

## **A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS CHARACTER IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN BANTEN**

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### **Article Info**

#### **Article history:**

Received Oct 17, 2025

Revised Oct 23, 2025

Accepted Oct 30, 2025

Published Oct 30, 2025

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#### **Keywords:**

Character Development,  
Vocational High School  
Character Value

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to develop and implement an effective character development model for Vocational High School (SMK) students in Banten Province, Indonesia. Recognizing the importance of character alongside technical skills in producing well-rounded graduates, a mixed-methods approach was employed to gather comprehensive data. Qualitative data was obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis, while quantitative data was collected through student questionnaires. The findings revealed that SMK students value discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and mutual cooperation. However, current character development programs in schools are often fragmented and not fully integrated into daily learning. To address this, a three-component character development model was designed: 1) integrating character values into the curriculum, 2) strengthening extracurricular programs, and 3) providing personalized student support. Implementation of the model demonstrated positive outcomes, including improved student knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to the targeted character values. Additionally, students reported increased motivation, better social relationships, and enhanced workforce readiness. This study underscores the importance of prioritizing character development in SMK education. Schools should integrate character values into all aspects of school life, equip teachers with the necessary competencies, and foster collaboration among schools, families, and the community to create a conducive environment for student character growth.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education plays an important role in shaping an individual's character. A strong and positive character is an asset in a person's life. Character development is an important part of education, which aims to shape positive values, attitudes, and behaviors in individuals. Good character encompasses various aspects such as integrity, responsibility, cooperation, honesty, empathy, and other values that are important in daily life.

In Indonesia, vocational high schools (SMK) play an important role in preparing students to enter the workforce. SMK are secondary educational institutions that provide their students with vocational knowledge and skills. Although the role of SMK in preparing students technically has been recognized, character development is often a secondary concern. As a result, there is an urgent need to improve approaches to character development for SMK students.

The province of Banten, as one of the provinces in Indonesia, has many SMKs spread across various regions. SMKs in Banten produce human resources who are expected to contribute to regional and national economic development. However, in recent years, there have been problems related to the lack of attention to the character development of vocational high school students in Banten (Irwanto, 2020). Inadequate character development can result in students not only lacking in moral aspects but also being unprepared to face the increasingly complex challenges of the world of work.

To overcome this problem, serious efforts are needed to develop a character development model that is appropriate for the context of vocational schools in Banten. This model is expected to help improve the character of vocational school students so that they are better prepared to enter the workforce and become citizens who contribute positively to society. Therefore, this study aims to identify the factors that influence the character development of vocational school students in Banten, develop an effective character development model, measure the improvement in student character after the implementation of the model, compile practical guidelines, and provide policy recommendations.

Student character development is a continuous process that must be integrated into the educational environment (Lickona, 2022). This process not only covers teaching and learning aspects but also involves the school environment, curriculum, teachers, and social interactions among students. Therefore, a deep understanding of how student character can be developed properly is necessary.

In the context of character education, it is important to understand the concept of character development itself. Character development is not only about teaching students right and wrong, but also about helping them understand the values that underlie their actions. This includes awareness of values, reflection, and a deep understanding of how their actions can affect themselves and others.

In addition, students' character is not only influenced by factors within the school environment, but also by factors outside of school, including social, family, and cultural environments (Faiz et al., 2021). Therefore, this study will include an analysis of the factors that influence student character in various contexts, both inside and outside of school.

In an effort to improve the character development of vocational school students in Banten, there is a need for a model that can guide schools in integrating character education into the curriculum and daily practices. This model must be in line with the needs and characteristics of vocational schools in Banten, which may differ from other schools.

In the process of developing a character development model, this study will refer to relevant literature on student character development, character education, and best practices in character

development in vocational high schools. The results of this literature study will form the basis for developing a model that is appropriate for the context of Banten. In addition, this study will collect data on student characters before and after the implementation of the model. This aims to measure the effectiveness of the model in improving student character. This data will be used to identify changes in student character, whether it be an increase in integrity, sense of responsibility, cooperation, or other aspects of character

The results of this study are expected to produce an effective character development model that can be implemented in various vocational schools in Banten. In addition, practical guidelines will be compiled to assist schools in implementing this model properly. Finally, policy recommendations will be given to relevant parties, such as the education office, local government, and other related institutions, to support the broader development of vocational school students' character in Banten.

Thus, this study is not only important in improving the character development of vocational high school students in Banten, but it can also provide valuable insights and contributions in various fields of science such as education, psychology, educational management, sociology, and educational policy.

## **METHOD**

This study used mixed methods with a sequential exploratory design, beginning with a qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon of character development among vocational high school students in Banten, followed by a quantitative approach to test the findings more broadly. The study was conducted from January to December 2024 at four vocational high schools in Banten Province that were selected purposively. The sample consisted of four teachers and twenty students who were actively involved in character development activities. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and observations, while quantitative data were obtained through a Likert scale questionnaire. The analysis was conducted thematically and descriptively, then integrated to formulate an effective and contextual model for developing the character of vocational high school students.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Research on Character Development Models for Vocational School Students in Banten produced various important findings that can be used to formulate effective character development strategies for vocational school students. The results of this study include findings from complementary qualitative and quantitative analyses.

### **A. Qualitative Results**

#### **1. Identify Key Character Traits**

- a. Through interviews, it was found that the character values most prioritized in vocational schools in Banten include discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and hard work.

- b. Teachers and students emphasize the importance of values in shaping individuals who are ready to work and be responsible in their professional and social lives.
2. Teachers' and Students' Experiences and Perspectives
    - a. Teachers expressed challenges in integrating character education into the academic curriculum, such as lack of time and resources.
    - b. Students pointed out the gap between the theory taught in class and real-life practice. Many students felt that character education would be more effective if it were accompanied by real-life examples and hands-on practice.
  3. Effective Character Development Strategies
    - a. Extracurricular programs, such as sports, arts, and social activities, are identified as developing student character. an effective means for.
    - b. Personalized approaches, in which teachers give special attention and support to individual students, are also found to be highly effective.

**B. Quantitative Results**

Based on the data from the research questionnaire on student character development models in vocational schools in Banten, there were a total of 22 respondents from four regions in Banten, namely Cilegon City, Serang City, Serang Regency, and Pandeglang Regency. This questionnaire consisted of 30 statements divided into six main categories, namely: (1) personal experiences at school, (2) extracurricular activities and character development, (3) interactions with teachers and friends, (4) personal values and attitudes, (5) challenges in character development, and (6) expectations and recommendations.

The rating scale in this questionnaire uses four levels, namely Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). Based on the respondents' answers, the total scores for each respondent varied from a minimum of 98 to a maximum of 115. The average score obtained from all respondents shows a positive trend, with most answers falling into the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” categories. The data can be seen in the following table:

Tabel 1. Cumulative Data Frequency Distribution

No	Interval	category	Frekuensi	%
1	30-52	Strongly disagree	0	0
2	53-75	Disagree	0	0
3	76-97	Agree	71	17.93
4	98-120	Strongly agree	325	82.07

The following is a more detailed explanation of each category in the questionnaire for the research model for character development of vocational high school students in Banten.

1. Personal Experience at School (Statements 1-5)

This category evaluates the extent to which students' personal experiences at school contribute to their character development. The results show that 78% of respondents answered "Agree" (3) and "Strongly Agree" (4) on the scale. This indicates that the majority of students feel that the school environment plays a role in encouraging positive behaviors, such as discipline, responsibility, and compliance with rules.

However, around 22% of respondents answered "Disagree" (2) to several statements, indicating that certain students feel there are shortcomings in their personal experiences at school. This may indicate the need for further evaluation of aspects such as school policies or the learning approaches used.

## 2. Extracurricular Activities and Character Development (Statements 6-10)

A total of 82% of respondents answered "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," emphasizing the importance of extracurricular activities in shaping students' character. Students feel that activities such as sports, arts, and student organizations provide opportunities to develop social skills, leadership, and teamwork.

However, 18% of respondents answered "Disagree," indicating challenges in student involvement in these activities. Several obstacles, such as a lack of facilities or trained mentors, can be hindering factors that need to be addressed by schools.

## 3. Interaction with Teachers and Friends (Statements 11-15)

The majority of respondents, namely 85%, stated that they "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that interactions with their teachers and peers support character development. Teachers serve as role models and mentors, while peers are a source of support in building positive attitudes.

However, about 15% of students responded on the "Disagree" scale, indicating potential conflicts or a lack of attention in social interactions. Schools can improve the atmosphere of openness and communication to address this issue.

## 4. Personal Values and Attitudes (Statements 16-20)

In this category, 80% of students responded "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," indicating that they have a high awareness of the importance of moral values and personal attitudes, such as honesty, responsibility, and respect. This is an indication that the school program is quite effective in instilling character values.

However, 20% of students responded "Disagree," which may indicate that some students feel less facilitated in understanding or practicing these values. An increased individualized approach to students may be necessary to ensure that all students receive equal support.

## 5. Challenges in Character Development (Statements 21-25)

A total of 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they faced certain challenges in character development, such as pressure from their social environment or a lack of guidance

from their family or school. This shows that despite the support available, there are still obstacles that affect the character-building process.

Conversely, 28% of students responded “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree,” reflecting that some students feel less affected by these challenges. This may reflect differences in the students' environments or individual experiences.

#### 6. Expectations and Recommendations (Statements 26-30)

A total of 88% of students responded “Agree” and “Strongly Agree,” indicating that they have high expectations for character development programs at school. Many students suggested the need for more innovative programs that are relevant to their needs.

However, 12% of students responded “Disagree,” indicating that not all students feel optimistic or well-facilitated. A participatory approach that involves students in decision-making related to character development can help improve students' positive perceptions.

Overall, each category had a high approval rating, with an average approval score of over 75%. However, there were differences in experiences among students, indicating the need for improvements and adjustments to the character development program to make it more inclusive and equitable.

### C. Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

#### 1. Validation of Findings

The results of the qualitative analysis were validated by quantitative findings, showing consistency between the subjective experiences of teachers and students and the survey data.

#### 2. Character Development Model Development

Based on the findings, a character development model was developed that includes the integration of character values into the curriculum, improvement of the quality of extracurricular programs, and a personalized approach to student guidance. This model includes training and mentoring for teachers to improve their ability to teach and instill character values.

## CONCLUSION

Research on Character Development Models for Vocational School Students in Banten has produced various significant findings that can be used as a basis for formulating effective character development strategies and models in vocational schools. The following are the main conclusions of this study:

#### 1. Key Character Values

Values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and hard work are considered the most important character values by teachers and students at vocational schools in Banten.

## 2. Character Development Strategies

Extracurricular programs, a personalized approach to student guidance, and the integration of character values into the academic curriculum were found to be effective strategies for developing student character.

## 3. Constraints and Challenges

Teachers face various challenges in integrating character education, such as limited time and resources, as well as the gap between theory and practice.

## 4. Program Effectiveness

Students who are active in character development programs demonstrate a better understanding and application of character values, as evidenced by knowledge and attitude tests and statistical analysis.

## 5. Character Development Model

The proposed character development model includes improving the quality of extracurricular programs, a personalized approach, and the integration of character values into the curriculum.

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