



The Transformation of the Teacher's Role in Creating a Social Environment that Supports Character Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of teachers' roles in creating a social environment for character education in elementary schools, highlighting the shift from an instructional model to an ecosystemic approach. The introduction emphasizes the importance of teachers not only as transmitters of values but also as role models and architects of classroom culture who foster students' moral growth. The main objective of this research is to analyze the multiple roles of teachers in shaping character, as well as to identify challenges and opportunities in sustaining effective character education. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method, drawing on literature reviews and recent empirical findings from case studies in Indonesian elementary schools. Data sources include previous research conducted, which provide insights into teacher practices, classroom management, and systemic constraints. The findings reveal that teachers play five complementary roles in character formation: educator, demonstrator, classroom manager, motivator, and evaluator. These roles contribute significantly to building an inclusive and value-based classroom atmosphere that enhances students' politeness, responsibility, and social care. However, challenges remain in terms of administrative pressures, lack of character-based training, and limited institutional support. In conclusion, the study underscores that teacher transformation in character education requires pedagogical, social, and reflective capacities, as well as strong collaboration among schools, families, and communities to ensure systemic and sustainable outcomes.

Keywords: Character Education; Teacher Role; Elementary School

1. Introduction

Character education in elementary schools serves as a crucial foundation for shaping students' personality, morality, and social values from an early age. In this context, teachers are not merely content deliverers but also social transformation agents who create a learning environment conducive to character development. The paradigm shift in education, which emphasizes values such as integrity, empathy, responsibility, and cooperation, requires teachers to adapt and expand their roles in establishing a learning ecosystem that supports children's character growth. According to (Dabbagh, 2024), teachers act as role models and facilitators who integrate character values into daily learning

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activities, even though challenges such as limited resources and external environmental influences remain obstacles. Meanwhile, (Hakim & Baihaqi, 2024) highlights the importance of internalizing social care values through thematic learning, where teachers function as motivators, guides, and evaluators in instilling students' social character.

The transformation of teachers' roles is also influenced by technological developments and the digitalization of learning. (Karataş & Ardiç, 2020) indicate that utilizing digital media, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) and digital-based projects, can reinforce character values like honesty and responsibility, while expanding the social learning space through digital communities. This demonstrates that the social learning environment is no longer confined to the physical classroom but extends into the virtual realm, which also requires teachers' active role in shaping students' character (Danang et al., 2020). Therefore, the transformation of teachers' roles in creating a social environment that supports character education in elementary schools is a strategic issue that requires in-depth examination (Sulistiawati & Fauziah, 2023) (Arbaiyah et al., 2023) (Júnior & Cruz, 2024). A holistic and contextual approach is essential to ensure that character education goes beyond mere discourse and is genuinely internalized in students' lives.

Character education has become a central focus in elementary education policies and practices; however, previous studies still reveal significant gaps in understanding and implementing the teacher's role in a transformative manner. Most research tends to emphasize formal instructional approaches, such as integrating character values into subjects or extracurricular activities, without thoroughly exploring how teachers actively shape a social learning environment that supports the internalization of these values (Asroni, 2022) (Lathere & Samuseviča, 2021) (Sudrajat, 2021). Moreover, the transformation of teachers' roles in the context of social change, educational digitalization, and the demands of the independent curriculum has not been comprehensively examined, even though teachers are required to be more flexible, innovative, and reflective in creating meaningful learning spaces (Kudiyarova, 2025). Another notable gap is the limited exploration of integrating local culture as a source of contextual character values, despite the considerable potential for teachers in local areas to use indigenous wisdom as a foundation for relevant and sustainable character education (Yang, 2025). Furthermore, few studies have produced systematic and practical models of social learning environments at the elementary school level, leaving teachers without concrete guidance in building a learning ecosystem that holistically supports students' character development (Rijal et al., 2022). Therefore, research is needed that not only describes teachers' roles but also examines their transformation contextually and develops a framework that can be implemented in character education practices in elementary schools.

The context of character education in an ever-changing digital and social era, recent studies indicate the emergence of new values that enrich the teacher's transformative role. One important value that is gaining prominence is digital character literacy, which refers to teachers' ability to use digital media ethically and educationally to shape students' character. (Masrifdah & Hakimy, 2025) (Yusnan, 2025) (Ava & Devi, 2022) emphasize that the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), educational social media, and digital-based projects can effectively instill values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and digital literacy. Another emerging value is cross-community collaboration,

where teachers no longer work in isolation but build learning ecosystems together with parents, local communities, and even digital communities to reinforce holistic character education. Furthermore, there is a shift toward pedagogical flexibility, which refers to teachers' ability to adapt character education strategies to students' social and cultural contexts. Research by (Hathazi & Argyropoulos, 2023) shows that teachers who integrate religious practices and social activities, such as providing aid to orphans, successfully foster students' religious, caring, and independent character. Contextual role modeling also gains attention, where teachers serve not only as behavioral exemplars but also demonstrate wise and reflective responses to social and technological challenges. Thus, these new values signify a paradigm shift from mere character instruction toward the creation of a dynamic, adaptive, and value-based social learning environment.

2. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to depict the transformation of teachers' roles in creating a social environment that supports character education in elementary schools. The research subjects include classroom teachers, school principals, and students from three public elementary schools, purposively selected based on their active and contextual character education practices. The primary research instrument was the researcher, assisted by interview guides, observation sheets, and document analysis formats. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checking with key informants. The data were analyzed thematically by identifying patterns of teacher role transformation and the forms of social environments established in the character education process.

Data were collected through multiple techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' transformative roles in fostering a social learning environment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with classroom teachers, school principals, and selected students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding character education practices. Observation sheets were used to systematically record interactions, classroom dynamics, and the manifestation of character values in daily learning activities. In addition, relevant documents such as lesson plans, school programs, and student activity reports were analyzed to complement and triangulate the interview and observational data. The data collection process emphasized ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained. Member checking was conducted with key informants to verify the accuracy and credibility of the information gathered. Triangulation across sources and methods was applied to reduce bias and strengthen the validity of the findings. The iterative data collection process allowed the researcher to refine questions and observation focus based on emerging patterns and insights.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify patterns and categories related to the transformation of teachers' roles and the social learning environments they create. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded systematically, highlighting recurring themes such as digital literacy, pedagogical flexibility, contextual role modeling, and collaborative practices. Observation notes and document analysis were cross-referenced to validate and enrich the emerging themes. The thematic analysis involved several stages: data

reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation. Patterns of teacher behavior, interactions with students, and classroom social dynamics were compared across schools to identify similarities, differences, and context-specific practices.

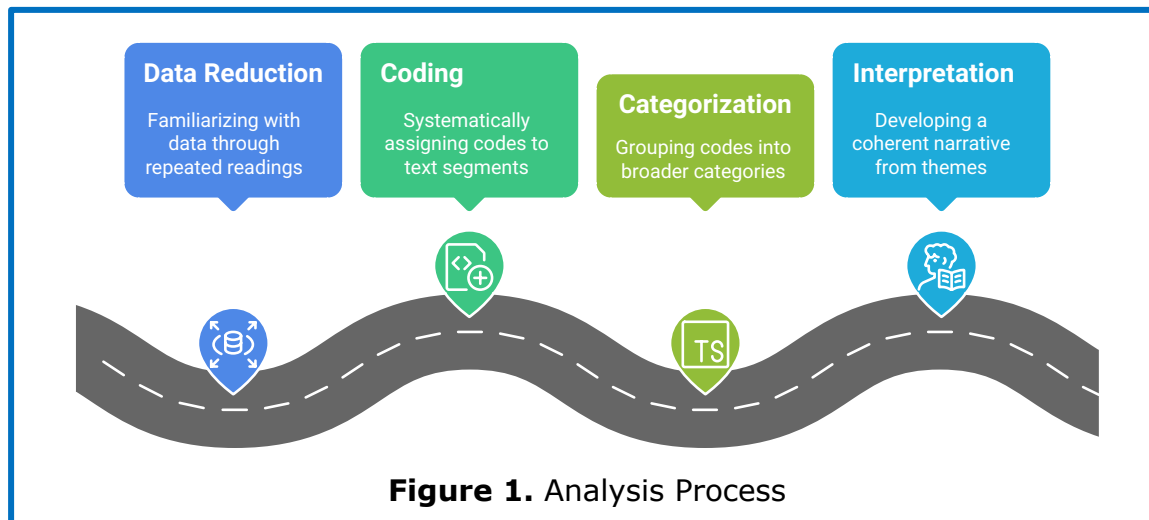


Figure 1. Analysis Process

The analysis focused not only on descriptive accounts but also on understanding the underlying processes and mechanisms through which teachers influence the development of character in students. This approach enabled a comprehensive depiction of how a dynamic and value-based social learning environment is cultivated in elementary schools.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings indicate that the transformation of teachers' roles in creating a social learning environment for character education in elementary schools occurs not only at the methodological level but also across relational and cultural dimensions. Teachers no longer function merely as content deliverers but serve as moral agents and managers of social ecosystems, shaping students' character values through everyday practices. This aligns with the findings of (Chairunisa & Humaizi, 2024), who emphasize that teachers act as role models, discipline mentors, and liaisons between school and family in fostering children's character. This transformation is reflected in teachers' strategies for building positive social interactions, such as using polite language, providing reinforcement for good behavior, and creating inclusive classroom cultures that respect diversity. Teachers also increasingly integrate value-based activities, including charitable acts for orphans, religious practices, and value discussions within thematic learning, as highlighted by (Veronika & Dafit, 2022). Such approaches strengthen students' religious values, empathy, and social responsibility in a contextualized manner.

3.1 Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation of teachers' roles in elementary schools encompasses methodological, relational, and cultural dimensions. Teachers no longer act solely as content deliverers but serve as moral agents and social ecosystem managers, shaping students' character values through everyday practices. They integrate value-based activities, such as thematic lessons, charitable acts, religious practices, and value discussions, which strengthen empathy, social responsibility, and religious values in a

contextualized manner. In addition, teachers actively foster positive social interactions and inclusive classroom cultures by using polite language, reinforcing desirable behavior, and respecting diversity, enabling students to practice character values in real-life social contexts. Overall, these strategies demonstrate how teachers cultivate a dynamic, adaptive, and value-based social learning environment that holistically supports character development.

Transformation of Teacher Roles Across Methodological, Relational, and Cultural Dimensions

Teachers in elementary schools no longer serve merely as content deliverers; they act as moral agents and social ecosystem managers who shape students' character values through everyday interactions. This transformation reflects a shift from traditional instructional roles to a more holistic approach, where teachers actively participate in nurturing students' social and moral development alongside academic learning. Their expanded responsibilities require an understanding of both pedagogical strategies and the broader social context in which students grow. At the methodological level, teachers innovate by integrating character values into lesson plans, thematic activities, and classroom routines. These strategies move beyond conventional instruction, incorporating value-based projects, discussions on ethical dilemmas, and activities that promote cooperation, responsibility, and integrity. By doing so, teachers ensure that character education is embedded in practical learning experiences rather than taught as abstract concepts.

From a relational perspective, teachers foster positive interactions with students, peers, and parents. They serve as role models, providing guidance, reinforcement, and support in everyday social exchanges. Teachers also act as liaisons between school and family, ensuring that character education is consistent across home and school environments. This relational engagement helps students internalize values more effectively through observation, practice, and feedback within trusted relationships. The cultural dimension highlights teachers' role in shaping inclusive and contextually relevant learning environments. By respecting diversity, integrating local wisdom, and responding reflectively to social and technological changes, teachers create a classroom culture that values empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility. This cultural awareness allows character education to be meaningful and relevant to students' lived experiences, fostering a learning ecosystem where ethical, social, and academic development are interconnected.

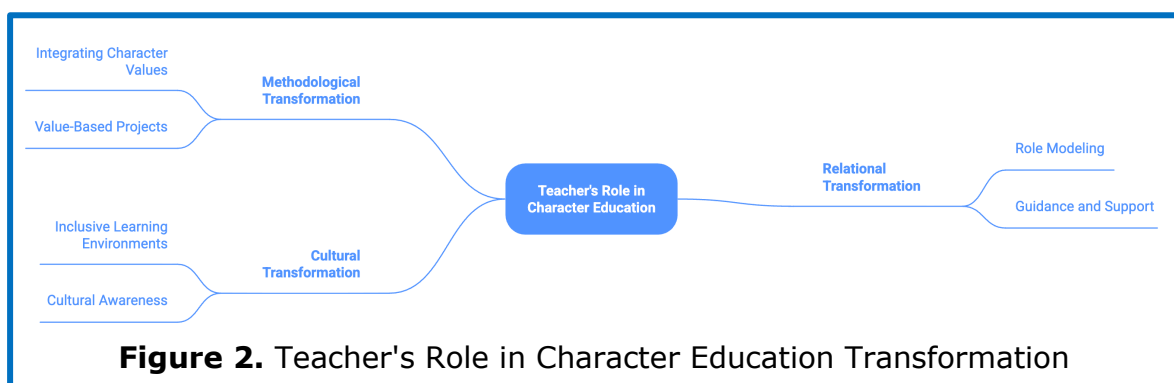


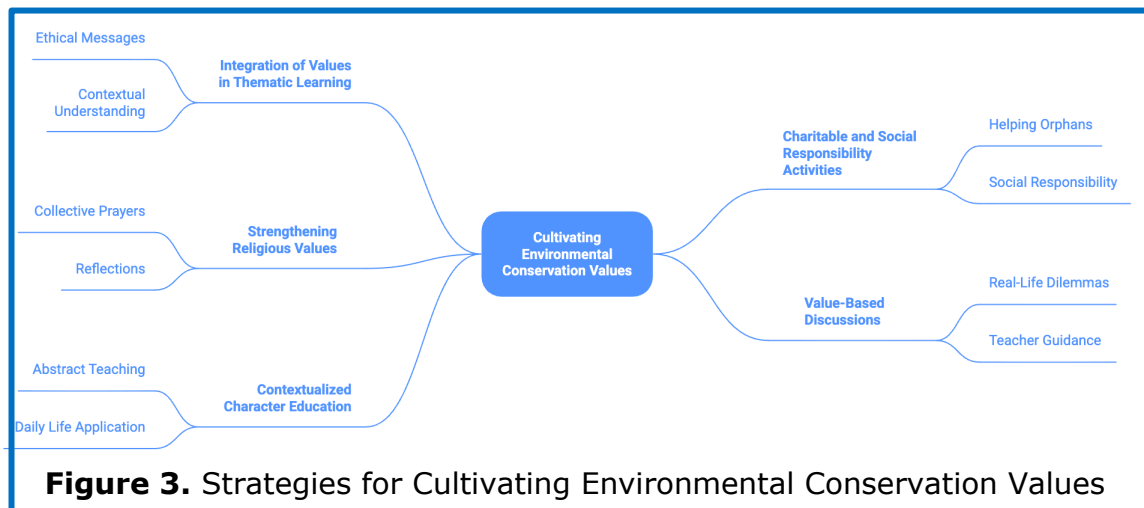
Figure 2 illustrates the transformation of teachers' roles in character education across three interconnected dimensions: methodological, relational,

and cultural. The methodological transformation emphasizes the integration of character values into lesson plans and the implementation of value-based projects, ensuring that character education is embedded within practical learning experiences. Relational transformation highlights the teacher's function as a role model who provides guidance and support, fostering positive interactions and reinforcing social and moral values through everyday classroom engagement. Cultural transformation focuses on the creation of inclusive learning environments and the development of cultural awareness, allowing character education to be contextualized and relevant to students' social and local settings. By linking methodological, relational, and cultural dimensions, Figure 2 demonstrates how teachers cultivate a holistic and dynamic social learning ecosystem that not only conveys knowledge but also nurtures empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and ethical behavior in students. This visual representation underscores the multifaceted and adaptive nature of teachers' transformative role in character education.

Implementation of Value-Based and Contextual Activities

Teachers' implementation of value-based and contextual activities serves as a bridge between academic content and real-life experiences. By incorporating values into thematic lessons, students are not only exposed to cognitive knowledge but also guided to internalize moral lessons. For example, topics on environmental care can be linked with values of responsibility and empathy, allowing students to understand the importance of protecting nature while developing ethical awareness. This approach ensures that character education does not remain theoretical but directly influences students' behavior and attitudes. In addition, charitable acts such as programs to help orphans provide students with tangible opportunities to practice kindness and compassion. Through these activities, they are encouraged to empathize with others' struggles and to contribute positively to their community. Such experiences nurture a sense of social responsibility, shaping students to become individuals who are sensitive to societal issues. In this way, learning is no longer confined to classroom walls but extended into meaningful social engagement.

Religious practices, as part of daily routines in schools, also play a crucial role in reinforcing students' moral and spiritual development. Activities such as collective prayers, recitations, or reflections on ethical teachings strengthen their sense of discipline, gratitude, and integrity. By engaging in these practices consistently, students learn to embody values in their everyday actions, fostering a holistic approach to education that balances intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. Finally, value-centered discussions create a safe space for students to critically reflect on real-life dilemmas and personal experiences. Teachers act as facilitators who guide students to analyze situations from ethical perspectives and make responsible decisions. This dialogic approach helps students build critical thinking skills alongside moral reasoning. As a result, students not only understand values conceptually but also learn to apply them contextually, ensuring that character education becomes an integral and sustainable part of their personal identity.



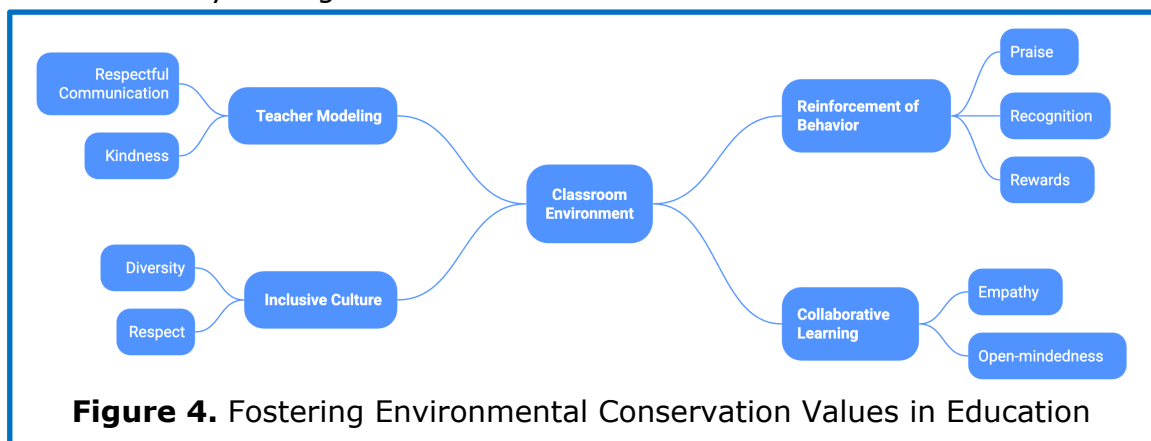
The image illustrates strategies for cultivating environmental conservation values through various character education approaches. These strategies include the integration of values in thematic learning, the strengthening of religious values, charitable and social responsibility activities, value-based discussions, and contextualized character education. Each strategy is supported by concrete examples, such as delivering ethical messages, collective prayers, helping orphans, and applying values in daily life. Through this approach, students not only understand environmental conservation concepts theoretically but also learn to connect them with moral, spiritual, and social values. In addition, the strategies emphasize the active role of teachers in guiding students to face real-life dilemmas and make responsible decisions. Religious values are reinforced through reflections and spiritual practices that foster discipline, while charitable activities nurture empathy and social care. At the same time, contextualized character education ensures that values do not remain abstract lessons but are genuinely applied in students' daily lives. Therefore, the strategies presented in the image represent a comprehensive effort to shape a generation that is environmentally conscious through the internalization of ethical, social, and religious values.

Promotion of Positive Social Interactions and Inclusive Classroom Culture

Teachers play a central role in promoting positive social interactions by modeling respectful communication and encouraging students to treat one another with kindness. The consistent use of polite language, both by teachers and students, helps establish a classroom atmosphere where mutual respect becomes the norm. This environment not only facilitates academic learning but also teaches students the importance of valuing others' perspectives and feelings, laying the foundation for strong social relationships. Reinforcing desirable behavior is another key strategy in shaping positive classroom dynamics. By acknowledging and rewarding actions such as cooperation, honesty, and responsibility, teachers encourage students to repeat and internalize these values. Positive reinforcement in the form of verbal praise, recognition, or small rewards motivates students to behave constructively and contributes to the development of a supportive classroom community.

An inclusive classroom culture further enhances students' social and emotional growth by embracing diversity and ensuring that every learner feels

valued. Teachers who implement inclusive practices through collaborative group work, differentiated instruction, and the representation of diverse perspectives help students appreciate differences as strengths rather than barriers. This inclusive approach cultivates empathy, acceptance, and open-mindedness, preparing students to engage respectfully in diverse social settings beyond the classroom. Ultimately, promoting positive social interactions and inclusivity supports holistic character development by giving students opportunities to practice values in authentic social contexts. When students learn to cooperate with peers, respect diversity, and empathize with others, they develop essential life skills that go beyond academic achievement. Such experiences nurture well-rounded individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also socially responsible and emotionally intelligent.



The image presents strategies for fostering environmental conservation values in education through the creation of a supportive classroom environment. One key aspect is teacher modeling, where educators demonstrate respectful communication and kindness, setting an example for students to follow. By consistently practicing these values, teachers create a culture of respect that encourages students to mirror positive behaviors in their own interactions. In addition, the promotion of inclusive culture emphasizes the importance of diversity and respect, ensuring that all learners feel valued and supported regardless of their backgrounds. Another important strategy shown in the image is the reinforcement of positive behavior through praise, recognition, and rewards. This approach motivates students to continue practicing desirable behaviors, making environmental and social values part of their daily habits. Furthermore, collaborative learning is highlighted as a means to cultivate empathy and open-mindedness. By working together in groups, students learn to listen to different perspectives, share responsibilities, and develop a stronger sense of care for one another and their environment. Altogether, these strategies demonstrate that environmental conservation values can be effectively nurtured through holistic character education within the classroom setting.

3.2 Discussion

The transformation of teachers' roles in creating a social environment for character education in elementary schools reflects a shift from an instructional approach to an ecosystemic approach. Teachers are no longer seen merely as transmitters of values but also as architects of the social environment who continuously shape students' attitudes and behaviors. This aligns with the findings of (Kalimullin & Valeeva, 2022), which emphasize that teachers function

as role models and managers of meaningful social interactions, despite challenges such as limited resources and negative external influences. The discussion also highlights that the teacher's role as a value demonstrator and classroom culture manager is crucial for the success of character education. Teachers who are able to establish a safe, inclusive, and value-based classroom atmosphere have a positive impact on students' moral development, including improvements in politeness, responsibility, and social care.

The discussion also highlights that this transformation has not yet become fully systemic. Teachers still face administrative pressures, a lack of character-based pedagogical training, and limited structural support from schools and communities. Research by (Guarda & Mayr, 2025) indicates that although teachers have made efforts to shape character through religious practices and social activities, students still show gaps in applying values outside the classroom. This suggests the need for a more integrative and collaborative approach involving schools, families, and communities. Overall, the discussion emphasizes that the transformation of teachers' roles in character education requires not only pedagogical competence but also social, spiritual, and reflective capacity. Teachers who are able to design a contextual and value-based social learning environment hold great potential for shaping a generation with strong character, capable of adapting to the challenges of the times.

The role of teachers in elementary school character education is experiencing a significant transformation from a traditional instructional model to a holistic, ecosystemic approach. Teachers are increasingly recognized as not only transmitters of knowledge but also as architects of social environments that shape students' values and behaviors. According to (Sudrajat, 2021), teachers function as role models and facilitators of meaningful social interactions, demonstrating that effective character education requires more than the delivery of moral content. Instead, it involves creating a classroom culture that integrates respect, empathy, and responsibility into daily practices. One of the key aspects of this transformation lies in the teacher's ability to manage classroom culture. Teachers who successfully cultivate inclusive, safe, and value-based learning environments foster positive moral development among students (Ma'ruf & Marzuki, 2022).

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in making the transformation systemic. Teachers often struggle with administrative demands, lack of training in character-based pedagogy, and insufficient institutional support. (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2024) found that while teachers have attempted to reinforce values through religious practices and social activities, gaps persist in students' ability to apply these values outside the classroom. This suggests that character education requires a broader collaborative framework involving schools, families, and communities to ensure continuity and consistency in value formation. Overall, the transformation of teachers' roles in character education underscores the importance of pedagogical, social, and reflective capacities in shaping well-rounded students. Teachers who can design contextual and value-centered learning environments hold the potential to cultivate students who are not only academically competent but also morally resilient and socially responsible. Future efforts must therefore focus on strengthening systemic support and fostering collaboration between multiple stakeholders to maximize the impact of character education in elementary schools.

4. Conclusion

The transformation of teachers' roles in elementary school character education demonstrates a shift from a purely instructional model toward a more ecosystemic approach. Teachers are no longer limited to transmitting values but are expected to act as role models, classroom culture managers, and architects of social environments that nurture students' moral growth. Research shows that when teachers successfully integrate respectful communication, inclusivity, and value-based practices into daily learning, students display improvements in politeness, responsibility, empathy, and social care. These findings highlight that the success of character education strongly depends on the teacher's ability to create meaningful and sustainable learning environments. However, this transformation has not yet been fully systemic. Teachers continue to encounter challenges such as administrative demands, limited character-based pedagogical training, and insufficient structural support from schools and communities. To address these gaps, collaboration among teachers, families, and society is crucial in fostering consistent value internalization inside and outside the classroom. Ultimately, character education requires teachers to combine pedagogical expertise with social, spiritual, and reflective capacities to prepare future generations who are not only academically capable but also morally strong and adaptive to the dynamics of modern life.

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