Overcoming the Character Crisis in Children: Strategies, Outcomes, and Evaluations of *Bina Desa* Program

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ABSTRACT

To address Indonesia's character crisis marked by bullying and negative behavior in students, *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung has introduced the *Bina desa* Program, incorporating experiential learning. This program emphasizes crucial character traits such as creativity, curiosity, responsibility, activeness, self-confidence, empathy, and cooperation. Through the involvement of families, schools, and communities, the program aims to enhance character education and make a positive contribution to the nation's development. This research analyzes the program's strategies, outcomes, and evaluation methods to improve character development initiatives in Indonesia. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews, observations, and documentation for data collection and analysis. 17 Participants, namely CEOs, program developers, volunteers, and community stakeholders, were selected through purposive sampling. The data underwent rigorous analysis, ensuring validity and reliability. The implications of this study highlight the importance of character development programs in combating the character crisis. By implementing a comprehensive curriculum and employing the principles of experiential learning, programs i.e., *bina desa* can effectively foster essential character traits in children. Continuous evaluation, feedback, and improvement are crucial elements for ensuring the program's success. Moreover, the involvement of social agents and collaboration with various stakeholders are vital for creating a supportive environment that nurtures children's character. This study underscores the significance of character education in broader societal progress and emphasizes the role of well-designed programs in shaping exceptional individuals who contribute positively to society.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is currently struggling to overcome the problem of character crisis, in which the character crisis is seen from the growing gap between behavior and actions and the values and norms that apply in society. The International Student Assessment Program (PISA) reported very worrying statistical data regarding the condition of students in Indonesia, including 41.1% of students claiming to have experienced bullying, 22% were victims of ridicule, 20% of students spread bad news, 19% experienced exclusion, 18% face pressure from peers, and 15% become victims of bullying (PISA, 2018; Midaada, 2023). These alarming figures are reflected in a recent incident in Dusun Pancer, Sumberagung Village, Pesanggaran District, East Java, where a child

tragically ended his life due to constant bullying by his peers because of his status as an orphan or having no father (Midaada, 2023). The current situation of education in Indonesia falls short of fulfilling its goals and ideals, as evidenced by the prevalence of troubling phenomena among the youth, including rising instances of juvenile delinquency like bullying, brawls, promiscuity, and crime (Susilo et al., 2016).

This worrying trend highlights an urgent problem in character development among the younger generation, because character plays an important role in the progress of the nation. Sidi (2014) emphasizes that a nation with strong character can successfully compete on the global stage, while a nation facing a character crisis is vulnerable to changing times.

The rapid current of globalization today makes the government and schools need a strategy to be able to provide education that can fortify the character of the nation's children form globalization (Herawati et al., 2019). By fortifying children with character education, it's hoped that they can make the successors of the Indonesia nation better and able to compete in the global world.

Schools are sometimes often the target of criticism for perceived failures in character education, it is important to realize that children spend more time with their families and communities than in the school environment (Sutikno et al., 2018). In line with that, Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that the educational process must take place in the three centers of education, namely the family, school and community. Therefore, if families and schools have not been able to optimally instill character education, the community as agents of change must actively participate in overcoming these problems (Mugiarso & Haksasi, 2017). In this context, the term "community" includes individuals, communities and institutions related to school development (Asriadi et al., 2019).

Strengthening Character Education or *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK) is a movement the Indonesian government launched through the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016 in response to the challenges of modernity in the 21st century (Muhajir, 2022). Until now, it has evolved and progressed through the establishment of diverse educational programs that are rooted in an integrated and contemporary curriculum.

One of the community-based organizations involved in addressing the character crisis is the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung. As a non-profit organization, the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung focuses on building and developing character. The program implemented by the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung to tackle these issues is the '*bina desa*' program. This program was initiated in 2016 in Ciberes Village, Subang, in response to Pringga's concerns as the Founder of the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung, regarding the unequal distribution of education and low awareness of character education.

Since its inception, Pringga and his colleagues have been teaching children in various villages based on the principles of character education. Currently, the '*bina desa*' program has expanded to cover five villages: Ciberes, Sirnajaya, Pasteur, Pacet, and Salakawung. In each village, around 25-35 children participate, mainly comprising children with education levels ranging from kindergarten to elementary school

In general, the *Bina desa* program aims to instill seven main characteristics in children, known as *KITA PEKA*: creativity, curiosity, responsibility, activeness, self-confidence, empathy, and cooperation.

The *KITA PEKA* concept from the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung offers an alternative solution for character development in Indonesia, in line with Presidential Regulation Number 87, released in 2017, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening character education (PPK). PPK has three goals: preparing a golden generation of Indonesia in 2045 with a strong foundation of Pancasila, integrating character education as the basis for implementing education with the support of the wider community through formal, non-formal, and informal channels, as well as realizing and strengthening the potential for character development at all levels of society.

Meanwhile, the main objective of the *bina desa* program is to improve living standards in remote areas by utilizing the enthusiasm and abilities of the community, as reflected in the *KITA PEKA* framework (MediaJabar.com, 2021).

Therefore, this character education is expected to be a bridge in achieving the ideals of the Nation (Susilo et al., 2016). Character education is very important for the achievement of a democratic society and contains several ideals, such as respecting others, maintaining justice and equality, caring for the welfare of society, and helping others voluntarily (Triyanto, 2020).

To achieve the goal of character development, the *bina desa* program uses experiential learning methods. David Kolb developed experiential learning theory (ELT) in the early 1980s, he proposed an approach that engages children's hearing, sight, and direct experience to enhance their knowledge and skills. Experiential learning is a process in which children build knowledge, skills and values based on direct experience, integrating theoretical competence and practical experience (Priatmoko & Dzakiyyah, 2020).

This concept has significant implications for a lifelong learning approach (Mugiarso & Haksasi, 2017). Earlier research has recognized the significance of character education, specifically in relation to its role in addressing behavioral problems within educational settings and preventing students from adopting negative moral values exhibited by their peers. (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008).

Although there is previous research conducted by Mugiarso & Haksasi (2017) regarding the stages of character building using the experiential learning method, there is a gap that distinguishes it from this research, namely this research provides more comprehensive analysis of strategies, learning outcomes, and evaluation process of character building through the *bina desa* program.

Therefore, this research aims to understand the strategies, outcomes, and evaluations of the *bina desa* program in addressing the character crisis in children.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Character Development Program: Strategy and Results

In overcoming the character crisis, various efforts are needed, one of which is to improve the quality of character education in it. Character education combines education and character development. This involves the formation of individual and group characters which include actions, behaviors, motivations, and skills as the embodiment of values, potential, competence, morals, and resilience in facing obstacles (Kemendikbud, 2016). Good character can be developed through an educational process, in which individuals acquire unique elements such as goodness, the will to do good, live well, and have a positive impact on the environment.

The purpose of character education is to improve the quality of implementation and educational outcomes, so that in the end it can produce comprehensive and good character development. Through character education, it is hoped that children will be able to improve their quality independently and apply what they have learned by internalizing and personalizing good character and character values (Suwartini, 2017). Character education serves multiple functions, including the formation of Indonesian individuals who possess moral values, intelligence, rationality, innovation, hard work, optimism, confidence, and love for their country (Suwartini, 2017). The principles of character education involved establishing basic moral values as the foundation for character development, providing opportunities for children to engage in virtuous acts, incorporating meaningful and challenging lessons to shape their character and foster success, fostering self-motivation, promoting collaboration between families and community members, and evaluating school culture, staff roles, and demonstrations of good character to optimize character education (Suwartini, 2017).

Furthermore, character education is not only carried out within the scope of formal education, but can also be carried out within the scope of non-formal education. Non-formal education in question is education that focuses on learning outside the formal environment, such as in society or community. This education is aimed at developing the qualities and abilities of students, both in academic and non-academic matters (Haerullah & Elihami, 2020). Non-formal education has an important strategy in the character development process, one of which is the flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the needs of students, so this certainly makes it easier to overcome the existing character crisis. In addition, character education should also be applied from an early age. According to the Early Childhood Education Association (NAEYC), early childhood covers the age range from 0 to 8 years, while UNESCO defines it as the period from 3 to 5 years. This is done to form the basic character of good and dignified children from an early age.

2.2 Character Development Program: Evaluation

Program Evaluation is usually used to analyze the relevance of strategy to the results of activities, both in terms of impact, effectiveness and efficiency of character development programs in long-term survival. Ingvarson & Rowe (2008) also describes that this evaluation is used as a methodical assessment of the benefits, value, and relevance of subjects based on a set of criteria, which in general, evaluation criteria can include: relevance of policies or programs, effectiveness in taking appropriate steps and efficiency of overall impact of implemented policies and programs (Osiesi, 2023).

2.3 The Role of Agents in Character Development

Researchers have explored the role of agents in character development according to Giddens' structural theory. According to Giddens, social structure is not fixed and predetermined, but can be formed consciously or unconsciously by actors (Kinseng, 2017).

In the context of character development, the role of the agent is very important. They can be individuals, groups, or organizations involved in shaping and changing social structures that affect the development of individual or group character. The agent's behavior is solely determined by values and norms (Ritzer, 2010), but emphasizes the dynamic relationship between actors and social structures, recognizing that actors have agency in shaping and changing social structures from time to time (Ritzer, 2010). Giddens also added, that structuration is a condition for explaining how a social relationship is structured in a reciprocal relationship that can be understood in three levels of awareness, namely: discursive awareness, practical awareness, and unconscious cognition or motivation (Thoyyibah, 2015).

Discursive awareness is a level of awareness where individuals actively pay attention to and reflect on their actions in relation to social structures (Thoyyibah, 2015). Which means, they realize that social structure affects their actions and their actions can affect social structure. Practical awareness is a level of awareness where individuals are unconsciously actively involved in the social structure (Thoyyibah, 2015). Which means, they accept and follow the values and norms that apply without questioning these rules again. Unconscious cognition/motivation is a level of awareness where individuals feel unsure about the values and norms that they carry out (Thoyyibah, 2015). Which means, they feel uncertain, constrained, and unsure in carrying out social actions.

Structuration theory is very relevant for discussing the strategy, results, and evaluation of the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung's *Bina desa* program in overcoming a character crisis in children which in this case can be done through implementing the *KITA PEKA* character (Creative, Curious, Responsible, Active, Confident, Empathy, and Cooperation).

2.4 Approach of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) in Character Development

The experiential learning theory (ELT) approach is an approach that is very relevant in efforts to develop character in children. This approach was developed by David Kolb and emphasizes the importance of integrating direct experience in the teaching and learning process to motivate children to improve knowledge and skills (Mugiarso & Haksasi, 2017). One of the key elements in ELT is concrete experience. Experience-based learning involves the construction and integration of knowledge, skills, and values from direct experience (Mugiarso & Hakiki, 2017). Not only concrete experience, ELT also includes reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

2.5 The Perspective of Social Cognitive Theory and Its Implications for the *Bina desa* Program

In the context of this study, cognitive social theory can be used to analyze how the *bina desa* program influences the development of children's character through social learning processes and environmental influences.

Social cognitive theory is rooted in the view of human agency, that individuals are agents who proactively engage in their own environment and can make things happen with their actions (self-efficacy) (Mukhid, 2009).

Self-efficacy significantly influences an individual's behavior. Self-efficacy can be obtained, changed, increased, or decreased through one or a combination of four sources, namely a) performance accomplishment, b) vicarious experiences, c) social persuasion, and d) emotional/physiological states (Jarnawi & Untara, 2019).

Performance accomplishment can be interpreted as achievements that have been achieved before, vicarious experiences are experiences gained through social capital both internal and external, social persuasion is the confidence of the person giving the persuasion, and emotional/physiological states are the realistic nature of what has been persuaded. Self-efficacy beliefs affect how people feel, think and act, besides that they also help determine how big and long a person in activities (Mukhid, 2009). That is, people who have low self-efficacy tend to drag on more when under pressure, depression, and lack of self-confidence. Meanwhile, people who have high self-efficacy tend to

be more helpful in creating feelings of calm in facing difficult tasks.

3. Method

The methodology used in this study aims to address the problem of character development research through the *bina desa* program. This section provides a comprehensive overview of the procedures for data collection and analysis, including the basis for selecting the methods and techniques chosen. The research design used is a qualitative approach, so that researchers can explore and understand more deeply about issues related to overcoming the character crisis in children: strategies, outcomes, and evaluations of *bina desa* program.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows systematic data collection and analysis to describe and interpret information obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation (Manab, 2015). This approach allows for in-depth exploration of the impact of the *bina desa* program on character development in early childhood. On the other hand, descriptive analysis methods are used to present a systematic and accurate description of various symptoms, facts or events related to the population and the intended area (Zuriah, 2009, p. 47).

3.2 Data Participation

This research was conducted in Bandung, West Java, specifically at Jalan Sukawarna No.12, Husen Sastranegara, Kec. Cicendo. The participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling technique, taking into account specific criteria during the participant selection process.

This study involved two types of participants: primary participants and supporting participants. The primary participants were the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung, consisting of the CEO and Staff of Development Program from *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung Program Development division. Meanwhile, the supporting participants were 11 volunteers form the *bina desa* program and 4 individuals for each of the four villages.

3.3 Data Collection

To collect the necessary data, several techniques were used, such as:

a) Participatory Observation

In this study researchers were actively involved in the Independent Campus Certified Internship Program (MBKM) at the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung for approximately 6 months starting from August to December. Thus, researchers can be directly involved in implementing *bina desa* program activities;

b) Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview was conducted using an open-ended question guide but still focused on the question points that had been made. This interview was conducted in order to explore more deeply about their views, experiences and insights regarding the program;

c) Activity Documentation

Data collection also involves collecting documents and materials related to the *bina desa* program, including photos, videos, and audio recordings that provide additional context and evidence of program implementation and results.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data underwent a fairly rigorous analysis process, which involved the following techniques:

a) Data Reduction

The researcher carried out systematic data reduction, sorting and selecting the most relevant and appropriate data for research purposes. This process helps simplify analysis and focus on key themes and patterns.

b) Data Display

The selected data is then data display, enabling a clear and detailed description of the underlying social situations and phenomena related to the *bina desa* program (Puspitawati & Herawati, 2013).

c) Data Verification

To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of data sources and data collection techniques was carried out. To see the validity of the research, researchers used two data triangulation techniques, namely data source triangulation and data collection triangulation. Because, triangulation of data sources is a comparison technique by re-checking the degree of trust in the main data through different sources (Bachri, 2010). For more details, can be seen in the image 3.1:
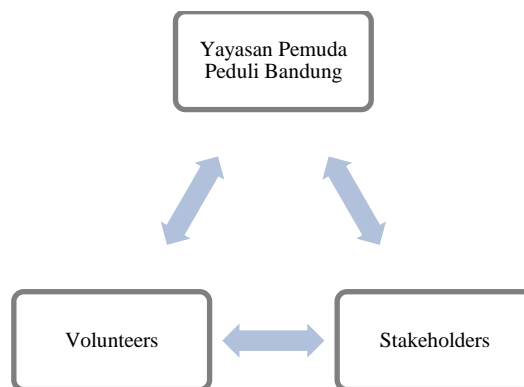

Image 3.1 Data Source Triangulation

The data sources are divided into two categories, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data is derived from the CEO and Staff of Development Program from the program development division of *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung. On the other hand, the secondary data is obtained from 11 volunteers involved in the *bina desa* program and 4 individuals from each of the four villages. In addition, data collection techniques were also triangulated, which combined participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and activity documentation. For more details, can be seen in the following image:
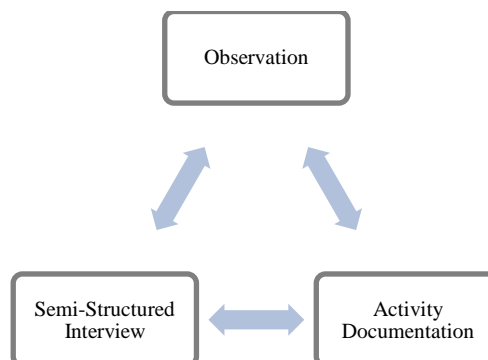

Image 3.2 Data Collection Triangulation

d) Drawing Conclusions

The last step of the analysis process involves drawing conclusions based on the pattern of data that has been organized and categorized.

By following a step-by-step framework, this study aims to ensure the validity, reliability and credibility of the research findings. The method chosen is also considered appropriate and effective in overcoming research problems, providing in-depth and comprehensive investigations of character development in early childhood through the *bina desa* program.

3.5 Research Ethical Issues

In this study, the researcher adhered to research ethics guidelines. In the domain of ethical considerations in various research topics of information systems, researchers need to take into account various ethical issues in information retrieval research, such as consent, informant privacy, confidentiality of search data, and privacy related to data on social media (Ramadani, 2021). Therefore, in this case, the researcher anonymized the names of the sources and ensured the confidentiality of the research data.

4. Result

This section presents findings from a study on strategies, results, and evaluation of the *bina desa* program in overcoming character crises in early childhood. It begins with a summary of the research problem and an overview of the data collected and analyzed. In which the results are presented systematically, by highlighting the main observations that are relevant to the research topic. Additionally, non-text elements such as tables are included to further illustrate the main findings.

The *bina desa* program initiated by the *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung is a non-formal teaching program that focuses on character development. This program was first established in 2016 in Ciberes Village, Subang, as a response to gaps in educational opportunities and low awareness about character education. Over time, the program has grown to include additional village locations. Currently, there are five villages where this program is implemented: Ciberes, Sirnajaya, Pasteur, Pacet, and Salakawung. Each village has around 25-35 children participating in the program, mainly from kindergarten to elementary school level.

4.1 *Bina desa* Program: Strategies

a. Focus on Character Development and Program Curriculum

The Program Development Staff of *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung stated, "what sets the *bina desa* program apart from other activities is that it

embraces the concept of fostered villages and aims to instill values, known as *KITA PEKA* values." In line with this, the CEO of *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung emphasized, "what distinguishes our *bina desa* program from others is the specific goal of addressing the character crisis in children by instilling the *KITA PEKA* values." The *KITA PEKA* values consist of creativity, curiosity, responsibility, activeness, self-confidence, empathy, and cooperation.

The program also adopts a curriculum that covers various fields: a) science: this component includes motor skills, language development, scientific and critical thinking, as well as art and creativity, b) character building: focusing on habituation activities that support student character development and positive moral reinforcement, c) leadership and volunteer activities: this component aims to foster leadership qualities, empathy, and a spirit of sharing with others, d) social enterprise: introducing entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities that have a positive social impact, and e) green lifestyle: this aspect emphasizes environmental preservation activities. This curriculum serves as the foundation for implementing the *bina desa* program and guides teaching activities for character development.

b. Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

To facilitate the *bina desa* program, *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung conducted an open recruitment process to attract volunteers who wish to contribute to the development of character education in children. The Program Development Staff stated, "The planning stage of the *bina desa* activities begins with the recruitment and preparation of volunteers, followed by discussions regarding the general explanation of *bina desa*, the materials to be prepared, the technical aspects of the activities, and the assignment of job descriptions." According to the Program Development Staff, "the volunteer recruitment process starts with open recruitment, followed by filling out a form for document selection. Prospective volunteers are required to provide personal information and attach a brief CV, provide motivation, and then the volunteers will be directed to participate in discussions and technical meetings through Google Meet."

In line with this, the CEO of *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung expressed that, "the planning stages of the activities are conducted by the program development team, which includes the creation of the curriculum, guidelines, and teaching themes. After that, they will be communicated to the volunteers who will then create teaching materials to be delivered, such as PowerPoint or video presentations."

Prospective volunteers who will be accepted are prioritized from those who have not participated in this program before, aiming to share knowledge and experiences. However, if there are volunteers who have participated before and wish to take part in *bina desa*

activities again, they will be selected as field coordinators. Once the volunteers have been selected, announcements will be made through the *Bina desa* social media account (@bin.des), and they will be invited to join a WhatsApp group for communication purposes.

Then there will be two debriefing sessions to provide an overview of the program, teaching guidelines, review of materials and teaching strategies based on *KITA PEKA* values and curriculum. In addition, volunteers are also involved in teaching simulations to ensure effective and engaging teaching practices.

According to Alyda, one of the *bina desa* program volunteers, she mentioned that "after the announcement of the volunteers who passed as tutors or facilitators, there will be an introduction session about *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung and the *bina desa* program in general."

In line with Alyda, Ihsan added, "There will be further briefing sessions that discuss the guideline, materials, and enjoyable teaching methods that effectively instill the *KITA PEKA* values in children."

4.2 *Bina desa* Program: Outcomes

During the implementation of the *bina desa* program, volunteers are assigned three roles: Host (MC), tutor (teacher), and facilitator (assistant). MCs guide activities, tutors deliver lessons, and facilitators support teachers and help manage children during the learning process. This program is usually carried out during holidays or weekends, considering that children participating in the *bina desa* program are on school holidays.

"The program also adopts an experiential learning approach based on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), emphasizing stages such as the initial stage, transition stage, working stage, and termination stage. This is aimed at developing character (*KITA PEKA*)," stated the CEO of *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung.

The Program Development Staff added that "the learning process is conducted by providing various forms of motivation through enjoyable activities, such as games with prizes, to encourage children to participate in the learning process." For a clearer understanding of the *KITA PEKA* values and how each value is implemented, please see the following details:

a) Creative

Creative thinking, which comes from the English term "create," refers to the process of generating new approaches or creating new things from existing ones (Rahmawati, 2022). It includes the process and the results achieved. Developing creative character is beneficial for individuals because it gives them the ability to adapt to social life (Setyawan et al., 2017).

Developing creative character in children helps them develop imagination, innovation and critical thinking skills. Those with creative characters tend to have the ability to solve problems in unique and unconventional ways. They learn to think outside the box, generate fresh ideas, and see challenges as opportunities for growth. In its implementation, *bina desa* program always provides teaching that invites children to think creatively, such as doing activities to decorate wall magazine and story-telling.

b) Curiosity

Curiosity is a cognitive and behavioral trait that involves a strong desire to explore, discover, and actively learn more about things seen and heard (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010). This becomes a basic element for children's involvement in any lesson (Ameliah, et al., 2016). Therefore, curiosity can be defined as the desire to obtain comprehensive information about the subject being discussed (Setyawan, et al., 2017).

The inquisitive nature of children encourages exploration, discovery and active learning. Children with this trait show a high level of curiosity about the world around them. They learn to ask questions, seek answers, and develop analytical thinking skills. Curiosity drives children to keep learning and develop a deeper understanding of various subjects. In its application, the *bina desa* program always provides teaching that can increase children's curiosity about something, one of which is by inviting children to study outside the classroom (outing).

c) Responsibility

The nature of responsibility includes values, behavior, and individual actions that involve fulfilling obligations to oneself, God, society, country, and the environment, which includes natural, social, and cultural aspects (Supriyono, et al., 2018). On the other hand, Setyawan and his colleagues argue that individuals have a sense of responsibility and diligently carry out all the tasks or mandates given (Setyawan, et al., 2017).

Developing a responsible attitude in children helps them appreciate the importance of being responsible for their duties and responsibilities. Children with a sense of responsibility learn to honor commitments, face the consequences of their actions, and stick to their commitments. They develop a responsible attitude in carrying out daily tasks, whether at school, at home, or in their social environment. In its application, the *bina desa* program always provides teaching that can increase a sense of responsibility for children, such as entering into learning contracts so that children can be committed and responsible for what has been agreed upon. In addition, children are also taught to be able to complete each task they have independently with a predetermined deadline.

d) Active

Active character development in children is facilitated through interactions between peers and between children and teachers, which facilitates effective communication. Children are encouraged to share their learning experiences with others through storytelling, dialogue or role-playing. In addition, direct involvement and exploration play an important role, because children use their senses in observing, experimenting, investigating or conducting interviews (Setiawan, 2014).

Active character in children encourages their active participation in physical, social and academic activities. Children with this trait tend to have high levels of energy, a desire to move and be involved in various activities. They learn to make use of their free time by engaging in meaningful activities, participating in sports or the arts, and interacting with their surroundings. In its implementation, the *bina desa* program always provides teaching that can increase children's activeness, one way is by involving children in every existing discussion.

e) Self-confident

Self-confidence is a vital characteristic that plays a significant role in an individual's development. It can be defined as the belief in one's own potential and the ability to set high expectations for oneself. Even if these expectations are not fully met, individuals with self-confidence remain positive and gracefully accept the outcomes. In essence, self-confidence is a mindset that convinces individuals of their capability to accomplish planned tasks (Priyatni, 2013). However, it is crucial to understand that mere planning is insufficient; it must be accompanied by calculated experiences and proactive actions.

In the context of children's development, fostering self-confidence is of utmost importance. By instilling self-confidence in children, they begin to cultivate faith in themselves, their abilities, and their potential. Children who possess self-confidence tend to exhibit positive self-esteem, readily overcome challenges, and willingly take risks. This trait empowers children to move forward with determination, face failure with optimism, and embrace new experiences with enthusiasm. Through the implementation of the *bina desa* program, particular emphasis is placed on providing teaching methodologies that can effectively enhance children's self-confidence. For instance, the program ensures that children are given ample opportunities to ask questions, express their opinions, and actively participate in discussions, thus reinforcing their self-assurance.

By nurturing self-confidence in children, the *bina desa* program aims to create a supportive and nurturing environment where young individuals can thrive and grow into confident and resilient individuals. This foundation of self-confidence not only benefits children during their formative years but also serves as a crucial factor in shaping their future success and well-being. Moreover, self-confident children are more likely to develop healthy relationships, exhibit leadership qualities, and become valuable contributors to their communities and society as a whole.

f) Empathy

Empathy refers to an individual's ability to understand and appreciate the emotions of others. This becomes the basis for caring for others. An important aspect of empathizing with others is the ability to interpret nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and hand gestures. Developing empathy requires an ongoing process that involves mastering knowledge, developing emotions, cultivating compassion, and taking action (Fithriyana, 2019). Empathic traits in children help them understand and respect the feelings of others. Children with empathy learn to listen actively, understand different perspectives, and respond emotionally. They learn to empathize, provide support, and pay attention to the needs of others. This trait allows children to build positive social relationships and become individuals who care and are sensitive to others. In its implementation, the *bina desa* program always provides teaching to instill a sense of empathy for children, including by giving appreciation for all the efforts that have been made and applying teaching about the importance of helping behavior towards others.

g) Cooperation

The nature of cooperation refers to individuals working together for the common good (Rudyanto & Saputra, 2005). There are six-character elements that are important for children to develop, including honesty, compassion, courage, kindness, self-control, and cooperation (Lickona, 2009). Cooperation is especially important for children in everyday life in the modern era, because it encourages harmonious relationships with others, promotes mutual assistance, and cultivates mutual respect between individuals (Wulandari & Suparno, 2020). Cooperation includes several interrelated aspects, such as fostering a sense of positive dependency within a group (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). The cooperative character in children helps them learn to work together, collaborate, and support each other in achieving common goals. Children with this trait value differences, share responsibility, and contribute actively. They learn to work in teams, appreciate the contributions of others, and achieve success together. The cooperative nature builds social skills and an understanding of the importance of collaboration in everyday life. In its implementation, the *bina desa* program always provides teaching on cooperation through the provision of group projects that require them to be completed together. In addition, it also provides games that require cooperation with one another.

Tabel 4.1 Content of Character Development in *Bina desa* Program

Step	Stage	Implementation Result
Beginning a Group	Spread a smile and say hello	Politeness, mutual respect, and appreciation
	Open the activity with prayer	Increasing faith and piety (religious)
	Introduction	Increase familiarity
	Welcome new group members openly	Uphold mutual respect and appreciation as well as a sense of openness without distinguishing one from the other
	Structuring or learning contracts	Improve order, discipline, commitment, and responsibility
	Games or ice breaker	Liveliness and self-confidence
The Transition Stage in a Group	Listen to tutors and facilitators in giving directions	Raise concern, responsive or sensitive, mutual respect and appreciation
	Keep commitments and be responsible	Keep commitments and be responsible
The Working Stage in a Group	Group members are allowed to choose learning topics to be studied. Then, after learning is over, all group members are given the opportunity to ask questions or express their opinion alternately	Democratic, increasing curiosity, openness, creative, mutual respect and appreciation
	Keeping the group together	Cooperation, empathy and social solidarity
Termination of a Group	Summarize the learning outcomes that have been studied	Self-confident
	Self-evaluation	Introspective, honest and responsible
	Expressing impressions and messages during the activity	Openness and honesty
	Familiarity with greetings and photos together	Social solidarity

Overall, the data in Table 4.1 demonstrate that the *Bina desa* program effectively incorporates character development strategies into its various stages. Through its implementation, the program nurtures important character traits such as politeness, mutual respect, appreciation, faith, piety, commitment, responsibility, self-confidence, curiosity, openness, creativity, cooperation, empathy, and social solidarity. The program's emphasis on democratic approaches, active participation, and self-evaluation contributes to the participants' personal growth and the creation of a positive and supportive group dynamic. By fostering these character traits, the *Bina desa* program aims to shape individuals who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible, empathetic, and contributing members of society.

4.3 *Bina desa* Program: Evaluation

In this evaluation stage, the CEO of *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* expressed that 'after the implementation of the *bina desa* activities, the volunteers will be given a Google form to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement of the activities. This will allow for further improvements to be made.' In line with this, the Program Development Staff added that 'the volunteers are encouraged to provide their critiques and suggestions. Additionally, there is a parent involvement activity to evaluate the children's learning outcomes, where the process of their learning is presented to their respective parents.

Therefore, this evaluation process includes receiving feedback, critiques, and suggestions for improvement. This evaluation allows for continuous improvements to be made in the program. Furthermore, during this evaluation process, *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* provides guidance and reports to parents regarding their children's development, ensuring that the teachings are implemented in their daily lives. The program has endured until now due to the enthusiasm of the children and strong support from stakeholders and parents in the assisted villages. Mr. Haikal, one of the parents of a student, expressed that 'with this program, he feels supported because not only is his child enthusiastic about participating in every lesson, but the child is also starting to develop empathy toward others and taking responsibility for their actions.'

The *bina desa* program from *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung has shown promising results in addressing the character crisis in children. The CEO of *Pemuda Peduli* Bandung stated that 'achievement indicators are set for each meeting or session, depending on the materials covered, but they are always aligned with the *'KITA PEKA'* values.

Therefore, the strategic implementation of the program, comprehensive curriculum, and emphasis on experiential learning have contributed to the development of children's character. The dedication of the volunteers, effective teaching methods, and ongoing evaluation also play a crucial role in the success of this program.

5. Discussion

The *bina desa* program has strategically focused on character development and implemented a comprehensive curriculum to instill the *KITA PEKA* values in children. The program's emphasis on character development is evident through the incorporation of the *KITA PEKA* values, which include creativity, curiosity, responsibility, activeness, self-confidence, empathy, and cooperation. The *bina desa* program is also in line with the principles of character education regarding self-reliance, which refers to lifelong learning using all one's energy, mind, and time to achieve hopes, dreams, and aspirations (Muhajir, 2022). The goal of character education is to improve the quality of implementation and outcomes in education, ultimately leading to comprehensive and positive character development. Lickona (1999) states that a comprehensive approach to character education can encompass emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. This aligns with character development theory, as the program aims to nurture essential character traits in children. Through character education, children are expected to enhance their individual qualities independently and internalize and personalize good character and moral values (Suwartini, 2017).

The role of agents in character development, as highlighted in Giddens' Structural Theory, is apparent in the program's recruitment and training of volunteers. According to Giddens, social structures are not fixed and predetermined but can be consciously or unconsciously shaped by actors (Kinseng, 2017). In the context of *bina desa*, this is seen through the involvement of volunteers who play vital roles as hosts, tutors, and facilitators during the program. Their engagement in delivering lessons, guiding activities, and supporting children's learning experiences creates a supportive environment conducive to character development. This aligns with Ritzer's perspective, which emphasizes the dynamic relationship between actors and social structures, recognizing that actors have agency in shaping and changing social structures over time (Ritzer, 2010).

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) focuses on experiences and the use of real-life problems that exist around children (Sholihah et al., 2016), enabling children to easily digest and comprehend these issues. Furthermore, the program's adoption of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) aligns with the experiential learning approach it employs. This approach emphasizes the integration of direct experiences in the teaching and learning process to motivate children in improving their knowledge and skills (Mugiarso & Haksasi, 2017). ELT's emphasis on concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation is visible in the program's activities. Children are encouraged to learn through real-life experiences, fostering creativity, curiosity, and cooperation, among other character traits. ELT also includes reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

The concept of self-efficacy in the social cognitive theory is implicit in the program's outcomes. Self-efficacy significantly influences individual behavior. Self-efficacy can be acquired, changed, enhanced, or reduced through four sources: a) performance achievements, b) vicarious experiences, c) social persuasion, and d) emotional/physiological states (Jarnawi & Untara, 2019). Social cognitive theory is rooted in the perspective of human agency, where individuals are proactive agents actively engaged in their own environments and capable of accomplishing something through their actions (self-efficacy) (Mukhid, 2009), thus encouraging them to have high motivation and perseverance and to firmly hold beliefs in their own abilities to develop (Sukidin et al., 2022). By providing a supportive learning environment and encouraging children to take responsibility for their learning, the program fosters self-efficacy in children. As they experience positive outcomes and successes in character development, their belief in their abilities increases, empowering them to actively participate in character-building activities.

The outcomes of the *bina desa* program demonstrate the success of the strategies employed. The program's focus on character development is evident in the positive changes observed in children. The development of creativity is beneficial for children as it provides them with the ability to adapt to social life (Setyawan et al., 2017). The development of curiosity is beneficial for children to have a desire to acquire comprehensive information about the topics being discussed (Setyawan et al., 2017). The development of responsibility is also beneficial for children to have a sense of responsibility and perseverance in carrying out all tasks or entrusted responsibilities (Setyawan et al., 2017). Fostering activeness in children can be achieved by directly involving them in important roles, as children use their senses to observe, experiment, investigate, or conduct interviews (Setiawan, 2014). Developing self-confidence in children can assure them of their ability to complete planned tasks (Priyatni, 2013). Fostering empathy requires a continuous process involving knowledge mastery, emotional development, nurturing compassion, and taking action (Fithriyana, 2019). Lastly, cooperation refers to individuals working together for mutual benefit (Rudyanto & Saputra, 2005). Developing cooperation in children is essential in modern-day life, as it promotes harmonious relationships with others, encourages collaboration, and fosters mutual respect among individuals (Wulandari & Suparno, 2020). Moreover, cooperation reflects the program's effectiveness in addressing the character crisis in Indonesia.

The Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) based learning approach has facilitated active participation and engagement among children. Through enjoyable and interactive activities, children develop essential character traits and critical thinking skills, contributing to their overall character development. This aligns with research conducted by Agustiani et. al. (2014), who found that the experiential learning model influences critical thinking skills in children because it can attract and challenge them to learn, thus fostering motivation to continue learning. The program's emphasis on fostering empathy and cooperation aligns with Giddens' Structural Theory, which highlights the role of social agents in shaping individuals and society. The behavior of agents is solely determined by values and norms (Ritzer, 2010). In line with this, Mukhid (2009) states that individuals are proactive agents engaged in their own environments and capable of achieving goals through their actions (self-efficacy). Therefore, by involving volunteers, parents, and community stakeholders, the program creates a supportive environment that nurtures children's character development and aligns with prevailing values and norms.

The positive outcomes also indicate the successful application of the Social Cognitive Theory's concept of self-efficacy. Belief in self-efficacy influences how individuals feel, think, and act, and it also helps determine how much and how long they engage in activities (Mukhid, 2009). As children develop self-confidence in their abilities and experience positive results in character development, their belief in their potential strengthens, enabling them to face challenges and actively participate in the program's activities.

The evaluation process plays a crucial role in the continuous improvement of the *bina desa* program. By collecting feedback from volunteers and parents, the program can identify areas for enhancement and make necessary adjustments. This iterative evaluation process is consistent with the principles of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), where active experimentation and reflection drive continuous learning and improvement. The involvement of parents in evaluating their children's learning outcomes is aligned with Giddens' Structural Theory, which emphasizes the role of social agents in character development. The engagement of parents in the process reinforces the values taught in the program and strengthens the bond between parents and children in supporting character development.

The positive feedback from parents and the observed changes in children's behavior and attitudes demonstrate the program's success in fostering character development. The use of achievement indicators aligned with the *KITA PEKA* values ensures that the program stays focused on its goals and objectives. The success of the *bina desa* program in addressing Indonesia's character crisis can be attributed to its strategic focus on character development, comprehensive curriculum, and experiential learning approach. Character education plays a crucial role in children, as character is related to positive qualities. It is also related to the inner strengths of a good life, such as virtues, which are actualized by external forces, including justice, education, health, and safety (Sukidin et al., 2022). The conjunction between the two has been widely confirmed to lead to individual personal well-being across cultures (Wagner & Ruch, 2015).

The program's alignment with character development theory, Giddens' Structural Theory, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), and Social Cognitive Theory reinforces its effectiveness. The involvement of social agents, particularly volunteers and parents, in shaping children's character is instrumental in the program's positive outcomes. The program's emphasis on fostering creativity, curiosity, responsibility, activeness, self-confidence, empathy, and cooperation reflects its novelty and effectiveness in instilling essential character traits in children. The continuous evaluation and improvement process ensure that the program remains impactful and aligned with its goals of nurturing exceptional individuals who positively impact society.

6. Conclusion

The *Bina desa* program implemented by *Yayasan Pemuda Peduli* Bandung employs several effective strategies to address the character crisis in children. The program's focus on character development, a comprehensive curriculum, recruitment and training of volunteers, and integration of experiential learning theory have been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes. Through engaging teaching practices and real-life experiences, the program successfully instills the *KITA PEKA* values, encompassing creativity, curiosity, responsibility, activeness, self-confidence, empathy, and cooperation in children. A significant strength of the *Bina desa* program lies in its evaluation process, which ensures continuous improvement by gathering feedback from volunteers and involving parents in assessing their children's learning outcomes. This feedback-driven approach allows for ongoing enhancements and ensures the practical implementation of character teachings in children's daily lives. The program's longevity and success can be attributed to the enthusiasm of the children and the strong support from stakeholders and parents in the assisted villages. This study's novelty lies in highlighting the effective strategies, positive outcomes, and evaluation process of the *Bina desa* program. By emphasizing character development, a comprehensive curriculum, and experiential learning, the program offers a holistic approach to fostering empowered individuals who contribute positively to society.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the importance of character education and the impact of well-implemented programs in shaping the character of children. The *Bina desa* program's success serves as a model for other similar initiatives aimed at nurturing children's character in a meaningful and impactful way. Overall, the *Bina desa* program stands as an exemplary effort to tackle the character crisis in children, and its achievements underscore the significance of character development in building a more responsible and compassionate society. As we continue to recognize the transformative potential of character education, it is crucial to support and replicate such well-structured programs to promote positive character development among children worldwide.

7. Acknowledge

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