

EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATING CHARACTER EDUCATION AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Character education is a vital element of primary schooling, fostering moral values, social responsibility, and active citizenship during the formative years when attitudes and behaviours are shaped. Teachers, as pivotal agents in moral and academic development, influence this process through their beliefs, pedagogical strategies, and daily classroom interactions. This study explored primary school teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges in integrating character education. Main objectives of the study were to (1) identify the values along their reasons that teachers perceive as essential for nurturing positive character traits in students through their teaching practices. (2) examine the various strategies employed by teachers in integrating character education into their teaching practices. Sample of the study comprised of 48 teachers from public boys primary schools in Gujranwala division. Purposive sampling technique was used for collecting of data. The population of the study was all teachers from public boys' primary schools in Gujranwala division. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and weekly reflection journals were used as a research instruments. Data was collected through instruments. Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis, supported by NVivo, facilitated the triangulation of self-reported beliefs, observed behaviours, and reflective accounts. Findings revealed that cooperation, honesty, and respect were consistently prioritized, with honesty seen as the foundation of trust, respect as essential for effective teaching, and cooperation valued for promoting teamwork and reducing conflict. Other values, such as accountability, empathy, and tolerance, were conceptually emphasized but less frequently enacted in daily practice. The study underscores the need for targeted professional development, including culturally responsive pedagogy and practical strategies for embedding moral values into everyday teaching. Hence it is recommended that plan specialized training courses that emphasize useful methods for incorporating moral principles like integrity, decency, and teamwork into regular instruction and address sociocultural sensitivities and advance inclusivity, offer workshops on culturally responsive pedagogy.

Keywords: Teachers' perspectives, Character education, Teaching practices, Primary school level.

INTRODUCTION

Character education constitutes a foundational element of holistic schooling, aiming to cultivate moral integrity, social responsibility, and active citizenship among learners (Syahputra & Shylviana, 2024). In diverse and rapidly changing societies, schools serve as critical sites for nurturing these

dispositions particularly during the formative primary school years. Teachers, in this context, are not only conveyors of curricular content but also influential moral agents whose beliefs, pedagogical choices, and daily interactions can significantly

shape students' character development (Times of India, 2025).

Yet, the integration of character education faces multifaceted challenges. In the Pakistani context, educators in Karachi reported reliance on strategies such as storytelling, modeling, and teamwork to instill moral values; however, many lack familiarity with the philosophical foundations of moral education, and systemic support is often insufficient (Khan & Akram, 2021). More broadly, curriculum design and textbook content may emphasize moral virtues nominally but frequently neglect practical pedagogical guidance or the development of comprehensive value systems (Ahmad, 2021; Ahmad's HEC thesis; Khokhar, 2023).

Against this backdrop, teachers in Pakistan and elsewhere often grapple with the dual demands of academic instruction and character-building, constrained by curriculum limitations, limited professional development, and contextual challenges (Ahmad, 2021; Khan & Akram, 2021). Such disjunctions underscore a pronounced gap between aspirational educational policies and the lived realities of classroom practice.

The current study aims to address this gap by exploring primary school teachers' perspectives on integrating character education in the Gujranwala Division. By focusing on their beliefs, pedagogical approaches, and perceived obstacles, this research seeks to generate empirically grounded insights. These insights can inform policy decisions, support teacher development, and strengthen curricular frameworks to better embed moral and civic values in primary education. Moreover, the introduction clarifies the scope and limitations of the study and defines key operational terms, thereby establishing a foundation of conceptual clarity and academic rigor for the investigation.

Rationale of the Study

The reason for this exploration was that teachers' beliefs and attitudes directly influence how character education is implemented in classrooms. This study is significant as teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' moral values, making their insights essential for effective character education. Understanding their perspectives can guide the development of strategies to integrate character education more successfully in primary schools.

Objective of the Study

Main objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the values along their reasons that teachers perceive as essential for nurturing positive character traits in students through their teaching practices.
2. Examine the various strategies employed by teachers in integrating character education into their teaching practices.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₁: Teachers perceive specific values, such as respect, honesty, and responsibility, as essential for nurturing positive character traits in students, and they associate these values with clear educational and moral reasons.

H₂: Teachers employ a variety of deliberate strategies, including modeling behavior, integrating moral lessons into subject content, and using collaborative activities, to effectively integrate character education into their teaching practices.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses the urgent need to instill core values such as, respect, responsibility, fairness, and trustworthiness during the primary school years. In Pakistan's current climate of social challenges, these values are vital for developing morally responsible citizens. Limited research exists on character education in the Gujranwala Division, especially at the primary level. By examining teachers' beliefs, strategies, and practices, the study fills an important gap to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of character education.

Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to public boys' primary schools within the Gujranwala Division, focusing exclusively on teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience. The research was further confined to the academic session of 2024–2025,

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character education

Character education encompasses a systematic and purposeful effort within schools to cultivate core

ethical values such as honesty, respect, empathy, responsibility, and fairness among students. It plays a pivotal role in promoting learners' moral, social, and emotional growth alongside their academic development. In educational contexts, character education is embedded within curriculum design, instructional methodologies, and the broader school ethos to encourage ethical decision-making and responsible conduct (Berkowitz & Bier, 2020). Distinct from traditional disciplinary measures, it prioritizes the development of intrinsic motivation and the internalization of virtuous traits (Lickona, 1991). At the primary school stage, character education assumes heightened importance, as it establishes the behavioral, attitudinal, and value-based foundations essential for students' lifelong personal and social development.

Importance of Character Education

Character education plays a critical role in fostering students' moral, social, and emotional development alongside their academic achievement. By promoting core values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility, it contributes to the creation of safe, inclusive, and respectful school environments. Beyond ethical guidance, character education enhances learners' emotional competence, preparing them to become responsible citizens and active members of society (Lickona, 2018). Research indicates that schools implementing structured character education programs experience improved student behavior, stronger teacher-student relationships, and better academic outcomes (Berkowitz & Bier, 2020). Given contemporary educational challenges, character education is increasingly recognized as an essential component of holistic education, supporting students' overall well-being and long-term personal and social success.

Historical Background of Character Education

The origins of character education can be traced back to ancient civilizations, including Greece, China, and India, where moral development was considered integral to human flourishing. Prominent Western philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, emphasized the intentional cultivation of virtues through structured education. In the United States, character education became a central goal of early public schooling during the 19th and early 20th centuries, as schools were viewed as key institutions for moral formation

(Berkowitz & Bier, 2020). Its prominence declined in the mid-20th century with the increasing emphasis on cognitive and academic achievement. However, recent decades have witnessed a resurgence of interest, driven by concerns about school climate, student behavior, and the broader need for holistic development. Contemporary approaches to character education now incorporate evidence-based practices, integration with social-emotional learning (SEL), and alignment with academic curricula (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2022). This historical evolution highlights the enduring importance of character education in fostering ethically grounded, morally responsible students.

Character Education as a Catalyst for Academic Excellence

Character education serves as a foundational mechanism for fostering both ethical development and academic success in students. By engaging learners in the cultivation of moral and civic values, schools aim to nurture individuals who excel academically while demonstrating responsibility and a commitment to their communities (Suminto & Mbato, 2020). Teacher cognition research underscores the close interplay between knowledge and beliefs, as teachers often interpret their personal beliefs as professional knowledge (Grossman et al., 1989). Scholars contend that knowledge and beliefs are interrelated, with components such as conceptions, intuitions, and experiences mutually influencing one another within teachers' cognitive frameworks (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006; Verloop et al., 2001; Richardson, 1996). Pre-existing beliefs of student teachers shape their understanding of new information and can alter perceptions of instructional relevance, pedagogical practices, and classroom interactions (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Pajares, 1992).

The integration of character education with academic learning demonstrates a symbiotic relationship whereby the development of virtues such as perseverance, responsibility, and ethical decision-making directly enhances students' engagement and commitment to learning. These attributes enable learners to approach academic challenges with resilience, adopt a growth-oriented mindset, and persist through obstacles, ultimately contributing to improved academic outcomes. Supporting this, a meta-analysis of 213 studies revealed that in-school programs targeting social-emotional development produced significant gains

in student behavior, attitudes, emotional well-being, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Virtues such as perseverance, critical for sustained cognitive effort, and responsibility, essential for effective task management, were particularly influential in promoting both moral and academic development.

Role of Teachers in the Integration of Character Education

Character education constitutes a comprehensive approach to learning that goes beyond academic instruction to actively shape students' moral and ethical frameworks. Through this process, learners are equipped with the skills and dispositions necessary to navigate complex ethical dilemmas and make informed, responsible decisions. Moreover, character education empowers students to contribute positively to society, fostering civic responsibility and social engagement. In light of the multifaceted challenges facing contemporary society, character education serves as a vital mechanism for nurturing moral resilience and ethical fortitude, enabling students to navigate life's complexities with integrity and principled judgment (Pattaro, 2016). Teachers are central to this process, guiding and modeling ethical behavior, and embedding values across curricular and co-curricular activities.

Teaching Character for a Better Tomorrow

Similarly, Hidayati et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between character education and students' mental health outcomes in Muhammadiyah Boarding School. Their study demonstrated that structured character education programs positively influenced students' psychological well-being, highlighting the dual benefits of character education in promoting ethical development and mental resilience. These findings contribute to the understanding of how character education can support holistic student development, particularly in environments such as boarding schools where students' social and emotional adjustment is critical.

Instilling Virtue in Young Minds: Strategies for Character Education

Contemporary educational philosophies recognize that teaching extends beyond the transmission of factual knowledge to encompass the holistic development of learners. The importance of

character education has increasingly been acknowledged as a central component of primary education (Temiz, 2019). Alongside academic instruction, schools and teachers focus on cultivating values, ethics, and moral principles, understanding that knowledge alone is insufficient to prepare students for the complexities of life. Through structured character education, learners are encouraged to develop virtues such as integrity, compassion, responsibility, and respect (Birhan et al., 2021). Strategies for integrating character education into primary curricula include classroom ethics discussions, problem-solving of ethical dilemmas, team-building activities, empathy development, and exposure to diverse cultures to promote open-mindedness.

Character-Focused Outcomes

Character education has demonstrated positive effects on student behavior, social relationships, and academic engagement. Research indicates that such programs can facilitate prosocial behavior, strengthen peer interactions, and enhance academic performance in primary and middle school students. These outcomes underscore the potential benefits of character education when systematically integrated into the school environment, highlighting its role in fostering holistic student development.

Lifelong Impact of Character Education

The values instilled during primary education contribute to the formation of morally conscious individuals who navigate life with ethical judgment and social awareness. Adolescents who internalize virtues such as perseverance, empathy, and civic responsibility are better equipped for positive interpersonal relationships, community engagement, and long-term personal success. Character education, therefore, is not merely an isolated curricular activity but a sustained influence that shapes students' lifelong moral and social trajectories.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative multiple data source design to explore teachers' beliefs, practices, and challenges in integrating character education at the primary school level. A qualitative approach was selected to capture rich, contextualized descriptions of teachers' lived experiences and professional insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

POPULATION

The research population consisted of all teachers working in public boys' primary schools across six districts of the Gujranwala Division: Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal, and Sialkot, comprising a total of 12,460 teachers in 1,936 schools (Punjab School Information System, 2024–2025).

SAMPLE AND SAMPLE TECHNIQUE

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select forty-eight (48) teachers eight (8) from each district ensuring representation across urban and rural schools and varying teaching experiences.

INSTRUMENT

Three complementary instruments, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and teacher reflection journals were used as a research instrument. The interview guide included open-ended questions addressing teachers' perceived essential values, strategies for integrating character education, and challenges faced, with prompts to encourage detailed responses. Classroom observations used a structured checklist with eight indicators and a three-point rating scale (fully observed, partially observed, not observed), along with space for qualitative field notes. Teacher reflection journals, maintained weekly over four weeks, documented values prioritized, strategies implemented, notable student responses, challenges encountered, and resources required. Triangulation across these multiple data sources enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2015), while the sample size was determined based on thematic saturation appropriate for qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

DATA COLLECTION

Table 1

Values Teachers Perceive as Essential (N=48)

Sr. No.	Themes	Sub-themes	f	(%)
1	Respect	Respect for teachers	28	58
		Respect for peers	25	52
		Respect for rules/property	20	42
2	Responsibility	Completing tasks/homework	27	56
		Classroom duties	22	46
3	Honesty / Integrity	Truth-telling	23	48
		Owning mistakes	19	40

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, direct classroom observations, and teacher reflection journals. These multiple sources provided rich, in-depth insights into teachers' beliefs, practices, and experiences regarding character education. The researcher personally conducted all interviews to ensure authenticity and contextual accuracy.

DATA ANALYSIS

Collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. The process began with familiarization, involving repeated reading of transcripts, observation notes, and journal entries to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. Initial codes were generated using both inductive and deductive approaches in NVivo, capturing meaningful units related to teachers' beliefs, practices, and challenges. These codes were then grouped into potential themes aligned with the research objectives. Themes were reviewed for coherence, distinctiveness, and relevance, followed by the assignment of concise, descriptive labels. Finally, findings were synthesized into a comprehensive report, supported by verbatim extracts from participants to illustrate key points.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This objective was to determine which values educators believe are most important for developing positive character traits in primary school pupils, as well as the rationale behind their prioritization. In order to foster positive character traits in primary school pupils, teachers identified a set of core values that they believe are essential. Six major themes surfaced, each with distinct sub-themes and justifications for their significance.

Sr. No.	Themes	Sub-themes	f	(%)
4	Self-discipline / Punctuality	Time management	21	44
		Following rules	20	42
5	Empathy & Cooperation	Helping peers	18	38
		Listening to others	15	31
6	Tolerance / Social Harmony	Acceptance of diversity	16	33
		Conflict resolution	14	29

Teachers in the sampled districts were asked to describe the values they believe are most important for fostering positive character traits in primary school students, as well as the reasons behind their prioritization (Table 4.1). According to the data, the most commonly mentioned value was respect, specifically respect for peers (52%) and teachers (58%). This finding emphasizes the importance of respect as a fundamental classroom principle in the Gujranwala Division context, where traditional hierarchies and teacher authority are culturally significant. The emphasis on upholding order and safeguarding shared resources in frequently resource-constrained public schools is further reflected in the 42% respect for rules and property. Second in importance was responsibility, with 56% of educators citing finishing assignments and homework as a crucial life skill.

This is in line with educational research that shows responsibility improves academic performance and self-regulation. In rural and semi-urban communities where group responsibility is valued, classroom responsibilities (46%) were seen as a culturally relevant method of fostering pride and ownership in the educational setting.

It indicates that the most often mentioned values are responsibility (completing tasks and taking care of the classroom) and respect (teacher and peers). This implies that at the primary level, teachers give social order and student accountability the most weight. Almost half of the participants valued honesty and integrity (truth-telling at 48% and owning mistakes at 40%). These principles are ingrained in Pakistan's larger moral traditions as well as in Islamic teachings. Teachers believed that they were crucial to helping students develop genuine relationships and trust. Concerns about preserving order in classrooms that may experience crowding and short instructional time were reflected in the fact that 44% of teachers (time management) and 42% (rule-following) cited self-discipline and punctuality. It was common to frame punctuality as a courtesy to others as well as a personal virtue. A balanced interest in both moral

virtues and useful behavioral habits is demonstrated by the fact that nearly half of participants place a high value on honesty (48%) and self-discipline/punctuality (42%–44%).

Additionally, table 4.1 demonstrates that cooperation and empathy were regarded as critical social-emotional abilities for fostering peer support and lowering conflict (38% and 31%, respectively). Recognizing the importance of listening and helping in fostering an inclusive learning environment, teachers purposefully set up scenarios where students could practice these skills. Lastly, the multicultural and multiethnic character of classrooms in the area was addressed by Tolerance and Social Harmony (acceptance of diversity at 33% and conflict resolution at 29%). In addition to being important for immediate peer relationships, these values support the goals of national education policy, which are to foster harmony and peaceful coexistence.

Overall, the values teachers identified point to a well-rounded strategy that incorporates social competence (e.g., empathy, tolerance), personal responsibility (e.g., discipline, punctuality), and moral character (e.g., honesty, respect). This suggests that although academic proficiency is still crucial, Gujranwala Division teachers also believe that character development is essential to primary education. Participants were asked to describe the values they believed were crucial for primary school pupils in the sampled schools. Their responses yielded six major themes, each of which had particular sub-themes and justifications for their significance.

One of the most important values to instill in students, according to the teachers' testimonies from the sampled schools, is respect. "Respect is first, if they don't respect the teacher, we can't teach anything else," one educator explained, underscoring the importance of respect for educators (T03-GW). Another educator emphasized the value of respect for peers, saying that in order to avoid confrontations and promote friendships, students should learn to listen and

treat friends with kindness (T07-MB). Another viewpoint emphasized adherence to regulations and property, emphasizing that maintaining school supplies like books, desks, and equipment fosters pride in addition to discipline (T14-SK). Collectively, these opinions demonstrate how educators view respect in all of its manifestations as

a fundamental for establishing a productive and encouraging learning atmosphere. (SIC)

This goal looked at how teachers use instructional strategies, resources, and stakeholder involvement to incorporate identified values into their teaching practices.

Results of Interview

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes: Strategies for Character Education Integration (N = 48)

Sr. No.	Themes	Sub-themes	f (%)
1	Modeling & Verbal Reinforcement	Teacher models values	40 (83)
		Positive reinforcement	38 (79)
2	Stories & Moral Tales	Textbook stories	35 (73)
		Cultural/religious anecdotes	32 (67)
3	Classroom Rules & Rewards	Rules linked to values	33 (69)
		Reward systems	30 (63)
4	Role-play & Experiential Activities	Simulations	22 (46)
		Group problem-solving	20 (42)
5	Cross-curricular Integration	Language lessons	15 (31)
		Social studies content	12 (25)
6	Parental & Community Engagement	Parent meetings	10 (21)
		Community projects	8 (17)
7	Observation-based Assessment	Anecdotal records	42 (88)
		Behavior checklists	4 (79)

Teachers' methods for incorporating character education are shown in Table 4.4. The most common strategies are observation and modeling, according to the results of table 4.4 of the interview data: 88% of respondents keep anecdotal notes, and 83% specifically report modeling behavior. The main means by which teachers impart character are through their own behavior and daily observation; they also heavily rely on informal, teacher-centered approaches. Additionally, table 4.4 showed that storytelling (73% textbook, 67% cultural/religious) demonstrates that moral stories including religious ones are culturally relevant and widely used due to their affordability and memorability. This is a practical solution for many schools' limited material resources.

Additionally, table 4.4 revealed that reward systems and classroom rules are prevalent (63–69%), indicating teachers' desire for controllable, predictable ways to influence behavior. Because they take more time and involve smaller groups,

role-playing and experiential methods are used less frequently (42–46%). About 25–31% of integration into language and social studies takes place, which suggests opportunity: only one-third of teachers regularly incorporate values into their subject lessons, which could increase coverage without adding extra time.

Additionally, table 4.4 demonstrated the strong reliance on observation, indicating that teachers lack formal, validated instruments but are confident in their daily judgments. Practical implications: offer brief, verified checklists and straightforward portfolio techniques that complement teachers' existing practices; this will boost dependability while staying doable. Only 17–21% of cases involve parent/community engagement. Strengthening school-home ties is an evidence-based leverage point that is currently underutilized, given teachers' reliance on home reinforcement for many values.

One of the teachers noted, "I show them by my own behavior, if I want them to be polite, I must speak politely first" (T06-GR), underscoring the importance of teaching values by example. This method supports the idea that when students regularly observe their teachers modeling positive behaviors, they are more likely to follow suit. As another teacher put it, "When I see a student helping a classmate, I praise them so others notice and copy" (T19-SK), positive reinforcement was also emphasized as an effective tactic. Teachers can foster a culture where kindness and cooperation are valued and emulated by praising and celebrating such behaviors, which not only supports the individual student but also sets a clear example for the entire class. (SIC)

Teachers discussed the use of narratives as a potent tool to communicate moral values in ways that speak to students' cultural and personal contexts under theme 2, stories and moral tales. According to one teacher, they use the moral lessons found in the Urdu textbook to start conversations about justice and honesty. They do this by using well-known material to encourage introspection and discussion (T12-HF). Another instructor described how they use religious and cultural tales, especially those from the life of the Prophet, to demonstrate virtues like kindness and patience (T09-NR). These narrative techniques improve students' comprehension and relevance by giving abstract moral ideas a tangible form and relating them to their shared heritage and life experiences. (SIC)

Teachers stressed the use of structured guidelines and incentive systems to encourage positive behavior and reinforce core values under theme 3, classroom rules & rewards. According to one teacher, their classroom rules are directly related to their values. For example, the rule "Listen before speaking" reminds students to treat others with respect at all times (T08-GW). Another educator talked about implementing a system of rewards, where students receive stars for good behavior. This encourages them to continue acting in a positive manner because they enjoy earning these tokens of appreciation (T14-MB). When combined, these tactics provide a clear framework in which values are directly linked to expectations, and students are motivated to uphold them both internally and externally. (SIC)

Teachers emphasized the importance of giving students practical, interactive learning experiences that foster empathy, teamwork, and problem-

solving abilities under theme 4, role-playing, and experiential activities. One teacher explained how social inclusion can be addressed through simulations, in which students role-play situations in which someone is excluded and then have conversations about ways to help them feel included (T05-SK). This approach fosters compassion in students and helps them emotionally connect to the experience. Another educator described how group problem-solving exercises that call for cooperation from students promote respect and teamwork (T17-GR). Instead of teaching values passively, these experiential methods enable students to put them into practice in the moment. (SIC)

Teachers discussed purposefully incorporating values education into various subject areas to reinforce moral concepts across the curriculum under theme 5, cross-curricular integration. One teacher revealed that they use literature as a starting point for conversations about empathy and cooperation in language classes by choosing reading passages that emphasize concepts like sharing and helping (T04-HF). Another social studies teacher described how they link academic material to moral role models by highlighting the integrity and bravery of historical leaders (T21-NR). Teachers can enhance students' comprehension and application of these principles by incorporating values into a variety of subjects. This way, character development is not limited to discrete lessons but is continuously reinforced across multiple learning contexts. (SIC)

Teachers underlined the significance of involving families and the larger community in order to extend values education outside of the classroom under theme 6, parental & community engagement. According to one teacher, they openly discuss the values being taught at school with parents during parent meetings, urging them to reinforce these lessons at home for increased impact and consistency (T18-GW). Another educator explained how students can develop a sense of collective stewardship and environmental responsibility by taking part in community projects like tree-planting events (T13-MB). These programs ensure that students receive a consistent message about the value of values in daily life by fortifying the bonds between the community, the home, and the school. (SIC)

Teachers discussed employing methodical techniques to track and assess students' display of values in everyday interactions under theme 7,

observation-based assessment. According to one teacher, they keep anecdotal records, highlighting particular instances of students being kind or honest, which enables them to provide in-depth, qualitative insights into character development (T02-GR). Another educator explained how to monitor changes over time using a basic behavior checklist, which offers an organized method of

determining areas that require additional support or progress (T15-SK). With the use of these observation-based tools, educators can evaluate values in real-world settings, guaranteeing that evaluation encompasses moral and social development in addition to academic success. (SIC)

Observation Findings Related to Strategies

Table 3

Observation Indicators of Strategy Implementation (N = 48)

Indicator	FO f (%)	PO f (%)	NO f (%)
Teacher models respectful/value-based behavior	42 (88%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)
Use of stories/examples to convey values	35 (73%)	8 (17%)	5 (10%)
Engagement in cooperative tasks	28 (58%)	12 (25%)	8 (17%)
Teacher facilitates conflict resolution	26 (54%)	14 (29%)	8 (17%)
Classroom rules visibly linked to values	31 (65%)	10 (21%)	7 (15%)
Positive reinforcement for values-based actions	39 (81%)	6 (13%)	3 (6%)

The results of the strategy implementation observation across the sampled classrooms (N = 48) are shown in Table 4.5. The majority of value-based teaching practices were found to be widely adopted. 88% of teachers were found to model respectful and value-based behavior frequently, 10% to do so partially, and only 2% to not model it at all. Similarly, 81% of teachers regularly used positive reinforcement for values-based actions, 13% partially used it, and 6% did not use it at all. This suggests that rewarding desirable behavior is a common practice.

Given that 73% of teachers regularly, 17% partially, and 10% never use stories or examples to teach values, it is clear that narrative methods are still a key component of values education. A moderate but significant degree of integration between moral principles and behavioral expectations was demonstrated by the presence of classroom rules that were clearly linked to values in 65% of the observed classrooms, partially in 21%, and absent in 15%. 58% of classrooms engaged in cooperative activities frequently, 25% partially, and 17% absently, indicating a balanced but less common use of collaborative learning to promote social skills.

The Sample Observer Comments (SOCs) provide rich qualitative insights into how teachers practically implement values-based strategies in their classrooms, complementing the quantitative findings. Observers recorded multiple instances of teachers modeling respectful behavior, such as

greeting each student individually upon entry and maintaining a calm, non-sarcastic tone even when addressing discipline issues (OBS-GW03; OBS-SK05). These actions not only set a welcoming tone but also demonstrated the interpersonal respect expected from students. (SOCs)

Positive reinforcement was also widely evident, with teachers praising students for spontaneous acts of kindness, such as helping peers without being asked, and giving verbal acknowledgments like "Good job for telling the truth" (OBS-MB04; OBS-GR06), reinforcing desirable behaviors and motivating others to emulate them. (SOCs)

Last but not least, while more than half of teachers actively assist students in resolving conflicts, this practice is less frequently used than modeling values or employing positive reinforcement. Conflict resolution facilitation was frequent in 54% of classrooms, partial in 29%, and absent in 17%. Overall, the data indicated that although there is room to improve the consistency of cooperative learning activities, conflict resolution facilitation, and the clear connection between classroom rules and values, core strategies like modeling values and offering positive reinforcement are already deeply ingrained in teaching practice.

Using examples and stories became a popular teaching strategy, with teachers incorporating local folktales to teach moral concepts like sharing equity or relating academic material, like math lessons, to honesty and fairness (OBS-HF02; OBS-NR07).

Posters with phrases like "we respect each other, we listen, we share" were used to document classroom rules that were clearly connected to values. These rules were also reviewed during morning meetings to make sure they were being reinforced (OBS-SK02; OBS-GW01). (SOCs)

When students engaged in small group discussions on community service or worked in pairs to create posters with a kindness theme, they demonstrated cooperative tasks that promoted empathy and teamwork (OBS-MB06; OBS-HF05). In order to model peaceful problem-solving, teachers also showed their ability to mediate conflicts by stopping lessons to mediate disagreements and assisting students in coming together through handshakes and apologies (OBS-NR03; OBS-GR05). (SOCs)

While some teachers demonstrated less obvious community linkage during lessons, others linked classroom learning to larger contexts in terms of parental and community engagement. For example, some teachers announced upcoming parent-teacher meetings on punctuality. Lastly, there was unmistakable proof that students were taking part in values-related activities, such as cooperative reading sessions and role-plays about assisting friends who were hurt (OBS-GR04; OBS-SK04). (SOCs)

Together, these findings show that educators used a variety of tactics to instill values, incorporating them into formal education and daily interactions to create a classroom environment based on moral consciousness, respect, and cooperation.

FINDINGS

Findings of Analysis of Objective 1

Teachers strongly agreed on the values they believed were crucial for the moral and social development of primary school pupils, according to the triangulated analysis of interviews, reflection journals, and classroom observations. The values that people prioritized the most across all three data sources were cooperation, honesty, and respect. Teachers frequently cited honesty as the cornerstone of trust between peers and between teachers and students. As one participant put it, "Respect is first, if they don't respect the teacher, we can't teach anything else" (T03-GW), respect was emphasized as a necessary condition for effective teaching. Cooperation was praised for its ability to lessen conflict, promote teamwork, and fortify peer support. Although they were recognized as

important, other values like accountability, empathy, and tolerance were less common in observational data, indicating that they were more frequently stressed conceptually than in day-to-day interactions.

Findings of Analysis of Objective 2

With differing degrees of consistency, teachers reported and were seen utilizing a variety of strategies to incorporate character education. The most often cited method for placing values like justice and honesty in context was storytelling based on religious narratives, local folktales, and textbook material. Another important tactic was for teachers to actively model the moral and polite conduct they wanted students to learn. Students had the chance to apply values in real-time interactions through cooperative projects and group activities.

Desired behaviors were reinforced by positive reinforcement, which included both symbolic rewards (such as stars) and verbal praise ("Good job for telling the truth"). The implementation of classroom rules that were explicitly linked to values, like "Listen before speaking," provided a structural framework for behavior management, but observations showed that the consistency and depth of these strategies varied across classrooms.

DISCUSSION

According to the study's findings, teachers strongly believe that cooperation, honesty, and respect are fundamental principles that are necessary for the moral and social growth of elementary school pupils. This is consistent with the seminal work of Lickona (1996), which emphasizes these principles as universal cornerstones of character education. Particular emphasis was placed on respect, which is crucial for creating a favorable learning environment and fostering good teacher-student relationships, as Nucci (2017) also points out.

The widespread use of storytelling lends credence to McDrury and Alterio's (2003) contention that moral instruction can be effectively conveyed through narrative. Modeling is consistent with the social learning theory of Bandura (1986), which holds that students pick up knowledge through imitation and observation. Johnson and Johnson's (2009) cooperative learning framework, which has been demonstrated to improve social and academic outcomes, is reflected in cooperative tasks. Skinner's (1974) behaviorist ideas, which stress the

reinforcement of desired behaviors through rewards, serve as the foundation for positive reinforcement. Contrary to Berkowitz and Bier's (2005) findings on unequal character education delivery, implementation variability indicates that variables like teacher preparation, class size, and time constraints affect the consistent application of these strategies.

The most common methods used by teachers in this study to incorporate character education were storytelling, modeling, group activities, positive reinforcement, and value-linked classroom rules. The widespread use of storytelling supports the claim made by McDrury and Alterio (2003) that narrative is an effective teaching tool for moral concepts because it enables the contextualization of abstract values in relatable situations. Another popular strategy was modeling, which is consistent with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which holds that moral behavior is learned by students through watching and copying role models.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive grasp of teachers' viewpoints, methods, and difficulties in incorporating character education at the primary school level is offered by the triangulated analysis of interviews, teacher reflection journals, and classroom observations.

The conclusion for Objective 1 shows that teachers strongly agree on the fundamental principles i.e. honesty, respect, and cooperation that are crucial for students' moral and social growth. These principles were emphasized consistently in all three instruments. These principles serve as the cornerstone for developing peer harmony, trust, and healthy teacher-student relationships. The fact that secondary values like accountability, empathy, and tolerance were recognized but less commonly demonstrated in day-to-day interactions suggests a disconnect between conceptual emphasis and classroom implementation.

According to the data for Objective 2, teachers use a variety of tactics, chief among them being cooperative learning, storytelling, modeling desired behavior, positive reinforcement, and rules that are directly related to values. Although these approaches show promise for integrating character education, the differences in their depth and consistency among classrooms suggest that sustained implementation will require organized professional development and continuous observation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forth to improve the incorporation of character education in primary schools in light of the findings and conclusion:

Plan specialized training courses that emphasize useful methods for incorporating moral principles like integrity, decency, and teamwork into regular instruction.

To address sociocultural sensitivities and advance inclusivity, offer workshops on culturally responsive pedagogy.

To guarantee uniformity of implementation across classrooms, incorporate peer observation, feedback systems, and follow-up assistance.

Rather than treating core values as extras, incorporate them clearly into lesson plans, exercises, and evaluations in all subject areas.

Create resource packs for teachers that include moral values-related stories, exercises, and discussion starters.

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