

Teacher's Example in Character Formation of Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

Character education at the elementary school level is an important foundation for developing students' moral, social, and personal qualities. In this context, teachers have a strategic role not only as educators but also as role models whose attitudes and behaviors can be observed and imitated by students. This study aims to analyze teacher exemplary behavior as a strategy for strengthening the character of elementary school students. This research employed a qualitative approach using library research. Data were obtained from relevant scientific journal articles, academic books, and educational publications, particularly those discussing teacher exemplary behavior, character education, elementary school students, habituation, and school culture. The data were analyzed descriptively and thematically by identifying, classifying, comparing, and synthesizing relevant findings from previous studies. The results of the literature synthesis indicate that teacher exemplary behavior contributes to the strengthening of various student character values, including religiosity, discipline, honesty, responsibility, politeness, social care, and independence. Teacher exemplary behavior works through a process of observation, imitation, repeated practice, habituation, and internalization of values. The effectiveness of this strategy is strongly influenced by the consistency of teachers in aligning their words and actions, as well as by habituation programs, school culture, the hidden curriculum, and family support. Therefore, teacher exemplary behavior should be integrated consistently into daily learning and school life as a fundamental strategy for strengthening character education at the elementary school level.

Keywords: Teacher Exemplary Behavior; Character Education; Elementary School; Character Formation; Habituation

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INTRODUCTION

Education is essentially not only oriented towards the development of students' intellectual abilities, but also has a responsibility in forming good personalities, morals, and character. The success of education is not only measured through academic achievement, but also through the ability of students to apply values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, manners, care, and appreciation for others in daily life. At the elementary school level, character education becomes increasingly important because this phase is a period when students begin to build habits, behavior patterns, and social values that will develop in their next life. Research by Damayanti, Sueca, and Darmayanti (2024) shows that strengthening the character of elementary school students can be done through habituation, spontaneous activities, examples, and conditioning of the school environment. Thus, character education needs to be placed as an integral part of the entire educational process, not just as material that is delivered theoretically.

Elementary school is an educational environment that has a great influence on the character development of students because most of the child's time is spent interacting with teachers and peers. At this stage, students learn not only through the material delivered verbally, but also through the process of observing, imitating, and habituating the behaviors they see in daily life. Teachers are one of the figures closest to students so that teachers' attitudes and behaviors can be a source of social learning for students. Fauzi (2025), through research on the role of teachers in shaping the character of elementary school students, shows that teachers have an active role in character formation through example, integration of character values in learning, positive reinforcement, creation of a conducive classroom environment, and communication with parents. This shows that students' character is not only formed through what the teacher says, but also through what teachers do and exemplify in school life.

In this context, teacher role models are one of the important instruments in character education. Exemplary can be understood as an educational process that is carried out through providing real examples in the form of attitudes, speech, and actions that can be observed and imitated by students. Teachers who show discipline, honesty, responsibility, politeness, care, and consistency in carrying out their duties provide students with concrete experiences about how a value should be manifested in behavior. Saputra, Wulandari, and Darsinah (2024) found that teachers' examples can be used as a means of instilling disciplined character in elementary school students. These examples are not only shown in learning activities, but also through teacher behavior in the school environment so that students get direct examples of disciplinary behavior that they can imitate.

Teacher role models are becoming increasingly important because elementary school students tend to learn through concrete experiences and observations of people in their immediate environment. Consistency between teachers' words and actions is an important part of the process. Teachers who teach the importance of discipline, but do not show discipline in carrying out tasks, have the potential to reduce the power of the educational message given. Conversely, when teachers are able to show the conformity between the values conveyed and the behaviors performed, the process of internalizing values becomes more concrete for students. Research by Tinambunan et al. (2024) also shows that teachers' prudence in speaking and acting is an important part of exemplification because teachers' behavior can be an example observed by students in daily life.

The urgency of teacher role models is getting stronger in the midst of information technology developments and changes in the social environment of students. Children today obtain information and examples of behavior not only from families and schools, but also

from social media, digital platforms, and various forms of online communication. This condition provides positive opportunities for knowledge development, but at the same time presents challenges in strengthening character because not all information and behaviors found in the digital space are in accordance with the expected educational value. Therefore, schools need to present an environment that is able to provide real experiences regarding positive behavior. Azizah et al. (2025) emphasized that the formation of manners character in elementary school students faces challenges due to the development of digitalization and the reduction of value habituation practices in the social environment. In these conditions, teacher role models and consistency are an important part of building students' character.

Character education also cannot be done only through lectures, advice, or the delivery of moral materials. The value of honesty will be easier to understand if students see the teacher applying honesty in carrying out their duties. Similarly, the value of discipline will be easier to instill if the teacher shows discipline in attendance, punctuality, learning implementation, and responsibility completion. The results of the research of Saputra et al. (2024) show that examples of disciplinary behavior shown by teachers inside and outside the learning process can be a means of instilling disciplined character in elementary school students. Thus, exemplary provides a concrete educational experience and allows students to understand the value of character through direct practice.

However, teachers' role models cannot be separated from school habits and culture. Character is not formed through one or two actions, but through a process that is carried out repeatedly, consistently, and supported by the educational environment. Damayanti et al. (2024) found that strategies to strengthen character education in elementary schools include habituation, spontaneous activities, examples, and environmental conditioning. These findings show that teacher role models need to be combined with positive habits and a supportive school environment so that character values do not stop at momentary examples, but develop into students' habits.

In addition, the process of character formation also takes place through a hidden curriculum, namely values, norms, habits, interaction patterns, and culture that students learn through their daily experiences at school even though they are not always explicitly listed in the formal curriculum. Research by Malahati and Rokhimawan (2024) shows that *hidden curriculum* can be used as part of the character development process of elementary school students through various habits and practices of school life. Other research on *hidden curriculum* in elementary schools also shows that character formation can take place through school culture, social interactions, habits, and behaviors exemplified by teachers. Vitriani and Sukiman (2026), through a systematic study of the *hidden curriculum* in elementary schools, found that character formation takes place through habituation of religious activities, teacher examples, discipline culture, social interaction, and extracurricular activities that are integrated into school culture.

A number of recent studies further strengthen the importance of teacher role models in the formation of students' character. Saputra et al.'s (2024) research specifically shows the role of teacher role models in instilling disciplined character in elementary school students. Damayanti et al. (2024) found that role models are one of the four main strategies of teachers in strengthening the value of character education. Meanwhile, Fauzi (2025) shows that the role of teachers in character formation is not only carried out through example, but also through the integration of character values in learning, positive reinforcement, the creation of a conducive learning environment, and relationships with parents. Research by Putri et al. (2026) also shows that the character formation of elementary school students takes place through a combination of habituation and exemplary behavior that is consistently applied in

daily school life. These findings show that teacher role models have an important position in building students' character, but their effectiveness is closely related to the consistency of habituation and support of the school environment.

Although research on teacher role models and character education has developed, there is still room to examine how teacher role models are concretely realized in daily school life and how these forms of role models contribute to students' character. Some previous research has emphasized role models in certain characters, such as discipline or manners, while character formation basically includes various interrelated dimensions, such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, caring, and the ability to respect others. In addition, teacher role models need to be understood not only in formal learning activities, but also through daily interactions, habituation, school culture, and *hidden curriculum*. Research that examines the entire process contextually in the elementary school environment is still relevant to gain a deeper understanding.

Based on this description, this research focuses on teacher role models as a strategy to strengthen the character of elementary school students. This research aims to analyze the forms of role models shown by teachers in school life, identify characters that develop through these examples, and examine the supporting and inhibiting factors that hinder their implementation. This research is expected to contribute to the development of character education practices in elementary schools, especially in placing teachers not only as conveyors of learning materials, but also as figures who provide real examples in the formation of students' character.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of library *research*. This approach was chosen because the research aims to analyze and synthesize various concepts, research results, and scientific findings regarding teacher examples and the formation of the character of elementary school students. Literature studies allow researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding through the study of relevant scientific sources without collecting data directly in the field. Haryono et al. (2024) explained that *library research* is a research approach that requires a planned process of tracing sources, selection of relevant materials, and analysis and synthesis of information to answer the research focus. The qualitative approach also allows researchers to understand an educational phenomenon based on the meaning, concepts, and findings contained in various scientific sources (Nababan & Marpaung, 2024).

Data Source

The research data sources consist of scientific journal articles, academic books, education policy documents, and other scientific publications that are relevant to teacher examples and character education at the elementary school level. Literature search was carried out through various databases and academic search engines using keywords in Indonesian and English, including *teacher examples*, *teacher roles*, *character education*, *character character of elementary school students*, *teacher exemplary behavior*, *teacher role*, and *character education*.

To maintain the relevance and up-to-date of sources, the research prioritizes publications in the last three years, namely 2024–2026, especially journal articles that directly discuss teacher examples, character education, school culture, habituation, and *hidden curriculum* in basic education. The literature used was selected based on the suitability of the topic, credibility of the source, clarity of methodological information, and its contribution to the focus of the research. The systematic use of search and selection strategies of sources is necessary so that literature studies are not only a collection of

literature summaries, but also produce a synthesis that can be accounted for academically (Jamaluddin et al., 2025).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is carried out through several stages. First, the researcher determines the focus and keywords based on the research objectives. Second, the researcher searches the literature through relevant academic sources. Third, the search results are selected based on the relevance of the title, abstract, research focus, year of publication, and availability of the necessary information. Fourth, sources that meet the criteria are read thoroughly to identify concepts, findings, and arguments related to the teacher's example and the formation of the character of elementary school students.

The selection process is carried out to ensure that the literature used really contributes to the research discussion. Priatna et al. (2024) emphasized that literature research in the field of education requires a systematic procedure starting from problem formulation, source search, literature selection, data analysis, to the preparation of research results. Therefore, this study does not use all sources found, but only sources that have direct relevance to the focus of the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained from various literature were analyzed descriptively-qualitatively and thematically. The analysis was carried out through several stages. First, the researcher identified the main information from each source related to the teacher's role model and character formation. Second, relevant information was reduced by eliminating information that was not directly related to the focus of the research. Third, the data was grouped based on the themes that emerged from the literature.

The theme of the analysis includes examples in discipline, honesty, responsibility, religious character, politeness, social concern, independence, habituation, school culture, and *hidden curriculum*. After the grouping is carried out, the researcher compares the findings between sources to find similarities, differences, tendencies, and patterns related to the role of teacher role models in the formation of students' character. The last stage is carried out through the synthesis and interpretation of all findings so that a more comprehensive understanding of the form of teacher example, character formation mechanisms, and factors that support its application is obtained.

These stages of analysis are in line with the characteristics of literature studies which place the process of identification, selection, coding, analysis, and synthesis as an important part of producing literature-based research findings. The latest methodological studies show that the quality of *library research* is greatly influenced by the clarity of search strategies, source selection processes, literature quality assessments, and systematization of the analysis process (Jamaluddin et al., 2025).

Data Validity

The validity of the information in this study is maintained through cross-examination between sources by comparing research results from various articles and scientific publications. Information that is related to the focus of the research is not directly used as a conclusion, but compared with findings from other sources to see consistency and differences in results. The process is carried out so that the resulting interpretation is not only based on one study or one point of view.

Thus, the literature study in this study does not only describe the results of previous research, but conducts **thematic synthesis** to explain how teacher examples can function as a character education instrument at the elementary school level. This approach allows the

research to produce a conceptual understanding of the relationship between teacher behavior, habituation, school culture, *hidden curriculum*, and student character development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Teacher's Example as an Instrument of Character Education

Based on the results of analysis of various literature, teacher exemplary is one of the important instruments in character education at the elementary school level. Exemplary behavior is not limited to the teacher's ability to convey learning materials, but includes all behaviors that can be observed by students, such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, caring, and the way teachers interact with others. Thus, teachers not only function as conveyors of knowledge, but also as behavioral models for students.

Damayanti, Sueca, and Darmayanti (2024) found that exemplification is one of the main strategies used by teachers in strengthening character education in elementary schools, along with habituation, spontaneous activities, and conditioning of the school environment. These findings show that teacher behavior has a pedagogical function because students gain experience about character values not only through verbal explanations, but also through observation of adult behavior in the school environment.

Example becomes increasingly important at the elementary school level because students are still at a developmental stage that allows the learning process to take place through observation and imitation. Teachers who come on time, speak politely, fulfill promises, respect students' opinions, admit mistakes, and carry out tasks responsibly are basically providing direct character learning. Therefore, character education takes place not only when the teacher delivers moral material, but also through real behavior displayed in daily school life.

The results of the literature synthesis show that the power of exemplary lies in the concretization of values. Abstract values, such as responsibility or honesty, become easier to understand when students see the form of their application directly. Thus, exemplary functions as a bridge between knowledge about moral values and behavioral practices in daily life.

Exemplary in Forming Religious Character

Religious character is one of the important dimensions in character education, especially in educational institutions that have a religious orientation. Based on literature studies, the religious example of teachers can be realized through the habit of praying, maintaining manners of speaking, carrying out worship, showing gratitude, respecting others, and habituating behavior in accordance with religious values.

Religious examples are not effective if they are only conveyed in the form of commands or advice. Teachers need to show these values through their own behavior. For example, when teachers teach the importance of discipline in worship, teachers also need to show consistency in carrying out worship. When teachers teach speaking manners, teachers need to use polite language when interacting with students.

In the perspective of Islamic education, the teacher's position is not only as *a mu'allim* or transmitter of knowledge, but also as *a murabbi* who helps the development of students' personalities. Therefore, example is an important part of the educational process because religious values are not only learned as knowledge, but also practiced in life.

The results of the study show that religious examples will be stronger if they are supported by school habits and culture. This means that teachers' religious behavior needs to be part of the school environment so that students have the opportunity to observe, practice, and repeat these behaviors consistently.

Exemplary in Forming Disciplined Character

Discipline is one of the characters that is most associated with the example of teachers in basic education literature. Discipline is related to the ability of students to obey rules, manage time, complete obligations, and show order in daily life.

Saputra, Wulandari, and Darsinah (2024) through a literature study found that teachers' examples can be used to instill the discipline character of elementary school students. They show that examples of disciplinary behavior carried out by teachers, both inside and outside learning, can be a direct example for students.

Exemplary discipline can be realized through punctual attendance, teaching readiness, consistency with rules, accuracy in completing assignments, and regularity in carrying out learning activities. When teachers ask students to be present on time but the teacher himself is often late, there is a mismatch between verbal messages and real behavior. Conversely, teachers' consistency in showing discipline provides a stronger moral message.

The findings of Fitri, Ganda, and Elan (2024) also show that the formation of disciplined character can be done through direct demonstrations of discipline, responsibility, and environmental concern shown by teachers, then strengthened through habituation. Thus, teacher discipline can function as a form of *hidden curriculum* because students gain character learning through daily experience without always having to be given special material about discipline.

Exemplary in Forming Honesty

Honesty is a fundamental character related to the personal integrity and social life of students. In the context of schools, honesty is not only related to the behavior of students when doing assignments or exams, but also to the way they convey information, admit mistakes, and take responsibility for the actions taken.

Teacher role models can be realized through openness in conveying information, objectivity in giving judgments, acknowledging mistakes, and consistency between words and actions. When teachers admit mistakes in explaining material or making decisions, students get an example that mistakes do not have to be covered up by lies, but need to be acknowledged and corrected.

From the results of the literature synthesis, it can be understood that honesty education requires an environment that provides real experience to students. Advice on the importance of honesty will have a stronger educational power if it is supported by teacher behavior that shows integrity.

Thus, exemplary honesty is not just the individual actions of teachers, but part of the formation of an academic culture that places integrity as a valued value in school life.

Exemplary in Forming Responsibility

Responsibility is related to a person's willingness to carry out obligations and accept the consequences of the actions taken. At the elementary school level, the character of responsibility can be developed through various academic and non-academic activities.

Teachers can provide examples of responsibility through seriousness in carrying out learning, preparing materials, completing administration, providing feedback, and fulfilling commitments to students. When teachers show seriousness in carrying out their duties, students get an example that every responsibility must be carried out consistently.

These examples can then be translated into students' learning experiences through assigning assignments, picketing classes, maintaining cleanliness, completing homework, maintaining school facilities, and completing group assignments. Thus, teachers not only explain the concept of responsibility, but also provide models and spaces for students to practice it.

The results of the synthesis show that exemplification and habituation have a complementary relationship. Exemplary provides a model of behavior, while habituation provides an opportunity to practice the behavior repeatedly.

Exemplary in Forming a Character of Manners

Manners are an important part of the social character of elementary school students. The way teachers speak, give reprimands, listen to opinions, and treat students can be a communication model that is then imitated in their social interactions.

Azizah et al. (2025) in a study on the formation of manners character in elementary school students shows the importance of the role of teachers through exemplary practices, guidance, and habituation. The research also places the development of digitalization and the reduction of the practice of habituating values in the social environment as challenges for the formation of manners character.

Teachers who speak in good language, respect students, do not embarrass students in front of their peers, and are willing to listen to opinions provide concrete examples of how to treat others with respect. Conversely, the use of abusive language or derogatory actions can be negative examples that have the potential to be imitated.

Thus, teacher communication has a pedagogical dimension. Every interaction between teachers and students can be an opportunity to teach politeness, appreciation, empathy, and respect for others.

Exemplary in Shaping Social Concern

Social concern is related to the ability of learners to pay attention to the needs, conditions, and feelings of others. This character can be developed through daily interactions at school.

Teachers can set an example of caring by helping students who are struggling, paying attention to students who need support, respecting differences in abilities, and creating a respectful classroom atmosphere. These behaviors provide concrete experiences of how one should treat others.

Furthermore, the value of caring can be strengthened through mutual cooperation activities, group work, helping friends, sharing, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and school social activities. In this context, teachers play the role of models as well as facilitators who provide opportunities for students to practice social care.

The results of the literature synthesis show that the teacher's example will be more effective if the exemplified values are then followed by activities that allow students to apply them directly. Thus, concern does not stop as moral knowledge, but develops into a social habit.

Exemplary and Development of Student Independence

Teachers' examples also have relevance to the development of independent character. Independence does not mean that students have to solve all problems without the help of teachers, but it is related to the ability to take initiative, complete assignments, make simple decisions, and be responsible for the learning process.

Teachers can be an example of independence through the ability to manage assignments, complete work responsibly, and show initiative in facing problems. However, this example needs to be accompanied by giving space for students to develop.

In learning practice, teachers should not always provide answers when students experience difficulties. Teachers can provide guiding questions, instructions, or alternative solutions so that students have the opportunity to find solutions on their own. This strategy allows teachers' examples to develop into a process of student empowerment.

Thus, the example in independence has two dimensions, namely the teacher shows independent behavior and the teacher provides space for students to learn independently.

Teacher Consistency as the Main Factor of Exemplary

One of the important findings of the literature synthesis is that the effectiveness of exemplary behavior is highly dependent on the consistency of teacher behavior. Examples that only appear occasionally have more limited character-building power than positive behavior that is displayed continuously.

Teachers can teach discipline, but the message becomes less powerful if the teacher himself does not show discipline. Teachers can teach honesty, but the message will lose power if the teacher's behavior does not reflect integrity. Therefore, there is a close relationship between what the teacher teaches and what the teacher does.

The research of Saputra et al. (2024) strengthens this argument by showing that examples of teacher discipline behavior are an important part of instilling the discipline character of elementary school students. Research on teacher discipline and exemplary behavior in elementary school also shows that the irregularity of teacher behavior can be a challenge in the formation of student character, so school efforts are needed to strengthen the consistency of teacher examples.

Thus, consistency is an important requirement for example. Repetitive behaviors provide opportunities for students to observe, imitate, practice, and finally form habits.

Teacher's Example as a *Hidden Curriculum*

The results of the study also show that teachers' exemplars can be understood as part of the *hidden curriculum*. *Hidden curriculum* refers to the values, norms, attitudes, habits, and interaction patterns that students learn through school experiences even though they are not always explicitly stated in formal curriculum documents.

In the context of example, when teachers respect others, students learn about respect. When teachers demonstrate discipline, students gain experience about the importance of order. When teachers admit mistakes, students gain examples of honesty. When teachers help others, students gain experience about caring.

Malahati and Rokhimawan (2024) show that the implementation of *hidden curriculum* in primary education can contribute to the development of students' character through practices and experiences that take place in school life. These findings reinforce the view that character education does not only take place through a formal curriculum, but also through the culture and interaction experienced by students.

Thus, teachers are one of the main actors in the *hidden curriculum*. The teacher's daily behavior indirectly conveys a message about what values are considered important, how one should treat others, and how a responsibility should be carried out.

Discussion

Based on the overall results of the literature synthesis, teacher exemplification has a close relationship with the process of character formation of elementary school students. Exemplary works through a series of processes that can be understood as follows:

Teacher behavior → observed by students → understood and imitated → practiced repeatedly → become habits → internalized into character.

However, the process does not take place automatically. Students can observe the teacher's behavior without always imitating it. Therefore, example needs to be supported by several conditions.

First, the teacher's consistency. Positive behavior needs to be shown repeatedly so that students gain a stable experience of the values being learned.

Second, habituation. The values exemplified by teachers need to be given space to be practiced by students. Damayanti et al. (2024) show that example becomes more meaningful when placed together with habituation, spontaneous activities, and conditioning of the school environment.

Third, school culture. Teachers' examples will be more effective if rules, habits, and interactions in the school environment have the same value direction. Inconsistencies between teacher behavior, school rules, and daily practices can reduce the consistency of character education messages.

Fourth, family support. Character built at school requires reinforcement in the family environment. Continuity between the grades obtained at school and the child's experience at home can help maintain positive habits.

These findings show that teacher role models should not be understood as stand-alone individual actions. Role models are part of a character education ecosystem that involves teachers, schools, students, and families.

From the perspective of character education, role models also have the advantage of being able to connect moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions. Students not only know that discipline, honesty, responsibility, and care are good behaviors, but also see how these values are manifested in real life.

Thus, the results of the study show that teacher role models are not just additional methods in character education. Role models are part of the educational process that takes place every day through teacher-student interaction, school culture, habituation, and *hidden curriculum*.

The results of the study have special implications for education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah because the educational process in it is not only directed at the development of academic abilities, but also the formation of morals and character based on Islamic values.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers need to realize that each subject can be a space for character formation. Learning the Qur'an can be a means of strengthening honesty, discipline, and religiosity; Moral Faith can strengthen commendable behavior; Fiqh can develop discipline and responsibility; while general subjects can also be integrated with the values of cooperation, independence, care, and responsibility.

However, the values conveyed in learning will be stronger when the teacher becomes a real example of these values. When teachers teach honesty, teachers need to show honesty. When teaching manners, teachers need to show politeness. When teaching cleanliness, teachers need to maintain cleanliness. When teaching responsibility, teachers need to show seriousness in carrying out their duties.

Thus, example is a bridge between moral knowledge and moral action. Students not only know that a behavior is a good action, but also obtain a concrete model of how these values are applied in daily life.

In the end, strengthening the example of teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah needs to be carried out consistently and supported by habituation, school culture, family involvement, and a conducive educational environment. This approach allows character education not to stop at the delivery of values, but to develop into habits and characters that are reflected in student behavior.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature analysis, teacher exemplary behavior is an important instrument in strengthening the character of elementary school students. Teacher exemplary behavior is not limited to verbal instruction but is reflected in the attitudes, actions, communication, and daily habits demonstrated by teachers. The literature indicates

that students tend to observe and imitate behaviors that are consistently demonstrated by teachers in the school environment.

The forms of teacher exemplary behavior identified in the literature include religiosity, discipline, honesty, responsibility, politeness, social care, independence, empathy, and respect for others. These values become more meaningful when teachers consistently demonstrate them in classroom activities and everyday interactions. Teacher exemplary behavior is therefore closely connected with habituation, because values that are repeatedly observed and practiced can gradually become part of students' behavioral patterns.

The synthesis also indicates that the effectiveness of teacher exemplary behavior is strongly influenced by consistency between what teachers teach and what they practice. Teachers who demonstrate discipline, responsibility, respectful communication, and integrity provide concrete examples that are easier for students to understand and emulate. This finding is consistent with research showing that teacher role modeling is associated with positive character development among elementary school students.

Furthermore, teacher exemplary behavior operates not only through formal learning but also through the hidden curriculum and school culture. Daily interactions, classroom routines, teacher-student relationships, and school habituation provide opportunities for students to internalize character values naturally. Therefore, character education requires an ecosystem involving teachers, school leadership, habituation programs, school culture, and family support.

Thus, teacher exemplary behavior can be positioned as a fundamental strategy for strengthening character education in elementary schools. The main implication of this study is the need for teachers to continuously develop personal and professional integrity so that the values taught to students are reflected in their actual behavior. Future research can strengthen this literature-based perspective through empirical studies that examine the implementation and effectiveness of specific teacher exemplary programs in different elementary school contexts.

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