

ROLES OF SCHOOL, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES IN VALUES AND CHARACTER FORMATION

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Abstract

Character and value formation are the bases of human growth, social harmony, and the nation's progress. This article focused on the roles of schools, families, and communities in fostering values and character development in children and adolescents. The study revealed that key values that support peaceful coexistence and the sustainable development of society are honesty, discipline, integrity, responsibility, tolerance, empathy, and respect. It identified the family as a key socialisation institution, as it was through the family that children learned moral values, culture, discipline, and appropriate social conduct through parental guidance, role modelling, emotional support, and religious teachings. The article also detailed how schools play an important role in character formation by providing opportunities for moral and civic education, school discipline, teacher role modelling, co-curricular activities, counselling services, and positive learning environments. Communities also have an important role in maintaining cultural values, controlling social behaviour, offering role models, encouraging social responsibility, and elucidating moral teachings through religious and traditional organisations. The paper also explored the partnership dynamics between schools, families and communities to promote effective moral development and responsible citizenship. Moreover, issues related to value formation and moral degradation, such as family instability, the negative influence of the media, peer pressure, moral decay, poor education, and economic problems, were mentioned. The article concluded that there is a need to build moral human beings who can contribute positively to the development of their society. This

requires effective collaboration between families, schools, religious organisations, communities and governments.

Keywords: Values, character formation, family, school, community, moral education, socialisation, character education, moral development, citizenship.

Introduction

Values and character formation are integral parts of the development of human nature and social stability. Morals, ethics, and socially acceptable behaviour are necessary for every society to achieve peace, unity, and sustainable development. Values are principles and beliefs that influence individuals' attitudes and behaviour, and character formation is the cultivation of moral qualities such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, integrity, respect, tolerance, and empathy (Berkowitz & Bier, 2021).

Unfortunately, in recent years, many societies have been suffering from moral deterioration, including violence, corruption, examination malpractice, cybercrime, dishonesty, and disrespect for authority. Such challenges have raised concerns about the effectiveness of institutions tasked with nurturing young people's moral character (UNESCO, 2021). Therefore, in today's context, schools, families, and Communities are increasingly called upon to work together in fostering responsible and moral citizens.

The family is the first environment that teaches children acceptable behaviours, values and cultural norms. These values are promoted in the formal education system, in school discipline and social interaction, and in the broader social context of communities where they are applied and maintained (Eccles & Roeser, 2020). These institutions together influence people's attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural patterns over the course of their lives.

The concept of values and character formation

Values are the society-approved norms that affect and guide people's actions and judgments. It dictates what people perceive as desired, appropriate, and morally acceptable (Nucci et al, 2021). Examples of values in a society include honesty, integrity, justice, respect, loyalty, compassion, tolerance, cooperation, and responsibility. Character formation is the process through which individuals learn to be morally upright, possess virtuous qualities to guide their interactions with the world around them, and become responsible citizens (Lickona, 2019). It is a lifelong learning process shaped by upbringing, schooling, relationships with friends, religion, media, culture, and society's history. According to social learning theory, humans acquire knowledge by watching and copying role models in their environment (Bandura, 2018). So, children acquire values and character traits through interactions in their homes, schools, clubs and organisations, and in their society as a whole (Johnson et al., 2024; Nwafor et al., 2024; Nkanu et al., 2025).

The role of families in values and character formation

The family is often considered the first and most significant social agency shaping a child's character. Parents and guardians inculcate in children acceptable social behaviour, the ways and norms of society, and beliefs about good moral behaviour (Bornstein, 2019).

1. Primary Agent of Socialisation

It is often within the confines of the home that the values of honesty, respect, kindness, responsibility, obedience, and morality, such as compassion and caring for others, are transmitted to the children. Children learn appropriate communication, behaviour, emotion regulation, and interaction skills (Bornstein, 2019) from their parents, which lays the foundation for future relationships. Family is also the primary agent of transmission of cultural and moral values from generation to generation.

2. Role Modelling Moral Behaviour

Children are natural imitators of the actions and beliefs of parents and other caretakers, making parental role modelling a very significant factor in the development of moral behaviour. According to Bandura (2018), social learning happens through modelling and reinforcement. Therefore, when a child observes his/her parents being honest, hard-working, empathetic, sincere, and displaying integrity, that child is most likely to follow suit. However, children will also imbibe the negative traits of their parents or caretakers if not guarded from corrupt, violent and irresponsible parents and role models.

3. Training on discipline and responsibility

Children develop self-control, responsibility and maturity through learning from the rules, expectations, and standards set by the family. Consistent training through positive correction, appropriate reprimands, and rewards and punishments helps instil a sense of self-control and a willingness to accept responsibility (Santrock, 2022). Discipline learned at home enables children to be respectful to authority and take ownership of their behaviours.

4. Emotional and Psychological Support

The family provides emotional and psychological stability that can nurture positive character traits in children. When children feel safe, loved, and secure in their homes and feel parents care for their needs and offer moral guidance and support, they will develop into emotionally and psychologically stable beings with high self-esteem and excellent interpersonal and social competence (Darling & Steinberg, 2021). Children in neglectful, abusive homes lacking love and security, and those growing up in homes characterised by conflict, violence and corruption tend to become rebellious, antisocial or possess other problematic character traits.

5. Religious and Cultural Transmission

The family is usually the initial source of religious teachings and practices, as well as of the understanding and observance of the customs and traditions passed down through the generations within a specific culture. Values associated with the practice of religion include love, kindness, humility, mercy, forgiveness, integrity and a desire for social justice. Cultural norms, on the other hand, influence values related to respect, community life, hospitality, and social duty (Kim & Esquivel, 2020).

6. Parental Monitoring and Guidance

Parental monitoring has a significant impact on behaviour; children can be guided regarding interactions with the environment, the selection of friends, involvement in different activities, media exposure and selection, and education. Monitoring of behaviour is crucial to protect children from undesirable and negative societal influences that might include juvenile delinquency, involvement in cults, substance abuse or other criminal activities. Responsible children would result from such diligent parental guidance and protection (Santrock, 2022; Ekpoto et al., 2025a & Ekpoto et al., 2025b).

The role of schools in values and character formation

Schools, as formal institutions established to promote moral, social, intellectual, and emotional development beyond academics, are crucial stakeholders in character education. Schools play an invaluable role in shaping students' values, attitudes, and character (Adams et al., 2025; Eccles & Roeser, 2020).

1. Moral and Civic Education

The school curriculum usually includes subjects such as civic education, social studies, and moral studies. The goals of teaching such subjects include instilling patriotism, responsibility, integrity, justice, leadership qualities, tolerance, and respect for law and order, enabling pupils to understand their civil rights and duties in relation to society.

2. Teacher Role Models

Teachers, like parents, are important role models for pupils. Good teachers, through their discipline, punctuality, honesty, fairness, and positive interaction, will impart these traits to his/her students. The good character of a teacher serves as a moral example to students (Lickona, 2019), moulding and refining pupils' character positively.

3. Discipline and Order in School

School rules and punishments for contraventions help children learn orderliness, obedience to authority and self-control. Adherence to school regulations and codes of conduct enhances responsibility, self-discipline, and social responsibility. Pupils learn the consequences of breaking rules and regulations and what good behaviour would earn them (Berkowitz & Bier, 2021).

4. Extracurricular activities

Activities such as sports, clubs, dramas, debating society, student council membership, and community service greatly influence and improve character. These help pupils learn how to work with others towards common goals, be persistent, have self-confidence, empathy, and tolerate others. Pupils can strengthen interpersonal relationships by participating in these activities (Wentzel, 2021).

5. Guidance and Counselling Services

School counsellors support students to cope with and resolve issues that arise; this support is also invaluable in shaping a pupil's moral behaviour, ensuring children know how to resolve conflicts,

make good choices when problems arise, and understand why they should take ownership of their actions and choices. Counsellors offer students moral and ethical guidelines, help children overcome problems, help them find a path to personal development, and provide psychological support (American School Counsellor Association [ASCA], 2022). Such support greatly reduces deviant behaviour among students.

6. Creation of a Positive School Environment

Schools must create a nurturing environment free of aggression, bullying, and discrimination so that pupils can develop desirable character traits. A positive school environment promotes positive conduct, empathy, fairness, and respect for individual differences (Thapa et al., 2020). Negative school environment, as characterised by bullying, fighting and prejudice, would only lead to aggressive, insecure children with low moral character.

The role of community in values and character formation

The term "community" can refer to religious organisations, peer groups, traditional institutions, and civic organisations. Community influences character through a variety of mechanisms, including enforcing social norms, providing moral teaching and exemplars, and setting standards for social behaviour (Akinpelu, 2020).

1. Preservation of Traditional Culture and Values

The community holds cultural beliefs and values that mould desirable individual and group behaviours. Traditional institutions and leaders have the mandate to teach children good moral behaviour. Festivals and traditional ceremonies help instil values like respect, unity, responsibility, and cooperation (Akinpelu, 2020).

2. Moral teaching by Religious Institutions

Religious organisations are centres of spiritual and moral teaching for members of all ages. Their teachings are mostly centred on morals that foster patience, empathy, humility, integrity and love (Kim & Esquivel, 2020). Religious leaders guide individuals and their behaviour through their moral teachings and examples.

3. Social control and behavioural regulation

Informal neighbourhood rules and standards regulate acceptable behaviour in communities. Neighbours influence behaviour through social approval or disapproval (Akinpelu, 2020). This influences people to be mindful of others to gain approval and thus to shun behaviour such as lying, stealing, and disrespecting elders.

4. Provision of positive role models

Leaders within communities, successful entrepreneurs, academicians, and sports professionals serve as role models for the younger generation, motivating children toward productive lives and development.

5. Social Responsibility promotion

Community projects such as environmental upkeep, volunteer work, and other philanthropic acts help build community awareness and promote social responsibility among children and youth by teaching them to work for the welfare of others and society.

6. Peer Group Influence

The friends that a child associates with will influence his or her actions. A child with morally upright and ambitious friends will naturally grow up with similar virtues, whereas one who associates with negative influences, such as delinquents and cult members, is likely to engage in antisocial behaviours (Wentzel, 2021; Ekpoto et al., 2021). Organised community activities, however, can combat the influence of harmful peer groups.

The Role of the School, the Family and the Community in Character Development.

Character development is more effective when it is a concerted effort between the school, the family and the community. The schools, the family, and the community all supplement each other to guide children and young people toward moral principles and responsible conduct (Eccles & Roeser, 2020).

Families provide children with basic moral guidance, while schools educate them on ethical standards. On the other hand, society is responsible for maintaining the morals and cultural values that society upholds for its citizens. When families, school and religious leaders, and community stakeholders work together, they establish uniformity in the teaching of morals and behaviour among young people (Lickona, 2019). Involvement of parents in school activities and in the community for a mentorship programme, and collaboration between the school and a religious institution, contribute greatly to moral training and development among young people (Akpama et al., 2025; Edinyang et al., 2020; Ekpoto et al., 2025a & 2025b).

Problems Influencing Values and Character Development.

Despite the great work the school, family, and community do, they cannot make character development effective without certain difficulties that influence values and character development. These problems include:

1. The Collapse of the family institution: The poor training of morals by the parents, neglect, divorce, family violence and inadequate training and upbringing of the child by parents will not permit a good moral development of the child. (Darling & Steinberg, 2021).

2. Harmful influences in the media: The type of movies, such as pornography and violence, that young people watch, websites they visit, programs they watch, and books they read that contain immoral influences negatively influence them. (Bandura, 2018).

3. Peer pressure: The influence of negative friends will not allow good character development. Young people will indulge themselves in cultism, drug abuse, examination cheating, internet fraud and juvenile delinquency. (Wentzel, 2021).

4. Lack of morality: When most people in society do not embrace the correct standards or ethics of behaviour but instead practice corruption and dishonesty, this affects and influences them negatively. (Akinpelu, 2020).

5. Defective system in education: Inadequacy of teaching of morals to children, misconduct from teachers, and no counselling guidance to the children does not give the school effectiveness in the development of children's character. (Berkowitz & Bier, 2021).

6. Economic deprivation: Poverty and unemployment in society can also make young people behave illegally so that they can survive. (UNESCO, 2021).

Ways of promoting efficient character development

1. Strengthen family values: Parental moral upbringing, monitoring, supervision and interaction are necessary (Bornstein, 2019).

2. Improve the schools in developing the students' character: The school should teach the children about what is good and how to be disciplined and a good citizen. (Lickona, 2019).

3. Train and professionalise teachers: Teachers should be able to counsel and manage students and children and give them proper morals (ASCA, 2022).

4. Involve the community: The community must create mentorship programs, civic clubs and group activities for young people and children to develop good character (Wentzel, 2021).

5. Control the media: All individuals and governments must take action against the morally decaying activities of the media; the media should promote and give good examples to the people (UNESCO, 2021).

6. Cooperation of all individuals in the society: Individuals in the family, school and the religious institution must work together to help children develop good character and morals (Eccles & Roeser, 2020).

Conclusion

Good moral and character development are required for every individual. The school, family, and community each have their distinctive responsibilities in developing good character; all should take this with utmost seriousness to ensure that young children and young adults develop the moral qualities they need. Values and character development are necessary for a nation. They give an individual a certain behaviour that they may carry to their grave. The family, school, and community play a significant role in shaping young minds towards positive behaviour.

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