



Character and Emotional Intelligence in Education

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Abstract

Character building and emotional intelligence play a very important role in the educational process, contributing greatly to the overall development of students. Character education emphasizes the instillation of values such as responsibility, respect, honesty, and empathy, which are essential for personal growth and social interaction. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, involves the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the ability to navigate social interactions effectively. This article explores the integration of character development and emotional intelligence in the curriculum and teaching methods, as well as their impact on students' academic success and interpersonal relationships. It also discusses the role of educators in creating an environment that supports students' emotional and ethical development, preparing them to face the challenges of the modern world with resilience and social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a very strategic role in shaping the foundations of a child's development, both in cognitive, physical, social, and emotional aspects (Novitasari, 2019; Ulfa, 2020). One important aspect that must be considered in early childhood education is character building and emotional intelligence. Character education in early childhood is not merely about teaching moral values or ethics but also encompasses the development of positive attitudes and behaviors that will shape a child's character in their future social life. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in developing a child's ability to recognize, manage, and express their emotions in a healthy and adaptive manner. In the context of early childhood education, both character development and emotional intelligence are essential foundations in supporting balanced child development (Brown et al., 2019; Gubbels et al., 2018).

Character education and emotional intelligence are not new concepts in the world of education. Over the past few decades, numerous studies have highlighted the importance of these two aspects in the holistic development of a child's personality. Raihana (2018); Weyns et al (2021); Zulkarnain (2017) intellectual intelligence in his seminal work on emotional intelligence explains that emotional intelligence is no less important than intellectual intelligence in determining a person's success, including that of children. Meanwhile, character

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education has been proven to play a role in improving children's social behavior, strengthening empathy, and building healthy social relationships (Faiz & Putri, 2024; Hidayati, 2020). Various teaching approaches and strategies that integrate character education and emotional intelligence have been implemented in many countries, including Indonesia with the aim of creating a generation that is not only intelligent but also possesses good social skills and is prepared to face life's challenges (Hafidz & Rachmy, 2021; Yulianti, 2022).

However, despite numerous studies supporting the importance of character education and emotional intelligence in early childhood, the challenge of integrating these concepts into the early childhood education curriculum in Indonesia remains significant. Curricula that are overly focused on academic achievement often neglect aspects of character and emotional development in children (Khilmiyah & Wiyono, 2021; Maulidah et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to explore further how character education and emotional intelligence can be applied in the context of early childhood education in Indonesia, as well as to assess their impact on the social and emotional development of young children (Lee & Kim, 2021). The objective of this study is to analyze how the implementation of character education and emotional intelligence development in early childhood education classrooms can support the formation of better personalities in children. This study also aims to provide recommendations for education practitioners in creating a more holistic approach to early childhood education that focuses not only on academic aspects but also on the development of children's character and emotional intelligence.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore the application of character education and emotional intelligence development in children in early childhood education institutions (Albshkar et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2022; Liang, 2019; Wekke et al., 2025). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the phenomenon in depth through the perspectives of students, educators, and parents. This approach also allows researchers to explore experiences, attitudes, and subjective views that cannot be accessed through quantitative approaches. The subjects in this study consist of three main groups, namely: i) early childhood children (aged 4–6 years) enrolled in early childhood education institutions where the research was conducted, to understand their character development and emotional intelligence in the educational environment; ii) early childhood educators who play a role in implementing character education and emotional intelligence development in the learning process; and iii) parents of students who also play a role in supporting character education and emotional intelligence in children within the family environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Character Education and Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood Education

Based on observations and interviews with teachers, it was found that character education and emotional development questions are integrated in various aspects of teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Character building is done through activities that emphasize moral values such as cooperation, empathy, discipline, and responsibility (Farantika et al., 2022; Khasanah, 2021). For example, in group activities, children are taught to share, resolve conflicts and work together in achieving a common goal. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence is enhanced through activities that involve recognizing, managing and expressing emotions. Teachers use stories, games and simulations to help children recognize their feelings and understand the feelings of others.

From observations, it was found that activities such as role-playing and stories were very effective in helping children understand their feelings as well as introducing the concept of empathy. Some children began to show more positive behavioral changes, such as being more patient waiting for their turn, being more caring towards friends, and more easily controlling their emotions in conflict situations.

Challenges in Implementing Character and Emotional Intelligence Education

Although the implementation of character and emotional intelligence education has shown positive results, there are some challenges faced by teachers and parents in integrating these two aspects. One of the main challenges found is time constraints in a crowded curriculum. Many teachers expressed difficulty in setting aside enough time to teach character values and emotional questioning, mainly due to the pressure to meet academic targets (Bates, 2019; Dewi & Rahayu, 2018).

On the other hand, parental involvement is also a very important factor in developing children's character and emotional intelligence. The results of interviews with parents show that most parents do not have sufficient knowledge on how to support the development of character and emotional question at home (Dung & Nguyen, 2021; Edwards & Reitz, 2022; Zeidner & Matthews, 2017). Some parents also found it difficult to apply these concepts consistently at home due to a lack of understanding and skills in managing children's feelings.

The Effect of Character Education and Emotional Questioning on Child Development

Based on observation data and child development reports, there is a significant improvement in the social and emotional skills of children who follow a learning program that integrates character and emotional questions. Children show improvement in their ability to manage their feelings, interact more easily with peers, and show empathy towards others (Erwin et al., 2022; Hotimah & Yanto, 2019; Nuryanto, 2016). In some cases, children who previously tended to be aggressive or had difficulty interacting with their peers began to show more positive behaviors, such as being more open in sharing and more patient in waiting their turn.

The findings of this study show that character education and emotional intelligence have a very important role in early childhood social and emotional development. The integration of these two aspects in the early childhood education curriculum can create a more holistic learning environment, where children are not only equipped with academic skills, but also with social and emotional skills that will be useful throughout their lives (Abawi, 2021; Joo & Schachter, 2025; Shavit et al., 2018).

However, implementation challenges, particularly time constraints and lack of parental understanding, point to the need for more intensive training for educators and parents so that they can play an active role in supporting children's character development and emotional questioning. It is also important to design a more flexible early childhood education curriculum that allows more space for character development and emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of character education and emotional question development in early childhood education has a significant impact on children's social and emotional development. From the research findings, it can be concluded that the integration of these two aspects in the early childhood education curriculum can enrich children's learning experiences, improve social skills and help children manage their feelings better. Learning processes that involve activities such as role-playing, stories and group interaction are effective in teaching character values and emotional intelligence. However, the main challenges faced in

implementing character education and emotional questioning are the limited time in the curriculum as well as parents' lack of understanding in supporting character education at home. This suggests that, despite the positive results, special attention needs to be paid to more intensive training and mentoring for teachers and parents so that the implementation of character education and emotional questioning can run more optimally.

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