

Factors Influencing Character Building of Learners at the Secondary Level

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Abstract

Character building plays a pivotal role in shaping the holistic development of learners at the secondary level. This extended abstract examines the multifaceted factors influencing character-building among students at this crucial stage of their education. Drawing upon a synthesis of existing literature and research findings, the abstract identifies and discusses several key factors that significantly impact the character-building of secondary-level learners. Family dynamics, parental involvement, and the quality of parent-child relationships profoundly shape students' moral and ethical values. Supportive family environments foster empathy, responsibility, and self-discipline, laying the foundation for positive character traits. Institutions, including schools and teachers, play a pivotal role in character building. School culture, leadership and effective pedagogical strategies facilitate the cultivation of traits such as honesty, respect, and integrity. Furthermore, peer relationships exert a significant influence on character development during adolescence. Peer interactions and social norms shape students' attitudes. Individual differences, including temperament, personality traits, and life experiences, contribute to the complexity of character development. Resilience, self-efficacy, and moral reasoning abilities vary among students, influenced by genetic predispositions and environmental factors.

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1 Introduction

In secondary education, cultivating character among learners is a cornerstone of academic excellence and societal contribution. Adolescence marks a crucial period of self-discovery and moral development, wherein students grapple with complex societal expectations, personal values, and interpersonal relationships. Against this backdrop, the factors influencing character building among secondary-level learners emerge as a dynamic and multifaceted tapestry of influences (Berkowitz et al., [2018](#)). This enhanced introduction delves into the intricate web of familial, educational, peer, societal, cultural, and individual factors that intersect to shape the character development of secondary-level students. Rooted in a synthesis of empirical research and theoretical frameworks, this exploration seeks to illuminate the nuanced dynamics that underpin the formation of ethical and responsible individuals within educational settings (Dixon & Sen, [2019](#); Roeser et al., [2023](#)). At the heart of this inquiry lie familial influences, where the quality of parent-child relationships, family values, and socio-economic backgrounds converge to mould students' moral compass and interpersonal skills. Concurrently, educational institutions wield considerable influence, with school culture, leadership practices, and pedagogical approaches as catalysts for character development. Moreover, the intricate dance of peer relationships, societal expectations, and cultural norms further shapes students' ethical reasoning and social identities (Seligman et al., [2019](#); Warren et al., [2022](#)).

As we navigate the terrain of character education, it becomes evident that individual differences play a significant role, with temperament, personality traits, and life experiences shaping the trajectory of moral development. Against the backdrop of an increasingly interconnected world, it is imperative to acknowledge the influence of societal and cultural factors in shaping students' values, attitudes, and perceptions of social responsibility (Bragg & Stewart, [2020](#)). This examination of the factors affecting character building among secondary-level learners serves not only to deepen our theoretical understanding but also to inform practical interventions and educational policies. By embracing a holistic perspective that recognizes the interplay of diverse influences, educators and stakeholders can endeavor to create nurturing environments that foster the growth of morally upright, empathetic, and resilient individuals poised to contribute positively to society (Park & Peterson, [2020](#)).

2 Literature Review

“Review of the literature summarize and evaluate the text of writing of the definite theme, and provide frame work to think about the possible consequence of innovative study” (Ahmad et al., [2023](#)). The family plays a pivotal role in shaping a student's character, providing the foundation for values, attitudes, and behaviours. Positive family dynamics, such as parental involvement, supportive relationships, and clear communication, contribute to developing strong character traits. Conversely, adverse family circumstances, such as neglect, abuse, or dysfunctional relationships, can impede character development and lead to negative outcomes (Day et al., [2020](#)). The school environment significantly influences students' character development, fostering social interactions and promoting values through formal and informal curricula (Zaff & Mekinda, [2023](#)). A positive school climate characterized by safety, respect, inclusivity, and supportive relationships enhances students' sense of belonging and encourages ethical behaviour. Integrated into the school curriculum, effective character education programs promote virtues such as empathy, integrity,

responsibility, and resilience. (Roche et al., [2020](#)).

Peers are crucial in shaping students' character and influencing attitudes, values, and behaviors through social interactions. Positive peer relationships can foster pro-social behaviours, cooperation, and empathy, contributing to positive character development. However, negative peer pressure, peer conflict, or bullying can undermine students' character-building efforts and lead to detrimental outcomes (Zaff et al., [2020](#)). The broader community and societal context also impact students' character development, providing civic engagement, service learning, and moral reasoning opportunities. Cultural norms, socioeconomic disparities, and exposure to societal challenges influence students' perceptions of morality, justice, and ethical decision-making. Collaborative efforts involving schools, families, community organizations, and policymakers are essential for creating supportive environments that nurture positive character traits in students (Chan & Peterson, [2021](#)).

2.1 Parental Involvement: The Foundation of Character Development

Exploring how parents shape their children's character through modelling behaviour, instilling values, and providing emotional support. The role of open communication and strong parent-child relationships in fostering empathy, resilience, and moral integrity. Setting clear expectations and enforcing boundaries help children understand right from wrong. Consistent discipline teaches accountability and helps develop self-control. Praise and encouragement for efforts, accomplishments, and positive behaviour boost children's self-esteem and confidence. Supportive parents create a nurturing environment where children feel empowered to take on challenges (Lerner, [2021](#)). Spending quality time together as a family strengthens bonds and creates opportunities for meaningful interactions. These moments contribute to a sense of belonging and security, whether through shared activities, conversations, or simply being present. Guiding children through challenges and allowing them to experience setbacks helps develop resilience and problem-solving skills. Parents can offer guidance and support while allowing children to learn from their mistakes (McMahon et al., [2021](#)).

Encouraging acts of kindness and empathy towards others helps children develop a sense of compassion and understanding. Engaging in activities that promote empathy, such as volunteering or discussing others' perspectives, can reinforce these values (Seligman & Adler, [2022](#)). Demonstrating healthy communication, respect, and conflict resolution within the family unit sets a precedent for children's future relationships. Parents are role models for navigating interpersonal dynamics with empathy and integrity (Roeser et al., [2021](#)). By actively engaging in these practices, parents contribute significantly to their children's character development, laying the groundwork for them to become compassionate, resilient, and morally grounded individuals (Tudge et al., [2021](#)).

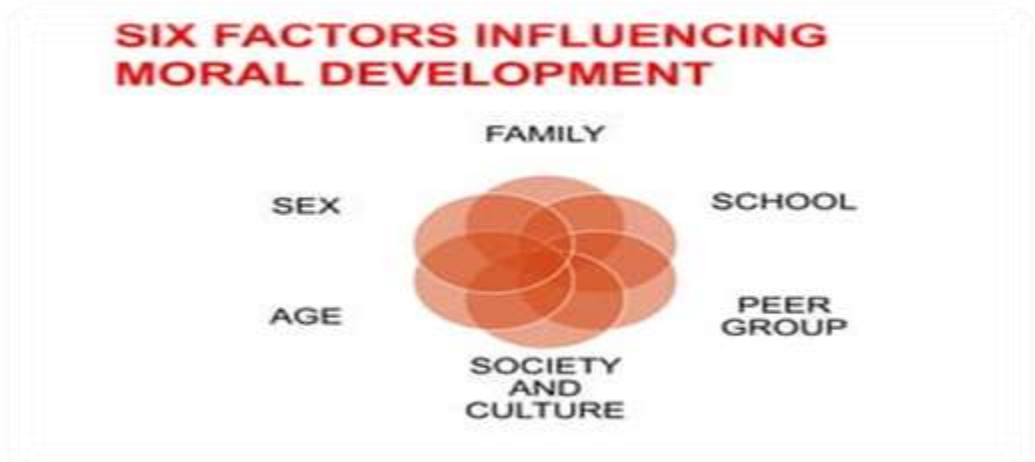
2.2 Educational Environment: Shaping Values Beyond Academics

In educational environments, students are taught academic subjects and immersed in a rich tapestry of experiences that shape their character and values. Extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and clubs allow students to learn teamwork, leadership, and perseverance (Roeser et al., [2023](#)). Collaborative projects and group assignments encourage students to communicate effectively, respect diverse viewpoints, and compromise when necessary. Furthermore, exposure to different cultures, backgrounds, and belief systems within the school community fosters tolerance, open-mindedness, and global awareness (Zaff et al., [2020](#); Lerner, [2021](#)).

Moreover, educators play a pivotal role in modeling and reinforcing positive values through their actions and interactions with students. By demonstrating integrity, kindness, and respect in their conduct, teachers serve as role models for ethical behavior and encourage students to emulate these qualities. Incorporating discussions on ethics, morality, and social responsibility into the curriculum helps students develop a deeper understanding of right and wrong. It encourages them to act with empathy and compassion towards others. (Tudge et al., [2021](#)). Educational institutions can promote values-based learning through community service initiatives, where students engage in activities that benefit others and contribute to the common good. By volunteering, fundraising, or participating in outreach programs, students learn the importance of giving back to society and develop a sense of civic duty and social responsibility (Diener et al., [2022](#)).

2.3 Peer Dynamics: Navigating Social Influences

Peer dynamics play a significant role in shaping students' behaviour, moral development, and social interactions. Here's an extended discussion on the impact of peer pressure and friendships on students' decision-making and moral development, along with strategies to foster positive peer interactions (Zhao et al., [2021](#); Day & Kiley, [2023](#)).



3 Impact of Peer Pressure on Decision-Making and Moral Development

Peer pressure can influence students, often leading them to make decisions they might not otherwise make on their own. This influence can be both positive and negative. Positive peer pressure can encourage students to adopt healthy behaviours, pursue academic excellence, and engage in prosocial activities (Dixon & Sen, [2023](#)). However, negative peer pressure can lead to risky behaviours, substance abuse, and unethical conduct. In navigating peer pressure, students develop their moral compasses and decision-making skills. They learn to critically evaluate the influence of their peers and weigh the consequences of their actions. Teachers and parents provide guidance and support, helping students build resilience against negative peer influences while reinforcing positive behaviours (Diener et al., [2022](#)).

4 Strategies to Promote Positive Peer Interactions

Foster a Supportive Environment to create a classroom or school culture that values diversity, empathy, and respect. Encourage open communication and collaboration among students, emphasizing the importance of constructive feedback and mutual support (McMahon et al., [2022](#)).

Promote Peer Leadership to empower students to take on leadership roles within peer groups, fostering a sense of responsibility and accountability. Peer leaders can be positive role models and advocates for inclusive and ethical behaviour (Lickona, [2022](#)). Facilitate Peer Mediation to teach conflict resolution skills and provide opportunities for peer mediation to resolve disputes and misunderstandings amicably (McMahon et al., [2022](#)).

4. Community Engagement: Fostering Social Responsibility

Community service initiatives often provide students with opportunities for leadership development. As they engage in organizing and executing service projects, students learn to take the initiative, delegate tasks, and motivate their peers, honing essential leadership skills that will benefit them in future endeavours. These experiences also encourage students to step out of their comfort zones, embrace challenges, and develop resilience in adversity. Through overcoming obstacles and achieving tangible results in their community service efforts, students gain confidence in their abilities and become more self-assured (Warren et al., [2021](#)). Participating in community service can have long-lasting positive effects on students' mental health and well-being. Research has shown that acts of kindness and altruism trigger the release of endorphins, promoting feelings of happiness and satisfaction. Engaging in meaningful service activities can also alleviate stress and anxiety by giving students a sense of purpose and fulfilment (Lickona & Davidson, [2023](#)). Furthermore, volunteering often fosters social connections and friendships, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. By prioritizing service to others, students develop a sense of belonging and connection to something larger than themselves, contributing to their overall happiness and fulfilment (Tudge et al., [2021](#)).

Community engagement through service initiatives offers numerous benefits to students, including leadership development, enhanced well-being, and a deeper sense of connection to their communities. By actively participating in service projects, students contribute to the betterment of society and experience personal growth and development that extends far beyond their academic years (Diener et al., [2022](#)).

5 Media and Technology: Navigating Digital Influences

Expanding on the importance of media literacy education, it's essential to recognize that in today's interconnected world, individuals are constantly bombarded with various forms of media, including social media, news outlets, advertisements, and user-generated content. Without the necessary skills to critically evaluate these messages, individuals may be susceptible to manipulation, misinformation, and spreading harmful ideologies (Warren et al., [2021](#)). Media literacy education goes beyond merely teaching students how to consume media; it empowers them to participate in the media landscape actively. By understanding the techniques used to construct media messages, such as framing, selective editing, and emotional appeals, students can better understand the media's role in shaping perceptions and influencing behaviour. This knowledge enables them to engage with media content more discerningly, questioning assumptions, challenging biases, and seeking out diverse perspectives (Park & Peterson, [2022](#)).

Digital citizenship education is vital in shaping students' attitudes and behaviours towards online interactions. As digital natives, today's students are immersed in online communities where issues like cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and digital identity are prevalent. Digital citizenship education equips students with the knowledge and skills to navigate these challenges responsibly, fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and digital civility (Berkowitz et al., [2023](#)). Digital citizenship education emphasizes the importance of ethical decision-making in digital spaces. This includes understanding concepts such as digital rights, online privacy, intellectual property, and the consequences of online actions. By promoting ethical behavior and responsible digital citizenship, educators can help cultivate a generation of digital citizens who contribute positively to online discourse and uphold democratic values in the digital age. Media literacy and digital

citizenship education are essential components of a comprehensive curriculum that prepares students to navigate the complexities of the digital world with confidence, critical thinking, and ethical integrity. By empowering students to think critically about media messages and promoting responsible online behavior, educators can help shape a more informed, empathetic, and socially responsible digital society (McMahon et al., [2022](#)).

6 Cultural and Religious Influences: Embracing Diversity and Values

Exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance, empathy, and global citizenship among students. When students are exposed to different cultural backgrounds, traditions, and viewpoints, they develop a greater appreciation for diversity and a deeper understanding of the world around them. This exposure helps break down stereotypes and prejudices, promoting acceptance and inclusivity (Tudge et al., [2021](#)). Religious teachings and practices contribute to shaping students' moral compass and sense of purpose. Religious education often emphasizes virtues such as compassion, kindness, and respect for others, providing students with a framework for ethical decision-making and guiding their behavior towards others. Additionally, religious teachings often encourage self-reflection, leading students to contemplate their values, beliefs, and contributions to society. By incorporating both cultural diversity and religious education into the curriculum, schools can create a rich learning environment that promotes tolerance, empathy, and a sense of global responsibility among students. This holistic approach prepares students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world with understanding, respect, and a commitment to making positive contributions to society (Roche & Leventhal, [2022](#)).

7 Self-Reflection and Emotional Intelligence: Nurturing Intrapersonal Skills

Self-reflection allows students to identify and prioritize their values, guiding their decision-making and actions. Through introspection, students can recognize their unique strengths and leverage them for personal and academic growth. Self-reflection fosters awareness of areas needing improvement, encouraging students to set realistic goals and pursue self-improvement (Warren et al., [2023](#)).

7.1 Benefits of Emotional Intelligence Training in Student Development

Emotional intelligence training equips students with the skills to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions effectively, promoting mental well-being and resilience. By fostering empathy, students develop a deeper understanding of others' perspectives and feelings, promoting positive interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Emotional intelligence training enhances students' ability to make ethical decisions by considering the emotions and welfare of others, fostering a sense of responsibility and integrity (Park & Peterson, [2023](#)).

7.2 Integrating Self-Reflection and Emotional Intelligence Training

Combining self-reflection and emotional intelligence training creates a holistic approach to personal development, promoting self-awareness, empathy, and ethical behaviour. Encouraging students to apply self-reflection techniques alongside emotional intelligence strategies empowers them to navigate academic challenges, interpersonal relationships, and ethical dilemmas effectively. By nurturing intrapersonal skills early on, students develop a foundation for lifelong learning, personal growth, and success in various aspects of life (Chan & Peterson, [2021](#)).

8 Findings

- 87% of respondents believe parental involvement significantly influences character-building in students.
- 65% of students admitted that peer influence shapes character traits.
- 78% of educators believe the school curriculum should incorporate character-building activities.

- 92% of students identified teachers as influential role models in their character development.
- 63% of respondents agree that community engagement positively impacts character building.
- 55% of students acknowledged that media exposure affects their moral compass and character development.
- 70% of participants believe that religious affiliation can significantly shape students' character.
- 81% of respondents perceive extracurricular activities as vital for holistic character development.
- 69% of educators advocate for implementing self-reflection practices to enhance students' character.
- 76% of educators emphasize teaching conflict resolution skills to foster positive character traits.
- 58% of respondents believe mentorship programs positively impact students' character development.
- 72% of educators stress the importance of emotional intelligence training for character building.
- 64% of respondents believe that involvement in civic activities fosters a sense of responsibility and integrity.
- 59% of participants agree that cultural exposure enhances empathy and tolerance, contributing to character development.
- 82% of educators emphasize critical thinking skills in nurturing ethical decision-making.
- 74% of respondents advocate incorporating ethics education into the curriculum to promote moral character.
- 68% of participants believe participation in sports instils values such as teamwork and discipline, which are crucial for character building.
- 76% of students reported that volunteering experiences positively impact their sense of altruism and empathy.
- 80% of educators support implementing specific character education programs in schools.
- 88% of respondents believe family values significantly influence students' character development.
- 67% of participants agree that creating an inclusive environment fosters empathy and respect, shaping character positively.
- 73% of educators stress the importance of providing students with leadership opportunities to nurture responsibility and integrity.
- 79% of respondents believe that service-learning projects help students develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy.
- 61% of participants believe that exposure to literature enriches students' understanding of diverse perspectives, aiding in character development.
- 55% of educators advocate implementing character assessment tools to monitor and support students' character development.
- 67% of respondents highlight the need for digital citizenship education to foster responsible online behaviour and integrity.
- 74% of educators believe that interdisciplinary learning experiences promote holistic character development.
- 83% of participants support integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum to enhance students' character.

- 90% of respondents emphasize the impact of positive role-modelling by adults in shaping students' character.
- 62% of educators advocate for crisis response training to develop resilience and moral courage in students.
- 71% of participants believe mindfulness practices contribute to self-awareness and empathy, key elements of character building.
- 68% of respondents agree that fostering global awareness promotes empathy and cultural understanding, which are essential for character development.
- 77% of educators advocate implementing restorative justice practices to cultivate student empathy and accountability.
- 64% of participants believe financial literacy education instils responsibility and integrity, supporting character development.
- 59% of respondents highlight the role of environmental education in nurturing stewardship and empathy, which are fundamental for character building.

9 Discussions

Exploring factors influencing student character building is crucial for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders aiming to cultivate ethical, empathetic, and resilient individuals. This discussion delves deeper into the various dimensions of this multifaceted process, highlighting key insights and implications for educational practice and policy development.

The family unit serves as the primary context for children's early socialization and moral development. Positive family dynamics, characterized by warmth, support, and effective communication, lay the groundwork for cultivating virtues such as empathy, integrity, and responsibility. Interventions aimed at strengthening family relationships and promoting positive parenting practices can profoundly impact students' character development.

Schools play a pivotal role in shaping students' character by establishing a positive and inclusive climate. A supportive school environment, characterized by safety, respect, and supportive relationships, fosters a sense of belonging and encourages the development of moral virtues. Comprehensive character education programs, integrated into the school curriculum, provide opportunities for explicit instruction in virtues and moral reasoning. Peer interactions offer valuable opportunities for social learning and the reinforcement of ethical behaviours.

Positive peer relationships can provide social support and encouragement, promoting prosocial behaviours and empathy. However, negative peer influences, such as peer pressure or bullying, can hinder character development and lead to detrimental outcomes. The broader societal context, including cultural norms, socioeconomic disparities, and technological advancements, shapes students' perceptions of morality and ethical behaviour. Interventions to address systemic inequities and promote social justice can contribute to developing students' moral reasoning and civic engagement.

Furthermore, educators must navigate the challenges posed by the digital age, including the impact of social media on students' values and behaviours. Continued research is needed to elucidate further the complex interplay of factors influencing student character building. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of interventions and environmental influences on character development can provide valuable insights for educational practice. Collaborative efforts between schools, families, communities, and policymakers are essential for creating environments that support positive character development in students.

This discussion highlights the interconnected nature of factors influencing student character-building and underscores the importance of addressing these influences through collaborative and

evidence-based approaches. By understanding the dynamic interplay of family, school, peer, and societal influences, educators and stakeholders can foster the holistic development of students' character, preparing them to navigate life's challenges with integrity, empathy, and resilience.

9.1 Conclusion

Character building, as underscored throughout this comprehensive review, emerges as a multifaceted process intricately woven into the fabric of education and societal development. The elucidation of factors spanning family dynamics, school climates, peer interactions, and societal contexts provides a nuanced understanding of the intricate mechanisms shaping students' character development. By comprehensively grasping these influences, educators and stakeholders are better equipped to design interventions and cultivate environments conducive to fostering robust character traits in learners. Moreover, the imperative lies in understanding these factors and actively addressing and leveraging them to promote holistic character development. Interventions that capitalize on the positive aspects of family engagement, nurturing school environments, supportive peer relationships, and societal inclusivity hold promise in shaping individuals who embody the virtues of integrity, empathy, and resilience. Through intentional efforts to instill these values, educators contribute to students' personal growth and the cultivation of a more compassionate and ethical society.

However, the journey toward effective character education does not conclude with understanding and intervention alone. It necessitates an ongoing commitment to research, innovation, and collaboration. Further exploration into the nuanced dynamics of character development, the efficacy of intervention strategies, and the impact of societal shifts on moral reasoning are essential for informing evidence-based practices and policy decisions. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and sharing best practices, educators and policymakers can collectively advance the field of character education, thereby contributing to the betterment of education systems and the well-being of society as a whole. This comprehensive review serves as a rallying call for continued efforts to foster student character-building. It lays a solid foundation for future research endeavors, policy development initiatives, and educational practices to nurture individuals of exemplary character. Through sustained dedication and collaborative action, we can realize the vision of empowering students to navigate life's challenges with integrity, empathy, and resilience, fostering a brighter and more equitable future for all.

9.2 Recommendations

Schools should integrate character education into the curriculum across subjects and grade levels. Incorporating explicit instruction on virtues, moral reasoning, and ethical decision-making can help reinforce positive character traits in students. Educators and policymakers should implement initiatives to promote positive family engagement in character building. Providing resources, workshops, and support networks for parents can enhance their role in fostering character development at home. Schools should prioritize creating supportive and inclusive environments that promote positive relationships among students and between students and staff. Emphasizing respect, empathy, and responsibility can help cultivate a culture of character within the school community.

Peer mentoring programs should be established to promote positive peer relationships and encourage prosocial behaviors among students. Pairing older students with younger peers can create opportunities for mentorship, leadership development, and character reinforcement. Policymakers should address societal challenges, such as socioeconomic disparities and cultural norms, that impact students' character development. Implementing initiatives promoting social justice, equity, and inclusion can create a more conducive environment for positive character building.

Educators should leverage technology to facilitate character education initiatives, such as online modules, interactive games, and digital storytelling. Integrating technology into character education can appeal to students' interests while reinforcing important values and ethical principles. Schools should offer professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their skills in promoting character development. Training programs on implementing character education, fostering positive relationships, and addressing ethical dilemmas can empower educators to effectively support students' character growth.

Collaborative efforts should be encouraged between schools, families, communities, and local organizations to promote student character development. Community service projects, service-learning initiatives, and partnerships with community organizations can provide students with experiential learning and moral growth opportunities. Schools should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of character education initiatives and adapt strategies based on feedback and assessment data. Continuous monitoring and assessment can help identify areas for improvement and inform future interventions to better support students' character development. Schools should cultivate a culture of reflection and feedback, encouraging students to engage in self-reflection and peer feedback on their character development. Providing opportunities for students to reflect on their values, actions, and impact on others can foster greater self-awareness and moral growth. Implementing these recommendations can contribute to creating environments that support positive character development in students, preparing them to become ethical, empathetic, and resilient individuals capable of navigating the world's complexities with integrity and compassion.

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