

The Role of Parents in Forming Children's Characters

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ABSTRACT

The role of parents in shaping children's character is increasingly important amid rapid social, cultural, and technological changes. This article presents a systematic literature review of studies published between 2022 and 2026 to analyze how parenting practices contribute to children's character development. The findings show that parenting style, parental involvement, communication, emotional support, and role modeling significantly influence children's moral values, behavior, and social development. Authoritative parenting is consistently identified as the most effective approach in fostering responsibility, empathy, discipline, and emotional regulation. In addition, digital technology creates both opportunities and challenges, requiring parents to apply digital parenting strategies and strengthen digital literacy. The review also highlights the importance of collaboration between parents and schools in ensuring consistent character education across home and educational settings. Despite contextual challenges such as limited time and socioeconomic pressures, effective parenting remains a key determinant of successful character formation. Guided by Social Learning Theory, children develop character primarily through observation and imitation of parental behavior.

Keywords: Parenting Style, Character, Parental Involvement, Digital Parenting

Introduction

Character formation is a fundamental aspect of child development because it shapes how children think, behave, interact socially, and respond to moral and emotional challenges throughout their lives. Character includes values, attitudes, habits, and ethical principles that guide individuals in making decisions and behaving within society. In the contemporary era, character development has gained increasing importance due to rapid technological advancement, globalization, and shifting social

environments that continuously influence children's behavior. As children are increasingly exposed to digital media, peer interactions, and diverse social contexts, parental involvement becomes a critical factor in guiding moral development and strengthening positive character formation (Wati et al., 2024). This condition shows that character education is not only a theoretical concept but also a practical necessity in helping children critically filter various external influences that may shape their attitudes, choices, and long-term behavioral patterns in daily life.

Parents are widely recognized as the first and most influential educators in a child's life. Before entering formal education, children acquire foundational values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and respect through family interactions. The family environment serves as the primary setting where early moral and social learning takes place, making it a crucial foundation for character development. Research shows that supportive relationships within the family significantly contribute to children's psychological well-being and character development by providing emotional stability and behavioral guidance (Butler et al., 2022). This demonstrates that a strong family environment plays an essential role in shaping children's early moral awareness and social behavior, particularly in forming how children understand acceptable and unacceptable actions in social contexts.

In addition, parental involvement plays a significant role in strengthening children's character formation through daily interaction and behavioral modeling. Parents not only provide instruction but also serve as role models whose actions are directly observed and imitated by children. Studies indicate that parents' perceptions and active involvement in character education significantly influence children's moral development and behavioral outcomes (Wati et al., 2024). This shows that consistency between parental guidance and behavior is essential, as children tend to internalize values that are repeatedly demonstrated in their daily environment, both consciously and unconsciously, through observation and imitation processes.

Recent studies emphasize that parenting style is closely related to children's behavioral and emotional development. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, clear boundaries, and responsiveness, is associated with positive outcomes such as self-discipline, empathy, and responsibility. Conversely, ineffective parenting practices may lead to behavioral instability and weak moral development (Cayaban et al., 2025). This suggests that the quality of parenting directly influences how children

regulate emotions, interact socially, and develop moral reasoning in everyday life. In practice, children who experience supportive parenting tend to have better confidence in social situations and are more capable of making responsible decisions.

Furthermore, parental communication plays a crucial role in supporting children's emotional development and moral understanding. Open and supportive communication enables children to express their feelings, build trust, and understand social values more effectively. Research highlights that parental communication and involvement significantly contribute to shaping children's emotional and moral development within the family context (Alfiyanto et al., 2024). This indicates that communication within the family is not only informational but also deeply emotional, where children learn how to manage feelings, resolve conflicts, and understand perspectives through daily interaction with parents.

The development of digital technology has also introduced both opportunities and challenges in parenting practices. On one hand, digital platforms provide access to educational resources that can support learning and character education. On the other hand, excessive exposure to digital content may negatively influence children's behavior if not properly guided. Therefore, parental supervision and digital literacy are essential in ensuring safe and responsible digital behavior among children (Stewart et al., 2022). This shows that modern parenting requires adaptation to technological environments while maintaining moral guidance, including the ability to accompany children in selecting appropriate content and understanding digital ethics.

In addition, social and economic changes have affected family dynamics and parenting practices. Work demands, limited time, and changing social expectations often reduce the intensity of parent-child interaction. However, research indicates that supportive family relationships remain a key determinant of children's mental well-being and character development regardless of external conditions (Butler et al., 2022). This suggests that the quality of interaction is more important than the quantity of time spent together in shaping children's character, especially when interactions are meaningful, emotionally supportive, and consistent.

The role of parents in character formation is also strongly supported by theoretical perspectives. Social Learning Theory explains that children learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement from significant individuals, particularly parents (Miller, 2022). This theory emphasizes that children are highly influenced by

what they observe in their daily environment, making parents central figures in shaping moral understanding and behavioral patterns. Consistent parental modeling of positive values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility contributes significantly to children's long-term character development, as these behaviors gradually become internalized as personal values.

Furthermore, collaboration between parents and schools plays an essential role in strengthening character education. Schools provide structured moral and academic learning, while parents reinforce these values at home. Studies show that collaborative efforts among schools, families, and communities enhance the effectiveness of character education and ensure consistency in value transmission (Sumar et al., 2025). This highlights that character formation is a shared responsibility requiring coordination between educational institutions and families to create a consistent moral environment for children.

Based on these considerations, this article aims to examine the role of parents in forming children's character through a review of recent literature published between 2022 and 2026. The study focuses on identifying the influence of parenting style, parental involvement, communication, digital parenting, and parent-school collaboration in shaping children's moral, emotional, and social development. Through this review, the article provides a comprehensive understanding of how parental roles contribute to the formation of strong and positive character traits in children in the modern era.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the role of parents in children's character development. The review followed the stages of identifying research questions, searching the literature, selecting eligible studies, extracting data, and synthesizing findings.

Relevant articles were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, and DOAJ using keywords including *parenting style*, *parental involvement*, *character development*, *digital parenting*, and *parent-school collaboration*. The inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed articles published between 2022 and 2026, available in full text, and focusing

on parental roles in children's character development. Articles that did not meet these criteria or were duplicates were excluded.

The selected studies were analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on five major themes: parenting style, parental communication, digital parenting, parent–school collaboration, and contextual challenges in parenting. The findings were synthesized narratively to provide a comprehensive understanding of current evidence regarding the contribution of parents to children's character formation.

Discussion

Parenting Style and Behavioral Development in Children

The literature review indicates that parenting style plays a crucial role in shaping children's character and behavioral development. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and clear behavioral boundaries, is consistently associated with positive character outcomes such as self-discipline, empathy, and responsibility (Cayaban et al., 2025). In this parenting approach, children receive balanced guidance that combines emotional support with structured discipline, allowing them to understand not only what is right or wrong but also the reasons behind moral rules. This process contributes to the development of internalized values rather than mere obedience based on external pressure.

Furthermore, parenting style significantly influences children's emotional regulation and social adaptation. Children who grow up in supportive and consistent parenting environments tend to demonstrate stronger emotional stability and better interpersonal skills in social interactions. In contrast, inconsistent, overly strict, or neglectful parenting patterns may hinder emotional development and weaken children's ability to manage behavior in social contexts. This indicates that effective character formation requires not only discipline but also emotional warmth, consistency, and responsiveness in daily parenting practices.

In addition, parenting style contributes to long-term behavioral formation by shaping how children interpret rules and moral expectations. Through continuous interaction, children gradually develop internal standards that guide their behavior even in the absence of parental supervision. This shows that character development is a gradual and continuous process influenced by everyday family experiences and behavioral reinforcement..

Parental Communication and Emotional Development

The findings of the literature emphasize that parental communication is a fundamental element in children's emotional and moral development. Open, supportive, and empathetic communication creates a safe environment where children feel comfortable expressing thoughts, emotions, and personal challenges (Alfiyanto et al., 2024). This interaction supports the development of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to understand social situations more effectively.

Moreover, communication within the family functions as a key mechanism for transmitting values and moral principles. When parents actively listen and respond to children's concerns, trust is strengthened, which increases children's willingness to accept guidance and internalize moral teachings. This highlights that communication is not merely an exchange of information but also a process of emotional bonding that shapes children's character development.

Consistent and healthy communication patterns also help prevent misunderstandings and behavioral conflicts between parents and children. Children who experience positive communication are more likely to develop constructive coping strategies when facing academic, emotional, or social challenges. Therefore, communication plays a central role in integrating emotional development with character formation.

Digital Parenting and Character Challenges in the Modern Era

The advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed parenting practices and children's developmental environments. Digital platforms provide access to educational content that can support learning and character development; however, they also expose children to inappropriate content, excessive screen time, and potential behavioral risks if not properly managed (Stewart et al., 2022). This condition indicates that digital technology is not inherently positive or negative, but its impact depends on how parents regulate and guide its use within the family environment. Therefore, parental awareness becomes essential in balancing the benefits and risks of digital exposure for children's character development.

In this context, digital parenting becomes essential in guiding children's use of technology. Parental supervision is no longer limited to restricting access but also

includes educating children about digital ethics, responsible online behavior, and critical evaluation of digital content. This means parents are required to actively accompany children in navigating digital environments rather than only imposing restrictions. This approach reflects a shift in parenting roles from control-based supervision to guidance-based mentoring, where children are gradually taught to make responsible decisions independently.

Furthermore, parental digital literacy plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of digital parenting. Parents who understand digital platforms are better able to guide and monitor their children's online activities. Therefore, adapting to technological change is a necessary aspect of modern parenting to ensure that digital exposure supports, rather than hinders, children's character development. This suggests that in the digital era, parenting competence is not only measured by emotional or moral guidance, but also by the ability to understand and engage with technological environments that shape children's daily behavior..

Parent-School Collaboration in Strengthening Character Education

The literature highlights that collaboration between parents and schools is essential in strengthening children's character education. Schools provide structured moral and academic learning, while parents reinforce these values within the home environment. When both institutions work in alignment, children receive consistent moral messages that support stronger internalization of character values (Sumar et al., 2025). This consistency is important because children tend to develop stronger moral understanding when values are repeatedly reinforced across different environments.

In addition, parent-school collaboration contributes to the development of a supportive educational ecosystem. Continuous communication between teachers and parents enables early identification of behavioral issues and more effective intervention strategies. This shared responsibility ensures that character education is not fragmented but integrated across different environments in which children develop. This indicates that collaboration creates a more stable and structured environment for shaping children's behavior, especially in addressing emotional and social challenges early.

Moreover, active parental involvement in school activities increases children's motivation and strengthens their perception of the importance of moral values. Observing cooperation between parents and teachers helps children understand that

character development is valued in both academic and family settings, thereby reinforcing consistency in behavior and attitudes. This means that collaboration not only affects educational outcomes but also strengthens children's belief system regarding the importance of positive character in everyday life.

Contextual Challenges in Parenting Practices

The also identifies several contextual challenges that influence parenting effectiveness. Economic pressures, work demands, and limited time often reduce the frequency of direct interaction between parents and children (Butler et al., 2022). These conditions may limit opportunities for consistent guidance and supervision in daily life. This situation indicates that modern parenting is increasingly shaped by external structural factors rather than solely individual parenting intentions, where parents are often required to divide attention between work responsibilities and family needs. As a result, the consistency of emotional presence and direct engagement with children may fluctuate, which can affect the stability of character-building processes in the family environment.

However, research indicates that the quality of interaction is more important than its quantity. Meaningful communication, emotional support, and attentive engagement can still produce positive developmental outcomes even when time is limited. This suggests that effective parenting is determined more by the depth of interaction than by its duration. In practical terms, even short interactions can become highly impactful when they involve active listening, empathy, and sincere attention to children's emotional needs. Therefore, the effectiveness of parenting is closely related to how parents utilize available time to create meaningful and value-based interactions that support children's moral development.

In addition, rapid social and cultural changes add complexity to parenting roles. Parents are required to balance traditional moral values with modern societal influences while adapting to evolving expectations. This dynamic highlights that parenting is a continuous adjustment process shaped by changing social environments. This means that parents are not only responsible for maintaining moral consistency within the family but also for interpreting and filtering external influences that may affect children's character formation. Consequently, parenting in the modern era demands

flexibility, critical awareness, and adaptive strategies to ensure that core values remain stable despite shifting social conditions.

Theoretical Interpretation of Parental Influence on Character Formation

Social Learning Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how children develop character through parental influence. According to Miller (2022), children learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement from significant individuals in their environment, particularly parents. This indicates that children are highly influenced by what they see in daily family interactions, making the home environment a primary setting for the formation of moral understanding and behavioral patterns.

In practical terms, children tend to imitate parental behaviors such as honesty, discipline, empathy, and responsibility. Therefore, parents function not only as caregivers but also as behavioral models whose actions directly shape children's moral development. Consistency between parental words and actions is essential in ensuring effective internalization of values. This implies that any inconsistency between what parents say and what they do may create confusion in children's value interpretation, potentially weakening the character formation process over time.

Furthermore, character formation is a long-term developmental process that requires continuous reinforcement. Values that are consistently demonstrated and practiced within the family environment gradually become part of children's personality and behavioral identity. This emphasizes that sustainable character development depends on long-term consistency, emotional engagement, and positive role modeling within the family system. In other words, character is not formed through isolated teaching moments, but through repeated lived experiences that shape how children understand, feel, and respond to moral situations in everyday life.

Implications for Education Policy and Parenting Programs

The findings of this literature review have important implications for education policy and parenting intervention programs. Education policymakers are encouraged to design more comprehensive family-based education strategies that actively involve parents in character education initiatives within schools. This is important because character formation cannot be achieved only through formal education, but requires consistent reinforcement from the family environment as the primary social setting for

children's development. Therefore, policies that strengthen parent engagement in school-based programs can improve the overall effectiveness of character education.

In addition, structured parenting programs need to be developed to support parents in facing contemporary challenges, especially those related to digital transformation and changing social environments. Training programs focusing on digital parenting, emotional communication, and positive discipline strategies can help parents develop more effective approaches in guiding children's behavior. This means that parenting support should not only be informal but also systematically organized through community, school, or government-based initiatives that ensure accessibility for all parents.

Furthermore, collaboration between schools, families, and community institutions should be strengthened to create a more integrated system of character education. Such collaboration ensures consistency in value transmission across different environments, allowing children to receive the same moral messages both at home and at school. As a result, character education becomes a shared responsibility among stakeholders rather than an isolated effort, thereby increasing its effectiveness in shaping children's long-term moral and social development.

Conclusion

The role of parents in children's character formation is a central and continuous process that significantly shapes moral, emotional, and social development. Based on the review of recent literature from 2022 to 2026, it is evident that parenting style, parental communication, digital parenting practices, and collaboration between parents and schools collectively influence the formation of children's character. Authoritative parenting characterized by warmth and clear boundaries contributes positively to self-discipline, empathy, and responsibility, while effective communication within the family strengthens emotional understanding and supports moral internalization.

The findings also show that the rapid development of digital technology introduces both opportunities and challenges in parenting. While digital platforms can support learning and character education, they may also negatively affect children's behavior if not properly guided. Therefore, parental digital literacy and supervision are essential in ensuring that technology use contributes positively to children's development. In addition, cooperation between parents and schools plays a vital role in

creating consistency in value education, which strengthens children's understanding of moral principles across different environments.

Overall, character formation cannot be achieved through a single factor but requires an integrated approach involving family, educational institutions, and broader social support systems. Guided by Social Learning Theory, it can be concluded that children learn most effectively through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their immediate environment, particularly from parents. Therefore, strengthening parental roles through education programs, policy support, and collaborative initiatives is essential to ensure the development of strong, positive, and sustainable character traits in children in the modern era..

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