

## STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTALLY CARING CHARACTER THROUGH LEARNING AT SCHOOL

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### Abstract

*The main problem of the environment is human attitudes and behavior that are not friendly to the environment. This shows the weakness of character building in the education process. This research aims to portray the method of value cultivation carried out by teachers to strengthen students' environmental care character in ecology learning at school on the theme of ecosystem balance. This study discusses strategies for improving students' environmental care character in one of the elementary schools in Subang Regency, West Java province with subjects of the research were elementary school teachers and sixth grade elementary school students. The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach with a case study research method and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The data collection process was carried out through stages of observation, interviews, and discussions involving 21 respondents consisting of principals, teachers and students. The results of the research show that the method used by teachers to strengthen students' environmentally caring character in ecological learning is through 5 (five) methods: 1) Information transfer, 2) Training, 3) Habituation, 4) Modeling, and 5) Conditioning. The need for teachers to apply creative and innovative strategies to strengthen students' character in classroom learning, whether in the form of methods, media, approaches and others in learning. Furthermore, other research needs to be carried out in other learning areas to strengthen students' environmentally caring character at school, it can even be developed in school culture and extracurricular activities at school.*

**Keywords:** environmentally caring character; ecology learning; school.

### Abstrak

Permasalahan utama lingkungan hidup adalah sikap dan perilaku manusia yang tidak ramah terhadap lingkungan hidup. hal tersebut menunjukkan lemahnya pembinaan karakter pada proses pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan metode penanaman nilai yang dilakukan guru dalam penguatan karakter peduli lingkungan siswa dalam pembelajaran ekologi di sekolah tema keseimbangan ekosistem. Penelitian ini membahas tentang strategi penguatan karakter peduli lingkungan siswa di beberapa sekolah dasar di kabupaten Subang provinsi Jawa Barat dengan subjek penelitiannya adalah guru sekolah dasar dan siswa kelas enam sekolah dasar. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode penelitian studi kasus dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematis. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan tahapan observasi, wawancara, dan diskusi yang melibatkan 21 responden yang terdiri dari kepala sekolah, guru dan siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode yang digunakan guru untuk memperkuat karakter peduli lingkungan siswa dalam pembelajaran ekologi adalah melalui 5 (lima) metode: 1) Transfer informasi, 2) Pelatihan, 3) Pembiasaan, 4) Pemodelan dan 5) Pengkondisian. Perlunya guru menerapkan strategi yang kreatif dan inovatif dalam menguatkan karakter peserta didik dalam pembelajaran di kelas, baik berupa metode, media, pendekatan dan lainnya dalam pembelajaran. Selanjutnya perlu dilakukan penelitian lain pada bidang pembelajaran lain untuk memperkuat karakter peduli lingkungan siswa di sekolah, bahkan dapat dikembangkan dalam budaya sekolah dan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler di sekolah.

**Kata Kunci:** karakter peduli lingkungan; pembelajaran ekologi; sekolah

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## Introduction

The most important environmental damage and threats are from human behavior (anthropogenic). Current concerns are that the attitudes and behavior of most individuals are not environmentally friendly and raise concerns about environmental damage as a result of immoral individual behavior (Bouman, Steg, & Zawadzki, 2020; Alistair Raymond Bryce Soutter & René Möttus, 2020). The need for character improvement in the realm of education is very urgent considering the increasing moral crisis among teenagers aged 10-24 years, comprising around 26,67% of the total population (Abdullah, Hudayana, Kutaneegara, & Indiyanto, 2019). Character education is an effort to shape and strengthen students' personalities and help improve and train them both mentally and morally (socially and spiritually) (Hayah, 2017), as a response to reduce and fight the massive moral decadence at this time. Therefore, character education is a necessity in the education process in Indonesia. This refers to education for sustainable development. Immoral behavior is not only carried out directly on humans as social creatures, another way of committing immoral acts towards humans is by destroying the natural environment, so that it will indirectly have a bad impact on human life itself. This is in line with what (Keraf, 2010) mentioned that the human environment means the environment in which it lives and the quality of the environment depends on the ethical behavior of humans themselves.

According to Law No. 21 of 2021, the environment is the unity of space with all objects, forces, conditions, and living creatures, including humans and their behavior, which influence nature itself, the continuity of life, and the welfare of humans and other living creatures (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). A beautiful living environment is a guarantee for the comfort of human life in it. On the other hand, a bad living environment will also have negative impacts felt by humans as active environmental management subjects themselves. Environmental problems are problems of human behavior that are unethical and do not consider the environment as an integral part of their lives (Alistair Raymond Bryce Soutter & René Möttus, 2020). Humans always take things that benefit themselves (economic motives) from the environment for their interests, without thinking far ahead about the environment for future generations (Ali & Anufriev, 2020).

Education has an important role in overcoming students' morality problems, especially in shaping the character of students at school (Sanderse, 2019). Education is expected to be able to produce a generation of individuals/people who have noble morals, character, and a society that can increase awareness of living in harmony, tolerance in diversity, and has democratic, and general insight. This is in line with the opinion of Jaedun and Manaf (2020) that the implementation of the school system itself is an effort to foster moral values. One part of the educational process is the learning process in the classroom carried out by teachers through subjects that have a variety of different characteristics. One of the efforts made by teachers to strengthen students' character is through ecological learning.

Ecology is a science that studies the correlation of living things with their environment and the living systems within it (Shen, 2020). Ecological learning does not only explain environmental facts and data but must be able to provide an understanding of knowledge about the environment, and how to act and behave responsibly (morally) (Hutcheson, Hoagland, & Jin, 2018). The role of teacher has a central role in learning, the teacher is the 'director' of learning who has the authority to design/arrange, implement, and evaluate learning. Teacher strategies in developing moral values can be through information transfer, training, habituation, example, conditioning, and acculturation (Hakam, 2020), strategies designed by teachers in learning will determine the achievement of learning objectives. Therefore, research on strategies

for strengthening students' environmentally caring character is important to look at teachers' strategies in teaching and internalizing environmental care character values because according to (Jaedun & Manaf, 2020), the care character for the environment is an important character for students to have which must be actualized in students' lives. According to Education (2010), environmental care is an attitude and action that always tries to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment and develops efforts to repair natural damage.

Several study results related to teacher strategies in strengthening students' environmental care character are explored. Mukminin (2014) study examines strategies for strengthening environmental care character through the Adiwiyata program. The results of their research reveal that the strategy is carried out through three activities, namely through learning, extracurricular, and cultural. However, this research has not focused on specific learning. Furthermore, Gusmadi (2018) explored community involvement in the community to strengthen the environmental care character. The results of his research revealed the role of the community in strengthening the character of caring for the environment. However, it is necessary to study further the strategies and role of teachers in improving the character of students through learning. (Karmilasari, Putri, & Faedlulloh, 2020) studied the eco-school program in environmental conservation in schools to shape students' attitudes and behaviors that care about the environment. However, there has been no research that examines the improvement of moral values of students' environmental care character through ecological studies on how to create good relationships with the environment through teacher strategies applied in the classroom, in this study it is limited only to the methods used by teachers when teaching.

Based on the studies above, studies related to strategies for strengthening students' environmentally caring character through ecological learning are something new to explore. Therefore, this study focuses on teachers' strategies in teaching ecology at school to strengthen students' environmental care character used as a case study to understand what strategies teachers use to strengthen character at school. This becomes an important study because teacher strategies determine the character of students and will have an impact on the sustainability of the school environment and society through their attitudes and behavior.

## **Research Methods**

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach with case study research methods and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Anam, Nyoman Sudana Degeng, Murtadho, & Kuswandi, 2019). This research was conducted in several elementary schools in Subang Regency, West Java province, Indonesia. The subjects of this research were school principals, elementary school teachers and sixth grade elementary school students. The data collection process was carried out in stages of observation, interviews and discussions involving 21 respondents consisting of school principals, teachers and students. Observations were made when the teacher taught ecology lessons in class. Observations were carried out as an effort to obtain information regarding the methods used by teachers to strengthen students' environmentally caring character in the classroom and also to examine the contribution of the ecological material taught in strengthening students' environmentally caring character. Researchers conducted interviews and discussions with school principals, teachers and students who received ecological material and were involved in classroom learning. This was done to triangulate the data and the credibility of the research data.

Data analysis was carried out starting from the beginning of the research, namely when data was collected. Initial data collection was the result of classroom learning observations.

Next, data was collected through interviews with school principals, teachers and students involved in the learning process. Data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until the data is complete and complete. This is obtained through the display process, data reduction and drawing conclusions. The data collected becomes the basic framework for compiling research results on teacher strategies in strengthening environmentally caring character in schools.

### Result and Discussion

Principally, strengthening the character of students is the development of moral values, that are intended to be internalized. According to (Hakam, 2020), internalization is a process of instilling certain values become pusher for somebody to act based on his choice. Internalization of values can be carried out through institutional doors, namely through door-to-door institutional, for example, body training, family, and containers society, which is formed by community members. It can even be done through personal doors, namely through individual doors, specifically the educators.

Based on the results of observations regarding teacher strategies for strengthening students' environmental care character through ecological learning, several methods were found. The first method is information transfer, this method is used by teachers to convey messages or information in the form of advice and warnings to direct students to care about the environment. (1) At the start of learning, the teacher gives advice to always maintain classroom cleanliness. This effort is made by the teacher every time learning takes place. (2) The teacher gives a warning when the classroom conditions are dirty and there is rubbish out of place. This is done by teachers to continue to provide consistent education so that it becomes a habit and class culture. (3) Providing advice through ecological concepts so that always build a good relationship with the natural environment, (4) providing advice on the importance of nature for human life, (5) through ecological learning the teacher provides advice on preventing damage to the natural environment, and (6) providing advice to always use energy as efficiently as possible (energy saving), and using non-single use plastic materials as an effort to love nature.

Based on the results of the interview, it is explained that the lecture method carried out by teachers in class is like an obligation, even though it is only a few minutes. The teacher's efforts in providing information to students cannot be eliminated, because providing information through lectures in class is like a must, because teachers can direct and provide messages both through lectures, even though it is only a few minutes.

Hakam (2020) explain the information transfer method as a form of value socialization, which can be said to be the initial gate for entering values into individuals. These values are expected to be captured by individuals (goals) so that these are taken into account according to the rules/recommendations (value information). Values conveyed through value transfer/socialization if it possible captured well by the individual (target), then the value will be remembered and become a consideration for even behavior. It is expected that this socialization will be able to be delivered efficiently to students so that the valuable information can be conveyed well.

The second method used by teachers found in observation activities is the training method. (1) The teacher trains students to throw rubbish in the right place. This is done when during the learning process, some students want to throw rubbish in their place, at that time the teacher encourages the students to throw rubbish in the rubbish bin in front of the class and (2) Trains students to throw rubbish according to the type of rubbish. Teachers train students to put any waste they have in the trash according to the type of waste (organic or inorganic). This value internalization method aims to train individuals to act as required by these social values, in this

case, the value of caring for the environment. The interview results explain that the method of training students is a good method, because students can directly practice it in real life.

Values training plays an important role in internalizing individual values who do not know the values in society become individuals who recognize and implement the values that already exist in society (Hakam, 2020). This has an important influence on individual education in the school environment and public in building good character to create young generations who have knowledge, attitudes, and behavior according to norms and applicable social values by continuing to train them. Value training is a fairly effective method of instilling social values in the environment and supporting factors must play an active role in training the individual by training and supervising, in this case, adults play an important role in training and supervising consistently so that the value becomes the individual's own.

The third method used by teachers found in observation activities is the habituation method. It is a method of internalizing values that is carried out repeatedly and within a certain period. Good habituation is carried out by students from an early age and is the cultivation of the skills to do and say something so that it can increase students' interest (Shunhaji & Komalasari, 2020). Habituation is carried out by the teacher every week in every time the lesson takes place. (1) The habit carried out by the teacher is the habit of maintaining classroom cleanliness when learning takes place so that teachers hope that classroom cleanliness is something that is considered important. (2) The next habit is the habit of cleaning the classroom. This habituation is carried out before learning the student's class that is still not clean. Good behavior needs to be habitual, it is not a choice, but it becomes a must. The habit of good deeds must be continuous, not situational (Hakam, 2020).

The inconsistency of moral actions often encourages children to choose immoral actions. For this reason, a conducive atmosphere is needed in the training situation so that moral values can be applied in every action. Internalization can be understood as the process of strengthening and instilling beliefs, attitudes, and values in early individuals so that these values become their behavior (moral behavior). According to Fahmi and Susanto (2018), the habituation method is very effective in shaping students' character by getting used to consistent and programmed training of the moral values that will be taught, even according to Tarmidzi and Sugiarti (2019), the moral culture formed in schools is very important and necessary for the creation of an effective atmosphere to build relationships between principals, teachers, as well as students and their environment to get used to and emulate the moral values that exist in schools.

Observation results, the fourth method is the exemplary method (Modeling). The example set by the teacher is that the teacher carries out the behavior of throwing rubbish in its place during the learning process. The interview results explain that the modeling method is the most difficult method, because teachers must be perfect examples that refer to the morals of the Prophet. Rasulullah Nabi Muhammad SAW. as stated by Hakam (2018) provides an example that exemplifies the practice of fostering human morals, namely first through exemplary, meaning that in the early stages, anyone must learn morals and character through example, and in exemplifying an exemplary figure, the teacher is required to be a role model and person, who displays the attitudes and behavior of moral values. The teacher must make a habit of being an example for the people in his environment and the character development model through exemplary is the main and effective method in educating children, especially in fostering good values because exemplary is transferring values with real behavior/actions. The success of character education programs in schools depends on how teachers manage the class. Teachers are students' role models, they are the spotlight so whatever teachers do has an impact on

students' development Sutisna, Indraswati, and Sobri (2019). Therefore, the teacher example is the best way in the process of implementing character education in schools.

The fifth method is the conditioning method. The teacher uses this method by making rules to be applied in ecological learning. The interview results explained that the school had made clear rules in the classroom, so that students were conditioned with good rules regarding environmental awareness. The rules made are (1) every class must be clean when ecological learning takes place. If it is not clean, there are consequences for that class. (2) In every ecology lesson, students are required to always throw away rubbish in the right place. Classical behaviorists, Ivan Pavlov, John B., Watson in Hakam (2020) discussed learning about the association or relationship between stimulus and response (S- R) relationship and operant behaviorist and famous US psychologist B.F. Skinner paid special attention to the role of learning or response-stimulus (R-S) relationship, the emphasis on the (S-R) or R-S relationship has made this theory known as relationship theory (*connectionist*) (Hakam, 2020).

Making rules (stimulus) by the teacher will have an impact on student responses about the rules themselves, internalizing values using this conditioning method has an important role in successfully changing student behavior, but even though it forces students to obey these rules, at least our goal is achieved to change student behavior to care for the environment. The coercion of students into obeying the rules slowly changes their attitude and motivation to behave better according to the rules they implement (Darsono, 2022). According to Rusli & Kholik (2013), another factor that is considered important by the behaviorist school of reinforcement is the (reinforcement) factor, if reinforcement is added (positive reinforcement) then the response will be stronger. Likewise, if the response is reduced or eliminated (negative reinforcement), then the response will also be stronger. Behavioristic learning theory considers learning success to come from a change in student behavior and experience. Learning student behavior requires observation of the parts that can be seen from the outside, not the inside of the body. Therefore, this theory does not prioritize students' psychological or mental aspects, such as talent, intelligence, interests, emotions, and feelings when studying. However, behaviorists emphasize that the learning process occurs because of physical symptoms or changes in behavior that are visible and can be measured (Yuli, Firmansyah, Muqowim, & Nurdin, 2024).

## Conclusion

It is important to cultivate moral values in the classroom, particularly among teachers, to reinforce the caring character toward the environment. Pro-environmental values will give rise to knowledge, attitudes, and moral behavior by treating nature well, which has an impact on personal, social, and natural aspects. The results of the research reveal that in ecological learning in the classroom, teachers use the method of instilling values by 1) transferring Information, 2) training, 3) habituation, 4) modeling, and 5) conditioning. The process of strengthening the environmental care character through ecosystem learning carried out by teachers must utilize various types of methods. This will make the potential for success even greater. The need for teachers to apply creative and innovative strategies to strengthen students' character in classroom learning, whether in the form of methods, media, approaches and others in learning. Furthermore, other research needs to be carried out in other learning areas to strengthen students' environmentally caring character at school, it can even be developed in school culture and extracurricular activities at school.

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