



Integrating Organizational Culture Management into School Governance: Evidence from Character Education Practices

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Abstract :

This study examines how integrating organizational culture management into school governance drives character education practices in elementary schools. Using a qualitative case study, we explore how governance routines and policies translate cultural values into daily practices. We collected data through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed the data using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings show that governance mechanisms such as morning gate routines, punctuality norms, collaborative planning, and parent-school communication institutionalize teacher role modeling and make it consistent across classrooms. These mechanisms shape students' politeness, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. Teachers act as visible carriers of culture, and students at the elementary level imitate these concrete behaviors. Collaboration among teachers, students, and parents sustains the process beyond the classroom and reduces value gaps between school and home. The study concludes that managing organizational culture as part of school governance is more effective than purely normative instruction for strengthening character education. Practical implications include embedding clear routines, consequence systems, and joint evaluations into school policies to ensure continuity and scalability. This approach offers a contextual and sustainable pathway for character formation in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

Moral degradation in elementary school students is increasingly worrying, characterized by a decrease in tolerance, responsibility, and ethics in daily life (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Mamlok, 2023; Sakalli et al., 2021). Although the national curriculum has emphasized character education through the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) policy (Mahanani et al., 2022; Maisyaroh et al., 2023; Sakban & Sundawa, 2023), implementation in the field often encounters obstacles. Moral values are often relegated to a formality in school activities, are inconsistent, and have not been fully internalized in the daily practices of teachers and students. Studies have shown that elementary school students are in the imitation phase, where they are more likely to imitate real behavior than to understand abstract concepts (Chen et al., 2024; Hong & Kim, 2025; Jin et al., 2025). This means that the teacher's behavior, both in speech and in everyday actions, serves as a significant moral model that is highly influential. Schools with Islamic religious bases and high accreditation have an excellent opportunity to strengthen character education through the example of teachers who are contextual, authentic, and in accordance with religious values (Isom et al., 2021; Mujahid, 2021; Tuna, 2022). Thus, teacher exemplarity needs to be positioned as the primary strategy in preventing the

moral degradation of elementary school students. The real practice of the teacher daily, such as greeting, maintaining politeness, and enforcing discipline, will be more effective in shaping character than normative approaches that are only theoretical in nature.

Several studies in the last decade have confirmed the importance of teacher role models and school culture in shaping student character. One of them is research conducted by Cahyanto et al. (2024). Through qualitative studies, it was found that character-based school culture, such as morning greetings, collective activities, and extracurriculars, plays a significant role in instilling religious values, nationalism, and integrity in elementary school students. Next, Muzakkir et al. (2024) show that teachers play a role as the primary agent of shaping students' moral values, but the success of character education is also highly determined by parental support and the wise use of technology. Other studies by Sholikah et al. (2025) emphasized that the teacher's exemplary model in aspects of personality, behavior, and communication has a direct effect on the formation of students' morals, especially in the context of elementary schools based on religious values. Thus, teacher exemplarity needs to be positioned as the primary strategy in preventing the moral degradation of elementary school students. The real practice of the teacher daily, such as greeting, maintaining politeness, and enforcing discipline, will be more effective in shaping character than normative approaches that are only theoretical in nature.

Although character education has become a focus in elementary school policies and practices, its implementation is often still formal and normative. Moral values are often taught only through lectures or written rules, without being fully demonstrated through real examples in the teacher's daily life. In fact, elementary school students are at a developmental stage where they are more likely to imitate concrete behaviors than to understand abstract concepts. Problems arise when the teacher's example is not consistently implemented, leaving students without a strong role model for shaping morality. In addition, the influence of the external environment, especially digital media, further accelerates the risk of moral degradation in early childhood. Thus, there is an urgent need to research how the practice of teacher example in daily life is really carried out, how students imitate it, and the extent to which the practice can prevent moral degradation from the elementary school age.

This research offers novelty in several important aspects. First, the research focuses on the exemplary practice of teachers, which is manifested through real daily actions, such as greetings, being disciplined, maintaining communication ethics, and showing professional responsibility, not just through normative instruction. Second, this study places students as active subjects who assess, imitate, and internalize teacher behavior, so that students' perspectives become an integral part of the analysis. Third, this research was conducted in private Islamic elementary schools with high accreditation, to provide a specific context related to religious-based character education that is rarely studied in depth. Fourth, the data triangulation method through interviews, observations, and documentation allows for more valid and comprehensive findings regarding teachers' exemplary practices. Thus, this research not only adds theoretical insights, but also makes a practical contribution in designing relevant and sustainable exemplary-based character education strategies.

This research investigates the exemplary practices of teachers in preventing moral degradation among elementary school students. The study focuses on how teachers instill values of politeness, discipline, responsibility, and collaboration through tangible

daily interactions in the school environment. It also examines how students observe, imitate, and internalize these behaviors as consistent moral models. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research provides a contextual understanding of teacher exemplarity in Islamic-based elementary schools. The findings are expected to enrich academic discourse on character education and offer practical recommendations for schools to design more effective, contextual, and sustainable strategies for moral development. The study highlights the pivotal role of teachers as primary role models in shaping students' character from an early age.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design that aims to explore in depth the exemplary practices of teachers in preventing moral degradation in elementary school students (Cole, 2024; Priya, 2021; Renjith et al., 2021). This study was carried out at SDIT Mentari Indonesia 2, a private school with A accreditation in Bekasi Regency that emphasizes character education based on Islamic values. The selection of this design is based on the need to understand the phenomenon contextually and thoroughly. The type of case study research was chosen because this research focuses on one location with distinctive characteristics, namely the integration of teachers' exemplary practices in students' daily activities (Muhajir, 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Rodrigues, 2023). The qualitative approach is used based on constructivist theory, where meaning is constructed from the interaction between the researcher and the participant in a natural setting (Burns et al., 2022; Clarke et al., 2023; Metelski et al., 2021). This approach allows researchers to capture social realities in depth, especially in looking at how teachers become moral role models in students' daily lives.

Table 1. Research Informant

Name of the Informant	Interview Code	Background	Role in Research
Grade 1 Teacher	W/G/1	PGSD Bachelor, 7 years of teaching	Providing insight into the habit of greeting and politeness
Grade 2 Teacher	W/G/3	Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, 5 years of teaching	Explain student discipline practices and responsibilities
Grade 3 Teacher	W/G/5	PAI Scholar, 6 years of teaching	Provide a perspective on exemplary teacher responsibility
Principal	W/K/1	Master of Educational Management	Provide policies and general views of character development
Student	W/S/2	Grade 3 students	Provide testimonials about the teacher's behavior that students imitate

Data was collected through participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, which were conducted in a triangulative manner to increase the credibility of the findings. Interviews were conducted with classroom teachers, principals, and selected students through purposive sampling, based on their active involvement in shaping student character. Researchers play the role of the main instrument as well as active observers in school interactions. The location of the research is SDIT Mentari Indonesia 2, Bekasi. To maintain the credibility of the data, the researcher triangulated sources and member checking by verifying the results of interviews with informants (Janis, 2022; Motulsky, 2021; Vella, 2024). The data of each informant is coded with an

interview to maintain anonymity. The following is a table of informants used in the study, as presented in Table 1.

The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman model, which includes four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) conclusion drawn/verification (Conner, 2022; Motulsky, 2021; Vila-Henninger et al., 2024). The reduction step involves extracting key information from the results of observations, interviews, and documentation related to teacher examples. The data are then presented in the form of a thematic narrative that reflects the research's focus on the values of politeness, discipline, responsibility, and collaboration. The process of concluding is carried out continuously while conducting member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in line with the informant's views. This model was chosen because of its ability to maintain the credibility of findings through an iterative and systematic analysis process (Janis, 2022; Motulsky, 2021; Vella, 2024). This technique also allows for the exploration of a deep meaning to the exemplary practice of teachers that is not only normative but also real in daily educational practice. Thus, the resulting interpretation reflects the moral reality in the school environment in a contextual and meaningful way.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Teacher's Role Model in Shaping Students' Politeness and Ethics

The example of teachers in shaping the politeness and ethics of students is a practice of moral education that focuses on providing examples of good behavior through real, daily actions. At the elementary school level, students are in the imitation phase, so that the teacher's behavior, both in speech and attitude, will be easier for students to imitate. Politeness includes not only the use of polite language, but also simple habits such as greeting, smiling, and appreciating others. The example of teachers in this aspect is relevant to prevent moral degradation, because polite behavior that is instilled consistently will become a positive habit inherent in students. In the context of elementary school, teachers are not only formal educators, but also moral role models that form the foundation of students' future personalities. Therefore, teachers' attitudes, speeches, and interactions play a strategic role in fostering students' ethical awareness.

One of the teachers emphasized that students directly imitate the simple habits that teachers do, especially in greeting and greeting every morning, "Elementary school children are usually imitators. They are more imitators. So when we usually give, 'Assalamu'alaikum,' surely the children will also, 'Wa'alaikumsalam, Miss'... every teacher is already at the gate in the morning, and the children are accustomed to smiling, greeting, and saying hello in the morning (W/G/5)." In line with that, another informant stated the importance of habituation by giving direct examples, so that students are used to imitating the teacher's behavior, "At an early age, children more easily imitate behavior. As a teacher, it is better to practice it directly so that the children will get used to it later. For example, greet them every morning at the gate (W/S/2)."

Through the interview above, it is clear that teachers play an active role as role models in shaping students' politeness. Elementary school-age children are in a phase of imitating the behavior they see firsthand. By giving greetings, smiles, and friendly greetings every morning, teachers instill the value of manners, which then become a

habit for students. This proves that moral values cannot be taught solely through theory or lectures; they must be practiced in real-life daily interactions.

In addition, teachers' consistency in maintaining communication ethics builds a positive atmosphere in the school environment, so that students feel comfortable imitating these behaviors. The example that teachers set becomes a form of continuous moral education, where students not only imitate but also internalize the value of politeness as part of their personality. Thus, moral degradation can be prevented through consistent but straightforward practices demonstrated by teachers in schools. The example of teachers in shaping students' politeness and ethics has proven to be an effective strategy in preventing moral degradation in elementary school-age children. Students directly imitate the teacher's behavior who consistently shows a polite, friendly, and appreciative attitude towards others. Simple practices, such as greeting, using polite language, and expressing gratitude, have formed a pattern of positive communication among students. These findings show that the internalization of moral values not only depends on the learning material, but especially on the real behavior of the teacher as a role model. Thus, teachers who maintain communication ethics and daily politeness have made a significant contribution to building the character of students who are polite, respectful, and ethical. This exemplary practice is also an important preventive strategy in facing the challenge of moral degradation in today's digital era.

Teacher Discipline as an Example in Instilling Student Responsibility

Teacher discipline is a form of consistency in carrying out duties and obligations, which directly becomes a real example for students. In the context of elementary school, discipline includes punctuality, regularity of activities, and consistency in implementing rules. Teachers who show high discipline in being present on time, preparing materials, and enforcing rules will be strong role models for students to instill responsibility from an early age. The value of discipline is closely related to the ability to manage time, order, and self-awareness to obey rules. For elementary school students who are still in the stage of learning to form habits, the example of teacher discipline serves as a mirror of behavior that must be imitated. Therefore, discipline is not just an instruction or regulation, but a practice that the teacher shows in fundamental and repeated ways. In this way, students will more easily understand that responsibility is a logical consequence of consistent disciplinary behavior.

One of the teachers explained that discipline is instilled through time habituation, especially coming on time so as not to miss important activities at school.

"... So it is familiarized in the initial routine anyway, then this, giving, inviting, yes, what, telling the footing, footing to the child. If, for example, you come to school at this time, son. Then we will start everything later. If you miss it, you will miss the dhuha prayer. So we give the cause and effect that he will be late (W/G/1)." Another informant emphasized that the responsibility starts with the teacher himself, including preparing teaching materials and being present on time, "... So start with small responsibilities in yourself. Then do not come late, because that will set a bad example for the students. So, those are the things that need to be prepared. From before teaching to having responsibility in teaching well, that is what (W/G/3)."

The results of the interview above show that teacher discipline is not only related to formal school rules, but also a practice that internalizes the value of responsibility in students. Teachers build discipline through simple habituation, such as associating tardiness with logical consequences (not participating in congregational dhuha prayers). Thus, students understand the cause-and-effect relationship of their actions. In addition,

teachers emphasized the importance of self-readiness as a form of professional responsibility. This example serves a dual purpose: teachers become role models for students while creating an orderly school climate. Teacher discipline, demonstrated by being present on time, preparing media, and consistently implementing rules, gives a strong message to students that responsibility starts with themselves. This proves that teacher behavior has a significant impact on shaping student character, so that discipline that is exemplified in real life can prevent negligent or irresponsible behavior.

Teacher discipline has been proven to have a significant influence in instilling an attitude of responsibility in elementary school students. Teachers who show up on time, consistently carry out routines, and prepare materials well provide a strong example of the importance of discipline as part of personal and professional responsibility. Students imitate this behavior by arriving early, obeying the rules, and showing awareness of the consequences of their actions. Thus, discipline is not just a formal rule, but a means of internalizing the value of effective responsibility. The example of teachers makes students more aware of the importance of managing time, respecting rules, and completing obligations. The practice of discipline exemplified by teachers becomes a moral fortress that can prevent the emergence of negligent, irresponsible, or less respectful behavior toward rules. Therefore, teacher discipline as an example plays a strategic role in the formation of responsible and integrity student character. Through this, Modeling Teacher Discipline and Student Responsibility is shown in Figure 1.

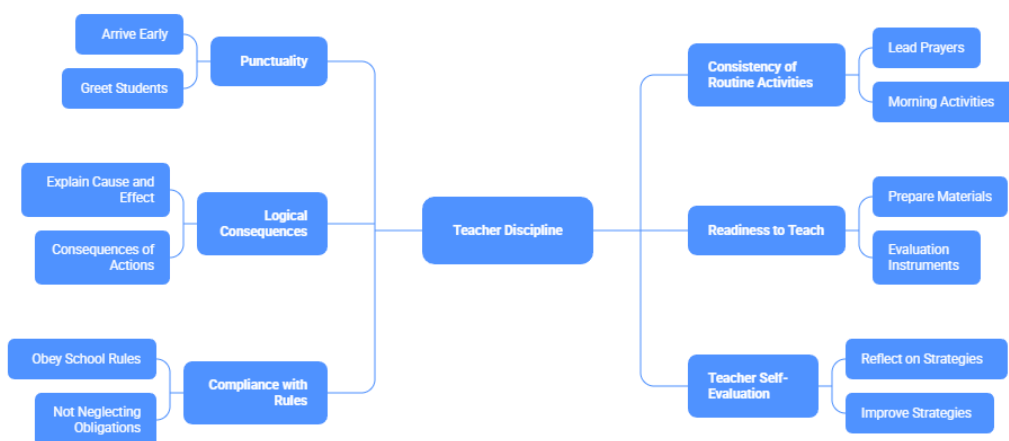


Figure 1. Modeling Teacher Discipline and Student Responsibility

Departing from the exposure of Figure 1, it can be understood that teacher discipline is an important model in shaping student responsibility. The punctuality aspect is reflected in the teacher's habit of arriving early and greeting students, which instills a culture of discipline from the beginning of the activity. Logical consequences are shown through the explanation of the causes and effects of each action, so that students learn to understand the importance of responsibility. Compliance with school rules and obligations demonstrates how teachers consistently enforce regulations. Consistency in routine activities such as leading prayers and morning activities instills spiritual values as well as order. Teaching readiness is reflected in the preparation of materials and evaluation instruments, which teach professionalism to students. In addition, teachers' self-reflection on learning strategies shows an open attitude to continuous improvement. Thus, this picture confirms that the example of teacher discipline not only shapes an orderly school culture, but also fosters an awareness of students' responsibilities in academic and moral aspects.

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Collaboration of Teachers, Students, and Parents in Preventing Moral Degradation

Collaboration between teachers, students, and parents is an important strategy in preventing the moral degradation of elementary school children. Moral education cannot rely solely on teachers in schools; it needs joint support from family and the environment. Teachers are the primary role models in schools, as their daily attitudes and behaviors set an example, while parents reinforce the same values at home. On the other hand, students become active subjects who learn through fundamental interactions and experiences. This collaboration is manifested in intensive communication between teachers and parents, cooperation between teachers, and student involvement in collective activities that instill moral responsibility. In practice, collaboration is carried out through the division of tasks between teachers, communication through WhatsApp groups with parents, and student involvement in group work. Thus, the synergy between teachers, students, and parents forms an educational ecosystem that is conducive to building positive character and preventing deviant behavior from an early age.

A teacher explained that cooperation between peers at school goes well, helping each other when there are difficulties, "So starting from small things, like the division of tasks, and then understanding each other. If you build cooperation, we will handle it and assist. Initiative in work, then building mutual understanding, like that (W/G/5)." In addition, collaboration is also established with parents through regular communication, "Regular communication with parents through WhatsApp groups and weekly coordination to provide information on activities. This prevents misunderstandings and builds trust with parents (W/K/1)."

The results of the interviews confirmed that collaboration is an important factor in creating a healthy educational environment. Teachers show a supportive attitude towards each other, which sets a real example of the value of cooperation to students. This makes students learn that morality is not only individual, but also related to how a person cooperates with others. Intensive communication with parents through digital media also strengthens the continuity of moral education between school and home. Parents understand children's activities at school, so that they can reinforce the moral values instilled by teachers. This collaboration creates harmony in moral education, prevents value contradictions between school and home, and builds sustainable trust. Thus, the collaboration of teachers, students, and parents is not only an administrative strategy but also a moral practice that directly contributes to the prevention of children's moral degradation. The form of collaboration in preventing moral degradation is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Forms of Collaboration between Teachers, Students, and Parents in Preventing Moral Degradation

Collaboration Aspects	Real Implementation Form	Impact on Students
Cooperation Between Teachers	Help each other in the division of tasks and replace colleagues when obstacles arise.	Students imitate the attitude of supporting each other, growing solidarity
Coordination with Parents	Communication via WhatsApp groups and weekly meetings	Parents understand the school program and reinforce moral habits at home
School Collective Activities	Teachers and students together in prayer, worship, or school events	Students learn togetherness, collective discipline, and the value of social responsibility
Student Group Work	The teacher gives project tasks that must be completed as a team	Students learn cooperation, respect opinions, and resolve conflicts in a healthy manner
Joint Evaluation	Teachers and parents conduct periodic evaluations of student behavior	Students feel monitored, so they are more motivated to maintain their attitude
Emotional Engagement	Teachers pay attention to students who are having problems and communicate them to parents.	Students feel valued, which fosters empathy and a sense of responsibility.

Table 2. Collaboration between teachers, students, and parents is an important strategy in preventing moral degradation. Cooperation between teachers reflects an attitude of mutual support, which students indirectly imitate as a form of solidarity. Coordination with parents through communication media and meetings strengthens the continuity of moral education between school and home. School collective activities, such as prayer and worship together, instill discipline and a sense of social responsibility in students. Student group work in the form of projects fosters collaborative skills, respect for opinions, and conflict resolution skills. Joint evaluation between teachers and parents ensures that students' behavior is constantly monitored, so that they are more motivated to maintain their attitudes. In addition, the emotional involvement of teachers through personal attention and communication with parents creates a sense of appreciation while encouraging empathy. Thus, this table confirms that the prevention of moral degradation requires the synergy of three parties to form a solid character.

The collaboration of teachers, students, and parents has proven to be an important factor in preventing the moral degradation of elementary school children. Real-world practice in schools shows that cooperation between teachers forms an example of solidarity, intensive communication with parents strengthens the continuity of moral education, while student involvement in collective activities instills the value of social responsibility. This synergy builds a consistent educational environment, so that students get moral examples both at school and at home. In addition, the teacher's emotional involvement with the student also strengthens the sense of empathy and closeness, which supports the formation of positive character. Thus, the established collaboration is not only an administrative strategy but also a moral practice that has a direct impact on student behavior. These findings confirm that the prevention of moral degradation requires a collective approach, in which teachers, students, and parents play a role in creating an educational and harmonious environment.

Discussion

The results of this study show that teacher role models have a strategic role in preventing moral degradation in elementary school students. Field findings show how teachers instill courtesy through hands-on practice, instill discipline with consistency, and build student responsibility through habituation and collaboration with parents. This aligns with the research's purpose to understand the role of teachers as moral role models amidst the digital era's challenges, which have the potential to erode the ethical values of the younger generation. Teachers not only function as academic educators, but also as models of behavior that students directly imitate. Thus, the relevance of this research lies in its contribution to strengthening character education based on teacher examples. Furthermore, the discussion will be analyzed based on three main themes: (1) teacher exemplary in shaping student politeness, (2) teacher discipline in instilling responsibility, and (3) collaboration between teachers, students, and parents in preventing moral degradation.

The study's findings confirm that teachers are the primary role models for learning politeness, including greeting and using polite language. This practice is in line with social learning theory, which emphasizes that children learn through observation and imitation of significant figures (Janis, 2022; Motulsky, 2021; Vella, 2024). Elementary school-age children who are in the imitation phase are more likely to imitate real behavior than to understand abstract concepts. Research by Riyanto et al. (2023) found that teachers who displayed a polite and appreciative attitude were able to encourage students to internalize the value of politeness. Similarly, the study by Harvey (2022) emphasized that the habituation of manners contributes directly to the formation of elementary school students' manners. However, research by Tołwińska (2021) shows the challenge of moral degradation of manners due to the influence of the environment and digital media, so that the exemplary practice of teachers becomes increasingly crucial. Thus, these findings reinforce the view that moral values are not sufficiently taught theoretically, but must be demonstrated through consistent real behavior of teachers.

Teacher discipline, demonstrated through punctuality, consistency in rules, and teaching readiness, has been proven to shape patterns of student responsibility. This aligns with DeTienne et al.'s (2021) view that moral development occurs through real experience, which demands an awareness of the rules and their consequences. Research by Fauzan et al. (2024) supports this finding by showing that the habit of congregational *dhuha* prayer fosters discipline and regularity in students. Mahanani et al. (2022). It was also found that teachers who attended on time and prepared the material well encouraged students to imitate responsible behavior. Maisyaroh et al. (2023) added that teachers' exemplary methods in maintaining discipline have a long-term impact on the formation of student morality. Differences can be seen in studies, such as Sakallı et al. (2021), which emphasize the need for school policy support in strengthening character education, so that teachers' examples will be more effective when supported by institutional regulations. These findings show that teacher discipline is a means of internalizing concrete responsibility as well as preventing negligent behavior.

Collaboration between teachers, students, and parents has been proven to form a consistent moral education ecosystem. This is in line with research by Mujahid (2021), which shows that effective communication between teachers strengthens trust and creates a harmonious school climate. Muhajir (2022) emphasized that the synergy of parents and teachers in moral habituation has a significant impact on the development

of students' character. Vella (2024). It was also found that school and family collaboration was able to reduce the potential for moral degradation in children. However, challenges arise when communication with parents does not go optimally, as shown by Sholikah et al. (2025), who found that there was an inconsistency of moral values between school and home. Therefore, successful collaboration requires intensive communication, value alignment, and the emotional involvement of teachers with students.

Practically, this research contributes to elementary schools in strengthening character education strategies through teacher examples. Teachers can integrate simple practices, such as greeting students every morning, being on time, and collaborating with parents on moral programs. This contribution is relevant to education policies that emphasize character education as a national priority. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of exemplary studies in the framework of social learning theory and developmental ecology. This research shows that teacher exemplary is not just an individual factor, but part of a holistic education system. Thus, this research provides an update to the theory of moral education by emphasizing the importance of the collaborative dimension.

Therefore, the results of this study emphasize the vital role of teacher role models in preventing the moral degradation of elementary school students. Teachers who consistently show politeness, discipline, and responsibility have been proven to form positive character in students. Collaboration between teachers, students, and parents is a key factor in ensuring the continuity of moral education at school and home. This discussion also strengthens the theory of social learning and developmental ecology, as well as broadens insights into moral education strategies in the digital era. For further research, it is suggested that there be a comparative study between schools with different backgrounds, as well as a more in-depth exploration of the role of technology in supporting or hindering teacher examples. Thus, the future direction of research can strengthen the design of character education that is more adaptive, contextual, and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that teacher role models play a strategic role in preventing the moral degradation of elementary school students. Teachers who consistently show polite, disciplined, and responsible behavior become real models for students in internalizing moral values. This example can be seen from hands-on practices such as greeting, being on time, and carrying out professional responsibilities consistently. In addition, the involvement of teachers in building collaboration with students and parents strengthens the continuity of character education at school and at home. The example of teachers not only creates a conducive learning environment, but also forms the foundation of children's character from an early age. These findings reinforce the urgency of a moral approach that is oriented towards practice and habituation, rather than mere theory. Therefore, teacher exemplarity is the central pillar in creating a generation with character, and is an important foundation for the development of sustainable character education strategies.

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