



Teachers' Exemplary Behavior and Student Character Building in Educational Environments

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Abstract. Teacher exemplary behavior constitutes an important component of character education because students learn moral values not only through explicit instruction but also through observing teachers' everyday conduct. This systematic literature review examines the relationship between teachers' exemplary behavior and student character building and identifies the educational mechanisms and conditions that strengthen this relationship. Twenty publications contained in the research corpus were mapped and synthesised, including quantitative, qualitative, conceptual, case-study, and literature-based studies. The findings indicate a consistent positive relationship between teacher exemplarity and character dimensions such as morality, Islamic character, politeness, discipline, responsibility, empathy, respectful behavior, and religious awareness. Quantitative effect estimates vary substantially, indicating that teacher exemplarity does not operate as an isolated determinant. Qualitative and conceptual evidence shows that character formation occurs through observation, moral emulation, habituation, emotional engagement, teacher credibility, school culture, and home-school consistency. Teacher exemplarity becomes particularly meaningful when students experience coherence between the values teachers communicate and the behaviors they demonstrate. The review concludes that strengthening teachers' personality competence and institutional support for consistent role modeling constitutes an important foundation for sustainable character education.

Keywords: Character Building; Character Education; Habituation; Moral Modeling; School Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Character education constitutes a fundamental part of the educational process because schools have the responsibility to develop intellectual abilities while shaping the personality of learners. Character development is not sufficiently carried out through the delivery of knowledge regarding good and bad values. Learners need concrete experiences that allow such values to be observed, felt, imitated, and habituated in daily life. Within the school education structure, teachers occupy a position very close to such experiences because teacher behavior is continuously observed during the learning process and social interaction. Wibowo and Ok (2023) show that Aqidah Akhlak teacher exemplarity has a positive relationship with student character building, with a contribution in their research ranging at 37.8 percent. Such findings indicate that a teacher's speech, discipline, manner of interacting, and attitude can become sources of character learning in addition to the material formally delivered in class.

Exemplarity possesses a pedagogical character different from the verbal teaching of values. Learners can know the concept of discipline from a teacher's explanation, but such understanding acquires a more concrete meaning when they see the teacher arrive on time and consistently obey rules. Similar principles apply to honesty, politeness, responsibility, care, and respect for others. Hidayat (2025) shows that exemplarity-based moral learning is able to

direct value internalization through habituation and emotional bonding, so that the teacher acts as a deliverer of knowledge as well as a moral model present in the learning experience of students. Tohet and Nuraini (2026) also show that the consistency of exemplary behavior, emotional engagement, and moral habituation become important mechanisms in the formation of discipline, social empathy, responsibility, and respectful behavior.

Studies regarding teacher exemplarity in research materials show a strong emphasis on moral education and Islamic education (Darmawan & Auliya, 2026; Darmawan & Pernaningtik, 2026). Abidin (2026) finds that exemplarity provides a positive contribution to Islamic character, while habituation and supervision also possess a meaningful relationship. Such a pattern indicates that exemplarity works most powerfully when the behavior displayed by the teacher receives reinforcement from educational routines (Darmawan et al., 2026). Lutfiah et al. (2023) also find that Aqidah Akhlak learning together with teacher exemplarity relates to the formation of polite character. Both provide an illustration that value education acquires greater formative power when learning content is consistent with the behavior of educators. A teacher who teaches politeness, for example, needs to demonstrate politeness in speaking, reprimanding, assessing, and treating learners.

The linkage between exemplarity and character is also found in diverse educational environments. Syafiq (2025) finds that female Islamic teachers' exemplarity has a significant influence on students' character, especially when taking place alongside religious habituation. Nuraeni and Rahman (2026) obtain similar findings regarding teacher exemplarity and the implementation of the tarbiyah concept toward student character formation. Musdalifah (2026) also reports a 44.9 percent contribution of Islamic Religious Education teacher exemplarity to learners' character. Institutional variations, ranging from madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, to public schools, indicate that exemplarity mechanisms are not limited to a single form of educational unit. What is more decisive is the quality of pedagogical relationships and the consistency of values demonstrated by teachers in school life.

Nevertheless, teacher exemplarity does not operate as a single factor. Character develops through the interaction of school, family, peer groups, institutional culture, religious experience, and the social conditions of learners. Latifah (2023) shows that teacher and parent exemplarity together relate to learner character. The character of learners is formed from teacher role modeling (Nafisa & Darmawan, 2025). Takwa et al. (2025) also position teacher personality, teacher competency, and family support as factors that simultaneously explain the variation in student morals. Sumardi et al. (2026) find that teacher exemplarity and Islamic school culture together explain 41.1 percent of the variation in female students' moral behavior.

Such findings direct the discussion toward the ecological nature of character education: teacher behavior becomes easier to internalize when receiving support from consistent school norms and family experiences.

Qualitative findings within the corpus further clarify this process. Shanti and Shohib (2026) find that Islamic Religious Education teachers perform the function of exemplarity through discipline, politeness, religious practices, moral guidance, and daily habituation. Samugara et al. (2026) show that elementary school students' morality is formed through teacher-student collaboration, value habituation, concrete experiences, and school-family cooperation. This is also mentioned from the study by Darmawan and Umar (2026). Anas et al. (2026) connect teacher personality competency with student discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, empathy, and cooperation. These three studies indicate that exemplarity is more appropriately understood as an ongoing educational practice rather than a momentary symbolic action. Teachers become role models through consistency between what is taught, said, and done.

Conceptual studies also provide an explanation regarding the reasons why exemplarity possesses formative power. Robi'Rozaqiy et al. (2025) reconstruct the concept of *uswah hasanah* by bringing it into encounter with moral exemplarism and moral development theory. They position the classroom teacher as a proximal exemplar, namely a moral figure close enough to a child's life so that they can be observed and imitated. The power of role modeling originates from the nobility of the values displayed. In addition, it also stems from the accessibility of such behavior to learners. Intansari et al. (2026) add that character internalization takes place through socio-institutional mechanisms, namely habituation reinforced by teacher examples, school leadership, institutional culture, and parental involvement. Such a framework clarifies that character does not develop solely through normative knowledge, but rather through repeated social experiences.

The available research materials show a strong tendency regarding the relationship between exemplarity and character formation, but also indicate heterogeneity in constructs, methods, educational levels, and accompanying variables. Some studies measure character generally, while others use morals, politeness, moral behavior, Islamic character, discipline, and spirituality. Some research focuses on the direct influence of exemplarity, while others position it alongside habituation, supervision, school culture, *tarbiyah*, or family support. Hakim and Syukri (2026) even show that teacher personality needs to be read alongside religious culture and educator collaboration. On that basis, this research formulates two problems: (1) how is the tendency of the influence of teacher exemplary behavior on student

character formation based on the synthesis of previous research?; and (2) what are the mechanisms and educational conditions that determine the success of teacher exemplary behavior in shaping student character?

2. METHOD

This research uses a Systematic Literature Review approach to map and synthesize research regarding teacher exemplary behavior and student character building. The research corpus was established from all materials available in the appendix, namely ten quantitative studies that directly or together with other variables examine teacher exemplarity and ten additional publications using qualitative, conceptual, case study, and literature review approaches. The systematic process was carried out starting from corpus inventory, relevance inspection, study characteristic extraction, construct identification, result comparison, up to thematic synthesis.

The extracted data cover authors, year, educational level or location, research approach, sample or informants if mentioned, exemplarity constructs, character dimensions, statistical findings, and character formation mechanisms. Quantitative studies are used to identify the direction and variation of relationships, while qualitative and conceptual studies are used to explain how exemplarity works through observation, imitation, habituation, emotional closeness, school culture, and family collaboration. Meta-analysis was not conducted because constructs, sample sizes, designs, instruments, and accompanying variables are highly heterogeneous.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several results of previous studies have been mapped so that they possess a tendency of results and can be traced back to the characteristics of each study. Quantitative findings are not treated mechanically as equivalent to qualitative or conceptual findings.

Table 1. Matrix of All Studies Serving as References.

N o.	Study	Design/Subject	Focus	Main Findings and Function in Synthesis
1	Wibowo & Ok (2023)	Correlational quantitative; 60 MTs students	Aqidah Akhlak teacher exemplarity and character Exemplarity, habituation,	Positive relationship; appendix table shows R ² of about 0.378. Serves as direct evidence of the relationship between exemplarity and character. Exemplarity contributes 34.3%; all three variables together explain 65.0%. Demonstrates the function of exemplarity in an integrative value education system.
2	Abidin (2026)	Quantitative; 82 MTs students	supervision, Islamic character	
3	Lutfiah et al. (2023)	Quantitative; 132 MI teachers	Aqidah Akhlak learning, exemplarity, politeness	Exemplarity has a significant effect; the joint model has an R ² of about 0.505.

4	Latifah (2023)	Quantitative; 37 MANU students	Teacher and parent exemplarity, character	Teacher and parent exemplarity are simultaneously significant. Demonstrates the importance of school-family consistency.
5	Syafiq (2025)	Quantitative; 227 female santri	Religious habituation, female Islamic teachers' exemplarity, student character	Female Islamic teachers' exemplarity is significant; joint model has an R^2 of 0.657.
6	Nuraeni & Rahman (2026)	Quantitative; 67 MTs students	Tarbiyah, exemplarity, morals	Exemplarity is significant; simultaneous model R^2 of 0.305.
7	Azhari (2025)	Quantitative; 36 SMP students	PAI teacher exemplarity and morals	$R^2 = 0.153$ and significant effect.
8	Takwa et al. (2025)	Ex-post facto; 56 MAN students	Teacher personality/competency, family support, morals	Simultaneous model R^2 of 0.381; all factors are positively directed.
9	Sumardi et al. (2026)	Correlational; 62 SMA female students	Exemplarity, Islamic school culture, moral	Simultaneous model R^2 of 0.411; teacher exemplarity and school culture are significant.
10	Musdalifah (2026)	Quantitative; 40 SMP students	PAI teacher exemplarity and morals	Significant effect; R^2 of 0.449.
11	Tohet & Nuraini (2026)	Qualitative case study	Figurative Learning Model and moral	Consistent exemplarity, emotional engagement, and habituation support discipline, empathy, responsibility, and respect.
12	Shanti & Shohib (2026)	Qualitative case study	PAI teacher as character model	Uswah hasanah, moral guidance, habituation, and school-family collaboration support Islamic character.
13	Samugara et al. (2026)	Qualitative phenomenology	Teacher-student collaboration and moral	Morality develops through role models, value habituation, participatory activities, and family synergy.
14	Hidayat (2025)	Descriptive qualitative	Exemplar-based moral learning	Teacher role models support honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and spiritual awareness through habituation and emotional bonding.
15	Anas et al. (2026)	Multi-site qualitative	Personality competency and character education	Teacher discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, empathy, and cooperation become character models.
16	Intansari et al. (2026)	Descriptive qualitative	Habituation and exemplarity	Character internalization takes place through school routines, teacher models, institutional culture, leadership, and parental involvement.
17	Yakub et al. (2025)	Described as literature review	Teacher exemplarity and discipline	Teacher exemplarity and discipline become forms of behavioral modeling for learners.
18	Hakim & Syukri (2026)	Field qualitative	Aqidah Akhlak teacher personality competency	Teacher politeness, patience, discipline, and consistency strengthen character habituation; madrasah culture becomes a supporting factor.
19	Aziz & Syahrin (2026)	Associative quantitative; 44 MTs students	Islamic school culture, exemplarity, moral	Simultaneous model is significant, $F = 16.384$ and R^2 of 0.444.
20	Robi'Roza qiy et al. (2025)	Conceptual study	Uswah hasanah, moral exemplarism	Teachers are positioned as proximal moral examples; the power of role modeling depends on concreteness, admiration, imitation, and model accessibility.

Source: Compiled From All Research And References.

Such a matrix shows two major patterns. First, quantitative studies consistently report the direction of a positive relationship between teacher exemplarity and character, although the magnitude of their contributions varies. Second, qualitative and conceptual studies explain that

such an effect works through observation, imitation, habituation, emotional closeness, behavioral consistency, school culture, and family support. These two patterns are what are used to answer the research problem formulation.

Tendency of the Influence of Teacher Exemplary Behavior on Student Character Building

The synthesis of quantitative studies shows a fairly high consistency regarding the direction of the relationship. Wibowo and Ok (2023) find that Aqidah Akhlak teacher exemplarity is positively and significantly related to student character building. The statistical table in the materials shows an R value of 0.615 and an R^2 of about 0.378. Such a finding means that in the research sample there is a fairly strong relationship between the quality of exemplarity perceived by students and the measured character. Such an influence can be understood because students interact with teachers repeatedly so that teacher behavior becomes a source of educational messages that is continuously observed. When discipline, responsibility, politeness, and consistency are present tangibly in the behavior of educators, such values are no longer abstract (Darmawan & Haq, 2026).

Abidin (2026) provides evidence that exemplarity contributes 34.3 percent to Islamic character. Habituation has a higher contribution, while supervision also has a positive effect. Simultaneously, all three explain 65 percent of the character variation in the research model. Such a finding is important because it avoids an overly simplistic reading that exemplarity works independently. Teachers can display good behavior, but such values require routines and supervision in order to develop into student behavioral patterns. Exemplarity provides an example, habituation provides a space for practice, while supervision maintains consistency.

Lutfiah et al. (2023) connect exemplarity with polite character. The table in the appendix shows that the teacher exemplarity beta coefficient is larger than Aqidah Akhlak learning in the presented model. Such a pattern holds a pedagogical meaning that learning regarding the value of politeness becomes stronger when the teacher themselves demonstrates politeness. Students learn from the content of the lesson and at the same time test the credibility of such content through the behavior of their educator. Incongruence between material and teacher actions can weaken moral messages because students face two different standards.

Latifah (2023) shows that teacher exemplarity interacts with parental exemplarity. The character of learners cannot be fully explained from the school environment because moral experience also takes place within the family. When teachers and parents show relatively consistent standards, learners receive value reinforcement through the two main environments

of their lives. Such findings explain why character education programs directed solely at students, without communication with the family, can face limitations.

Syafiq (2025) reinforces the relationship between exemplarity and habituation through the Islamic boarding school environment. Female Islamic teachers' exemplarity has a significant effect, while religious habituation shows a strong contribution. The simultaneous model explains 65.7 percent of the variation in student character. The boarding school environment has a high intensity of interaction so that the educator figure is present in both learning activities and daily life. Such conditions enlarge the opportunity for learners to observe the conformity between the values taught and the behavior of the educator.

Nuraeni and Rahman (2026) find that teacher exemplarity has a positive effect on character formation, while the tarbiyah concept also contributes positively. The simultaneous model explains 30.5 percent of character variation. These results show that exemplarity acquires educational meaning when placed within a structured nurturing process. The teacher is not merely a figure who "behaves well," but part of a tarbiyah system that helps learners understand, internalize, and practice moral values.

In the study by Azhari (2025), the statistical table in the appendix shows an R^2 of 0.153 with a significant regression coefficient. This figure differs from the percentage description listed in the appendix abstract. In this synthesis, the statistical table is prioritized because it displays the model output directly. Findings continue to show a positive direction, but the magnitude of contribution is lower compared to several other studies. Such differences actually demonstrate that the strength of exemplarity can change according to the characteristics of learners, schools, instruments, and social conditions.

Takwa et al. (2025) place exemplarity in a broader construct consisting of teacher personality, teacher competency, and family support. All three factors simultaneously explain 38.1 percent of the variation in learners' morals. These findings show that the ability of teachers to provide role models is also related to personality and pedagogical competencies. Effective exemplarity relates to visible moral actions as well as the ability to build educational relationships that can be trusted by students.

Sumardi et al. (2026) combine teacher exemplarity with Islamic school culture and obtain a simultaneous contribution of 41.1 percent. School culture has meaning because good teacher behavior is more easily accepted as a shared norm if the institutional environment provides consistent support. If teachers show discipline but the school is tolerant of repeated rule violations, the message of exemplarity becomes less strong. Conversely, a harmonious school culture expands the personal examples of teachers into social norms.

Musdalifah (2026) finds that Islamic Religious Education teacher exemplarity contributes 44.9 percent to learners' morals. Such results include a relatively large contribution within the group of studies examining direct influence. These findings strengthen the position of Islamic Religious Education teachers as figures whose behavior has educational consequences, especially because the material taught directly relates to values, morals, and ethics. When teacher behavior matches learning messages, learners gain experiences demonstrating the validity of values in real life.

Aziz and Syahrin (2026) also demonstrate a similar pattern through the relationship between teacher exemplarity and Islamic school culture. Their model explains 44.4 percent of the variation in learners' moral character. These results support the conclusion that exemplarity and the institutional environment are complementary factors. Strong character requires value experiences taking place repeatedly and consistently across various interactions at school.

Teacher exemplary behavior demonstrates a tendency toward a positive and significant relationship with student character building in almost all quantitative studies within the corpus. Character dimensions related to exemplarity include morals, politeness, Islamic character, discipline, responsibility, moral behavior, courteousness, and religious values. The magnitude of contribution differs between studies, meaning exemplarity cannot be positioned as a single factor. Such variation actually demonstrates the necessity of reading exemplarity as part of an educational ecology that involves habituation, family, school culture, teacher competency, and learning structures.

Mechanisms and Educational Conditions Determining the Success of Teacher Exemplarity

Qualitative findings provide a deeper explanation regarding how the effect of exemplarity takes place. Tohet and Nuraini (2026) find that the Figurative Learning Model builds moral awareness through teacher model consistency, emotional engagement, and habituation. Discipline, social empathy, responsibility, and respectful behavior develop when learners hear explanations and observe such values present in the actions of people who possess pedagogical closeness to them. Such a mechanism is in line with the idea of learning through observation and experience mentioned in that research. Every educator should continually maintain the consistency of their behavior as a form of moral responsibility in shaping the character of learners.

Shanti and Shohib (2026) demonstrate a similar mechanism through the concept of *uswah hasanah*. PAI teachers function as models through discipline, politeness, and consistent religious practices. Exemplarity is then reinforced through *mau'idzah hasanah* and the

habituation of religious activities. Such findings indicate that behavioral examples do not replace verbal teaching. Both complement each other. Moral explanations help students understand the reason for a behavior, while role models show how such values are realized. The integration of polite oral instruction and tangible role models must always be applied in a balanced manner within the educational process.

Samugara et al. (2026) position teacher-student collaborative experiences as part of character internalization. In their research, morality is not formed as a product of unilateral advice-giving, but rather through daily activities, student participation, integration of religious activities, and consistent relations. Such interactions allow values to become experiences lived together. Exemplarity then acquires strength because students interact directly with figures displaying such values. The school environment ought to prioritize a culture of collaboration and healthy interaction for the creation of an effective moral value habituation process.

Hidayat (2025) shows that exemplarity assists the formation of honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and spiritual awareness through habituation and emotional bonding. Such findings demonstrate the affective aspect of character education. Students are more likely to receive moral influence from teachers perceived as credible and having a positive relationship with them. Exemplarity loses part of its educational power if teacher behavior is perceived as formal demands without closeness and care. Teachers are required to build warm and sincere emotional bonds so that moral values can be well-internalized within students.

Anas et al. (2026) place personality competency as the basis of exemplarity. The discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, empathy, and cooperation demonstrated by teachers are values observed by students during the learning process. Their research also finds supporting factors in the form of teacher training, religious activities, and support from fellow educators. Conversely, workload, suboptimal teacher-parent communication, funding limitations, and student background diversity can reduce the power of character education. Exemplarity therefore requires professional and institutional support. Schools and stakeholders are obliged to provide an adequate supporting ecosystem to sustain the role of teacher exemplarity continuously.

Intansari et al. (2026) add that character formation takes place through socio-institutional mechanisms. Religious routines, literacy, discipline, and teacher role models work as a single series. School leadership, institutional culture, and parental participation reinforce such a process. Such findings are important because a teacher's exemplarity can lose its effectiveness if the overall school norms contradict the behavior modeled. Institutional consistency makes exemplarity more easily transform from individual experience into group norms. Educational

institutions ought to align all school policies and culture to be in line with the character values modeled by teachers.

Hakim and Syukri (2026) demonstrate that the politeness, patience, discipline, and consistency of Aqidah Akhlak teachers encourage the habituation of polite behavior, discipline, and students' religious participation. They also find madrasah religious culture and educator collaboration as supporting factors, while external environmental influences, social media, and suboptimal parental involvement become inhibiting factors. Teacher exemplarity is important, but learners still reside within a broader social ecosystem so that schools must develop cross-environmental value consistency. Synergistic collaboration between schools, families, and communities must continue to be fostered in order to create a complete moral learning environment for learners.

Robi'Rozaqiy et al. (2025) provide a conceptual explanation regarding the process of moral imitation. The classroom teacher is positioned as a proximal exemplar or a role model close to a child's life. The effectiveness of a role model is determined by the high moral quality of a teacher. In addition, it is also determined by the accessibility of their behavior for students. Figures who are too ideal and distant can be admired without being easily imitated, whereas concrete examples from daily teachers allow children to see tangible forms of discipline, patience, honesty, and responsibility. Such a model adds the dimension of admiration as a driver of moral emulation. Teachers should display exemplarity in simple daily actions so that they are more easily understood and imitated by learners.

Quantitative studies in the corpus also reinforce the habituation mechanism. Abidin (2026) shows that habituation even provides a strong contribution in the Islamic character education model, while Syafiq (2025) finds that religious habituation has a large effect on student character. Such findings explain that observed teacher behavior requires opportunities to be practiced by students repeatedly. Exemplarity provides behavioral direction, while habituation helps behavior transform into a more stable pattern. Schools ought to provide consistent containers and spaces for students to train and practice such moral values periodically.

The family factor becomes the next condition consistently found. Latifah (2023), Takwa et al. (2025), Shanti and Shohib (2026), and Samugara et al. (2026) all position the family as an element that can strengthen character education. When the values modeled by teachers gain support at home, learners obtain moral consistency. When the standards of both differ greatly, students must face competing norms. Character education therefore requires sufficient communication between teachers and parents. Synergy and intensive communication between

the school and parents must always be built in order to maintain harmony in children's character formation.

School culture is also a determining condition. Sumardi et al. (2026), Aziz and Syahrin (2026), Intansari et al. (2026), and Hakim and Syukri (2026) show that teacher behavior works more strongly when the school institution has a supportive culture. Individual exemplarity can initiate moral learning, but school culture determines whether such behavior gains social legitimacy and continuity. Norms of discipline, appreciation, religious practices, cooperation, and communication patterns need to become collective experiences so that values do not stop merely as the personal character of a specific teacher. All school members are obliged to create and nurture an institutional environment conducive to the growth of goodness norms.

The success of teacher exemplarity is primarily shaped through behavioral consistency, observation and imitation, habituation, emotional closeness, moral credibility, teacher personality quality, school culture, and continuity between school and family. Exemplarity is strongest when students witness conformity between the teacher's message and actions and obtain opportunities to practice such values repeatedly. Teachers are therefore not merely transmitters of norms, but living representations of the values being studied by students. Every teacher deserves to realize their position as a central figure who continually guides and reflects noble moral values throughout the educational process.

4. CONCLUSION

There is a consistent tendency that teacher exemplary behavior is positively related to student character building. Such a relationship is apparent in morals, politeness, Islamic character, discipline, responsibility, moral behavior, empathy, and religious awareness. The differing magnitudes of contribution across publications indicate that exemplarity is not a single factor, but rather works alongside habituation, school culture, teacher personality competency, supervision, tarbiyah, and family support. The qualitative synthesis shows that character formation takes place when students observe consistent teacher behavior, develop closeness and trust toward the teacher figure, and then practice values through daily activities.

Theoretically, exemplarity needs to be understood as a social and moral learning mechanism connecting observation, experience, emotion, imitation, and habituation. Academically, the research results indicate the necessity of distinguishing the direct influence of exemplarity from its contributions when interacting with school culture or family. Practically, schools need to position teacher personality quality and behavioral consistency as part of professional development. Character education will be stronger when demands placed

on students are aligned with teacher behavior, school rules, learning routines, and family assistance. Schools are advised to develop character education programs combining exemplarity, habituation, moral reflection, school culture, and parental collaboration. The strengthening of teacher personality competency needs to be positioned as equal to the development of academic and pedagogical competencies because educator behavior constitutes part of the educational material experienced by students every day.

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