

The Role of the English Teachers in Strengthening Character Education at the Eighth Grade of SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur in 2023/2024

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A B S T R A C T

The objective of this research is to analyze English teachers' roles in strengthening character education and its obstacles. Qualitative methods with an inductive approach were used, gathering data through interviews, observations, and field notes. There are two English teachers and the eighth grade students participated in this research, which was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur. The data analysis techniques used are data condensation, data display, and verification. Results reveal three teacher roles, designing and implementing learning that integrates character values, being role models, and inspirators. Religiousness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for accomplishment, friendliness, peace, love of reading, environmental and social care, and responsibility are all examples of integrated character values. Lesson plan analysis shows five main character value focuses: religion, honesty, responsibility, hard work, discipline, and environmental care. Obstacles include environmental factors, family, social media, and time constraints. Due to time constraints, one teacher was observed to only verbally communicate their role as an inspirator without putting it into practice in the classroom, according to the Theory of Planned Behavior.

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Introduction

Education is essential to human life because it is a process of learning that is conducted both formally and informally with the goal of educating, supplying knowledge, and developing each person's potential. One of the elements of education that significantly contributes to raising the standard of education in Indonesia is character education that defined as instruction in ethics, values, and character with the goal of fostering in pupils the capacity to make morally right or wrong judgments, uphold moral principles, and fully appreciate goodness in daily life (Susanti, 2021). The role of teachers as the leaders of the teaching and learning process is fundamentally inextricable from the implementation of character education because of the direct and ongoing interactions that teachers have with students. As a result, teachers' roles as educators include aiding and motivating, supervising and coaching, and disciplining students to ensure compliance with school regulations as well as family and societal norms (Veronika & Dafit, 2022). Therefore, in this instance, it is expected of instructors to be able to integrate and apply character education values in the classroom.

The government has made it clear how crucial it is that character education be taught in all schools, and the law now outlines this national policy. According to Law No. 20 of 2003's article 3, national education seeks to develop students' potential to

become human beings with faith and devotion to God Almighty, noble character, health, knowledge, ability, creativity, independence, and the capacity to become democratic and responsible citizens. It also aims to develop the nation's civilization and abilities in order to educate its citizens. This makes it abundantly evident that the goal of character education is to improve the nation's generation, which is why it is imperative that it be applied, particularly in educational settings. Since schools are key locations for enhancing the future generation of the country, character education is particularly concerned with the school environment.

Character education is now a learning objective in national education units and is incorporated into the syllabus's core competencies (KI). Character education in this instance is not taught as a stand-alone subject; rather, it is implemented and carried out through a variety of classroom activities, including learning activities in all subjects or fields of study. This is significant because every subject has unique characteristics (Nurafiati et al., 2021). As a result, it is crucial to identify English teachers who are fulfilling their responsibilities in accordance with the curriculum in order to integrate and reinforce character education, which is essential to implement because it influences students' character. There is an urgent need to develop character education, which is supported by Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017, whereas one of the objectives of character education is to prepare students to be the country's future golden generation.

But in reality, currently not all students can practice character values well. Most students still reflect an increasingly low level of decency, cheating on assignments, lying, lack of discipline, and other attitudes that do not show the behavior of an academic. Such examples, in some secondary schools in Nias, first there is a student of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli was returned to his parents because repeatedly violating school rules by drinking alcohol and smoking in class (Zonamerdekanews, 2023). Second, there was a brawl by students from Bintang Laut private junior and senior high school, and also Mitra Kasih Foundation in South Nias. In this clash, it is estimated that there were as many as 200 students who resulted in persecution (Srikaninews, 2021). Then, there was a case of a student at junior high school in Gunungsitoli who was willing to steal for his girlfriend. The student is known to have stolen a Honda Beat motorcycle to resell it to get money to meet and fulfill some needs for his girlfriend (Wartanias, 2019). It is seen that character possessed by students of some secondary schools are still very low and bad.

This is also supported by several earlier studies that indicate some pupils, particularly those in lower classes, still exhibit a lack of discipline when it comes to attending morning roll call. There are still a lot of students who don't do their homework, arrive late to class and start class after the break, cheat, or conduct assignments dishonestly. There are also still a lot of students that start fighting among themselves. This shows that character education in schools is still not well implemented (Utami, 2019). Furthermore, there are some theories states that character education is very influential in shaping one's personality to be better and more positive. Because character will be the primary evaluation that the outside world sees, character education is crucial. Through it, students are expected to comprehend, realize, and practice values and apply them to their daily lives. Understanding, caring, and acting morally are all components of good character (Hidayat & Ahmad, 2022). Therefore, it is a tremendous hope for the government, schools, and parents. It is also backed by a number of theories that character education has a significant impact on the realization of a moral nation's life.

But in fact, researchers also states that there are many cases are created because of moral imbalances towards individuals, especially in Indonesia and not infrequently also carried out by students who are still underage. So, it is concluded that in this case there is a gap between expectations and reality, namely the expectation that character education should be able to make students have a good moral, have good ethics, and apply all the values that are in character education. Based on the above phenomena, previous research, current theories, and the findings of interviews with English teachers, it seems that character education is still very low in the modern era. Therefore, it is imperative that character education be strengthened in every school in order to prevent a crisis in student character. Naturally, this is inextricably linked to the function of educators in educational institutions. Therefore, the researchers are interested in analyzing how English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur can improve character education at the eighth grade.

Research Method

This study was conducted using an inductive technique and a descriptive qualitative research design. To determine general ideas, laws, and conceptions, the inductive approach looks at particular events or issues (Lase et al., 2023). Two English teachers and eighth graders participated in this study, which was carried out at SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur. The information used in this study was gathered using a variety of methods, including field notes, observations, and interviews. Following the acquisition of the necessary data using a variety of methods and tools, the researchers examined the data in light of the eighteen character values, the outcomes of their interviews, and their observations of English teachers and students.

Researchers analyzed the data obtained using data analysis techniques from the theory of Miles et al. (2014) in Islamuddin et al. (2023) ; Fikni et al. (2024) that there are three techniques in analyzing qualitative research data consists of three steps, as follows:

Data condensation

In this step researchers made a transcript of the interview results with the English teachers which was written in detail on the transcript sheet, then condenses the data with organizing and grouped the similarities and differences of the results of interview of both English teachers to find out views and perception of both related to strengthening character education at school, after that researchers analyzed the results of observation namely the frequency of the number of indicators implemented by both English teachers during four meetings based on indicators of 18 character values according to the Ministry of Education (2010:9-10) in Kurniasih and Sani (2017).

Data display

This is a step to present the data in several forms of graphs and tables according to the data obtained from the research results. In this case, researchers describe and elaborate more deeply on each character values and the role of the English teachers.

Drawing conclusion and verifying

At this stage, researchers made conclusions based on the data results that have been analyzed and interpreted, so that the research objectives can be achieved and the problem formulation can be answered.

Result and Discussion

There are some similarities and contrasts in the two English teachers' comments, so, researchers examined and categorized the data that shown in Table 1 below.

Table 4.1 Similarities and Differences of English Teachers Responses

No	Question	Similarities	Differences
1.	1	2	0
2.	2	1	1
3.	3	2	0
4.	4	1	3
5.	5	2	0
6.	6	2	2
7.	7	6	1
8.	8	2	1
9.	9	2	0
10.	10	4	0
Total		24	8

Based on the table above about the categorization of similarities and differences, it is seen that both of English teachers have more similar responses than different responses. It means that both of English teachers have quite a lot of similar views on the background of implementation and strengthening of character education at SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur.

Additionally, two responses were chosen for further consideration in line with the study's goals about the contributions of English teachers to enhancing character education and the challenges encountered during its execution. The table below describes the many roles that English teachers play in enhancing character education, as determined by the findings of the interviews that were done.



Chart 1. Roles of English Teachers in Strengthening Character Education

Through the chart above, it is seen that there was consistency in some answers by the first English teacher and the second English teacher, although one point was added by the second English teacher. Nonetheless, both English teachers concurred that educators must use character values found in the curriculum, lesson plans, and learning resources while creating and carrying out instructional activities in the classroom. In order to help pupils develop positive personalities, English teachers indirectly taught, mentored, and instilled character ideals in their students through classroom activities. In this case, both English teachers have 4 total points in common as a response regarding roles in integrating character values. Therefore, both English teachers agreed that setting a good example is one way that they may support character education.

In carrying out this role, both English teachers agreed that teachers need to show good attitudes and behavior in accordance with character values, because this will be emulated by students. In this case, both English teachers have 2 equal numbers of points as a response regarding roles being a good role model. The third role in strengthening character education was added by the second English teacher, that the English teachers also need to acts as an inspirer for students. This can be done by the English teacher by conveying illustrations or stories that are useful to support the formation of students' characters. Additionally, according to the findings of the interviews with English instructors, which are displayed in the chart below, there are a number of challenges that English teachers have when attempting to improve character education.

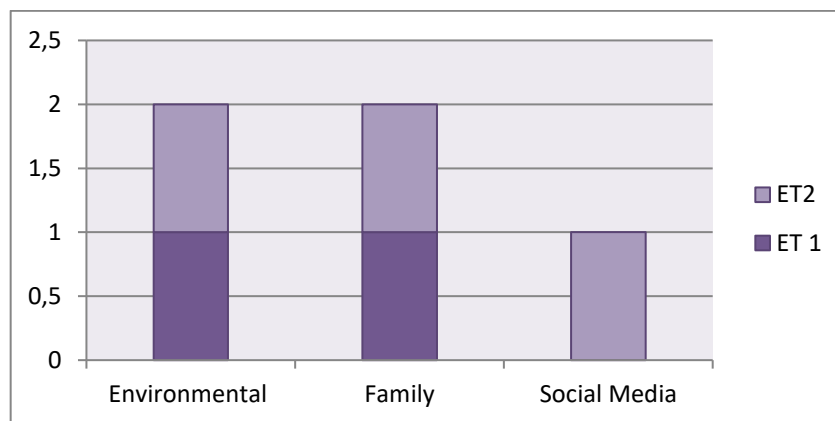


Chart 2 Obstacles Faced by English Teachers in Strengthening Character Education

From Chart 4.2 above, it is seen that both of English teachers faced the same obstacles in strengthening character education, although there is other obstacles conveyed by the second English teacher. The first obstacle faced by both English teachers is environmental factors. Environmental factors are very influential on student character. If students live in a bad environment, then students will tend to follow to behave badly. So this will hinder teachers in shaping and strengthening student character for the better. The second obstacle is family; this clearly affects how the character of students because character building is not only at school but the family is also very influential. Therefore, the lack of assistance and supervision from parents will also hinder the process of forming student character. The next obstacle was also conveyed by the second English teacher, that another obstacle in strengthening character education is social media. Despite its advantages and ease, social media might negatively impact students' personalities.

Furthermore, researchers conducted telephone interviews with two English teachers because this was done to get a more complete data of the topic of the research and to double-check the information. This relates to the concept of data triangulation as expressed by (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gay et al., 2012) about triangulating different data sources to check the evidence from those sources so that qualitative researchers use it to ensure trustworthiness or add validity to the research. There are some parallels and contrasts in the two English teachers' comments, according to the findings of the telephone interviews. The researcher classified and examined the data, and the results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Similarities and Differences of English Teachers Responses

No	Question	Similarities	Differences
1.	1	1	0
2.	2	3	1
3.	3	1	2
4.	4	2	2
5.	5	2	2
Total		9	7

It is evident from the following table that the two English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur share many opinions regarding the improvement of character education. The telephone interview's findings indicate that both English teachers hold nearly identical opinions about the significance of teachers' roles in enhancing character education, as well as the roles they play, the challenges they face, the character values they emphasize, and the efforts that can be made. Furthermore, in compliance with the Republic of Indonesia's Number 87 of 2017 Regulation of the Minister of National Education regarding Strengthening Character Education, observations were conducted using indicators of 18 character values. The data that follows are the findings from the observation of both English teachers over the course of four meetings, based on indications that have been completed and those that have not.

Table 3. The Result of the First & Second English Teachers' Observation

No	Character Values	Indicator	Frequency (ET1)	Frequency (ET2)	Amount	
					ET 1	ET 2
1	Religious	Praying before and after class.	4	4		
		Giving every learner the chance to practice worship.	4	4	8	8
2	Honest	Establishing locations for the recovery of misplaced objects.	4	4		
		Financial statement and class evaluation transparency on a regular basis.	4	4	12	12
3	Tolerance	Ban on cheating.	4	4		
		Delivering equal services to all individuals, irrespective of their economic level, social standing, race, religion, or ethnicity	4	4		
		Providing services to students with special needs.	0	0	4	4
4	Discipline	Getting used to being on time.	4	4		
		Getting used to obeying the rules.	4	4	8	8
5	Hard work	Creating a healthy competitive atmosphere.	4	4		
		Putting up a display with catchphrases or mottos about putting in a lot of effort and research.	4	4	8	8
6	Creative	Establishing educational scenarios that encourage imaginative behavior and thought.	4	4	8	8

		Tasks that test the creation of fresh, authentic, and modified works are assigned.	4	4		
7	Independent	Creating an environment in the classroom where students can work on their own.	4	4	4	4
8	Democratic	Making class decisions together through deliberation and consensus	0	0		
		Opening selection of class stewardship.	0	0	0	0
9	Curiosity	Creating a classroom atmosphere that invites curiosity.	4	4		
					8	8
		Communication or information media	4	4		
10	The Spirit of Nationality	Cooperating with classmates of different ethnicities, ethnicities, socio-economic status.	4	4	4	4
		Discuss national holidays.	0	0		
11	Love homeland	Showcasing images of the president and vice president, the national insignia, the state flag, an Indonesian map, and images of the daily life of Indonesians.	4	0	4	0
12	Rewarding achievement	Giving appreciation gifts for students work	4	4	4	4
		Displaying achievement awards signs	0	0		
13	Friendly/ Communicative	The teacher listens to the complaints of students.	4	4		
		In communicating, teachers do not keep a distance from students.	4	4	8	8
14	Love peace	Creating a peaceful classroom atmosphere.	4	4		
		Gender-unbiased learning.	4	4	12	12
		Kinship in an affectionate class.	4	4		
15	Joy of reading	Frequency of library visits	4	4		
		Reading exchange	0	0	4	4
16	Environmental concern	Maintaining the classroom environment	4	4		
		Trash cans are available in the classroom	4	4	8	8
17	Social concern	Empathize with fellow classmate				
		Conducting social actions.	4	4	4	4
18	Responsibility	Regular implementation of picket duties.	4	4	4	4
Total					112	108

From Table 3. above, it is seen that there are 34 indicators of teacher success in strengthening character education which include 18 character values. Thus, there are 136 frequency indicators for 4 meetings. However, it is known from the aforementioned statistics that the first English teacher has conducted four meetings and has 112 frequencies of character education boosting indicators.

This means that there were 6 indicators that none of which were carried out during 4 meetings. Meanwhile, second English teacher only has 108 frequencies of indicators have been carried out of 136 frequencies of indicators during 4 meetings.

Furthermore, the data in Table 3. were analyzed and classified by the researchers with the results as in chart below.

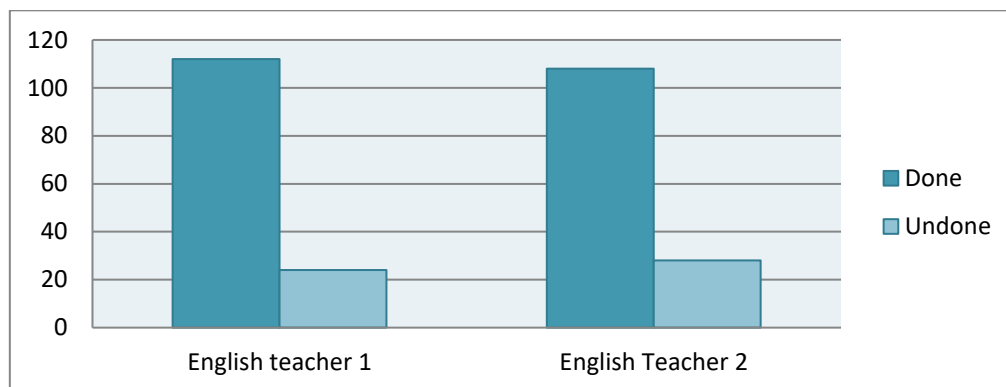


Chart 3 Comparison Data on the Number of Indicators of Both English Teachers

The data collected during the four meetings indicated that both English teachers had more frequencies of indicators that had been completed than the number of frequencies of indicators that had not, according to Chart 3 above, which is based on data analyzed using indicators of 18 character values. So, based on the chart it is concluded that the first English teacher did more indicators in strengthening character education than the second English teacher. Additionally, based on the Presidential Regulation of the Indonesian Minister of National Education Number 87 of 2017 on strengthening character education, it is determined that students at SMP Negeri 1 Lahewa Timur, particularly in the eighth grade, continue to fall short in exhibiting attitudes and behaviors consistent with the 18 character values.

It is well recognized from the research findings that English teachers play a critical role in enhancing character education. The first responsibility is to include character values that have been incorporated into the lesson plan into the design and execution of learning activities in the classroom (Veronica & Dafit, 2022). Teachers implement the integrity of character education values by educating and guiding students in developing themselves during the learning process. Furthermore, the second role is being a good role model for students. Both of English teachers stated that what the teacher does will be imitated by students, both in attitude and behavior, in dress, time discipline, cleanliness and various other positive attitudes. Teachers are expected to set a good example for students to follow so that they can be emulated and exemplified. As Sari (2021) also reveals, teachers play a crucial role in bolstering character education by advising students to follow school rules. Furthermore, according to the interview results, the third function in enhancing character education is to serve as an inspiration for students, namely by sharing stories or images that aid in the development of their character (Siregar, 2021).

However, during the observation period the researcher did not find any concrete evidence that the second English teacher carried out his role as an inspirer in the classroom. This shows that there is a significant difference between the informants' statements and their actions. Furthermore, this is in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which acknowledges that sometimes there is a gap between intentions (statements) and actual behavior. A person's intention to behave in a certain way is influenced by three main factors, namely attitude towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Kupers et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024), which attitudes towards behavior can be distinguished cognitive attitudes and affective attitudes (e.g.

beliefs about differentiated instruction and feelings of competence), while subjective norms refers to a person's perception of how others will perceive the behavior as well as individuals' perceptions of the social pressures that influence their behavior, while perceived behavioral control (a concept very similar to self-efficacy) involves beliefs about internal and external factors that can facilitate or inhibit behavior so that this shapes perceived behavioral control (Yang et al., 2024; Liu and Wang, 2024).

So, it is concluded that the second English teacher did not carry out this role because it was caused by the perception of behavioral control, namely the perception of obstacles or challenges in implementing the role of inspirer as stated by the second English teacher himself in the results of the telephone interview, namely because of limited time. This is supported by Saputra and Budimansyah (2021) that one of the obstacles in integrating character education is limited time in the classroom. Therefore, in this case the second English teacher has a theoretical understanding of his role, but time constraints or time limitations become an obstacle in its implementation in the classroom.

Furthermore, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 87 of 2017 addressing enhancing character education states that both English teachers shall incorporate the 18 character values. The first is religious value, which aims to mold pupils into morally upright individuals who believe in and are committed to God Almighty (Hayati et al., 2020). Therefore, to realize the achievement of strengthening the character value, English teachers have several indicators that must be done to achieve the strengthening of religious values. The value of honesty follows, which is behavior based on an attempt to become a trustworthy individual in both words and deeds. Honesty is the main capital in association and education which honesty is an attitude or behavior that can be trusted by others as a form of responsibility for what we do (Rismianti & Wakhudin, 2023). This is evidenced by the actions of the English teacher who always criticized the condition of the class so that it was arranged to be better and there was a rule or prohibition not to cheat in doing the assignments that the English teacher had given (Bharati et al., 2019).

The next character value is tolerance, data from observations show that English teachers provide opportunities for students who want to try to answer questions even though the answers are still not correct (Thoyyibah et al., 2019). Because they are a role model for children, English teachers have internalized discipline by being accustomed to being punctual and according to school rules. This has helped to build this character value (Priastuti et al., 2023). In the meantime, the character value of hard labor demonstrates a sincere attempt to go beyond different learning challenges and finish tasks as well as feasible. English teachers have provided opportunities for students to answer questions quickly so that they get special daily scores (Syapal & Amin, 2022).

Creative, English teachers have asked students to find and create new sentences/new ideas about suggestion according to the pattern or formula (Wijayanti, 2022). Furthermore, for the character values of independence, the several words that were not understood using a dictionary, then write it in his book (Dewi, 2022). Democracy whereas during the observations that have been made, the researcher did not directly see the making of class decisions together or the election of class administrators together or deliberation or consensus. According to Catyaningsih et al. (2022), democratic attitudes can be acquired through the educational process received from schools because education in schools plays a role in producing good citizens who can be actively and effectively involved in the life of a democratic society. This is not in line with the role of the teacher, which should be that of the teacher.

For spirit of nationality, the English teachers still have not carried out discussions about national holidays, but every time the flag ceremony is held, students are invited to sing the national compulsory song together as the spirit of nationality (Yati et al., 2020). Love for one's country is the next character value. According to the researcher's findings, one of the classes had a picture of the president and vice president as well as a state symbol on display. Researchers hasn't, however, observed any conversation on the image between the pupils and the English teacher. This goes against what teachers are supposed to do. According to Nursamsi & Jumardi (2022), teachers should help students develop a love for their country by teaching them about mental patriotism in the classroom. This will help them grow into nationalist, patriotic people.

Then the character value of appreciation for achievement, which has been integrated well by English teachers, one of which is when English teachers asked students to give applause and give thumbs up as appreciation to students who have answered questions correctly (Yulianti & Nainupu, 2023). Communicative, but the English teachers always allowed students to ask questions if they had any or if they had any questions about any of the material (Jamaludin et al., 2021). Love of peace, the researcher saw that English teachers had also internalized the indicators of this character value as evidenced by the efforts of English teachers to advise students to always care about others, not to cause commotion or chaos, so as to create a serene and peaceful situation (Halim et al., 2020). Joy of reading, here English teachers have advised students and suggested students to visit the library and read books to increase their insight and knowledge (Kurniasih and Sani, 2017). Caring for the environment has indicators of maintaining the classroom environment and the availability of trash bins in the classroom. This is consistent with Ismail's (2021) assertion in Marlina et al. (2023) that, in general, the school environment can serve as a starting point for the development of environmental care character by keeping schools clean, which is a successful tactic to raise public awareness of the environment and prevent damage.

Furthermore, social care as which in internalizing this character value, English teachers always advise students to help each other when asking for help (Khaerunnisa and Muqowim, 2020). The last character value is responsibility, which in strengthen it the English teachers also always remind students to carry out their obligations at school (Setiyono & Fawzia (2021). Interviews with the first English teacher said that environmental factors are very influential on student character. If students live in a bad environment, then students will follow to behave badly. This will hinder and affect students in forming good character. Likewise with the second English teacher, who stated that a bad environment certainly also has a bad influence on oneself (Siregar, 2021). As evidenced by the findings of observations in the field notes, the researcher saw that several children rushed out of the classroom after school departure, displaying an unruly and unruly demeanor. Even on the way home, the researcher has heard students whistling (See appendix 8 students' field notes of the research). It is evident that environmental factors can hinder English teachers' efforts to strengthen character education because they may contain values that are at odds with the goals of character education. As a result, students from such backgrounds may exhibit tendencies that are inconsistent with the values taught in character education classes.

The next obstacle is the family, as stated by both English teachers that the family factor clearly affects how the character of students because character building is not only at school but the family is also a place where children are cared for, nurtured and raised as well as the first and main place for children in learning and developing character (Jhon et al., 20210). The third obstacle is the bad influence of social media. As

stated by the second English teacher that social media can be an obstacle for teachers in strengthening student character, because social media can have a bad influence on student personality. This is corroborated by Madyan and Baidawi (2021), who claim that in addition to its beneficial effects, social media can also have detrimental effects on students, including making them lazy and unruly, forgetting time, which leads to neglected assignments, and instilling in them the tendency to cheat on other people's work.

This is further supported by the findings of the researchers' observations of eighth-grade class B pupils, who continued to exhibit attitudes and behaviors inconsistent with character standards, such as students who often yawn in class when learning is taking place (See appendix 8 the result of field notes for students class B meeting 3), where this can be caused by excessive use of gadgets so that they lack sleep. Even students' tardiness in coming to school can also be caused by this. During recess after the English teacher leaves the classroom, there are also students who mimic the language styles of social media that are disrespectful and non-academic such as the sentences '*emang gue pikirin*', and '*bodo amat gue*' (See appendix 8 the result of field notes for students class B meeting 3). So, the influence of social media and technology also sometimes conflicts with the values taught at school.

Furthermore, according to the findings of the second English teacher's telephone interviews, time limits seem to be another barrier to enhancing character education, making it difficult to strike a balance between character development and academic success. Researchers observed that when break time approaches, students lose focus on the teacher in the classroom, which is consistent with the findings of their observations (see appendix 8 students' field notes of the research). This is certainly an obstacle for the English teacher in carrying out his role as an inspirator to conveyed stories that should contain character values to be integrated to students in the classroom (Aryawan et al.,2022).

Conclusion

English teachers have carried out two roles in strengthening character education, namely the role of integrating character values through learning activities and the role being as good role model, while as an inspirer for students still not yet carried out. Not only do English teachers play a crucial part in the classroom learning process, but they also consistently uphold character education outside of the classroom. According to Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education, the character values instilled in the role of the English teacher are: religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hardworking, creative, independent, curious, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, environmental care, social care, and responsibility, with the exception of the democratic character value. Additionally, the results indicate that environmental influences, family, social media, and time limits are some of the challenges that English teachers encounter in enhancing character education, particularly in this school.

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