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The Meaning of Character Education in Citizenship Learning in Junior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the meaning of character education in Civics Education (PKn) learning at MTs Laboratorium UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) and the role of teachers in shaping students' character. Character education is an important focus in the Merdeka Curriculum and in reinforcing Pancasila values to produce a generation that is virtuous, religious, and has a sense of nationalism. This study uses a qualitative case study design with PKn teachers and students in grades VII–IX as informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and then analyzed using the interactive analysis techniques of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), with source and method triangulation to ensure data validity. The research results show that character education in Civics at MTs Lab UINSU is implemented in an integrated manner through active learning, group discussions, case studies, and attitude assessments that emphasize discipline, responsibility, honesty, and respect for diversity. Civics teachers act as facilitators, mentors, and role models in instilling character values, supported by policies and a religious, conducive school environment. However, challenges such as differences in students' character readiness, limited access to technology, influences from the outside school environment, and limited learning time become obstacles to the optimal internalization of character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a major focus in Indonesia's national education system, especially since the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the strengthening of Pancasila Education as the foundation for shaping a generation with noble character, religious values, and a sense of national awareness [1]. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that the purpose of education is to develop students' potential so that they become faithful individuals, pious, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable,

creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. [2]. Therefore, character building is not only the responsibility of the family or community environment, but also a strategic task of formal educational institutions, including madrasahs.

At the Junior High School (SMP) level or its equivalent, such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah, early adolescence is a crucial phase in the formation of students' identity and citizenship attitudes [3]. At this level, students begin to show increasingly complex cognitive and affective development, so character education must be presented more contextually and address aspects of moral awareness and social responsibility. One of the subjects that plays a strategic role in character building is Civics Education (PKn), which not only provides knowledge about the rights and obligations of citizens but also the internalization of the values of Pancasila, democracy, tolerance, and discipline in real life [4].

MTs Laboratorium UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU), as a model Islamic educational institution (laboratory school), aims to produce graduates with a religious character, noble morals, and a strong sense of national awareness. In this context, Civics Education (PKn) at MTs Lab UINSU is seen as an important means of instilling moral values, social ethics, and an understanding of diversity as a national strength. However, social dynamics and technological advancements present new challenges, such as tendencies toward individualism, declining tolerance, and a crisis of role models, which can affect the development of students' character.

These conditions require Civics teachers not only to act as conveyors of material but also to facilitate character building through collaborative, contextual approaches and role modeling in the learning process. Therefore, it is important to understand how the meaning of character education is interpreted, planned, and implemented in Civics learning at MTs Lab UINSU, and its impact on changes in students' attitudes and behaviors.

Most previous research has focused on the effectiveness of learning models, strategies for implementing character values in the curriculum, and the influence of Civic Education (PKn) learning on students' nationalism and discipline. Research conducted by Harahap & Surianti shows that integrating character education into civic education can increase students' awareness of Pancasila values through an active learning approach [4]. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Anugrah & Rahmat emphasizes that the success of character education is greatly influenced by teachers' role modeling and the support of the school environment [5].

However, most of these studies focus only on implementation and learning outcomes, without delving deeply into how the meaning of character education is understood and internalized in the Civics (PKn) learning process, by both teachers and students. In addition, existing research tends to focus on general schools, thus giving less attention to the context of madrasahs, which have the distinct characteristic of integrating religious and citizenship values into educational objectives. This situation indicates a research gap regarding how character education in PKn is practiced and understood in the Islamic education context, particularly at MTs Lab UIN North Sumatra, a model school serving as an educational laboratory.

Furthermore, most previous studies used a quantitative or simple descriptive approach that examined only correlations among certain variables, without conducting an in-depth exploration of students' learning experiences and the construction of character meaning. The lack of qualitative case studies on the dynamics of character education in Civics learning at

the madrasa level underscores the importance of research examining students' subjective understandings and teachers' pedagogical strategies for building character that aligns with religious and national values.

From a novelty perspective, this study makes three main contributions. First, it offers a new perspective by examining the meaning of character education interpretively in Civics learning, rather than focusing solely on its technical implementation. Second, this study provides a contextual empirical overview of how Islamic values and citizenship values are integrated and internalized by students in madrasahs, particularly MTs Lab UINSU, which has a mandate to develop character education through an integrated curriculum. Third, this study offers field-based recommendations for more meaningful and adaptive Civics learning strategies to shape students' character **in the digital era, which is full of moral and social challenges.**

Thus, **this study** not only enriches the literature on character education in Civics (PKn) subjects but also contributes to the development of more reflective, integrative, and relevant learning practices **in the madrasah environment. This study** is expected to strengthen **the role of PKn** as a strategic vehicle for shaping future generations with noble character, a strong sense of national identity, and moral maturity in facing the dynamics of national life.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design to deepen understanding of **the meaning of** character education in Civics learning at MTs Laboratorium UIN Sumatera Utara. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on exploring the experiences, perspectives, and meaning constructions **of teachers and students in the Civics learning process.** This aligns with Sugiyono's view that qualitative research allows researchers to explore phenomena holistically within their natural social context [6].

A case study design was used because the research was conducted at a single location that has specific characteristics as an Islamic education laboratory school. Moleong emphasizes that case studies are suitable when researchers seek an in-depth understanding of contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts [7]. MTs Lab UINSU was chosen as the research location because this madrasa explicitly integrates religious and citizenship values, which are the focus of the character education study.

The research subjects include Civic Education teachers and students in grades VII–IX who are involved in the character education learning process. Informants are selected using purposive sampling to identify individuals who are considered to understand best and engage in character education activities at school. In addition, snowball sampling techniques can be used to obtain additional relevant informants as needed for the research.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation during Civic Education learning activities, and documentation of learning tools such as lesson plans, teaching modules, and student attitude assessment records. All data were collected in accordance with **research ethics, including obtaining consent from informants and maintaining their confidentiality.**

The data obtained were analyzed using interactive analysis techniques [8], which include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis

was carried out simultaneously with data collection to ensure accurate, contextually appropriate findings.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Triangulation was conducted to validate the consistency of information obtained from various techniques and research subjects, while member checking was used to ensure that the researcher's interpretations aligned with the informants' experiences [9]. With this method, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the meaning of character education in citizenship learning at MTs Lab UINSU, as well as the strategies teachers use to effectively and contextually internalize character values among students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Implementation of Character Education in Civic Education Learning

Based on the observations conducted at MTs Laboratorium UIN Sumatera Utara, the implementation of character education in Citizenship Education (PKn) learning appears to be integrated into various aspects of the learning activities. The PKn teachers consistently connect the teaching materials with character values based on Pancasila and Islamic teachings, such as honesty, discipline, mutual respect, and responsibility. This is evident when teachers encourage students to relate the topic of citizens' rights and obligations to examples of applying discipline in daily life, both at school and within the family environment.

The learning implementation mostly uses group discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and case studies to foster democratic values, courage in expressing opinions, and a tolerant attitude towards differing views. Observations show that teachers provide equal opportunities for all students to participate in the learning process, including encouraging quiet students to be more confident in expressing their opinions in front of the class.

Character education is also implemented through continuous attitude assessment. Teachers not only evaluate students' cognitive aspects but also observe their behavior during the learning process. Attitudes such as punctuality, politeness in communication, and teamwork in groups are important indicators of success in Civics education. Teachers give direct appreciation to students who display good behavior as a form of positive reinforcement.

In addition, a religious school culture also supports the development of students' character in Civics learning. Routine activities such as reciting prayers before studying, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and reminding each other to do good strengthen the integration of religious values and citizenship values. This conducive learning environment shows that character education does not only occur in the classroom but also through social interactions at school. The observation results also align with the interview results, which the researcher presents below.

Interview with a Civic Education Teacher

The civics teacher stated that integrating character education is an inseparable part of the learning process. He explained:

"In teaching Civics, I always connect the material with character values such as discipline, respecting others' opinions, and being responsible. I want students not only to understand the theory of citizenship but also to apply it in their daily lives, truly."

This statement indicates that teachers play an active role in consistently and purposefully integrating character values into Civics learning activities.

Interview with Students

An eighth-grade student shared their experience of participating in Civics lessons:

"In Citizenship Education class, we often discuss social issues and how to solve them. The teacher also always reminds us to respect each other if we have different opinions."

This indicates that students realize that character assessment contributes to their learning outcomes, thereby encouraging positive behavioral changes.

Interview with the Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Curriculum Affairs

The Deputy Head of the Madrasah emphasized that the school places character education as a priority in all subjects, including Civics Education (PKn):

"Character is the main focus at this madrasa. We always encourage teachers to integrate Islamic and national values into learning, especially Civics, which is indeed rich in moral and social values."

This view indicates the school's managerial support in the successful implementation of character education.

Based on observations and interviews at MTs Lab UINSU, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education in Civics Learning has been effectively applied and integrated into the students' learning process. Civics teachers not only deliver citizenship theory but also connect it to character values such as discipline, responsibility, mutual respect, and the courage to express opinions, through active learning models like group discussions and case studies.

The internalization of character values is reinforced through attitude assessment, habituation of positive behavior in the classroom, and strengthening a religious and conducive school environment. Students demonstrate an understanding that character is an important part of learning success in Civics education. Support from the school, especially from the vice principal in charge of curriculum, serves as a reinforcing factor in ensuring that the implementation of character values runs in a planned and sustainable manner. Thus, Civics learning at MTs Lab UINSU not only emphasizes cognitive achievement but also encourages the formation of character in accordance with national values and Islamic teachings, thereby contributing to the development of students who possess noble character and awareness as good citizens.

3.1.2. **The Role of Civic Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Character**

Observations at MTs Lab UIN North Sumatra indicate that Civic Education teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' character through the learning process, which takes place both in the classroom and in the broader school environment. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering lesson materials, but also serve as facilitators, mentors, and role models in the internalization of character values.

In learning, the civics teacher actively guides students to demonstrate behavior aligned with the moral and social values taught, such as respecting others' opinions, fostering cooperation within the group, and taking responsibility for assigned tasks. The teacher consistently encourages students to actively participate in discussions of current citizenship issues, allowing them to hone their critical thinking and democratic attitudes.

Teachers also demonstrate exemplary behavior through their words, maintaining a firm attitude while still respecting students, and through disciplined classroom management. Observations show that teachers' instructions are often accompanied by real-life examples from everyday experiences, making character values not only theoretical but also easier for students to understand and apply. Furthermore, teachers provide positive reinforcement to students who exhibit behavior aligned with the expected character, such as praise, motivation, or acknowledgment through attitude assessment scores. These efforts help create an appreciative classroom climate and consistently motivate students to behave well.

Not only in the classroom, but Civic Education teachers are involved in school activities that emphasize the cultivation of religious and social character, such as maintaining school cleanliness, greeting each other politely, and regularly participating in religious activities. This shows that the role of teachers is holistic and continuous, guiding students to practice positive character in various situations. The observations are also in line with the interviews, and the researcher presents the interview results below.

Interview with a Civic Education Teacher

The PPKn teacher explained that character building is an inseparable part of the learning process. He explained:

"We always strive to instill values such as discipline, responsibility, and respect for others' opinions through various learning activities. For example, by getting students used to being on time, working together in groups, and discussing politely."

The teacher also added that habituating role models is an important strategy and that teachers must provide concrete examples of the behavior expected from students.

Interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum

The Vice Principal stated that the role of PPKn teachers is very strategic in strengthening students' character:

"Civics teachers not only teach citizenship theory, but also serve as mentors in instilling character values in the classroom and throughout the school environment. They participate in supervising school rules and provide guidance to students regarding daily behavior."

He emphasized that the school also encourages collaboration among teachers through co-curricular activities to support holistic character education.

Interview with the Student

One eighth-grade student stated that the PPKn teacher has an approach that is close to the students:

“The teacher always reminds us to be honest and respect our friends. If there are students who are noisy or undisciplined, the PPKn teacher always reprimands them in a kind way and makes us aware.”

Students also feel that Civics lessons help them better understand the importance of behaving well within the school community.

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Citizenship Education teachers play a very significant role in shaping students' character at MTs Lab UINSU. This role is manifested through learning that emphasizes instilling character values, such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect. In addition, teachers serve as direct role models for students and play an active role in behavior development through positive habituation in both the classroom and the school environment.

The school also provides support through policies and teacher coordination to strengthen the implementation of character education. Meanwhile, students experience tangible benefits through changes in attitudes and habits that better align with civic values. Thus, it can be said that collaboration among teachers, school management, and students makes Citizenship Education a strategic avenue for holistically and sustainably developing students' character at MTs Lab UINSU.

3.1.3. Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of Character Education in Civic Education Learning

Based on observations during the Citizenship Education learning process at MTs Lab UINSU, it was found that although character education has been implemented, several challenges and obstacles remain that hinder its optimal execution. One of the main obstacles is the difference in the levels of discipline and character readiness among students. Some students show enthusiasm and a positive attitude during learning, but others remain inconsistent in adhering to classroom rules, such as arriving late, losing focus during discussions, and showing little initiative in expressing their opinions.

In addition, the uneven use of technological devices and digital access also becomes an obstacle. When teachers use interactive learning media, not all students have adequate devices, resulting in uneven participation. On the other hand, external factors, such as the influence of social environments outside of school, also affect the character habits built in class, especially regarding values of discipline and responsibility.

Another identified obstacle is the limited learning time. Civics teachers often have to focus on completing the curriculum, so the time allocated to character development in a practical way in the classroom is limited. Although teachers strive to integrate character education into every learning activity, its implementation has not run optimally due to the high cognitive demands students must meet.

The learning environment also presents its own challenges. Although the school's religious culture is quite strong, control and supervision of student behavior across various areas of the school environment are not yet consistent, resulting in behaviors such as a lack

of responsibility for maintaining classroom cleanliness or excessive noise during class transitions. The observation results also align with the interview findings, which the researcher presents below.

Interview with a Civic Education Teacher

The Civics teacher explained that, despite the implementation of character education, there are still complex challenges. He stated:

“We always strive to integrate character values into every Civics lesson, but it is undeniable that some students are still lacking in discipline, especially when it comes to completing assignments on time and paying attention during class. Limited time also causes us to focus more on finishing the material rather than deepening character values through direct practice.”

Teachers also emphasize that differences in students' social backgrounds affect their attitudes and behaviors, so teachers need to take a more individual approach, but it cannot be fully optimized due to time constraints.

Interview with the Vice Principal for Student Affairs

The student affairs department provides a broader perspective regarding conditions outside the classroom. He/She said:

“Institutionally, we strongly support character education through various habituation activities. However, the influence of social circles outside of school remains the biggest obstacle. Some students are easily influenced by social media or peers, so the values of discipline and responsibility that have been established at school are sometimes inconsistent.”

He also revealed that teacher supervision in several school areas still needs improvement to ensure the process of character internalization runs evenly across all school environments.

Interview with Student Participants

An eighth-grade student shared their views on the implementation of character education in Civics class:

“Learning Civics is fun when we are having discussions, but sometimes friends can be noisy or play on their phones during class. For online assignments, some don't have a phone, so sometimes they don't submit their work. We have actually been taught to be disciplined and responsible, but it can sometimes be difficult to apply this outside of school due to peer influence or habits at home.”

The student also admitted that developing character habits requires support from the environment in order to be consistent.

Overall, this study shows that Civic Education learning significantly strengthens students' character at MTs Lab UINSU. However, there is a need to strengthen collaboration among teachers, schools, and parents, as well as to develop more varied and adaptable learning strategies to sustain the internalization of character values and consistently apply them in students' daily lives.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Implementation of Character Education in Civic Education Learning

Research findings at MTs Laboratorium UIN Sumatera Utara indicate that character education in Civics Education (PKn) learning has been integrated into the learning process, assessment, and school culture. These results align with the views of Pujowati, Hasibuan, and Budiono, who state that effective character education must be carried out through moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action embedded in learning activities and school life [10]. Civics teachers at MTs Lab UINSU not only provide a theoretical understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities, but also guide students in internalizing values such as discipline and responsibility through practical activities.

The learning methods used, such as group discussions, Q&A sessions, and case studies, demonstrate the application of an active learning model based on democratic values. This aligns with Makki's view that participatory learning methods can develop social skills, the ability to express opinions, and students' attitudes of tolerance [11]. Research by Sitorus et al. also shows that group discussions in Civics learning foster mutual respect and the courage to argue politely [12].

Teachers provide the same opportunities for all students to express their opinions. This practice supports Rizai's findings, which emphasize that character education must be based on the principle of active student participation in the learning process to develop the desired character, typically [13]. In fact, passive students are nurtured to be more confident, showing evidence of personalized support efforts in character development.

From the assessment perspective, the implementation of ongoing attitude assessment in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2016 concerning Education Assessment Standards emphasizes that character assessment is an integral part of every learning process. Yuliani et al.'s research also concludes that attitude assessment can motivate students to improve their behavior and maintain positive habits [14].

Furthermore, the support of a religious school culture strengthens the achievement of character education. This result is supported by research by Aswidar and Saragih, which found that a conducive school environment can accelerate the habituation of character through routine activities grounded in non-religious values [15]. The integration of Islamic moral values and citizenship values at MTs Lab UINSU demonstrates an important synergy in shaping students' characters to be both nationalistic and morally upright. Thus, the school not only serves as a place for knowledge transfer but also as a platform for forming a well-rounded personality (integrated personality).

In addition, the school's managerial factor, supported by the vice principal, strengthens the implementation of character education. This aligns with the statement of Mediatati et al. that the success of character education depends on the commitment of all school elements, especially leadership, supervising, and ensuring that implementation runs effectively and consistently [16].

Overall, Civic Education learning at MTs Lab UINSU has successfully integrated character values into various aspects of learning and the school environment. This integration not only strengthens cognitive achievements but also fosters citizens with

Pancasila character and Islamic values, in accordance with the main goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003.

3.2.2. The Role of Civic Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Character

Research conducted at MTs Laboratory UIN North Sumatra shows that Citizenship Education (PKn) teachers play a central role in shaping students' character through the learning process, focusing not only on cognitive but also on affective and psychomotor aspects. This finding aligns with the opinion of Tarso et al., who argue that character education cannot succeed without teachers serving as models, mentors, and motivators in students' daily behavior [17]. In this context, the Civics teacher serves as a moral example, demonstrating discipline, effective communication, and respect for every individual, thereby providing a real role model for students to follow.

The implementation of Civics education that emphasizes participatory values, such as group discussions and the study of social issues, reflects the teacher's effort to develop students' critical thinking skills and democratic attitudes. This aligns with the research by Ismana and Iswadi, which affirms that discussion-based learning methods can enhance students' understanding of moral values and their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully [18]. Through opportunities to speak and listen to friends' opinions, students learn to appreciate the diversity of views as they practice citizenship.

In addition to being instructors, Civic Education teachers also serve as facilitators in creating a classroom climate that supports students' character development. Zega's research notes that character education will be more effective when teachers consistently provide positive reinforcement, such as praise or other forms of recognition, or when students exhibit good behavior [3]. This finding aligns with research indicating that teachers motivate and evaluate students who exhibit expected character values, encouraging them to maintain and enhance those positive behaviors.

The implementation of character education by Civic Education teachers is also carried out through habituation and involvement in activities outside the classroom. This aligns with the research of Sahputra et al., which states that character development cannot be done solely in the classroom but must be reinforced through a religious, collaborative school culture [19]. Teachers' involvement in fostering habits of cleanliness, greeting, and participating in religious activities is concrete evidence that character education is carried out holistically and touches all dimensions of students' lives.

In addition, school support also plays an important role in the success of Civics teachers in carrying out their duties. The perspective of the Vice Principal in this study reinforces the statement by Zai et al. that the success of character education implementation is greatly influenced by school policies, teacher coordination, and continuous supervision of student behavior [20]. This indicates a harmonious ecosystem among teachers, school management, and students in their efforts to develop character.

The students in this study also acknowledged that the Civics teacher's advice, firmness, and closeness helped them understand the importance of behaving in accordance with civic values. These student responses support the findings of Aandriami, et al., that the

emotional closeness between teacher and student is a determinant of the successful internalization of character values [2].

This finding confirms that the role of Civics teachers at MTs Lab UINSU is very significant and strategic in shaping students' character. Teachers not only teach citizenship concepts but also instill character values through role modeling, active learning, habituation, and support from the school environment. This synergy makes character education a continuous process, shaping students into religious, morally upright, and responsible citizens.

3.2.3. Challenges and Obstacles in **the Implementation of Character Education in Civic Education Learning**

Research findings indicate that although the implementation of character education in Civics at MTs Lab UINSU has been going quite well, its implementation still faces several obstacles that prevent optimal internalization of character values. This condition aligns with the opinion of Bangun & Wibawa, who state that character education requires a continuous process and faces complex challenges, both from internal school factors and the external social environment of the students [21].

The first obstacle encountered is the differences in students' character readiness. Inconsistencies in discipline and a lack of active participation in discussions indicate that each student has a different level of character awareness. Research by Hafiz, Masganti, and Daulay indicates that family background, parenting patterns, and social culture greatly influence students' character development, so teachers need to adopt varied approaches tailored to individual needs [22]. This aligns with the teacher's interview response that the character of some students still requires intensive guidance, especially in terms of discipline and responsibility.

The second challenge concerns the limitations of facilities and digital literacy. Interactive learning media have not fully reached all students due to the lack of technological devices. This finding supports the study by Hendri, Utami, and Nurlaili, which states that the digital divide can weaken the effectiveness of character education because technology-based learning activities cannot be equally accessed [23]. These obstacles affect participation in learning and the consistency of behavior throughout the learning process.

Limited learning time is also a factor that affects the effectiveness of character internalization. Civics teachers often focus on achieving curriculum competencies, thereby reducing opportunities for practicing character habituation. According to Revalina, Moeis, and Indrawadi, character cannot be internalized merely through the delivery of concepts; it requires students' repeated involvement in real-life practice [24]. Thus, inadequate time allocation becomes an obstacle in implementing experiential-based educational strategies.

Social environmental factors outside of school also significantly influence the consistency of students' behavior. Interaction with peers and exposure to social media, as stated by the vice principal, often trigger a decline in students' discipline and responsibility at home and in the community. Research by Putri & Iskandar emphasizes that character education will be successful when schools, families, and the community collaborate to foster sustainable, positive habits [25].

In addition, the uneven school supervision system across all areas of the school environment is also an obstacle to ensuring the consistent application of character values. This aligns with the findings of Arianto, Fitri, and Ali, who revealed that the implementation of character education needs to be supported by strong school management, including comprehensive control and guidance of student behavior throughout the school area [26].

Thus, the obstacles encountered indicate that implementing character education cannot be the sole responsibility of Civics teachers but requires support from a broader educational ecosystem, including families and communities, as well as the provision of supportive school facilities and policies. Therefore, strengthening cooperation among the three education centers (school–family–community), enhancing inclusive technology integration, and developing applicable, habit-based learning strategies must be continuously pursued to ensure that students' character development at MTs Lab UINSU proceeds optimally and sustainably.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, character education in Civic Education (PKn) learning at MTs Lab UINSU has been effectively implemented through the integration of teaching materials that promote discipline, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect. PKn teachers play a strategic role as educators, mentors, and role models, supported by a religious school culture and continuous attitude assessment. However, the implementation still faces challenges, including differences in student discipline, limited learning time, uneven access to technology, and the influence of the outside school social environment. These findings indicate that character education through Civics Education has important theoretical, practical, and policy implications: teachers need to develop contextual and collaborative learning methods, schools should enhance supervision and facility support, and parental involvement should be strengthened. The limitations of the study include a scope limited to one school, reliance on qualitative data, and the lack of direct parental involvement. Future research is recommended to expand the sample, use quantitative and longitudinal instruments, and involve families and communities to strengthen the consistent internalization of character.

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