

Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate in Students' Character Building

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ABSTRACT

Character building among school students develops through repeated social experiences within family and school environments. This systematic literature review examines the contribution of parents' exemplary behavior and school ethical climate to students' character development and explores their complementary relationship. The evidence base comprised 24 publications, including 20 studies contained in two predefined literature corpora and four additional internationally verified studies. Narrative and comparative synthesis was used because the reviewed studies varied substantially in constructs, samples, measures, and outcomes. Findings indicate that parental influence operates through behavioral modeling, warmth, attachment, involvement, monitoring, and consistency between communicated values and actual conduct. School ethical climate contributes through shared norms, fairness, moral exemplarity, discipline, safety, belonging, and institutional consistency. Evidence further suggests that family and school environments function complementarily: parental modeling establishes early moral orientations, whereas school climate provides broader social situations in which those values are reinforced, challenged, and practiced. However, direct evidence testing the interaction between parents' exemplary behavior and school ethical climate remains limited. Future longitudinal and multilevel studies should examine their combined effects and identify mediating mechanisms underlying sustainable character development.

INTRODUCTION

Student character formation is an educational process that develops through repeated social experiences within families, schools, and peer environments. Character development involves more than acquiring knowledge of right and wrong; it emerges as moral values are accepted, understood, internalized, and translated into everyday behavior. During the school years, families and schools constitute the two most immediate environments in which such experiences occur (Ajeng, 2024). Families introduce values through emotional relationships, parenting practices, daily routines, parental supervision, and behaviors observed by children. Schools extend this developmental process through interactions with teachers and peers, institutional regulations, school culture, and experiences involving fairness and responsibility (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Sugiarti et al. (2022) demonstrated that parenting is associated with adolescent character formation, although the magnitude of its contribution indicates that character development is also influenced by other social factors. These findings highlight the importance of examining Character Building across multiple developmental environments.

The significance of families and schools as primary environments for character formation becomes more evident when both are understood as complementary settings that shape students' habits, discipline, moral conduct, and moral orientations. Darmawan and Wijayanti (2026) demonstrated that the school environment and parental support are both associated with the development of disciplinary character, while Darmawan, Irsyadul'Ibad, and Arrisallah (2025) identified relationships between parenting practices, the school environment, and students'

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moral conduct. Within the family environment, parental attention has also been associated with character formation among junior secondary and elementary school students (Nuriyah & Darmawan, 2024; Darmawan & Rodliyah, 2026). The interconnected roles of families and schools are further reflected in research examining parental attention alongside school culture in shaping students' character within Islamic boarding schools (Risqi & Darmawan, 2024). At the institutional level, the religious climate of madrasahs and school culture provide value-oriented environments that support students' character development (Darmawan & Mahbubah, 2026; Yusuf & Darmawan, 2026). This process is further reinforced when schools provide adult role models, as teachers' personality competence has been associated with students' character formation (Nafisa & Darmawan, 2025). Darmawan and Umar (2026) also demonstrated that students' religious behavior develops through interactions among multiple social influences, including religious habituation, parental involvement, teacher role modeling, peer relationships, and community support. Collectively, these findings suggest that Character Building is best understood as a developmental process extending across interconnected environments, in which families establish foundational values while schools provide opportunities for these values to be practiced, tested, and expressed through behavior.

The parental role in character formation extends beyond establishing rules or providing moral instruction. Children also learn through observing the actual behaviors demonstrated by their parents (Rahmayanty et al., 2023). The concept of Parents' Exemplary Behavior refers to the consistency with which parents demonstrate behaviors that serve as models for children in practicing honesty, responsibility, empathy, discipline, respect, and other socially valued conduct (Damayanti et al., 2023). This mechanism is particularly important because moral instruction may lose its credibility when it contradicts the behavior of the person delivering it. The existing literature identifies several constructs conceptually related to parental role modeling, including parenting style, parenting behaviour, parental attachment, parental monitoring, and parental involvement. Although these constructs are not equivalent to exemplary behavior, they describe relational conditions that may facilitate children's observation, acceptance, and internalization of parental values. Kil, Gath, and Grusec (2023), for example, demonstrated that maternal moral identity is associated with adolescents' values and prosocial behavior, particularly when parent-child relationships are characterized by warmth and involvement.

Evidence across studies indicates that moral character does not develop through a single, isolated parenting practice. In a meta-analysis of 23 studies, Pinquart and Fischer (2022) identified a positive, although relatively small, association between authoritative parenting and moral reasoning, whereas authoritarian parenting exhibited an opposite pattern of association. These findings have two important implications. The quality of family relationships matters for moral development, yet familial influences are not deterministic. Children continue to participate in other social environments that may reinforce, modify, or weaken the values acquired at home. Schools therefore assume an increasingly important role, particularly during adolescence, when interactions with teachers and peers occupy a greater proportion of students' everyday social experiences (Chan, 2023).

Schools influence character development through two interconnected pathways. The formal pathway operates through curricula, religious instruction, character education programs, institutional regulations, and extracurricular activities. The informal pathway emerges through social experiences that shape students' perceptions of the values actually practiced and reinforced within the institution (Rao et al., 2024). Grazia and Molinari (2021) conceptualized School Climate as perceptions of the moral, relational, and institutional dimensions of school life. From the perspective of Character Building, its moral dimension provides a conceptual

foundation for understanding School Ethical Climate. An ethical school climate is reflected in how institutions enforce regulations, treat students, address dishonesty, cultivate interpersonal relationships, demonstrate exemplary conduct, and establish shared norms concerning acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Cheng, Hung, and Hsu (2021) provided directly relevant empirical evidence. Their study involving 1,271 students from 31 secondary schools in Taiwan found that ethical attitudes were negatively associated with academic dishonesty and that a strong ethical climate strengthened this negative relationship. These findings indicate that individual moral orientations do not necessarily translate into equivalent behavioral outcomes across different environments. School Ethical Climate may function as an institutional condition that facilitates the consistent expression of moral attitudes in observable behavior. Students with strong ethical orientations may be better able to maintain honest conduct when their school environment communicates clear expectations that honesty is valued, misconduct is addressed fairly, and unethical practices are not normalized within the school community.

Agustin and Wahono (2026) reported a positive coefficient for the school environment in explaining students' character formation and found that the school environment, together with full-day schooling, accounted for 59.3% of the variance, as indicated by an R^2 value of 0.593. Nazwa, Halimah, and Nurislamiah (2026) found that School Environment explained 16.4% of the variation in students' moral education. Maranga and Mullei (2026) provided evidence linking Ethical Leadership and School Climate with student discipline and identified several relevant themes, including moral exemplarity, compassionate leadership, restorative discipline, and positive school climate. Although these studies employed different indicators of character-related outcomes, their findings consistently suggest that institutional environments play a meaningful role in shaping students' moral behavior.

A significant scholarly problem arises from the tendency of family-based and school-based research to develop along relatively separate lines of inquiry. Within family research, Character Building is commonly examined through parenting, attachment, monitoring, involvement, moral identity, discipline, and prosocial behavior. In school-based research, related discussions emphasize ethical climate, school climate, school environment, school culture, discipline, religiosity, emotion regulation, and prosocial behavior. Although this conceptual diversity reflects the multiple mechanisms underlying character development, it also complicates efforts to establish an integrated understanding of how family and school environments jointly contribute to moral formation. Students experience these environments simultaneously rather than independently. Values considered appropriate within the family are tested and negotiated through school experiences, while ethical experiences acquired at school may subsequently influence interactions within the family. Consequently, examining either environment in isolation may provide an incomplete explanation of the social processes underlying Character Building.

A more specific research gap concerns the relationship among Parents' Exemplary Behavior, School Ethical Climate, and Character Building. Most available studies have not examined these three constructs simultaneously within an integrated explanatory framework. Even within family research, parenting style and parental involvement are frequently employed as broader proxies that do not adequately capture the behavioral modeling dimension of parental exemplarity. Similarly, school-based studies often examine general School Climate without explicitly distinguishing its ethical dimension. These conceptual and empirical limitations create a need for a systematic synthesis of the existing evidence. Such a synthesis is necessary to distinguish findings that directly address the proposed constructs from those providing indirect support through conceptually related variables. It can also clarify how parental behavioral

modeling and the ethical characteristics of school environments may operate as complementary mechanisms of moral socialization. Importantly, the integration of these mechanisms should be evaluated in relation to the strength and relevance of the available evidence rather than assumed from conceptual similarities alone.

In response to these research gaps, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) aims to develop a more integrated understanding of students' Character Building through the complementary roles of family and school environments. Specifically, the review examines how Parents' Exemplary Behavior and related parenting constructs contribute to students' Character Building, while also investigating the role of School Ethical Climate and related school environmental factors in shaping students' moral development. Furthermore, the review explores how the interrelationship between Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate may provide a more comprehensive explanation of Character Building. Through these interconnected lines of inquiry, the review seeks to distinguish the respective contributions of family and school environments, identify potential synergies between them, and clarify the empirical foundations of an integrated approach to students' character building.

These research questions guide the synthesis of evidence concerning family-related influences, school-related influences, and the potential complementarities between the two environments. By distinguishing direct empirical findings from evidence derived from related constructs, the review seeks to clarify the conceptual foundations, empirical support, and remaining limitations of an integrated approach to understanding students' Character Building.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach using narrative and comparative synthesis. The initial review was based on two literature corpora compiled according to the two principal research constructs. The first corpus comprised ten articles addressing parenting, parental attachment, parental monitoring, parental involvement, moral development, student discipline, prosocial behavior, and Character Building. The second corpus consisted of ten articles examining ethical climate, school culture, school environment, discipline, morality, academic dishonesty, emotion regulation, and prosocial behavior. All 20 articles were retained as core evidence because each provided empirical information relevant to family-related or school-related mechanisms in character development. Publication identities were validated through the respective journal websites. The final evidence base comprised 24 publications. Methodological references were excluded from the count of empirical studies.

The synthesis followed the principles of framework synthesis, whereby studies were classified according to sources of moral socialization, measured constructs, character-related outcomes, research designs, and directions of findings. Given the substantial heterogeneity in variables, populations, measurement instruments, and outcomes, a meta-analysis was not conducted. Reporting was guided by the principles of transparency in systematic reviews outlined by Page et al. (2021). The interpretation of findings prioritized conceptual alignment and methodological rigor rather than relying exclusively on the number of studies reporting statistically significant results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parents' Exemplary Behavior and Students' Character Building

The synthesis of family-related studies reveals a relatively consistent pattern indicating that parenting experiences are associated with various indicators of Character Building. Table 1

presents the studies addressing parental behavioral influences, including constructs conceptually related to Parents' Exemplary Behavior.

Table 1. Studies on Parental Exemplary Behavior and Related Constructs

N o.	Study	Research Design and Sample	Research Focus	Main Findings
1	Sugiarti et al. (2022)	Quantitative; 415 adolescents	Parenting and Character Building	Positive association; $R^2 = 0.090$
2	Rakhmah et al. (2024)	Survey; 150 junior secondary school students	Parenting and teacher personality competence in character formation	Positive combined relationship; $R^2 = 0.384$
3	Musiimenta et al. (2024)	Mixed methods, cross-sectional; 459 respondents	Parenting styles and students' morality	Three parenting styles positively correlated with morality
4	Mabunde et al. (2024)	Ex post facto; 681 respondents	Parenting behaviour and student discipline	Significant correlation between parenting and discipline
5	Esmaeili et al. (2021)	Correlational; 128 children	Parenting and moral development through attachment	Significant relationships involving parenting and attachment; attachment as mediator
6	Agnes & Ninawati (2025)	Correlational; 546 adolescents	Parental attachment and prosocial behavior	Positive association between secure attachment and prosocial behavior
7	Turan & Rahman (2024)	Correlational; 403 adolescents	Parental monitoring, moral identity, and delinquency	Monitoring: $r = -0.52$; model $R^2 = 0.38$
8	Tumusabe et al. (2022)	Mixed methods, cross-sectional; 379 respondents	Parenting styles and adolescent behavior	Significant relationships between parenting styles and adolescent behavior
9	Mukami et al. (2024)	Cross-sectional; 347 students	Parental involvement and holistic development	Positive relationships with academic, social, emotional, physical, and mental development
10	Syahril et al. (2020)	Ex post facto; 60 students	Authoritative parenting, empathy, and prosocial behavior	Model explained 25.1% of variance in prosocial behavior
11	Pinquart & Fischer (2022)*	Meta-analysis; 23 studies	Parenting styles and moral reasoning	Positive association for authoritative parenting; negative association for authoritarian parenting
12	Kil et al. (2023)*	Cross-sectional; 105 dyads	Maternal moral identity and adolescents' moral	Stronger relationships under high parental warmth and involvement

and prosocial
outcomes

Sugiarti et al. (2022) occupy an important position in this synthesis because their outcome variable was explicitly identified as Character Building. Parenting exhibited a positive standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.300$) and explained approximately 9% of the variance in character formation. This relatively modest explanatory contribution does not support the conclusion that parenting constitutes the sole or most dominant determinant of students' character. Instead, the findings highlight the importance of considering additional social influences, particularly schools and communities. For the present review, this evidence provides a rationale for examining Parents' Exemplary Behavior alongside School Ethical Climate within an integrated conceptual framework.

Rakhmah et al. (2024) provided evidence more closely aligned with a framework involving multiple developmental environments. Parenting styles and teacher personality competence jointly explained 38.4% of the variance in students' character formation. This explanatory value cannot be directly compared with that reported by Sugiarti et al. (2022), given differences in research models, measurement instruments, and sample characteristics. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that family experiences and adult behavioral models within schools may operate simultaneously. Parents provide behavioral examples within the family, while teachers represent additional role models beyond the home. Character Building can therefore be understood as a developmental outcome associated with exposure to multiple social models rather than the influence of a single socialization agent.

Musiimenta, Balimutajjo, and Arinaitwe (2024) extended the evidence by examining relationships between parenting styles and students' morality. Using a cross-sectional approach incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods, their study identified positive relationships between several parenting styles and students' moral outcomes. An important strength of this research lies in its use of morality as an outcome closely related to character development. However, the parenting categories employed were not equivalent to the concept of Parents' Exemplary Behavior. The findings nevertheless remain relevant because they demonstrate that parent-child relationship structures and parental practices are associated with the development of behavioral standards.

At the secondary school level, Mabunde, Barasa, and Likoko (2024) identified a significant relationship between parenting behaviour and student discipline. Although discipline does not encompass the entirety of character, it represents an observable manifestation associated with adherence to social norms and behavioral self-regulation. These findings indicate that parental behavioral patterns remain relevant to students' conduct even when students spend a substantial proportion of their daily academic activities within school environments.

Emotional relationships constitute another important mechanism in moral development. Esmaeili et al. (2021) found that parenting styles were associated with moral development and that attachment performed a mediating role. This finding suggests that values communicated by parents are interpreted within an existing relational environment. Emotional closeness may influence whether parental advice, rules, and exemplary behaviors are perceived as credible and worthy of internalization. Within supportive relationships, children may be more likely to develop positive identification with parental figures. A comparable pattern was reported by Agnes and Ninawati (2025), who identified a positive contribution of secure parental attachment to adolescents' prosocial behavior.

Kil et al. (2023) further clarified this relational mechanism. Maternal moral identity was associated with adolescents' generosity during a prosocial task when mothers also demonstrated high levels of warmth and involvement. Explicit maternal moral identity was also associated with adolescents' prosocial values. This study is particularly relevant to Parents' Exemplary Behavior because it demonstrates that parental moral values and relationship quality operate together. Behavioral modeling involves more than the presence of observable positive conduct. For moral values to acquire personal significance, the parent-child relationship must support the child's perception of parents as credible and emotionally meaningful role models.

Parental monitoring represents a somewhat different mechanism. Turan and Rahman (2024) reported a negative correlation between parental monitoring and delinquency ($r = -0.52$), while parental monitoring and moral identity jointly explained 38% of the variance in delinquency. Monitoring operates primarily through behavioral boundaries and external supervision, whereas exemplary behavior functions mainly through observational learning and behavioral modeling. These mechanisms may reinforce one another. When parental supervision is consistent with parental conduct, children receive coherent messages concerning acceptable behavioral standards. Conversely, parental control that is inconsistent with parental behavior may be perceived as a unilateral demand rather than a credible moral expectation.

Tumusabe et al. (2022) also identified significant relationships between parenting styles and adolescent behavior in Uganda. The exceptionally high coefficients reported for several relationships require cautious interpretation because the cross-sectional design and measurement characteristics may influence the magnitude of the observed associations. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the evidence map, although its findings should not be assigned the same evidentiary weight as those derived from meta-analyses or studies employing more rigorous measurement procedures. This distinction is particularly important in an SLR because the number of studies supporting a particular conclusion does not necessarily correspond to the overall strength of the evidence.

Parental involvement extends behavioral modeling into the educational domain. Mukami, Piliyesi, and Makinda (2024) found that parental involvement predicted students' academic, social, emotional, physical, and mental development. From the perspective of Character Building, the social and emotional dimensions are particularly relevant because they contribute to students' interpersonal competence, self-regulation, and responsiveness to others' needs. Parental involvement may also represent an indirect expression of exemplary behavior. By allocating time and attention to children's development, parents demonstrate responsibility and care through observable actions.

The relationship between parenting and prosocial behavior was also identified by Syahril et al. (2020). Authoritative parenting and empathy jointly explained approximately 25.1% of the variance in prosocial behavior. These findings support the interpretation that parental warmth, clearly established behavioral expectations, and attentiveness are associated with outcomes extending beyond rule compliance to include concern for the well-being of others. Prosocial behavior is particularly important because Character Building encompasses both adherence to established norms and the willingness to engage in constructive actions that benefit other individuals.

The meta-analysis conducted by Pinquart and Fischer (2022) provides a more proportionate perspective on these findings. Across 23 studies, authoritative parenting demonstrated a positive association with moral reasoning, although the effect size was relatively small. Authoritarian parenting exhibited a negative association, whereas permissive parenting did not demonstrate a consistently significant relationship. These results indicate that Character

Building cannot be adequately explained solely through parenting practices. Parenting provides one set of developmental conditions, while moral development also involves cognitive capacities, peer relationships, school experiences, cultural influences, and opportunities to translate moral values into behavior.

Overall, Parents' Exemplary Behavior is most appropriately understood as an integral component of the broader parenting environment. Behavioral modeling may become more influential when accompanied by warmth, attachment, involvement, appropriate monitoring, constructive dialogue, and consistency between parental expectations and actual conduct. Although direct empirical evidence explicitly operationalizing Parents' Exemplary Behavior remains limited, the patterns identified across the 12 publications support the proposition that parental behavior, relationship quality, and parenting practices are associated with Character Building, moral development, prosocial behavior, discipline, and lower levels of delinquency. The magnitude of these relationships varies across studies and does not justify a deterministic interpretation of familial influences. These findings establish the importance of examining schools as a complementary developmental environment capable of reinforcing, modifying, or correcting the processes of moral socialization initiated within families.

School Ethical Climate and Students' Character Building

The second group of studies indicates that the school environment is associated with several outcomes representing important dimensions of Character Building. As observed in the parenting literature, not all studies explicitly employ the term School Ethical Climate. Some examine School Culture, School Environment, Religious School Environment, School Climate, Discipline, or Character Education. These constructs are incorporated as supporting evidence to the extent that they address normative expectations, interpersonal relationships, safety, institutional order, behavioral modeling, or values that shape students' moral experiences.

Table 2. Synthesis of Studies on School Ethical Climate and Related Constructs

N o.	Study	Research Design and Sample	Research Focus	Main Findings
1	Maranga & Mullei (2026)	Mixed methods; 980 participants	Ethical Leadership, School Climate, and Discipline	Full model $R^2 = 0.659$; moral exemplarity and positive school climate identified
2	Juminah et al. (2023)	Quantitative; 60 respondents	School Culture, principal competence, and Character Building	Significant simultaneous relationship
3	Agustin & Wahono (2026)	Survey; 262 students	Full-Day School, School Environment, and Character Building	Positive relationship; model $R^2 = 0.593$
4	Wahyuni (2026)	Correlational; 320 students	Islamic Religious Education Discipline and Moral Character	$r = 0.673$; $R^2 = 0.453$
5	Cheng et al. (2021)	Survey; 1,271 students	Ethical Climate and Academic Dishonesty	Ethical Climate strengthened the negative relationship between ethical attitudes and academic dishonesty

6	Nazwa et al. (2026)	Quantitative; 125 students	School Environment and Moral Education	Positive relationship; $R^2 = 0.164$
7	Rahayu et al. (2025)	Correlational	Family Religious Education, School Religious Environment, and Morality	Model $R^2 = 0.575$; positive contribution of the school environment
8	Luaran et al. (2025)	Correlational; 304 students	School Climate and Academic Achievement	$r = 0.318$; $R^2 = 0.101$
9	Dadeh et al. (2025)	PISA 2022 data; 13,439 students	School Climate and Emotion Regulation	Significant model; $R^2 = 0.040$
10	Lestariningsya et al. (2026)	Correlational; 37 students	Islamic Character Education, Learning Discipline, and Prosocial Behavior	Model $R^2 = 0.716$
11	Voight & Nation (2016)*	Systematic review; 66 studies	School Climate Improvement	Identified nine elements of school climate improvement practices
12	Grazia & Molinari (2021)*	Systematic review	School Climate Measurement	Emphasized moral, relational, and institutional dimensions

Among the reviewed studies, Cheng et al. (2021) provide the most direct empirical support for the construct of School Ethical Climate. Their findings demonstrate that Ethical Climate moderates the relationship between Ethical Attitudes and Academic Dishonesty. The significance of this study lies in its demonstration that environmental conditions can alter the strength of the relationship between moral attitudes and actual behavior. Students may recognize academic cheating as morally unacceptable, yet their behavioral decisions remain influenced by peer norms, consistency in rule enforcement, the likelihood of sanctions, and the extent to which unethical practices are socially tolerated. These findings suggest that ethical attitudes are more likely to be reflected in behavior when supported by an institutional environment that consistently reinforces moral expectations.

Maranga and Mullei (2026) demonstrated a comparable process from the perspective of student discipline. Their model, integrating Patristic principles, Ethical Leadership, and School Climate, explained 65.9% of the variance in Discipline Management. Qualitative findings identified several recurring themes, including moral exemplarity, compassionate leadership, restorative discipline, and positive school climate. This study provides particular support for the concept of institutional behavioral modeling. Schools contribute to character formation through institutional regulations and through the conduct of principals and teachers, whose actions demonstrate how authority, discipline, and interpersonal relationships can be exercised ethically. Accordingly, the ethical characteristics of school leadership may constitute an important component of students' everyday moral learning experiences.

Juminah et al. (2023) found that School Culture and principals' pedagogical competence were jointly associated with Character Development in madrasahs. Although School Culture encompasses a broader range of institutional characteristics than School Ethical Climate, it includes shared values and habitual practices that shape students' understanding of expected

conduct. When Character Education becomes embedded in school culture, moral learning can be reinforced through everyday institutional practices rather than depending exclusively on individual subjects or temporary educational programs. This finding supports the interpretation that institutional consistency is relevant to the sustainability of character formation.

Agustin and Wahono (2026) identified a positive contribution of School Environment to Character Formation, with a regression coefficient of 0.412. Together with Full-Day School, the explanatory model accounted for 59.3% of the variance in Character Formation. These findings suggest that students' character development is associated with the organization of school time and the quality of the institutional environment. Extended school attendance may provide additional opportunities for repeated exposure to behavioral expectations and moral habituation. However, the duration of school participation alone cannot be assumed to produce favorable character outcomes without an environment that consistently supports appropriate behavior and meaningful social interaction.

Wahyuni (2026) reported a correlation of 0.673 between discipline in Islamic Religious Education and Moral Character, with an R^2 value of approximately 0.453. In this study, discipline encompassed religious observance, compliance with institutional regulations, and consistency in practicing religious teachings. The findings indicate a relationship between normative educational practices and moral characteristics such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance. Nevertheless, the correlational research design requires caution when interpreting these associations as causal effects. The findings therefore provide evidence of a meaningful relationship rather than definitive proof that discipline independently determines students' moral character.

Nazwa et al. (2026) reported a more moderate explanatory contribution, with School Environment accounting for approximately 16.4% of the variance in students' Moral Education. The differences in R^2 values between this study and Agustin and Wahono (2026) indicate that the explanatory contribution of the school environment cannot be represented by a universal effect size. Such variation may reflect differences in construct operationalization, measurement instruments, student age, educational settings, and the inclusion of additional explanatory variables. From an SLR perspective, these differences are analytically informative because they indicate that Character Building is sensitive to the characteristics of the educational setting. Consequently, preserving variation across studies is more appropriate than imposing a single aggregate estimate on heterogeneous findings.

Rahayu et al. (2025) provide a particularly important connection between family and school environments. Their study demonstrated that Family Religious Education and School Religious Environment were positively associated with students' Morality within a model that also incorporated Social Media and Religiosity. The overall model explained 57.5% of the variance in Morality. This finding is especially relevant to the third research question because it demonstrates that family-related and school-related factors can be examined simultaneously within an explanatory model of moral development. Although the constructs differ from Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate, the study offers empirical support for considering the complementary roles of family and school environments.

Examining educational constructs separately provides conceptual clarity but may offer an incomplete explanation of students' overall development. The relationship between School Climate and Academic Achievement offers an initial indication that institutional environments are associated with broader dimensions of student functioning. Luaran, Hasanah, and Jain (2025) did not directly measure Character Building. Instead, their study examined the relationship between School Climate and Academic Achievement, reporting a correlation of 0.318 and an

explanatory contribution of approximately 10.1%. The relevance of this study lies in its identification of School Climate as an organizational condition associated with student outcomes beyond explicitly moral indicators. Although its explanatory contribution was relatively modest, the findings suggest that institutional environments represent meaningful components of students' educational experiences. However, because academic achievement is conceptually distinct from moral character, this evidence should be interpreted as indirect support rather than direct confirmation of the relationship between School Ethical Climate and Character Building.

Dadeh et al. (2025) provide another source of indirect evidence. Using PISA 2022 data from 13,439 students, the study identified a statistically significant relationship between School Climate and Emotion Regulation, although the model explained approximately 4% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.040$). Sense of Belonging, Bullying, and Feeling of Safety emerged as meaningful predictors. Emotion Regulation is conceptually distinct from moral character, but it represents a psychological capacity that may facilitate impulse control, conflict management, responsible conduct, and empathic responses. These findings support the proposition that School Climate may contribute to psychological processes relevant to character development. Nevertheless, the modest explanatory contribution and the absence of a direct Character Building measure limit the strength of conclusions that can be drawn regarding moral outcomes.

Lestariningsih et al. (2026) examined Islamic Character Education, Learning Discipline, and Prosocial Behavior. Islamic Character Education demonstrated a statistically significant partial relationship with Prosocial Behavior, whereas Learning Discipline was not statistically significant when examined individually. Simultaneously, the model explained 71.6% of the variance in Prosocial Behavior. These findings suggest that value-oriented education may be more closely associated with prosocial conduct than learning discipline considered independently. The results also indicate the importance of distinguishing between compliance with learning requirements and the internalization of moral values expressed through behavior benefiting others.

Voight and Nation (2016), through a systematic review of 66 studies, demonstrated that School Climate can be improved through a range of practices sharing common characteristics across intervention programs. Grazia and Molinari (2021) further emphasized the multidimensional nature of School Climate, particularly its moral, relational, and institutional components. Together, these sources strengthen the conceptual justification for treating School Ethical Climate as a construct extending beyond the existence of moral regulations. An ethical school environment is shaped through interpersonal relationships, fairness, safety, leadership practices, participation, and institutional experiences that give practical meaning to formal expectations. Accordingly, ethical norms acquire educational significance when they are consistently reflected in how school communities organize relationships and respond to everyday moral situations.

School Ethical Climate is associated with Character Building through the development of shared norms, experiences of fairness, exemplary conduct demonstrated by teachers and school leaders, relationship quality, psychological safety, Sense of Belonging, and consistency in institutional rule enforcement. The most directly relevant evidence concerns Ethical Climate and Academic Dishonesty, School Environment and Character Formation, and School Environment and Moral Education. Findings involving Academic Achievement and Emotion Regulation provide indirect evidence concerning broader institutional and psychological mechanisms and should therefore be interpreted as complementary rather than equivalent outcomes. Taken together, the reviewed studies suggest that schools constitute important social environments in which personal values are tested through interpersonal interactions and reinforced through

institutional practices. This synthesis supports the conceptual relevance of School Ethical Climate to students' Character Building while recognizing that the strength and directness of the available evidence vary across studies.

Synergy Between Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate in Character Building

The synthesis of both groups of studies suggests that family and school environments should not be regarded as competing sources of influence. Instead, they perform distinct yet complementary functions in students' moral development. Parents provide moral experiences through intensive personal and emotional relationships, whereas schools offer broader social environments characterized by interpersonal diversity, shared regulations, institutional authority, and the demands of collective life. Parents' Exemplary Behavior may establish foundational moral values, while School Ethical Climate provides opportunities for students to apply these values when encountering social situations beyond the family.

Table 3. Cross-Environmental Synthesis of Family and School Influences

Pattern	Family Environment	School Environment	Implications for Character Building	Supporting Literature
Reinforcement	Exemplary behavior and positive relationships	Consistent Ethical Climate	Greater stability in value internalization	Sugiarti et al. (2022); Cheng et al. (2021); Rahayu et al. (2025)
Complementarity	Foundational values developed at home	Opportunities for social practice at school	Moral values translated into social habits	Rakhmah et al. (2024); Maranga & Mullei (2026)
Family Protective Function	Strong parental behavioral modeling	Less supportive School Climate	Personal values may help students resist environmental pressures	Turan & Rahman (2024); Pinguart & Fischer (2022)
School Protective Function	Suboptimal parenting experiences	Supportive and ethical School Climate	Schools may provide alternative behavioral models	Voight & Nation (2016); Grazia & Molinari (2021)
Relational Mechanisms	Warmth, Attachment, and Involvement	Sense of Belonging, Safety, and Fairness	Greater receptivity to moral values	Kil et al. (2023); Dadeh et al. (2025)
Inconsistency	Contradictions between parental messages and behavior	Ambiguous institutional norms	Potential moral uncertainty and opportunistic behavior	Synthesis of 24 publications

The reinforcement pattern emerges when values observed within the family are supported by similar norms in the school environment. Honesty provides a straightforward illustration. Parents may demonstrate honesty through everyday behavior, but this value

acquires broader social significance when students encounter situations at school requiring them to choose between complying with examination regulations and conforming to peers engaging in academic cheating. Cheng et al. (2021) demonstrated that Ethical Climate can strengthen the negative relationship between Ethical Attitudes and Academic Dishonesty. This finding suggests that moral character may become more stable when internalized values and external institutional norms are aligned. Such alignment provides students with consistent expectations across different social environments and may facilitate the translation of moral attitudes into observable conduct.

Complementarity represents another important pattern. Family and school environments do not necessarily operate through identical mechanisms. Attachment and Warmth are particularly prominent within family relationships, whereas procedural Fairness and Peer Norms are more evident within schools. Kil et al. (2023) emphasized the significance of parental warmth in moral socialization, while the School Climate literature highlights Sense of Belonging, Safety, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. These mechanisms converge in their capacity to provide credible and supportive social relationships through which students encounter, interpret, and internalize moral expectations. Accordingly, the complementary roles of families and schools can be understood through their different relational and institutional contributions to the development of moral character.

The protective function constitutes a further potential pattern of interaction. School Ethical Climate may provide alternative behavioral models when family experiences are less supportive of moral development. Through interactions with teachers and other members of the school community, students may encounter fairness, responsibility, compassion, and constructive approaches to conflict resolution. This possibility does not imply that schools can fully replace the developmental role of families. Rather, schools may provide additional sources of moral socialization that partially compensate for limitations in the home environment. Conversely, families characterized by consistent moral expectations and positive behavioral modeling may help students maintain their values when confronted with peer pressure or inconsistent institutional practices. These protective functions remain conceptually plausible interpretations that require more direct empirical examination.

Rahayu et al. (2025) provided some of the most relevant empirical evidence supporting an explanatory framework incorporating both environments. Their findings indicated that Family Religious Education and School Religious Environment were positively associated with students' Morality within the same analytical model. Although these constructs do not correspond precisely to Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate, the study demonstrates the relevance of considering family and school factors simultaneously rather than treating them as mutually exclusive explanations of moral development. Variables representing both environments may contribute differently to students' moral outcomes.

Rakhmah et al. (2024) reported a comparable pattern through their examination of Parenting Styles and Teacher Personality Competence. Their findings reinforce the significance of adult behavioral models across different developmental environments. Children observe parental behavior within the family while also witnessing how teachers fulfill responsibilities, exercise authority, respond to misconduct, and treat others. Consistency across these adult figures may strengthen the credibility of moral expectations because students encounter similar values beyond their immediate family relationships. The findings therefore support the relevance of examining multiple socialization agents within a broader explanation of Character Building.

Behavioral exemplarity represents a particularly important conceptual connection between the two principal constructs examined in this review. Maranga and Mullei (2026)

identified moral exemplarity as a recurring theme in the relationship among Ethical Leadership, School Climate, and Discipline. Within the family domain, Kil et al. (2023) highlighted processes consistent with moral modeling through parental moral identity and supportive relationships. When both environments provide adults who demonstrate moral values through their conduct, Character Education becomes embedded in students' everyday experiences. Students encounter moral principles through observable decisions and interactions, thereby gaining opportunities to understand how values are applied in practical situations.

These findings have implications for the development of effective partnerships between families and schools. Parent-School Partnerships should extend beyond academic meetings and the communication of examination results. Collaborative initiatives may emphasize shared understandings of core moral values, communication practices, digital responsibility, discipline, honesty, mutual respect, and constructive conflict resolution. The objective is not to impose uniformity across families but to minimize unnecessary contradictions between home-based expectations and school-based norms. Greater consistency may provide students with clearer moral reference points while preserving the distinct responsibilities of parents and educational institutions.

A strong School Ethical Climate should also avoid excessive dependence on punitive approaches to Character Building. Compliance motivated primarily by fear of sanctions differs conceptually from the internalization of moral values. Although discipline remains necessary, its implementation should incorporate clear explanations, procedural fairness, opportunities to correct mistakes, and consistent behavioral modeling. The findings of Maranga and Mullei (2026) concerning Restorative Discipline are particularly relevant in this regard. Schools may provide more meaningful moral experiences when misconduct is addressed as an opportunity to understand consequences, assume responsibility, and restore damaged relationships rather than exclusively as grounds for punishment.

A comparable principle applies within family environments. Parental Monitoring may be more supportive of character development when accompanied by warmth and constructive communication. Turan and Rahman (2024) demonstrated an association between Parental Monitoring and lower levels of Delinquency, while Kil et al. (2023) emphasized the relevance of Warmth and Involvement in moral socialization. Synthesizing these findings suggests that Character Building involves both behavioral boundaries and supportive relationships. Control without credible behavioral modeling may encourage situational compliance, whereas exemplary conduct without clearly communicated boundaries may leave behavioral expectations insufficiently defined. This interpretation highlights the importance of consistency between parental conduct, relational quality, and disciplinary expectations.

Across the evidence base, relatively few studies have directly examined the interaction effect between Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate. Most available findings concern parallel or conceptually complementary relationships. This limitation constitutes an important finding of the present SLR rather than a weakness that should be overlooked. The literature provides conceptual support for integrating family and school influences and includes several studies examining variables from both environments within the same analytical model. However, direct evidence concerning moderation or mediation involving the two principal constructs remains limited. Consequently, the proposed synergy should be interpreted as a theoretically informed synthesis rather than an empirically established interaction effect.

Another significant limitation concerns the conceptualization of Character Building. The reviewed studies employed diverse outcomes, including Moral Reasoning, Moral Development, Prosocial Behavior, Discipline, Delinquency, Morality, Academic Dishonesty, Emotion Regulation,

and Holistic Development. This heterogeneity reflects the breadth of character-related development but limits direct quantitative comparisons across studies. Combining these findings into a single effect size would be methodologically inappropriate without adequate construct harmonization. The synthesis therefore suggests that Character Building is more appropriately conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing moral orientation, self-regulation, social behavior, integrity, and behavioral consistency.

The relationship between Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate can be interpreted through four interconnected mechanisms: Consistency, Reinforcement, Complementarity, and Protection. Parental behavioral modeling provides foundational values through close interpersonal relationships, while the ethical school environment establishes institutional norms and opportunities to apply these values in interactions with others. When both environments are aligned, students may experience more consistent moral expectations. When one environment provides insufficient support, the other may offer partial protective resources. Nevertheless, conclusions regarding causal interaction effects require further longitudinal research that directly measures both constructs and examines their relationships with Character Building over time.

CONCLUSION

This Systematic Literature Review of 24 publications indicates that students' Character Building is associated with developmental experiences occurring within both family and school environments. Parents' Exemplary Behavior is supported by parenting mechanisms involving Warmth, Attachment, Involvement, Monitoring, and consistency in moral expectations. School Ethical Climate operates through shared norms, Fairness, exemplary conduct among educators, discipline, safety, Sense of Belonging, and institutional experiences that support the practical application of moral values. The strongest overall pattern suggests that family and school environments perform complementary rather than substitutive functions. When moral expectations across these environments are consistent, opportunities for value internalization may be strengthened. However, direct empirical evidence concerning the interaction between Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate remains limited, preventing definitive conclusions regarding their combined causal effects.

Theoretically, the findings support the conceptualization of Character Building as a social ecological developmental process. Parents' Exemplary Behavior should be distinguished from Parenting Style because the former emphasizes observable behavioral modeling, whereas the latter represents broader patterns of parenting relationships and practices. Similarly, School Ethical Climate should be differentiated from general School Climate because its conceptual focus concerns ethical norms, Fairness, Integrity, Moral Leadership, and Consistency of Conduct. From a practical perspective, effective Character Education requires coordination between families and schools. Educational institutions can establish core moral values and translate them into observable expectations for teachers, students, and school leaders, while communicating these expectations to parents. Families can reinforce these values through consistent behavioral examples and daily habituation. Evaluations of Character Building should extend beyond behavioral compliance to include integrity, Prosocial Behavior, responsibility, empathy, and the capacity to maintain moral standards in the absence of direct supervision.

Future research should develop measurement instruments that explicitly operationalize Parents' Exemplary Behavior and School Ethical Climate rather than continuing to rely predominantly on broader proxy constructs. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable for examining changes in character development over time, while Multilevel Modeling could

distinguish the contributions of family, individual, classroom, and school-level factors. Further empirical studies should investigate whether School Ethical Climate moderates the relationship between Parents' Exemplary Behavior and Character Building or whether Moral Identity, Attachment, Sense of Belonging, Perceived Fairness, and Emotion Regulation function as mediating mechanisms. At the practical level, schools are encouraged to establish family partnerships centered on consistency in moral expectations and exemplary conduct rather than focusing exclusively on academic achievement. Such initiatives may facilitate the development of Character Education as a coherent social experience extending across home and school environments.

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