Teacher-parent collaboration for developing student character in online learning

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Teachers, parents, and students have had difficulty with character development exercises in online learning programs. Students' character quality has suffered as a result of these issues. This study described the essence of reading fondness, learning discipline, and social care in developing the students' character development. In addition, this study also aimed to analyze the role of teachers and parents in character development during the online learning process. Students, teachers, and parents provided information via online questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive quantitative analysis, thematic analysis, and reflective thinking were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that teachers and parents faced challenges that impacted student character quality. Teachers and parents have limited opportunities to shape a students' character. Therefore, they must collaborate to develop it. The limitation of this study lies in the online data collection process, thus suggesting the need to use a more in-depth method to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the case.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic have presented challenges for teachers [1], [2], and parents [3] that have impacted student character development, as noted in a drop in reading fondness in elementary students [4], the lack of discipline of junior high school students in following learning instructions [5] and the low social care in senior high school students [6]. Teacher unpreparedness for online learning has affected student character development [7], [8] because of limited interaction between teachers and students, both in terms of quantity of time and quality. In addition, parents feel burdened with the roles carried out at home [9]. Due to more responsibilities and the overall stress of increasing functions, parents' possibilities for quality interactions with their children are limited [10]. This condition necessitates collaboration between teachers and parents to optimize student character development.

Previous studies on student character development can be categorized into three groups. First, character development is carried out by schools through the learning process by implementing interactive classroom activities [11]. This includes the development of students' character in virtual classroom activities, which develop discipline, honesty, responsibility, communication, and collaboration [12]. Second, student character development is accomplished by creating a conducive school environment. Schools make efforts

for character development by designing activities and providing facilities that can be used to form students' character [13]. The third category is parents' influence on a child's character development at home. In this third category, the majority of society imposes the task of forming the children's character as the main task of the mother [14]. These three models of character development show the role of three institutions in developing children's character: the classroom, the school, and the home. Collaboration among the three is required for more effective character development.

This study elaborates the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in shaping student character in online learning. The nature of virtual learning necessitates different ways of interaction which, in turn, requires different ways of collaboration. In this study, the development of student character is carefully mapped and discussed the reasons behind it are. In line with that, three questions can be formulated: i) How is the description of student character during the COVID-19 pandemic?; ii) What is the role of teachers and parents in developing students' character development?; and iii) How is the urgency of collaboration between teachers and parents in developing children's character during the COVID-19 pandemic? These three questions support the importance of cooperation between teachers and parents in developing student character development.

This study argues that the educational process has an essential teacher-parent collaboration. It has been long acknowledged that teacher-parent collaboration plays a significant role in students' learning success [15], [16]. The pandemic condition necessitates stronger teacher-parent collaborations for students' character development due to the emergence of behavioral problems [17], [18]. Such collaborations are expected to be able to build harmonious cooperation in developing student character during online learning. The theme selection regarding educational practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in developing student character was chosen with three essential considerations. First, character development is always a crucial dimension of educational processes. The nature of interactions during the pandemic COVID 19 requires a particular school strategy [19], which may entail certain patterns of teacher-parent collaboration which are virtually executed. Second, an underdeveloped character may negatively influence other learning factors. The pandemic has caused mental health problems [20] which may hinder character development. Third, the difficulties experienced by teachers and parents in character development necessitate the existence of alternative learning models that can be used as solutions [21]. Even though teacher-parent collaborations have gained currency in character development, evidence of how such collaborations are done during the pandemic continues to build up.

Character education is an activity in which pupils acquire educational treatments to pass on their knowledge to future generations. The goal is to shape the individuals' continuous self-improvement path toward a better life [22], [23]. Various research results have demonstrated the importance of character education in students, showing that character is related to academic achievement [24] and mental health [25]. Important factors which become the key to the success of character education are teachers and parents.

Character development must involve three components that can be used as implementation references in the process and stages of character education: moral knowing, moral loving, and moral doing. A suitable learning strategy to develop moral knowledge is using learning resources from teachers and educational facilities [26]. The development of moral loving can be done through the interaction between students so that there is a process of mutual understanding between individuals. Moral doing can be effective when students are mentored, their ability is utilized, and opportunities are available in their environment [27]. The three learning strategies are structured to take advantage of values and morals by using the potential and possibilities accessible in their surroundings and social lives.

At all stages of education in Indonesia, eighteen traits must be specifically established, including reading fondness, learning discipline, and social caring. Reading preference is an activity that aims to obtain information to increase knowledge and is an essential characteristic of elementary school students. This characteristic is a desire to read books online and offline [28] The character of learning discipline is defined as the ability of students to be responsible and independent in learning. Social care is a necessary character in building relationships with other people. It is a human need as a social being and includes behavior to help others, being empathetic, and being sympathetic to the difficulties of others.

Online learning is a process of learning conducted via the internet as the primary access for communication and interaction between students and teachers [29]. The online learning process occurs through various technologies, such as web, email, chat, text, audio, and video conferencing. Online learning concerns the concept of learning by changing the time and place of learning to allow students to study anytime and anywhere without the need to leave their homes [30].

The implementation of online education has resulted in various countries' problems requiring policy responses and improvements. In Indonesia, online learning performance has been in place, mainly in response to the pandemic, since March 17, 2020, per instructions from the ministry of education. Difficulties in implementing learning for educational institutions and students urge a realignment of online learning

activities. The implementation of academic regulations during the pandemic is still contradictory, such as using face-to-face learning standards in online learning [31]. From the various cases arising from the pandemic in education, it is clear that the need for evaluation and improvement of policies to build an education that is adaptive to the pandemic [32], is included in the character learning process [33], [34].

Teachers and parents have an essential role in developing students' character. While the teacher conveys knowledge and works as a student educator [35], parents serve as caregivers who meet the various needs of children and act as children's educators while at home [36]. Under normal conditions, these roles can be performed separately. However, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which dictated particular responses and adjustments in character development, a model of collaboration between teachers and families is needed to support student character development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a mixed-method strategy was used. Character development was studied in three dimensions, namely reading fondness; learning discipline; and social caring. These three aspects were quantitatively obtained while the elements that determined student character, on the other hand, were qualitatively collected.

This research was conducted at nine schools located in eight regions of three different provinces in Indonesia, namely Central Kalimantan (Palangkaraya), East Java (Lamongan, Gresik, Malang, Lawang, Kepanjen and Batu), and Riau (Tanjung Baru). Table 1 shows that the research site for the primary education level was located in three different provinces, while the junior and senior high school levels were found in East Java only. At first stage, the present study involved 252 students which consisted of 122 elementary school students, 30 junior high school students, and 100 students from senior high school schools.

Based on their responses to the questionnaire, 64 students were found to experience problems in their character development. These students were then purposively selected as the subjects of the study to portray problematic areas of students' character development. In addition, the present study also involved 34 teachers and 27 parents who voluntarily joined the study. Table 1 explains that the research sites for the primary education level were located in three different provinces while the junior and senior high school levels were positioned in East Java. Most student subjects came from the elementary school level and teachers came from the junior high school level.

Table 1. Composition of research subjects

No	Name of schools	Students	Teachers	Parents	Total
1	State Islamic elementary schools, Palangka Raya	15	2	3	20
2	Islamic elementary schools, Lamongan	9	2	3	14
3	State elementary school, Tanjung Baru, Riau	6	3	3	12
4	Islamic junior high school, Gresik	6	2	3	11
5	Junior high school, Malang	4	2	3	9
6	Islamic junior high school, Malang	4	13	3	20
7	Senior high school, Lawang	6	3	3	11
8	Senior high school, Kepanjen	5	3	3	11
9	Senior high school, Batu	9	4	3	16
	Total	64	34	27	124

To obtain the data, questionnaires and interviews were employed. Due to the pandemic, both instruments were carried out online. Closed questionnaire was given to students to collect data on character forms, namely reading fondness, learning discipline, and social care. Open questionnaire was used to obtain the data on students' problems in their character development. Interviews with teachers and parents were conducted by focusing on how students' characters were developed and efforts made by the two parties to overcome the difficulties of character development.

The data from the closed questionnaire were statistically analyzed to provide the percentage of the three types of student characters. The percentage represented the profile of students' character development during the pandemic. This data was enriched by the descriptions of the students' problems with character development. From the interviews, the subjects' responses were qualitatively analyzed and then grouped by the commonality of emergent themes. This projected the teachers' and parents' perspectives on obstacles of students' character development during pandemic COVID-19. Additionally, critical, and reflective analysis were done to locate the teachers' and parents' efforts on facilitating the students' character development.

3.   RESULTS

This study investigated three essential points. The points are related to the description of the students' character development during the pandemic. Specifically, this study focuses on teachers' and parents' role in developing students' character as well as the need for collaboration between teachers and parents in developing children's character during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1. The students' character development during pandemic COVID-19

Table 2 shows an overview of the three characteristics of students' character development, namely: i) The students' reading fondness; ii) The discipline of learning; and iii) Social care. The emerging themes are grouped into these three categories to show the existing character development experienced by the students in pandemic. The table shows that 50% of the students under the study, despite their love of reading, tended to be uninterested in reading activities, both offline and online. Instead, they were increasingly interested in playing video games on the internet. The students felt overloaded and uninterested in learning due to the requirement of the learning discipline, which led to the creation of behavior delaying work and diverting by playing games. There are pupils who are greedy and unconcerned with social situations, according to the character of social care.

Table 2. Profile of the students' character development

Character	Topic question	Finding	Σ
Reading fondness	Reading a book offline	Not interesting to read	15
		More like to play the game	9
		Do not have a book	6
	Reading a book online	Lazy to read	15
		Internet problem	12
		More like to play the game	3
Learning discipline	Individual learning	Difficult to focus on the study	6
		Play the game	4
		There's other work	4
	An assignment collected	Procrastination	6
		Forget assignment	5
		Studies are boring	3
Social cares	Prosocial behavior	Do not like socialization	11
		Do not have empathy	6
		Do not have sympathy	3
	Harmonious behavior	Egocentrism	12
		Likes conflict	5
		Feel shame	3

3.2. Teachers' difficulties

The teachers' difficulties in assisting the students' character development are uncovered by answering two questions, namely: i) What teachers' difficulties in students' developing character are?; and ii) What efforts are made by the teachers to overcome the challenges? The answers are grouped into three categories according to the emerging themes. The complete data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers' difficulties

No	Students character	Problems	An effort to solve	Σ
1	Reading fondness	− Limited facilities	Using limited facilities	3
		− Busy parent	Give more time	3
2	Learning discipline	− Difficult to care	Give a behavioral model	3
		− Limited facilities	Using limited facilities	4
		− Busy parent	Give more time	3
3	Social care	− Difficult to care	Give a behavioral model	2
		− Limited facilities	Using limited facilities	4
		− Busy parent	Give more time	3

Table 3 depicts the numerous issues teachers face in students' character development in online learning, as well as the attempts made to overcome them. This data reveals that teachers confront two types of issues: infrastructural issues and a lack of preparedness for the online learning process. Limited facilities, particularly concerns with the school's internet network, were among the issues. Second, delivering the subject content online is tough. Making use of virtual platforms for learning requires not only skills for

handling technology but also adjusting materials and students' needs on the platforms. Third, keeping track of student behavior is difficult. Teachers' access to the students is limited through web cameras used by the students. This limited access will vanish once the internet connection disappears.

From the interview with the teachers, they faced problematic communication with the parents due to a lack of technology. Three teachers have expressed their frustrations with their involvement with parents in establishing online educational practices.

> "*The most perceived difficulty is the limited opportunity to communicate directly with parents so that not all problems can be conveyed to them.*" (Teacher 1)
> "*Many of them have difficulty using technology, so the opportunity to build and collaborate with them becomes difficult.*" (Teacher 2)

Even though virtual communication provides more access and flexibility, however, the teachers admitted their difficulties in communicating with the parents. As a result, they had less opportunity to solve students' problems. Furthermore, the teachers also perceived that their needs were not necessarily met because the parents did not fully understand what the teachers expected. Parents' less accessibility to technology was also perceived as a serious problem for the teachers as it prevented them from initiating collaboration.

> "*Many of them (parents) have difficulty using technology, so the opportunity to build collaboration with them becomes difficult.*" (Teacher 2)

In addition, the parents' less understanding of what the teachers expected was also a challenging factor for teacher-parent collaboration. The pandemic foiled the teachers to clarify the parents due to limited access, even when it was virtually done.

> "*Sometimes, I feel parents did not understand what the teacher wanted, while the opportunity to explain was limited due to the pandemic. It's one of the things I've experienced.*" (Teacher 3)

These views explain the problems of teachers associated with the dilemma of collaboration between teachers and parents in developing students' character. This condition requires mutually beneficial cooperation between the two parties. Teachers are helped in carrying out their duties in teaching children, and parents are facilitated with their children's success in education due to successful character development.

3.3. Parents' difficulties

In determining the parents' problems, the same questions were also proposed, namely, 'what are the problems for parents in developing character in students? And what efforts are being made to overcome these difficulties?' As previously done, the responses were categorized into three dimensions of character development: reading fondness, learning disciplines, and social care. The details are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that difficulties experienced by parents can be classified into infrastructure problems and childcare practice issues. As experienced by the teachers, problems concerning internet connections were on the top list. Parents also face domestic matters, a busy household, and difficulties in assisting children in learning, which hinder their help in their children's character development. The subject has tried to solve these problems by utilizing existing facilities, taking the time to accompany the child, and trying to set an example. These efforts were endorsed by their awareness that, within the pandemic COVID-19, online learning was the only alternative to ensure their children continued their learning.

Table 4. Parents' difficulties

No	Students' character	Problems	An effort to solve	Σ
1	Reading fondness	Limited facilities	Using limited facilities	3
		Busy parent	Give more time to a child	3
		Difficult to care for a child	Give a behavioral model	3
2	Learning discipline	Limited facilities	Using limited facilities	4
		Busy parent	Give more time to a child	3
		Difficult to care for a child	Give a behavioral model	2
3	Social care	Limited facilities	Using limited facilities	4
		Busy parent	Give more time to a child	3
		Difficult to care for a child	Give a behavioral model	2

Regarding collaborations with the teachers, the parents acknowledged problematic points deterred that collaboration with teachers in online learning. A parent indicated that her difficulties in locating her child's learning problems made it difficult for them to collaborate with the teachers.

> *"Sometimes I feel confused about communicating my difficulties to the teacher in accompanying children to study. I have a lot to say, but I don't know what to tell the teacher."* (Parent 1)

Another problem was raised by a parent who deliberately mentioned his low education as thought-provoking matter. This statement implies that the parent's insufficient knowledge and learning experience not only hampered their children's learning but also prevented them from collaborating with the teachers.

> *"Because I am not an educated person, I'm just an elementary school graduate. I feel confused about conveying my difficulties to the teacher. I'm doing what I can to help my child during online learning."* (Parent 2)
>
> *"Online learning requires all parents to use technology, even though I do not understand how to use internet technology, so it's the reason why I have difficulty collaborating with teachers in carrying out online learning."* (Parent 3)

The data projected parents' problems in initiating collaboration between teachers and parents in developing students' character. Parents find it difficult to build cooperation with teachers because of limitations in communication, facilities, and the ability to use technology in online learning. This condition, of course, requires problem-solving so that the collaboration of teachers and parents can be well established. In a nutshell, students' character development was closely related to teacher and parental difficulties. During prolonged class suspension, teacher's shortcomings in skills and knowledge of orchestrating online learning as well as parent's unprepared assistance to their children's online learning were determinants of the students' disparities in developing their characters.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that teachers' and parents' struggle in building character have resulted in a drop in student performance. Teachers and parents were increasingly confronted with challenges connected to infrastructure availability, particularly internet network issues. Other obstacles that instructors face are more professional ones in teaching and managing students online. The issues that parents encounter, on the other hand, are related to parenting which covers scarcity of time and providing appropriate help when their children were learning online. Due to these challenges, pupils' character has deteriorated in their love of reading, learning discipline, and social caring. Building harmonious relationships is a solution that can be developed to tackle the challenges that instructors, parents, and students encounter.

The result explained that the teacher as an actor who plays a role in developing students' character at school turns out to experience difficulties, both difficulties in the aspect of facilities, professionalism, and problems on the part of cooperation with parents [37]. Likewise, parents experience issues because of facilities, parenting, and difficulties in collaboration with teachers. The challenges encountered by teachers and parents have caused the learning process to occur not optimally, resulting in not achieving educational goals, including efforts to develop student character. The pandemic stimulated stronger needs of collaboration. The findings of this study also show sharing responsibility by teachers and parents is not a simple matter, especially during the pandemic. Various obstacles for teachers and parents have forced the need for cooperation due to the decreased quality of student character [38]. Collaboration built by both parties, apart from lightening the existing burden, can also be a solution to answer challenges in developing various aspects of student life.

The impact of the learning process on developing students' character during the pandemic has shown two essential meanings for education. First, education that is only done by teachers or parents has become a heavy burden for both parties [39], [40]. Second, the harmonious collaboration model between teachers and students is an alternative for achieving educational goals. The explanation shows that cooperation between teachers and parents in educational practice will benefit both parties and especially students. Teachers and parents have undertaken efforts for collaborations on character development. For more effective results, teachers and parents were required to understand each other, invest more work together as well as compensate for their weaknesses to develop their students. It has been empirically proved that collaboration between teachers and parents, for example, in dealing with children with special needs [41] improved the students' performance. Furthermore, teacher-parent collaboration both under normal conditions and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic [42] has promoted student character.

Students' problems can be solved by forming a collaborative team of teachers and parents [43], [44]. The key to success in building student character education is a harmonious interaction between teachers and parents. Developing effective cooperation necessitates three conditions: goal-oriented, attention to shared interests, and mutually beneficial. In the learning process, teachers and parents should focus on the learning goals that students want to achieve. They should also prioritize the same attention and interests to create benefits for both teachers and parents. In developing student character, the common goal is to achieve positive student consistency. Cooperation can be done by building positive interactions between teachers and parents to attain common goals while still paying attention to each other's interests.

5.   CONCLUSION

An essential finding of this study shows that students' character is caused by the difficulties of both teachers and parents in carrying out online learning during the pandemic. These findings also indicate less effective cooperation between teachers and parents in implementing educational practices. The teacher still assumed that the learning process was the teachers' task while parents believed that the main task of learning was at school with a small portion of parents' assistance in the learning process. Educational practice has been understood as a one-way process of providing information while, in fact, it has turned into an interactive process involving various parties. Thus, the online learning process going on so far should change the mindset of teachers and parents that the teacher-centered learning process must be changed to a learning process that involves parents actively and effectively, with bigger portions of teacher-parent cooperation.

Online learning could be the way of future learning in many cases, not just during a pandemic. Therefore, it is essential to understand student character development in the virtual classroom fully. This study suggests a solution in the importance of harmonious cooperation between teachers and parents in developing students' character. Collaboration can be built by understanding each other and helping each other carry out their respective roles. Teachers act as teachers of subject matter to students, but they must also be a source of information for parents who need information assistance related to their children's education. Likewise, parents take care of problems related to the household, but they must be able to replace the role of teachers in assisting children in studying at home. This study is confined to online data via student questionnaires or direct interviews with instructors and parents. Due to pandemic conditions, the approach of data collection by observation, which is critical for qualitative research, cannot be applied. Similarly, the students' perspectives as a basis for inferring student character learning implementation continue to lack depth. An additional study should focus on data-gathering procedures and selecting more suitable informants.

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