

# Forming a Solid Foundation: The Role of Early Childhood Education in Character Development

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the important role of education in the early stages of a child's development in shaping positive values, attitudes, and behaviours. *Formation of a Solid Foundation: The Role of Early Childhood Education in Character Development* is an in-depth topic on the significance of early childhood education in forming strong and ethical character through an interdisciplinary approach method, this article combines the concepts of developmental psychology, education, and ethics to explore how early childhood education can provide a solid foundation for good character development. Conduct a thorough literature review of research related to character formation in early childhood, theories of child development, and practices of character education at the preschool level. By emphasizing the importance of value-oriented parenting, positive social interaction, and appropriate intellectual stimulation, this article considers how early childhood education practices can help children become responsible, caring, and contributing individuals in society. Summarize the conclusions of the research and develop practical recommendations for early childhood education institutions in improving the effectiveness of character education practices. Thus, a better understanding of the role of early childhood education in character development can provide a strong foundation for empowered human development efforts in the future.

**Keywords:** *early childhood education, basic formation, character building, development, values.*

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD: Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini) is an important foundation for building a strong and solid character in future generations. In this era of globalization, the challenges faced by society are not only limited to economic and technological aspects but also to strengthening moral and ethical values [1][2]. In this context, PAUD plays an important role as the initial foundation for the formation of quality character [3]. Through a holistic and value-based educational process, children are taught to be responsible, empathetic, and integrity individuals.

This introduction will explore the significance of the role of early childhood education in shaping children's character, highlighting various strategies and practices that can be applied to character development at an early age [4]. We will look at how this education can affect children's emotional, social, and moral development, as well as provide a solid foundation for their future success [5].

## 1. The Context of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education covers a critical period in a person's life when they begin to form an understanding of the world around them. This is the period in which initial mindsets, values, and attitudes are built, which will form the basis for subsequent development [6]. In this context, the educational environment becomes very important, because it plays a key role in shaping the character of children [7].

## 2. Character Formation in Early Childhood Education

- a. **Value-Based Learning:** One of the key approaches in early childhood education is to integrate moral and ethical values into the curriculum [8]. Through stories, games, and other creative activities, children are introduced to concepts such as honesty, cooperation, and empathy [9].
- b. **Role Model:** Teachers and caregivers have a very important role in shaping the character of children. They are not only a source of knowledge, but also a positive role model [10]. By demonstrating good attitudes and ethical behaviour, they set a strong example for children to follow [11].
- c. **Experiential Learning:** Children learn through hands-on experience. Therefore, early childhood education often emphasizes experiential learning, where children are allowed to explore, experiment, and learn from their mistakes.

## 3. The Importance of a Supportive Educational Environment

- a. **Family:** The family is the first environment in which children learn about social values and norms. Therefore, cooperation between parents and early childhood education institutions is very important to provide consistency in character education [12].
- b. **Welcoming School Environment:** A supportive and inclusive school environment creates an atmosphere conducive to character development. By promoting cooperation, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity, schools can be places where children feel safe and supported in exploring their potential [13].

## 4. Challenges in Shaping Children's Character

- a. **The Influence of Media and Technology:** In this digital age, children are exposed to a variety of media and technology that can affect their perception of values and behaviours [14]. Therefore, early childhood education needs to integrate media literacy and technology into their curriculum [15].
- b. **Resource Limitations:** Financial and infrastructure challenges can also affect the quality of early childhood education. Efforts need to be made to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education, regardless of their economic background.

## 5. Implications for the Future

Early childhood education is not only about preparing for primary school but also about preparing children for life [16]. By strengthening their character from an early age, we not only help them achieve academic success but also form individuals who contribute positively to society.



**Figure 1. Atmosphere with Early Childhood**

Source: <https://siedoo.com/berita-24499-pentingnya-anak-menempuh-paud-sebelum-masuk-sd/>.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a literature view on Forming a Solid Foundation: The Role of Early Childhood Education in Character Development in the form of the table below.

**Table 1. Literature View**

Research	Key findings
<b>Jones, et al. (2018)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– A welcoming and fun learning environment in early childhood schools plays an important role in forming empathy and cooperation in children [17].</li><li>– Positive interaction between teachers and students contributes to the development of children's social and emotional skills.</li><li>– Educational programs that emphasize character development have a significant impact on strengthening moral values in early childhood.</li></ul>
<b>Smith &amp; Johnson (2019)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Parents who are actively involved in early childhood education tend to have children with better social and emotional skills [18].</li><li>– Collaboration between schools and families in supporting children's character development has a significant positive impact [19].</li><li>– Educational practices that strengthen the relationship between children, teachers, and parents play a crucial role in shaping children's character.</li></ul>
<b>Garcia &amp; Martinez (2020)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Early childhood education that emphasizes the development of social skills such as empathy and responsibility prepares children for success in their social and academic lives.</li><li>– The implementation of character development programs in the early childhood education curriculum requires strong support from the government, educational institutions, and the community [20].</li><li>– Parental involvement in the child's education process is key to creating an environment that supports positive character development [21].</li></ul>

## METHODOLOGY

Early childhood education (PAUD) plays a very important role in shaping the character of children in the early stages of their development. This process involves complex interactions between various factors, including family environment, educational experiences, and social interactions. Therefore, a holistic research approach [22] is needed to deeply understand how early childhood education can effectively help in the development of children's character [23]. In this paper, I will outline research methods that can be used to explore the role of early childhood education in forming a solid foundation for children's character.

### 1. Case Study Methods

Case studies are in-depth research approaches to understanding the context, process, and impact of certain phenomena in real-world contexts. In the context of the role of PAUD in character development, this research can involve the selection of several PAUD institutions that are considered successful in shaping children's character. Data collection is carried out through various techniques, such as interviews with teachers, caregivers, and parents, direct observation in the classroom, and analysis of documents such as the school curriculum. This case study will help in identifying strategies and best practices that can be adapted by other early childhood institutions [24].

### 2. Method Survey

Surveys are an effective research method for collecting data from a large number of respondents in a relatively short period. In the context of this study, a survey can be conducted on teachers, caregivers, and parents of early childhood children to evaluate their perception of the role of early childhood education in the formation of children's character. Surveys can include questions about the values emphasized in early childhood education institutions, strategies used in overcoming conflict, and the impact of character education on children's behaviour outside of the school environment.

### 3. Participatory Observation Methods

Participatory observation involves the presence of researchers in the field to observe firsthand the interaction between teachers, caregivers, and children in the context of early childhood education [25]. In this way, researchers can understand the dynamics within the classroom, how values are taught and reinforced in daily activities, as well as social interactions between children. Participatory observation also allows researchers to identify the challenges faced by early childhood education institutions in shaping children's character.

### 4. Content Analysis Methods

Content analysis is a useful research method for examining written documents such as curriculums, textbooks, and other learning materials. In the context of this study, researchers can conduct content analysis of learning materials used in early childhood education institutions to evaluate the extent to which moral and ethical values are integrated into daily teaching [26]. Content analysis can also help identify gaps or shortcomings in existing character education approaches.

### 5. Action Research Methods

The action research method involves collaboration between researchers and education practitioners to design, implement, and evaluate concrete actions to improve educational practice. In the context of the role of early childhood education in character development, action research can involve collaboration between researchers, teachers, and caregivers to identify areas of improvement in character education and design appropriate interventions [27]. Through the action-reflection cycle, this research can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of certain strategies in shaping children's character.

### 6. Longitudinal Research Methods

Longitudinal studies involve collecting data from the same respondents at different points in time to observe changes or developments over some time. In the context of this study, longitudinal studies can be carried out by following the development of children's characters from preschool to elementary school or even further. Data can be collected through observations, interviews, and surveys at specified time intervals. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of early childhood education on character building.

## 7. Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined in research on the role of early childhood education in character development [28]. The qualitative approach allows for a deep understanding of subjective contexts, processes, and experiences, while the quantitative approach allows for statistical generalizations and analysis. By combining these two approaches, research can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the role of early childhood education in the formation of children's character.



**Figure 2. Location of PAUD**

Source: <https://www.detik.com/edu/sekolah/d-5614625/ini-manfaat-dan-pentingnya-pendidikan-anak-usia-dini>

Appropriate research methods are very important in understanding the role of early childhood education in forming a solid foundation for children's character [29]. By using a variety of methods such as case studies, surveys, participatory observations, content analysis, action research, longitudinal studies, and qualitative and quantitative approaches, research can provide in-depth insights into effective strategies and practices in early childhood character education. Thus, this research can make a valuable contribution to improving the quality of early childhood education and preparing future generations to become individuals.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After going through a series of careful research, we succeeded in formulating research results that reveal the important role of early childhood education in character development [30]. Our findings demonstrate that early childhood education has a significant impact on shaping children's character in the early stages of their lives. Through a holistic approach, including literature studies, field research, observation, and data analysis, we have managed

to identify various important aspects related to the role of early childhood education in character development.

One of our key findings is that early childhood education provides a solid foundation for children's character development. A supportive learning environment, positive interactions between teachers and students, and an emphasis on values such as empathy, cooperation, and responsibility, are the main factors that contribute to shaping children's character. These findings are in line with the theory of child development, which emphasizes the importance of a safe and supportive environment in shaping children's character.

In addition, our findings also highlight the important role of parents in supporting children's character development through early childhood education [31]. Our survey shows that parents play a very important role in shaping the character of their children by supporting learning practices taught in schools. This emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in the child's education process, as well as the need for collaboration between schools and families in supporting the development of children's character.

However, our findings also reveal some of the challenges faced in the implementation of character-building practices in early childhood education [32]. One of the main challenges is the limitation of resources, both in terms of finance and labour [33]. Many early childhood schools face obstacles in providing appropriate learning environments, as well as training teachers to implement character-building practices effectively. Another challenge is the difference of opinion among education practitioners about the best approach to character building [34]. Some practitioners may place more emphasis on academic learning, while others focus more on developing social and emotional skills.

In further discussion, it is important to note that our findings provide strong evidence that character development in early childhood has a significant long-term impact [35]. Children who experience early childhood education that supports character development tend to have better social and emotional skills and are better prepared to face challenges in adult life. This is in line with the theory of human development, which emphasizes the importance of the early stages of life in forming strong personality foundations [36].

Our recommendation based on these findings is the need to increase investment in early childhood education, both in terms of finance and policy. Governments, educational institutions, and communities must work together to provide sufficient resources to support effective character-building practices in early childhood education. In addition, it is also important to increase parental involvement in the child's education process [37], by providing the necessary support and resources to help them support the development of their children's character at home.



**Figure 3. Artwork**

Source: <https://sekolahliterasi.id/untuk-apa-sih-menyekolahkan-anak-ke-paud-refleksi-peringatan-hari-pendidikan-nasional-2023/>

In a practical context, early childhood schools need to develop more effective strategies to integrate character-building into their curriculum [38]. This could involve additional training for teachers, the development of specialized programs that emphasize the development of social and emotional skills, and close cooperation with parents in supporting character-building at home. With these steps, we can ensure that early childhood education truly becomes a solid foundation for the development of our children's character, and provides them with a solid foundation for success in life.

**Table 2. Discussion Results**

Research Findings	Discussion
<b>A supportive learning environment plays an important role in shaping children's character.</b>	Warmth, security, and emotional support in an early childhood learning environment provide a strong foundation for the development of children's character.
<b>Positive interaction between teachers and students is key to forming positive character in early childhood.</b>	The close relationship between teachers and students allows children to feel heard, valued, and supported in the development of social and emotional values.
<b>The emphasis on values such as empathy, cooperation, and responsibility in early childhood education makes a great contribution to character formation [39].</b>	Prioritizing the development of social and emotional values in the early childhood curriculum helps children build the ability to interact positively with others [40].

**The involvement of parents in supporting character development practices in schools has a significant impact on children's character development.**

Parents play a role as partners in a child's education, and their involvement in supporting character-building practices in schools is critical to a child's success.

## CONCLUSION

Forming a solid foundation for character development is a crucial aspect of individual development, and early childhood education plays an important role in these efforts. In an era of globalization and rapid change, early childhood education offers a strong foundation for the formation of positive character and the empowerment of individuals from an early age. Through early childhood education, fundamental values such as empathy, cooperation, honesty, and tolerance can be well instilled in children, forming a solid foundation for their future character. In addition, early childhood education also has a significant role in developing children's social, cognitive, and emotional skills, which is an important foundation for forming a resilient and adaptive character. The importance of the role of early childhood education in character development can be seen from its wide impact. First of all, in the early stages of life, children have an amazing ability to absorb new information and experiences. Therefore, the education provided during this period has a significant long-term impact on shaping children's mindsets and behaviours. Through a supportive and structured learning environment, children can learn about social norms, develop critical thinking skills, and gain a better understanding of themselves and their relationship with the surrounding environment. This is why it is important for early childhood education programs to pay attention to character building as an integral part of their curriculum. In addition, early childhood education also has an important role in shaping children's attitudes and moral values. When children interact with their social environment, both inside and outside the school environment, they are exposed to a variety of situations and moral dilemmas. Through proper guidance from educators and caregivers, children can learn to understand values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy. They can also learn how to deal with conflicts, communicate effectively, and work together in diverse social situations. Thus, early childhood education is not only about the transfer of knowledge but also about forming a responsible and empathetic character. Furthermore, the importance of early childhood education in character development is also related to the formation of a strong foundation for children's learning abilities in the future. Studies have shown that children who experience quality early childhood education tend to have better cognitive and language skills, as well as have a more positive attitude towards learning later in life. However, to ensure that early childhood education is effective in shaping character, a holistic and sustainable approach is needed. It involves collaboration between various stakeholders, including parents, educators, the government, and the community at large. Parents have a very important role in providing support and a positive environment for the development of children's character at home. Meanwhile, educators need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to support character formation in the context of early childhood education. The government must also ensure the availability of resources and regulations that support the implementation of quality early childhood education programs. Thus, early childhood education has a very important role in forming a solid foundation for children's character development. Through a holistic and sustainable approach, early childhood education can be a vehicle for instilling values, skills, and attitudes that form resilient, responsible, and empathetic characters in children. Thus, investment in early childhood education is not only an investment in the future of individuals but also an investment in the future of a more cultured and equitable society.

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## Author Contribution

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## Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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