

School Family Partnership Management in Character Development of Students in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

Schools as educational institutions have the responsibility to provide an environment that supports the development of student character. In this case, the management of school partnerships with students becomes an important aspect to ensure that positive values can be conveyed and well received by students. The purpose of this study was to obtain information/description and analyze the Management of School Partnerships with Families in the Development of Student Character at SMA Negeri 1 Kawali and SMK Negeri 1 Kawali, Ciamis Regency. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The results of the study indicate that partnerships that are well managed through intensive communication, involvement of parents and families in school activities, and understanding of the vision of character education between schools and families, can have a positive impact on the behavior and character values of students. The main supporting factors are the leadership of the principal, the openness of teachers, and the active participation of parents. As a suggestion, schools need to develop a structured and sustainable partnership program, carry out targeted communications as well as conduct training for teachers and parents to strengthen synergy in fostering student character. This research is recommended for teachers as a liaison tool to improve collaboration with families. It also serves as a platform for schools to create synergy in supporting student character development. It also serves as a platform for supervisors to encourage schools to build active partnerships with families to support student character development. It also serves as a resource for future researchers to develop more effective partnership models within the context of character education.

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Introduction

Social change and rapid technological developments have created an urgency to strengthen character education as the foundation for the formation of a national identity, especially at the secondary school level. Global and local phenomena related to moral degradation and declining national values have a direct impact on the quality of graduates, thus encouraging educational institutions to adopt an integrated character approach to the learning process (Fikri et al., 2023). In this context, the synergy between schools and families is a key strategy for supporting the character building of students because each party has a strategic role that complements the other (Suharta et al., 2020).

The increasingly complex development of society reinforces the importance of strategic partnerships between schools and families. Empirical findings show a tendency towards weakening collective commitment to instilling moral values and character among teenagers, which is reflected in their social behaviour (Munawar-Rachman et al., 2015). Collaboration between educational institutions and families has been recognized as a sustainable approach to address this issue and create a holistic learning environment that supports character development (Chasanah et al., 2023).

The existing literature emphasises that character building does not solely depend on the formal curriculum, but also on the active involvement of the family as the main agent in character education (Lestari et al., 2022). Basic values such as honesty, discipline, and tolerance can be more easily instilled if there is synergistic cooperation between the school and parents (Pasiningsih, 2021). This collaboration allows the character-building process to occur naturally, as both institutions play an important role in strengthening moral and social values.

Practically, integrating partnership management between schools and families opens up strategic opportunities for developing character education at the secondary level. A collaborative approach that combines educational policies with character programs has been proven to improve the quality of graduates and learning (Susanto, 2022). This requires innovative management, decentralisation of roles, and active support from stakeholders; thus, policy implementation does not stop at the conceptual level but is manifested in practice in schools (Ulfah & Anwar, 2024).

Several studies have explored the concept of partnerships between schools and families in character education. Suharta et al. (2020) highlight the role of the informal environment at home as an effective character learning space, while Lestari et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of a self-development mindset that is strengthened through collaboration between schools and families. In general, this literature presents a consistent pattern of collaboration, even in different contexts, and highlights the strategic value of institutional synergy in overcoming a character crisis.

In line with this, Pasiningsih (2021) shows that partnerships between schools, families, and communities can create more comprehensive learning synergies. The role of parents as active partners has been shown to increase the effectiveness of character-building programs while strengthening the position of schools in dealing with moral and social issues among students. These studies provide a solid theoretical basis for developing a more adaptive partnership management model for secondary education (Anwar, 2024; Sulastri et al., 2024).

However, most research focuses on primary and junior secondary education. In-depth studies on the dynamics of partnerships in public high schools and vocational schools are limited. Canova et al. (2024) provide an initial overview of partnership management at the secondary level but do not specifically discuss the patterns of collaboration between public high schools and vocational schools in the same area. Therefore, further research is required to understand the dynamics of partnerships in heterogeneous secondary education environments.

Based on a literature review, a partnership between schools and families in strengthening character education shows positive results if it is carried out in an integrated and sustainable manner. This study aims to develop a strategic partnership management

model that can be effectively applied at SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali to optimise the strengthening of students' character.

A gap in the literature is also seen in the lack of an integrated partnership model specifically applied to senior high schools and vocational high schools. There are still limitations in empirical studies that systematically capture the successes and challenges of implementing partnership programs in the secondary education environment (Canova et al., 2024). Therefore, this study is important for filling this gap by exploring the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of partnership programs.

Compared to previous studies, this research attempts to overcome the limitations of evaluating the effectiveness of partnership programs which have so far only focused on academic achievement. The absence of an integral and comprehensive managerial approach—involving families, teachers, and other stakeholders—in public and private senior high schools in Kawali shows that implementation gaps need to be bridged (Susanto, 2022). Therefore, this study aimed to develop a comprehensive, context-based partnership model.

Thus, this study aims to address the need for a strategic school-family partnership management model to strengthen character education. This study focuses on two secondary education institutions in Kawali, SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali, which are analysed to explore the challenges and potential for collaboration. The results of this study are expected to contribute to more effective and contextualised character-education policies and practices.

Based on the literature review presented, this study departs from a series of descriptive, critical, and transformative questions. The main question asked is: How can the partnership mechanism between schools and families be optimised to increase the effectiveness of character education at the secondary education level, especially at SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali? This question is complemented by an exploration of the implementation gap, which has hindered the strengthening of character education. This research also aims to review the effectiveness of existing partnership management models, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the success of their implementation (Canova et al., 2024).

In line with this question, the main objective of this study is to develop and test a strategic and applicable school-family partnership management model that can be implemented contextually at the secondary education level. This model is expected to address the specific challenges faced by senior high schools and vocational high schools, especially in building the character of students through a planned and sustainable collaborative approach.

In addition, this study aims to produce policy recommendations and managerial practices that can be applied in the context of state secondary education in the region, considering the distinctive local aspects of the same. With this approach, the research contribution is expected to be practical and provide a theoretical basis for the development of character education policies in the future (Suharta et al., 2020; Susanto, 2022).

Method

The research method used in this study is qualitative research using a case study approach, which focuses on developing a model of strategic partnership between schools and families at SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali. This study includes an in-depth analysis of partnership dynamics, managerial practices, and the impact of interactions between schools and families on character education. The research participants included principals, teachers, education staff, parents, and students directly involved in the partnership process, selected through purposive sampling techniques and supplemented by snowball sampling when necessary to ensure diversity of perspectives (Abdussamad, 2022).

The data collection instruments used in this study consisted of semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The data collection procedure began with the preparation of the research instruments and initial validation, followed by initial meetings with relevant stakeholders to obtain approval and contextualise the study. Triangulation data collection techniques were applied to mutually confirm information obtained from various sources, thus obtaining a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the phenomenon

(Halimatusha'diah & Rajabi, 2023). The entire data collection process was carried out systematically and continuously during the field phase to ensure data validity and to present an authentic representation of the ongoing partnership practices.

Data were analysed inductively using thematic analysis techniques. First, the data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents were reduced and codified to identify the categories and main themes that emerged according to the content analysis steps adapted from a qualitative approach (Fadli, 2021). All data and findings were analysed in depth to explore the relationship between variables and interpret the meaning contained therein. Thus, the results of the analysis could provide an empirical basis for formulating an innovative and applicable strategic partnership model for the secondary education environment.

Results and Discussion

Results

The dynamics of the partnership between schools and families in character education

The implementation of the partnership between schools and families in character education at SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali shows a complexity that reflects the diversity in collaborative practices, the intensity of interaction, and the effectiveness of coordination between the parties. The results of qualitative research through interviews and observations show that both schools have developed various systematic initiatives to involve parents, such as organising value discussion forums, student behaviour evaluation meetings, and coaching programs that involve parents as partners in instilling moral and social values (Purwaningsih & Syamsudin, 2022; Rahayu et al., 2023).

However, the dynamics of the implementation did not go smoothly. In the midst of efforts to build partnerships, structural and cultural obstacles were encountered, such as a lack of feedback from parents, limited interaction time, and a lack of a shared understanding of the urgency of character education. These obstacles had a direct impact on the consistency of program implementation and caused several activities to lose continuity and substantial focus (Purwaningsih & Syamsudin, 2022).

This condition shows that the effectiveness of partnership implementation is strongly influenced by the quality of two-way communication and the success of building a shared vision between the school and family. When communication synergy is formed intensively and based on mutual trust, the character-building process runs in a more directed manner and is rooted in the concrete needs of learners in their respective social environments.

Table 1. Qualitative Findings Related to the Dynamics of School-Family Partnerships

Aspect	Findings SMAN 1 Kawali	Findings SMKN 1 Kawali
Collaborative Initiative	Routine meetings on character building, moral counseling, grade control books	Parent-teacher forum, project-based character training
Main Obstacles	Lack of feedback and gap in parents' expectations	Time constraints and uneven participation between classes
Role of the Teacher	As a liaison between students and parents, a value facilitator	Technical assistant and mediator for strengthening vocational character
Role of the Principal	Establish top-down moral development policies	Providing space for parental participation in activity planning
School Culture	Tends to be academic, not fully character-oriented	Strong work culture, practice-based character building

Furthermore, the successful implementation of the partnership was strongly influenced by three main supporting factors. First, visionary school leadership determines the strategic direction of the partnership, including building an inclusive school communication system, activity structure, and culture. Second, teachers' role as mediators between students and parents is an important bridge in aligning formal and informal educational approaches. Third,

parents' commitment to actively participate in school activities, both through official forums and non-formal activities at home, has been proven to strengthen students' character building (Foeh & Saefatu, 2024).

Furthermore, strengthening character education is not enough through the provision of formal programs that are inherently structural. The key to success lies in the school's ability to build a holistic culture of collaboration and the active involvement of families in various aspects of students' lives, including extracurricular activities, learning assistance, and the inculcation of daily values. This finding is in line with the idea of heart education which emphasises the affective and reflective dimensions in the process of character learning (Hidayat & Kurniawan, 2024).

A participatory approach that unites all elements of education in a collaborative ecosystem has been proven to shape students' tolerant, caring, and responsible character. This character-strengthening strategy requires a transformational approach that goes beyond administrative change. Instead, it requires the continuous renewal of the partnership model through critical reflection, program innovation, and the active involvement of all stakeholders.

Considering the dynamics and challenges found in the field, an adaptive and contextual partnership model is urgently needed. This model must be designed to respond to rapid social change and accommodate the increasingly complex character needs of students in the post-modern era. Thus, a successful partnership not only supports the school program but also creates a profound transformation in the culture of character education itself building (Foeh & Saefatu, 2024).

Effectiveness of Existing Partnership Models and the Need for Reformulation

The results of qualitative analysis through in-depth interviews and participatory observations at SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali reveal that the partnership model that has been implemented so far shows indications of positive contributions, especially in increasing parental participation and communication between education stakeholders. In several practices, parental involvement in school meeting forums, student development activities, and informal communication via social media or instant messaging groups has become a channel that strengthens the relationship between families and educational institutions.

However, the effectiveness of this model is not yet fully optimised. One of the main findings was that there was no clear and adequate role structure between the school and the family. Most informants stated that the division of responsibilities for fostering student character is still implicit and not systematically documented. Consequently, partnership activities often occur without a clear direction and are not integrated into a comprehensive character education strategy. This finding is in line with the framework of (Ball et al., 2020), who emphasise the importance of strengthening the *liaison* function in the partnership structure to strategically coordinate roles and responsibilities among key actors.

Table 2. Qualitative Findings Related to the Effectiveness and Weaknesses of the Partnership Model

Model Component	Positive Findings	Constraints Encountered
Parental Participation	Involvement in school activities and informal communication	Uneven and often dependent on individual initiative
Role Coordination	Teachers take the initiative to bridge communication with families	Role division is not yet structured and poorly documented
Program Responsiveness	Discussion and meeting rooms are available	The program is not yet responsive to diverse socio-cultural contexts
Communication Media	Use of digital groups for quick coordination	Not all parents have adequate access and digital skills

Program Evaluation	Internal evaluation initiatives by teachers	There is no formal participatory and adaptive evaluation mechanism
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In general, the existing partnership model is still normative and has not accommodated social complexity and the need for active participation from families. For example, the use of information technology to support two-way communication has begun to be applied, but it is not yet fully equitable. In some cases, the use of digital platforms has led to participation gaps because not all parents have adequate technological capabilities or access.

Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted the importance of an integrative and contextual partnership approach. Afianti et al. (2024) show that many collaborative programs fail because they ignore local social and cultural dynamics, which determine the success of character building in certain communities. Therefore, a reformulation of the model is needed that is not only based on formal structures but is also able to respond to the needs and changes that continue to evolve at the field level.

The reformulation of the partnership model is all the more urgent when linked to the findings of Surikova & González, (2022), who state that the success of educational collaboration depends heavily on the existence of open channels of communication and flexible role interpretation. In addition, Gerdes et al., (2020) emphasised the need for a continuous and evidence-based system of outcome evaluation, as the gap between theoretical expectations and field practice is often a weak point of existing partnership models.

Therefore, the results of this study lead to the recommendation of the need to refine partnership operational standards through three main steps: (1) the development of clear and mutually agreed role guidelines between schools and families; (2) intensive training for teachers and parents to improve collaborative literacy and two-way communication skills; and (3) the development of an adaptive and participatory data-based monitoring and evaluation system.

An effective partnership model must create a balance between structure and flexibility, formal instruments and cultural approaches, and national educational goals and the local context. Reformulating the model is not just a matter of redrafting administrative documents but a strategic effort to build a collaborative, adaptive, and inclusive character-education ecosystem.

Supporting and Hinderling Factors in the Implementation of School-Family Partnerships

The implementation of the partnership between schools and families in shaping the character of students at SMAN 1 Kawali and SMKN 1 Kawali is influenced by various conditional and contextual factors, including: The results of this study show that the success of the partnership is strongly influenced by a positive family environment, parental commitment to character education, and the school’s capacity to create programs that are responsive and supportive of character-building values.

Among the most dominant supporting factors are parents emotional and social involvement in the process of educating children at home. Families that can provide a supportive, caring, and consistent environment for instilling the values of honesty, responsibility, and discipline contribute greatly to the effectiveness of partnership programs initiated by the school (Nadziroh et al., 2023). Open and transparent communication between schools and families is also an important pillar for building trust and strengthening cross-role coordination. This can be seen from the success of several collaborative activities at SMKN 1 Kawali which integrates input from parents in evaluating student behaviour and developing character-based extracurricular programs.

Another supporting factor is the existence of an inclusive school community and broad community support, which also strengthens character education norms. The involvement of outsiders, such as community leaders or youth organisations, in collective character-building activities has created a learning environment that is more contextual and relevant to the social

reality of students. Canova et al. (2024) emphasised the importance of participatory partnership design, in which the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating programs is carried out jointly and systematically by the school and the family to ensure the realisation of continuous synergy.

However, this study also found a number of inhibiting factors that can reduce the effectiveness of partnership implementation. The most common internal obstacle is an unharmonious family situation or lack of commitment to supporting children's character education at home. Families in these situations tend to hand over all responsibility for education to the school, resulting in a disjunction in the process of instilling values between the home and school environments (Lety, 2021).

Another external factor that hinders is the negative influence of the social environment and uncontrolled digital media, which often contradicts the values that schools want to instill. Learners exposed to a free flow of information without guidance can experience value disorientation, which hinders consistent character-building efforts. In addition, limitations in school facilities and infrastructure, such as a lack of consultation rooms for parents and the unavailability of inclusive digital platforms, hamper effective communication and coordination.

Table 3. Factors Supporting and Hindering the Implementation of School-Family Partnerships

Category	Supporting Factors	Hindering Factors
Family Environment	Supportive environment, consistent parenting	Family disharmony, absence of caregiver
Parental Commitment	High level of concern, involvement in school activities	Low participation, inconsistent in accompanying children at home
School Initiatives	Structured and contextual character-building programs	Lack of facilities for parent-teacher interaction
Supporting Communities	Community and social organization involvement in character education	Lack of strong external partnership networks
Media & Technology	Utilization of digital media for communication and education of values	Exposure to negative content from social media, unequal digital literacy among parents

These findings confirm that the effectiveness of partnerships depends heavily on the ability of both parties to align their roles and maintain continuity of communication. Strategic coordination and continuous involvement of all stakeholders can help overcome these challenges. For example, joint training between parents and teachers on parenting, digital literacy, and home-school-based character building has proven to strengthen the collective awareness of the importance of character education as a shared responsibility. (AbdhulGhani et.al., 2026)

Reformulating the partnership model is an important and unavoidable agenda for the future. The model must be designed adaptively, not only by improving the formal structure of cooperation, but also by building a system of interventions that are preventive and solution-oriented to address existing inhibiting factors. This approach includes the development of participatory policies, the creation of spaces for dialogue between stakeholders, and the involvement of the community in strengthening a holistic and contextual character-education ecosystem. (Permadi et.al., 2025)

Thus, it can be concluded that the success of the school-family partnership in character building is largely determined by the balance between strengthening supporting factors and managing inhibiting factors systemically. In summary, integrated, trust-based, and participatory collaboration is the main foundation for creating an educational environment

conducive to the character growth of students at the secondary education level. (Permadi et.al., 2026)

Discussion

Theoretically, partnerships between schools and families are considered an important foundation in supporting the character development of students. Hatimah. (2010) Family involvement in school activities from a partnership perspective describes the family as the first and foremost educational institution for a child, playing a very large role in preparing children for their lives. In accordance with UUSPN No. 20 of 2003, education is a shared responsibility between families, communities, and the government.

However, findings in the field show that there is a significant gap between theoretical idealism and the reality of its implementation, including a lack of two-way communication. Effective family involvement is achieved through open and two-way communication between schools and parents, but the findings show that many schools still implement one-way communication, where information is only conveyed from the school to parents without any dialogue or feedback (Hanan et al., 2023; Suherman et al., 2025).

In addition, there are different perceptions about the respective roles of schools and families in shaping children's character. Findings show that there are differences in perception between teachers and parents regarding who is more responsible for character education (Anwar & Sulaeman, 2025; Maryati et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that the implementation of a partnership between schools and families in character education has a complex and multidimensional dynamic. In the implementation of the partnership, positive initiatives were found in the form of open communication strategies and the implementation of an integrated character-building program involving the active role of parents and schools. Meanwhile, in the evaluation of the partnership model, although the existing model has had a positive impact, there are still significant obstacles in the form of unclear role division and a lack of synchronisation between school programs and various forms of family support, as reflected in the participatory design. As for the need for reformulation of the model, there is a highlighted gap in the partnership structure that requires reformulation to accommodate diverse local contexts, limited resources, and different social dynamics in the educational environment. Nevertheless, limitations such as differences in perception between stakeholders and implementation barriers indicate the need for further adjustments to optimally adapt this partnership model to various educational contexts.

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