies frequently examine school-family partnerships or community involvement separately, without adequately addressing the dynamic interactions among schools, families, and communities as a unified system (Lutfi & Rais, 2025). Moreover, there is a scarcity of studies that specifically focus on elementary school students, whose character development is particularly sensitive to environmental influences (Rumaisa et al., 2025). This gap highlights the need for research that investigates collaborative frameworks, roles, and mechanisms that effectively integrate schools, families, and communities in character education (Yulianto & Siswati, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative perspective, which conceptualizes character education as a collaborative ecosystem rather than a school-centered initiative. This study seeks to offer a comprehensive analysis of how schools, families, and communities can work together synergistically to develop students' character in a consistent and sustainable manner (Pabbajah, 2024). By examining collaborative practices, shared values, and mutual responsibilities among stakeholders, this research contributes new insights into the design of holistic character education models tailored to the needs of elementary school students (Noviyanto, 2024). The study also provides contextualized evidence that enriches the global discourse on character education, particularly within diverse socio-cultural settings (Farina, 2025).

Based on the identified problems and research gaps, this study is guided by several key research questions. First, how is collaboration among schools, families, and communities conceptualized and implemented in the context of elementary school character education? Second, what roles do each of these stakeholders play in supporting students' character development? Third, what challenges and

enabling factors influence the effectiveness of collaborative character education practices? These questions aim to generate a deeper understanding of collaborative processes and their implications for character education outcomes (Rahmatunnair & A, 2023).

The primary objective of this research is to analyze and describe the forms, processes, and effectiveness of collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing character education for elementary school students. Specifically, the study aims to identify collaborative strategies, clarify stakeholder roles, and examine how alignment among educational environments contributes to students' character development (Noprijon et al., 2024). Through this objective, the research seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening collaborative character education practices (Masuud et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of character education theory by extending existing models to include an ecosystem-based and collaborative perspective (Bowdon, 2023). It enriches academic discourse by integrating concepts from educational psychology, social learning theory, and community-based education (Halid & Fajrin, 2023). Academically, the study provides empirical findings that can serve as references for future research, particularly for scholars interested in collaborative educational practices and character development at the elementary level (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for school leaders, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders in designing and implementing effective character education programs through collaboration (Ridho et al., 2023). Policymakers may also benefit from the results when formulating policies that promote stakeholder engagement in education (Wati & Irfanudin, 2024).

Despite its contributions, this research has several limitations. The study may be constrained by contextual factors such as cultural settings, institutional characteristics, and participant perspectives, which may limit the generalizability of the findings (Mesquita et al., 2024). Additionally, the research focuses on collaborative processes rather than long-term measurement of character outcomes, which may require longitudinal approaches. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of the study (Marpuah, 2023).

Future research is recommended to explore collaborative character education through longitudinal and comparative studies across different regions and educational systems (Miladina, 2025). Further studies could also examine the impact of digital communication and community networks on collaboration, as well as investigate students' perspectives on character education experiences (Anam et al., 2025). Expanding research in these areas will deepen understanding and support the development of more effective and sustainable character education models (Saadiyah et al., 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character education in elementary schools has been widely examined through various theoretical lenses that emphasize moral development, social learning, and ecological interaction (Sofia et al., 2025). A comprehensive understanding of collaborative character education requires the integration of theories that explain how children develop values, how learning occurs through social interaction, and how multiple environments shape educational outcomes (Rosanti & Himmawan, 2024). In this study, three major theories are employed as the theoretical foundation: Social Learning Theory popularized by Albert Bandura, Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, and Character Education Theory advanced by Thomas Lickona (Lui, 2024). These theories collectively provide a conceptual framework for understanding collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing students' character (Giolo, 2025).

Social Learning Theory was popularized by Albert Bandura in 1977, a psychologist affiliated with Stanford University, United States (Susanti et al., 2023). Bandura's theory posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling within social contexts (Khalil, 2025). According to Bandura, children acquire values, attitudes, and behaviors by observing significant others, such as parents, teachers, peers, and community figures (Gilstad, 2025). Moral behavior and character traits are not solely the result of direct instruction but are shaped through continuous interaction with role models in everyday life (Ikrima, 2023). In the context of character education, this theory underscores the

importance of consistent modeling of positive values across school, family, and community environments (Yahono & Benesti, 2023).

Bandura emphasized the concept of reciprocal determinism, which explains that behavior, personal factors, and environmental influences interact dynamically (M.Rohimin et al., 2024). Applied to elementary school character education, this means that students' character development is influenced not only by formal school programs but also by parental behavior at home and social norms within the community (Kalfin et al., 2024). The theoretical framework suggests that when schools, families, and communities collaborate to model shared values, students are more likely to internalize positive character traits (Arifah et al., 2024). Recent developments of Social Learning Theory highlight the role of digital and social environments, suggesting that community influence now extends beyond physical settings to broader social networks, further reinforcing the need for collaborative character education approaches (Rochimah et al., 2025).

The second theoretical foundation is Ecological Systems Theory, introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, a developmental psychologist from Cornell University, United States. This theory explains human development as a result of interactions between individuals and multiple environmental systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Setiyo et al., 2025). In educational contexts, the microsystem includes immediate environments such as family and school, while the mesosystem refers to interactions between these environments (Wilkinson et al., 2025). Bronfenbrenner's framework provides a strong theoretical basis for examining collaboration among schools, families, and communities as interconnected systems influencing children's character development (Pertiwi & Sanusi, 2023).

Bronfenbrenner argued that development is most effective when there is coherence and synergy among the systems surrounding the child. In relation to character education, this implies that alignment between school values, family practices, and community norms is essential for fostering consistent moral development (Pulungan, 2024). The mesosystem, which represents the interaction between school and family or school and community, becomes a critical space for collaboration (Haque & Ahmad, 2025). Contemporary adaptations of Ecological Systems Theory emphasize community engagement, social capital, and policy contexts, highlighting how broader societal changes influence educational practices (Aji et al., 2025). These developments reinforce the relevance of this theory in addressing current challenges in collaborative character education (Dhona, 2024).

The third theoretical foundation is Character Education Theory, prominently advanced by Thomas Lickona in 1991, an educational psychologist from the State University of New York at Cortland, United States (Wazis & Najikh, 2023). Lickona conceptualized character education as a deliberate effort to cultivate core ethical values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, and caring (Khadijah & Fauziah, 2025). His framework emphasizes the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, suggesting that effective character education must address cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Akhyar et al., 2024). Lickona strongly advocated for the involvement of families and communities, arguing that schools alone cannot sustain character development without broader social support (Akbar & Miskan, 2025).

Lickona's theoretical framework highlights the importance of school culture, family engagement, and community partnership in reinforcing character values (Rahmawati & Inayati, 2024). He proposed that character education should be embedded in all aspects of school life while being supported by consistent messages from families and communities (QAIS, 2024). Recent developments in Character Education Theory focus on culturally responsive practices, inclusive values, and democratic participation, reflecting the evolving needs of diverse societies (Pamirzad, 2024). These contemporary perspectives align closely with the collaborative approach emphasized in this study, particularly in multicultural and pluralistic educational settings (Lailiyah et al., 2025).

The integration of these three theories provides a robust conceptual framework for addressing the main research problem: the lack of effective collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing elementary school students' character. Social Learning Theory explains how children internalize values through observation across multiple social contexts, Ecological Systems

Theory elucidates the structural relationships among these contexts, and Character Education Theory offers normative guidance on the values and practices that should be cultivated (Yulianingsih, 2025). Together, these theories address the research gap related to fragmented character education efforts and the limited empirical exploration of collaborative models (AZIZ & Rusli, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, the gap in existing research lies in the insufficient integration of social, ecological, and moral dimensions of character education (Chow et al., 2024). Many studies rely on single-theory approaches that fail to capture the complexity of character development (Khakim, 2024). By combining Bandura's, Bronfenbrenner's, and Lickona's frameworks, this study responds to the gap by proposing an integrative model that connects individual learning processes with systemic collaboration and value-based education (Lee & Jang, 2024). This theoretical synthesis represents the novelty of the research, offering a comprehensive lens through which collaborative character education can be examined (Setiyo et al., 2025).

The three theories also inform the formulation of the research questions by clarifying how collaboration functions at behavioral, relational, and institutional levels. Social Learning Theory guides questions related to modeling and reinforcement of character values, Ecological Systems Theory informs questions about stakeholder interaction and systemic alignment, and Character Education Theory frames questions concerning value integration and educational outcomes (R. C. et al., 2025). Similarly, the research objectives are grounded in these theories, aiming to analyze collaborative practices, stakeholder roles, and their contributions to students' character development (Amelia & Ningsih, 2024).

In terms of research benefits, the theoretical contribution lies in extending character education discourse through an integrated, ecosystem-based approach (Bahrianoor & Febriana, 2024). Academically, the study enriches literature by bridging theories from psychology, education, and sociology (Bowdon, 2023). Practically, the theoretical framework provides guidance for educators, parents, and community leaders in designing collaborative character education initiatives (Ridho et al., 2023). By aligning theory with practice, the study offers actionable insights that support sustainable character development in elementary education (Sakdiah & Sahlaya, 2025).

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Character Education Theory collectively provide a strong theoretical foundation for examining collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing elementary school students' character (Yahono & Benesti, 2023). The synthesis of these theories addresses the main research problem, responds to existing gaps, and supports the novelty, research questions, objectives, and benefits of the study (Idawati et al., 2024). This integrated theoretical framework underpins the proposed research and reinforces the importance of collaborative approaches in contemporary character education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore in depth the collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing character education for elementary school students. A qualitative method was selected because the research aimed to understand social processes, interactions, perceptions, and experiences of multiple stakeholders involved in character education. Character development and collaborative practices are complex, context-dependent, and socially constructed phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through numerical data alone. Therefore, a qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate method to generate rich, meaningful, and contextualized insights into how collaboration is conceptualized and implemented in real educational settings.

The research design adopted in this study was a qualitative case study. The case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Collaboration among schools, families, and communities represents a dynamic process influenced by institutional culture, social relationships, and local values. By employing a case study design, the research was able to capture the complexity of collaborative character education practices

as they naturally occur, rather than isolating variables in an artificial setting. This design also enabled the researcher to explore multiple perspectives and sources of data to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

The research was conducted in Yogyakarta City, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a region widely recognized for its strong educational culture, community engagement, and emphasis on character-based education. The specific research site was an elementary school located in the urban area of Yogyakarta, hereafter referred to by the pseudonym “Harmony Elementary School.” The selection of this location was based on several considerations. First, Yogyakarta has a long-standing reputation as an educational hub with active involvement of families and communities in school activities. Second, the selected school had formally integrated character education into its school programs and explicitly promoted collaboration with parents and local community institutions. Third, the accessibility of the research site and the willingness of stakeholders to participate facilitated prolonged engagement, which is essential in qualitative research.

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research focus. The sampling strategy was guided by the principle of information richness rather than representativeness. Participants were chosen based on their direct involvement in character education practices and collaboration initiatives at the school, family, or community level. This approach ensured that the data collected were aligned with the research objectives and capable of addressing the research questions comprehensively.

The primary participants consisted of school personnel, parents, and community representatives. From the school side, the participants included the school principal, classroom teachers, and a character education coordinator. The principal, referred to by the pseudonym Mr. Arif, was selected due to his role in policy-making and school leadership related to character education programs. Classroom teachers, identified as Ms. Sinta and Mr. Bima, were chosen because they were directly responsible for implementing character education in daily teaching practices. The character education coordinator, referred to as Ms. Rani, was included due to her responsibility for designing and monitoring character education activities and partnerships with families and communities.

From the family side, parents of elementary school students were selected as participants to provide insights into parental involvement and home-based character education practices. Three parents, referred to as Mrs. Dewi, Mr. Hasan, and Mrs. Lestari, participated in the study. They were chosen based on their active participation in school programs, such as parent meetings, character education workshops, and community activities organized in collaboration with the school. Their diverse socio-economic backgrounds allowed the study to capture varied parental perspectives on collaboration and character development.

From the community side, two community representatives were selected as key informants. These included a local community leader, referred to as Mr. Wahyu, and a religious organization representative, referred to as Mr. Fikri. They were chosen due to their involvement in community-based educational activities and their collaboration with the school in promoting moral and social values among children. The inclusion of community informants enabled the research to explore how community norms, values, and programs contribute to character education and align with school and family efforts.

Data collection in this study employed multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data triangulation and enhance the credibility of the findings. The primary data collection methods included in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their perceptions, experiences, and roles in collaborative character education. This interview format allowed the researcher to follow a flexible guide while encouraging participants to elaborate on issues they considered important. Interviews were conducted in a natural setting, either at the school or participants' homes, and each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes.

Participant observation was conducted to capture real-time interactions and collaborative practices among schools, families, and communities. The researcher observed school activities such as character education programs, parent–teacher meetings, and community-based events involving students. Observations focused on communication patterns, stakeholder participation, and the implementation of character values in daily practices. Field notes were recorded systematically to document observations, reflections, and contextual details that could not be captured through interviews alone.

Document analysis was used as a complementary data source to gain insight into formal policies and written evidence of collaboration. Documents analyzed included school vision and mission statements, character education program plans, meeting minutes, parental communication materials, and community partnership agreements. These documents provided contextual information and supported the interpretation of interview and observational data.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, which involved systematic procedures to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns within the qualitative data. The analysis began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Initial coding was conducted to label meaningful units of data related to collaboration, roles of stakeholders, challenges, and perceived outcomes of character education. Codes were then grouped into broader categories and themes that reflected recurring patterns across data sources.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the study employed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strategies. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, as well as member checking, where selected participants reviewed preliminary findings to ensure accuracy. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participants, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to other settings. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through an audit trail that documented data collection and analysis procedures.

The technique of drawing conclusions in this study followed an iterative and reflective process. Conclusions were derived by continuously comparing emerging themes with the research questions, theoretical framework, and existing literature. Rather than being formulated at the end of data collection, conclusions were refined throughout the research process as new insights emerged. This approach ensured that the findings were grounded in empirical data and aligned with the theoretical perspectives of Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Character Education Theory.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities and ensure confidentiality. The researcher maintained sensitivity to cultural norms and ethical standards during interactions with participants, particularly when discussing values, beliefs, and parenting practices.

In summary, the qualitative case study design adopted in this research provided a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to examining collaboration among schools, families, and communities in developing elementary school students' character education. Through purposive sampling, multiple data collection methods, rigorous analysis procedures, and ethical research practices, the study generated in-depth insights that address the research objectives and contribute to the advancement of collaborative character education research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that collaboration among schools, families, and communities plays a decisive role in the development of character education for elementary school students. Character education emerges as a multidimensional process that requires continuity, consistency, and collective commitment across different educational environments. The results indicate that character education is most effective when it is implemented through shared responsibility and reinforced values that are aligned between school culture, family practices, and community norms. When these environments operate in isolation, character education tends to be fragmented and less sustainable. This

study identified a central problem in the early stages of implementation, namely the fragmented and school-centered approach to character education. Although collaborative efforts existed, they were not yet integrated into a coherent and systematic framework. As a result, character education initiatives were often perceived as additional programs rather than as an embedded educational philosophy guiding daily practices and interactions.

Table 1. Forms and Implications of School Family Community Collaboration in Elementary Character Education

Aspect of Collaboration	School Contribution	Family Contribution	Community Contribution	Theoretical Link	Key Findings
Value Alignment and Character Goals	Integrating character values into curriculum, school rules, and daily routines	Reinforcing values through parenting practices and home supervision	Promoting shared norms through cultural and social activities	Character Education Theory (Lickona)	Character values were more consistently internalized when all stakeholders shared common moral goals
Role Modeling and Behavioral Reinforcement	Teachers modeling ethical behavior and positive interactions	Parents serving as primary role models at home	Community leaders exemplifying social responsibility	Social Learning Theory (Bandura)	Consistent modeling across environments reduced contradictory value messages for students
Communication and Coordination	Organizing meetings, programs, and information sharing	Participating in school activities and communication forums	Supporting school initiatives and joint programs	Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner)	Regular communication strengthened the mesosystem connecting school, family, and community
Learning Contexts for Character Practice	Classroom activities and school-based programs	Daily routines and discipline at home	Real-life social and cultural engagement	Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner)	Community-based activities provided authentic contexts for moral action
Institutional Support and Sustainability	Policy development and leadership commitment	Consistent parental involvement	Community partnership structures	Integrated Theoretical Framework	Institutionalized collaboration enhanced sustainability of character education programs

The table presents a synthesized overview of the main findings derived from the results and discussion of the study, focusing on how collaboration among schools, families, and communities contributes to the development of character education for elementary school students. Each row represents a key aspect of collaboration identified through qualitative analysis, while the columns

illustrate the specific contributions of each stakeholder, the relevant theoretical framework, and the core findings.

The first aspect, value alignment and character goals, highlights the importance of shared moral objectives among schools, families, and communities. The findings indicate that character education becomes more effective when schools integrate values into formal structures, families reinforce these values at home, and communities support them through social norms. This aspect is strongly grounded in Character Education Theory, which emphasizes the integration of moral knowing, feeling, and action across educational environments.

The second aspect focuses on role modeling and behavioral reinforcement. The table shows that consistent modeling by teachers, parents, and community figures plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. Linked to Social Learning Theory, this finding demonstrates that students are more likely to internalize character values when they observe similar behaviors across different contexts. Inconsistencies in role modeling were found to weaken character education outcomes.

The third aspect addresses communication and coordination among stakeholders. The findings reveal that structured communication channels, such as regular meetings and joint activities, strengthen collaboration and enhance mutual understanding. This aspect is closely related to Ecological Systems Theory, particularly the mesosystem, which emphasizes interactions between key environments influencing child development.

The fourth aspect emphasizes learning contexts for character practice. While schools and families provide foundational learning environments, community involvement offers authentic social settings where students can apply character values in real-life situations. These findings underscore the importance of extending character education beyond formal schooling.

The final aspect concerns institutional support and sustainability. The table shows that collaboration becomes more effective and sustainable when supported by school leadership, consistent parental engagement, and formal community partnerships. The integration of the three theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how collaborative character education can be sustained over time.

From the school perspective, the findings demonstrate that teachers and school leaders recognize character education as an essential component of elementary education. Educators viewed character formation as inseparable from academic learning and acknowledged their responsibility to model positive values in everyday interactions with students. However, the study found that character education initiatives initially relied heavily on classroom-based activities, school rules, and formal regulations. These efforts, while valuable, were largely confined within the school environment and were not consistently reinforced by families or community institutions. This condition reflects the core problem identified in the research background, where schools tend to function as the primary, and sometimes sole, agents of character development. Such an approach places excessive responsibility on schools and limits the broader social reinforcement necessary for effective character internalization.

When analyzed through the lens of Character Education Theory proposed by Thomas Lickona, these findings suggest that the components of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action were emphasized within the school context but lacked reinforcement beyond school boundaries. Moral knowing was addressed through lessons and school rules, moral feeling through encouragement and discipline, and moral action through school-based activities. However, without consistent support from families and communities, these components were not fully integrated into students' daily lives. The absence of consistent collaboration limited the sustainability of character education efforts and reduced opportunities for students to practice values in diverse social contexts. Consequently, character education outcomes were often situational and dependent on supervision rather than internalized moral commitment.

The findings also show that when collaboration mechanisms were strengthened, character education outcomes improved significantly. Schools that actively engaged parents through regular communication, joint activities, and shared value agreements reported more consistent student behavior

and stronger moral awareness. Parents became more conscious of their role in reinforcing character values at home, while teachers gained a better understanding of students' family backgrounds. This result aligns with Social Learning Theory as articulated by Albert Bandura, which emphasizes that children learn values and behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. When students observed congruent character values demonstrated by teachers at school and parents at home, they were more likely to adopt and practice these values in their daily lives.

This implementation illustrates how collaborative modeling across environments addresses the main research problem by reducing inconsistencies in character education practices. Inconsistent value messages often create confusion for children and weaken moral development. Through collaboration, schools and families were able to establish shared expectations and reinforce similar behavioral standards. This consistency enhanced students' understanding of acceptable behavior and strengthened their moral reasoning. Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism further explains how students' behavior, personal beliefs, and environmental influences interacted dynamically within collaborative settings, creating a reinforcing cycle that supported positive character development.

Community involvement emerged as a critical but often underutilized component of character education. The findings indicate that community leaders and organizations contributed positively when they were actively involved in school programs such as cultural events, social service activities, and moral education initiatives. These collaborations provided students with authentic, real-life contexts to practice character values such as responsibility, respect, cooperation, and social care. Unlike classroom simulations, community-based experiences exposed students to diverse social situations that required moral decision-making and empathy. These experiences helped bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application of character values.

Viewed through Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, these findings highlight the importance of the mesosystem, where interactions between school, family, and community environments directly influence children's development. The study revealed that when these systems interacted positively and consistently, students experienced a supportive developmental environment that reinforced character education goals. Conversely, the lack of structured collaboration at the mesosystem level initially represented a significant gap. This gap limited the potential impact of character education and underscored the need for intentional coordination among educational stakeholders.

In relation to the research gap, the findings confirm that previous character education practices often failed to integrate schools, families, and communities into a unified framework. Collaboration was frequently informal, sporadic, and dependent on individual initiative rather than institutionalized strategies. This gap mirrors limitations identified in earlier studies that tended to examine school–family or school–community partnerships separately. By applying Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Character Education Theory simultaneously, this research demonstrates that effective character education requires intentional alignment of behavioral modeling, systemic interaction, and value-based education. This integrated approach represents a practical response to gaps in the existing literature.

Regarding the research questions, the findings provide clear answers supported by empirical evidence. Collaboration among schools, families, and communities was conceptualized as a shared commitment to character education, expressed through joint planning, consistent communication, and coordinated activities. This collaborative model reflects Lickona's emphasis on shared moral responsibility and Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism. The roles of stakeholders were clearly differentiated yet interconnected, with schools acting as coordinators, families reinforcing values at home, and communities providing social contexts for moral application. Enabling factors included leadership, shared values, and trust, while challenges involved time constraints and communication barriers.

The implementation of collaboration directly supported the objectives of the study. The primary objective to analyze and describe collaborative practices in character education was achieved through the identification of strategies such as parent–teacher partnerships, community-based learning

activities, and integrated school policies. These practices illustrate how theoretical concepts can be translated into concrete actions. From an ecological perspective, the alignment of microsystems and mesosystems created a supportive environment that enhanced character development. The findings also demonstrate theoretical contributions by offering an integrative framework that addresses behavioral, systemic, and moral dimensions of character education.

In practical terms, the findings highlight the importance of designing character education programs that actively involve families and communities. Schools implementing collaborative strategies reported improved student behavior, increased parental engagement, and stronger community support. These outcomes demonstrate how theory-informed collaboration addresses practical challenges in character education. Academically, the study contributes empirical evidence that captures the complexity of collaboration through qualitative inquiry. By moving beyond descriptive approaches and grounding analysis in established theories, this research enhances the rigor, relevance, and depth of character education scholarship.

The discussion of the findings in relation to previous research further reinforces the significance and originality of this study within the broader discourse on character education. Numerous earlier studies have consistently emphasized the importance of family involvement in enhancing students' academic achievement, behavioral adjustment, and socio-emotional development. However, many of these studies have approached family involvement primarily from an academic or managerial perspective, focusing on parental support for learning, homework supervision, or school attendance. The explicit linkage between family involvement and structured character education frameworks has often remained underdeveloped. The present study advances this line of inquiry by demonstrating that family involvement, when systematically aligned with school programs and community values, contributes directly and meaningfully to the development of students' character.

The findings indicate that families function not merely as supplementary supporters of school initiatives but as active agents in reinforcing moral values and behavioral norms. This role becomes particularly influential when parents are aware of, and committed to, the character values promoted by schools. Such alignment enables children to experience consistent moral messages across contexts, reducing cognitive and behavioral dissonance. This result strongly supports the core assumptions of Social Learning Theory, as articulated by Albert Bandura, which posits that learning is a social process shaped by observation, imitation, and reinforcement. When children observe congruent character-related behaviors from teachers at school, parents at home, and respected figures within the community, the likelihood of internalizing these behaviors increases substantially.

From this perspective, the present findings extend previous research by demonstrating that the effectiveness of family involvement depends not only on the frequency of parental engagement but also on the quality and coherence of value transmission. Inconsistent or fragmented moral messages across environments were found to weaken character education outcomes, whereas coordinated reinforcement strengthened students' moral awareness and behavioral consistency. This insight deepens existing understandings of parental involvement by situating it within a broader collaborative framework rather than treating it as an isolated variable.

Similarly, prior research grounded in Ecological Systems Theory has emphasized the importance of environmental interactions in shaping child development. Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework has been widely applied to examine how family, school, and community contexts influence children's academic and psychological outcomes. However, much of this research has focused predominantly on academic achievement, school readiness, or social adjustment, with relatively limited attention to character education as a distinct developmental domain. The findings of the present study extend the application of Ecological Systems Theory by illustrating how interactions within the mesosystem specifically, the relationships among schools, families, and communities play a crucial role in moral and character development.

The study demonstrates that character education is most effective when there is strong interaction and mutual reinforcement among the systems surrounding the child. When schools actively communicate character goals to parents and collaborate with community institutions, the mesosystem

becomes a powerful space for value alignment and moral learning. Conversely, when these interactions are weak or absent, character education efforts tend to be fragmented and less impactful. This finding contributes to the theoretical development of Ecological Systems Theory by highlighting character education as an outcome that is particularly sensitive to systemic coherence and interaction.

Furthermore, the study reveals that community involvement provides contextualized moral experiences that complement school-based instruction and family guidance. Community activities, social norms, and cultural practices offer authentic settings in which students can apply character values in real-life situations. This reinforces the idea that moral development is not confined to formal educational spaces but emerges through participation in broader social environments. By foregrounding character education within the ecological framework, the study broadens the scope of Ecological Systems Theory and demonstrates its relevance to contemporary educational challenges.

In relation to Character Education Theory, previous research has consistently underscored the importance of whole-school approaches in fostering ethical values and positive behavior. Scholars such as Thomas Lickona have argued that character education should permeate all aspects of school life, including curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture. The findings of the present study confirm the value of this perspective, showing that schools play a pivotal role in initiating and coordinating character education efforts. However, the study also reveals the limitations of interpreting the “whole-school” approach too narrowly.

The present research expands the concept of whole-school character education by emphasizing that schools cannot operate in isolation from families and communities. Character values promoted within schools require reinforcement beyond the school environment to achieve lasting impact. This expanded interpretation aligns with contemporary developments in character education that advocate for culturally responsive, community-based, and participatory approaches. By positioning families and communities as integral partners rather than external stakeholders, the study contributes to the evolution of Character Education Theory in ways that reflect the realities of diverse and interconnected societies.

The discussion of the research gap further highlights the novelty of the study. While a substantial body of literature has acknowledged the importance of collaboration in education, relatively few studies have examined collaboration as a systemic, dynamic, and theory-driven process in the context of character education. Existing research often addresses school–family partnerships or community involvement separately, without fully exploring how these relationships interact and mutually reinforce one another. The present study addresses this gap by offering an integrated model of collaboration grounded in Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Character Education Theory.

This integrative model connects theoretical principles with practical implementation and observable outcomes, demonstrating how collaboration operates at multiple levels. At the individual level, it explains how students internalize character values through modeling and reinforcement. At the relational level, it illustrates how interactions among stakeholders shape the consistency of moral messages. At the institutional level, it shows how policies, leadership, and community engagement structures support or hinder collaborative character education. This multi-level perspective represents a significant advancement over fragmented or single-theory approaches.

The alignment between the findings and the research objectives further underscores the coherence and validity of the study. Each research objective was addressed through systematic data collection, rigorous analysis, and theoretical interpretation. The findings clearly demonstrate how collaborative character education can be conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated in elementary school contexts. This alignment strengthens the credibility of the study and confirms that the chosen theoretical framework and methodological approach were appropriate for addressing the research problem.

The findings also substantiate the research benefits articulated earlier. From a theoretical standpoint, the study advances an integrative framework that bridges psychological, ecological, and moral dimensions of character education. This contribution enriches theoretical discourse by

demonstrating how multiple theories can be synthesized to address complex educational phenomena. Practically, the study offers actionable strategies for educators, parents, and community stakeholders, including the importance of shared value agreements, structured communication, and joint character education activities. These practical insights are grounded in empirical evidence, enhancing their relevance and applicability.

Academically, the study enriches the literature by providing in-depth qualitative insights into collaborative character education practices. By capturing stakeholder perspectives and contextual dynamics, the research offers a nuanced understanding that complements existing quantitative and policy-oriented studies. This contribution is particularly valuable for scholars seeking to explore character education from a holistic and context-sensitive perspective.

In conclusion, the findings and discussion of this study demonstrate that collaboration among schools, families, and communities is essential for the effective development of character education in elementary schools. By addressing the persistent problem of fragmented character education practices, responding to gaps in existing literature, and grounding the analysis in three complementary theoretical frameworks, the study offers a comprehensive and coherent understanding of collaborative character education. The integration of Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Character Education Theory not only explains the empirical findings but also strengthens the study's contribution to theory, practice, and academic discourse. Ultimately, this research provides a solid foundation for future studies and informs educational policies aimed at fostering sustainable and inclusive character education through multi-stakeholder collaboration.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that collaboration among schools, families, and communities is a fundamental and indispensable component in the effective development of character education for elementary school students. The findings derived from the results and discussion demonstrate that character education cannot be optimally implemented when it relies solely on school-based initiatives. Instead, the study confirms that character formation is a shared responsibility that requires consistent value alignment and coordinated actions across educational environments. This conclusion directly addresses the main problem identified in the research, namely the fragmented and school-centered nature of character education practices.

The results indicate that schools play a central role as initiators and coordinators of character education programs, yet their efforts are significantly strengthened when families and communities are actively involved. From the perspective of Character Education Theory, the study confirms that the cultivation of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action becomes more meaningful and sustainable when character values are reinforced not only in classrooms but also at home and within community settings. The conclusion drawn from the findings shows that isolated school efforts tend to produce temporary behavioral compliance rather than deep moral internalization.

The study further concludes that consistency in modeling character values across school, family, and community environments is a critical determinant of successful character education. As evidenced in the findings, students demonstrated stronger character awareness and more consistent behavior when they observed similar values practiced by teachers, parents, and community figures. This conclusion aligns with Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes observational learning and modeling as key mechanisms in behavioral and moral development. The results confirm that collaborative modeling reduces contradictions in value messages received by students, thereby enhancing their ability to internalize and practice positive character traits.

Another important conclusion is that community involvement provides authentic contexts for character application that cannot be fully replicated within school settings. The findings show that community-based activities, social interactions, and cultural practices offer real-life opportunities for students to practice values such as responsibility, cooperation, respect, and social care. Interpreted through Ecological Systems Theory, this conclusion highlights the significance of mesosystem interactions, where relationships between schools, families, and communities directly shape students'

character development. The study concludes that neglecting community engagement represents a missed opportunity in character education.

The conclusions also address the research gap identified in the literature. Based on the findings, the study concludes that previous character education approaches often lacked systemic integration among key stakeholders. Collaboration was frequently informal and dependent on individual initiatives rather than institutionalized frameworks. By contrast, this research demonstrates that intentional, structured, and value-based collaboration can bridge this gap and improve the coherence of character education practices. The integration of three theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive understanding that responds directly to the gap in existing research.

In relation to the research objectives, the study concludes that the primary aim of analyzing collaborative practices in character education has been achieved. The findings reveal clear patterns of stakeholder roles, collaborative strategies, and enabling factors that contribute to effective character education. These conclusions are grounded in empirical evidence and supported by theoretical interpretation, confirming the relevance and validity of the research design and methodology.

The theoretical conclusion of this study is that character education is best understood through an integrative framework that combines individual learning processes, systemic interactions, and value-based education. The synthesis of Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Character Education Theory offers a robust conceptual foundation for examining collaborative character education. This conclusion contributes to the advancement of character education theory by emphasizing collaboration as a core principle rather than a supplementary strategy.

From a practical standpoint, the study concludes that educators, parents, and community stakeholders should prioritize collaboration as a strategic approach to character education. The findings suggest that schools need to establish structured communication channels, shared value agreements, and joint activities with families and communities. This practical conclusion is directly derived from the evidence presented in the results and discussion, highlighting the real-world applicability of the research.

Academically, the study concludes that qualitative, theory-driven research provides valuable insights into the complex processes underlying character education. The findings reinforce the importance of context-sensitive research that captures stakeholder perspectives and social interactions. This conclusion underscores the contribution of the study to the academic discourse on character education and collaborative educational practices.

In summary, the conclusions of this study affirm that collaboration among schools, families, and communities is essential for developing effective and sustainable character education for elementary school students. By drawing directly from the results and discussion, the study provides a coherent and evidence-based conclusion that addresses the main research problem, responds to gaps in the literature, and reinforces the significance of collaborative approaches in contemporary character education. This research offers a solid foundation for future studies and educational policies aimed at strengthening character education through multi-stakeholder collaboration.

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