

# Implementation of Character Education in Higher Education

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## Abstract

This study explores the implementation of character education policies in higher education especially of first-semester students in the Fine Arts Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar. This study uses a qualitative research approach. This study uses descriptive qualitative to explore student perceptions in depth. Data was collected through interviews and observation. The data were collected from 44 respondents through interviews and observations. The findings indicate that the implementation of character education policies in the learning process has a positive impact on the development of students' character values, such as responsibility, honesty, discipline, tolerance, and cooperation. Students appreciate the approaches used in learning, such as discussions, reflections, case studies, and simulations, which help them understand and internalize these values. Furthermore, lecturers play a crucial role as facilitators and role models in instilling character values through interactive teaching methods.

*Keywords:* Implementation, Students, Character, Education Policy.

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## 1. Introduction

Character education is a cornerstone in cultivating a generation imbued with strong moral values and critical thinking abilities. In the context of globalization, which presents rapid changes across social, cultural, and technological landscapes, the significance of character education has become increasingly prominent (Hassine, 2022). Higher education institutions bear a critical responsibility in imparting these character values to students, particularly to aspiring educators who will have a significant influence on shaping the moral and ethical character of future generations (Akmal, 2018).

Throughout Indonesia, character education policies have been embedded into university curricula, integrating foundational values such as integrity, responsibility, and cooperation, with the expectation that these values be exemplified in teaching and learning processes (Fikri et al., 2023). However, the efficacy of these policies is not solely reliant on their execution but also students' perceptions regarding their relevance and effectiveness. Such perceptions can substantially impact the degree to which students internalize these values in their personal and professional lives (Narawati, 2019). Research indicates that despite the implementation of character education frameworks, their impact is often limited due to gaps in understanding, engagement, or support from key stakeholders, including the students themselves (Zurqoni et al., 2018; Fikri et al., 2023). Consequently, comprehending students' perspectives on the implementation of character education policies is crucial, particularly in academic programs that promote creativity.

Students in the Fine Arts Education program at Universitas Negeri Makassar, as future educators in the arts, are uniquely positioned to communicate character values through artistic expressions. The visual arts, known for their power to convey complex moral messages, offer a vibrant platform for such communication (Sharp & Tieg, 2018). Nevertheless, the extent to which these character values are internalized among students largely hinges on their perceptions regarding character education policies and their execution within the higher education context (Potočnik et al., 2022). As prospective educators, students need to recognize that the responsibility for character education extends beyond educational institutions and into their roles as teachers. Positive perceptions of character education policies will likely result in students incorporating these values into their future teaching practices (Setiawan et al., 2021).

Universitas Negeri Makassar is dedicated to fostering character development in its students through various character education initiatives. However, there exists a gap in comprehending how these policies are perceived, internalized,

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and valued by future fine arts educators. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining the implementation and effectiveness of character education policies within higher education. The insights garnered from this research are anticipated to deepen the understanding of these policies' effectiveness and yield valuable recommendations for future enhancements in policy (Fikri et al., 2023).

Based on the issues discussed, this study focuses on examining “The Implementation of Character Education in Higher Education.”

## 2. Methodology

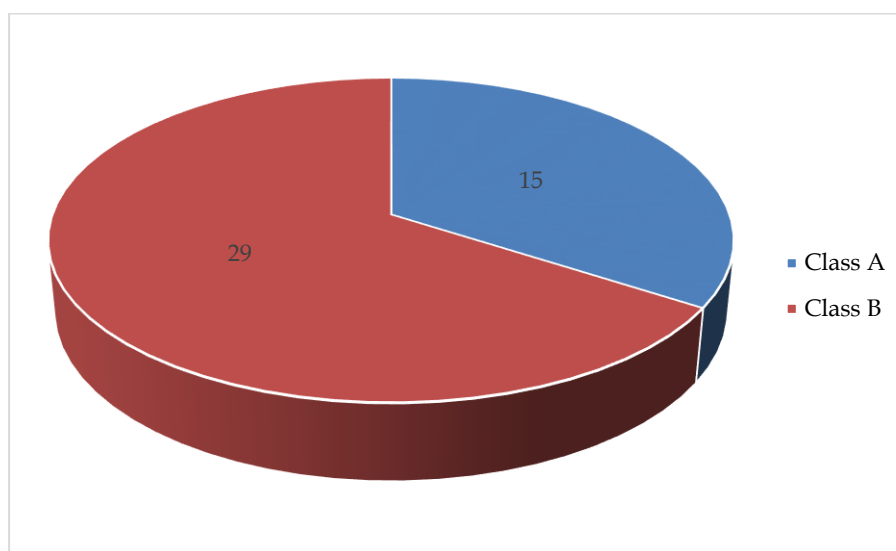
This study uses a qualitative research approach. This study uses descriptive qualitative to explore student perceptions in depth. Data was collected through interviews and observation.

The subjects of this study are new students of the Fine Arts Education Study Program, Faculty of Art and Design, Universitas Negeri Makassar because in semester 1 there are *Pengantar Pendidikan* and *Belajar dan Pembelajaran* course. Where this study wants to know and analyze how the implementation of character education policies is felt by students in the learning process. Students in the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year who take this course consist of 2 classes with a total of 63 students.

Qualitative data is collected and analyzed interactively as can be adapted from Miles and Huberman (1984). Data was collected; and then analyzed. The results of the analysis are then presented and concluded. Furthermore, the temporary conclusions obtained are verified or supplemented with other evidence found through subsequent data collection activities.

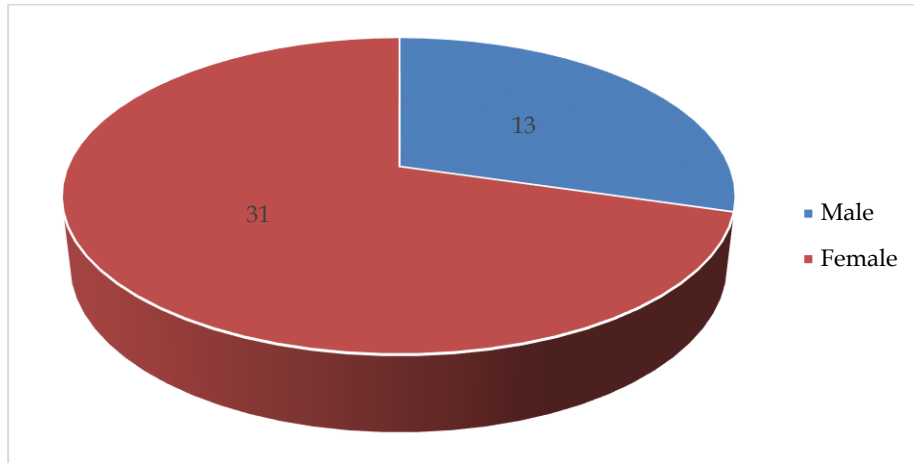
## 3. Findings

Based on data collection and analysis conducted on 63 first-year students enrolled in educational courses within the Fine Arts Education Study Program, several key findings were identified. In addition to the data obtained from the research instrument, supplementary demographic information about the students is also presented. Out of the 63 first-year students who were sent the survey link, only 44 responded. The demographic details of these students shown on Figure 1.



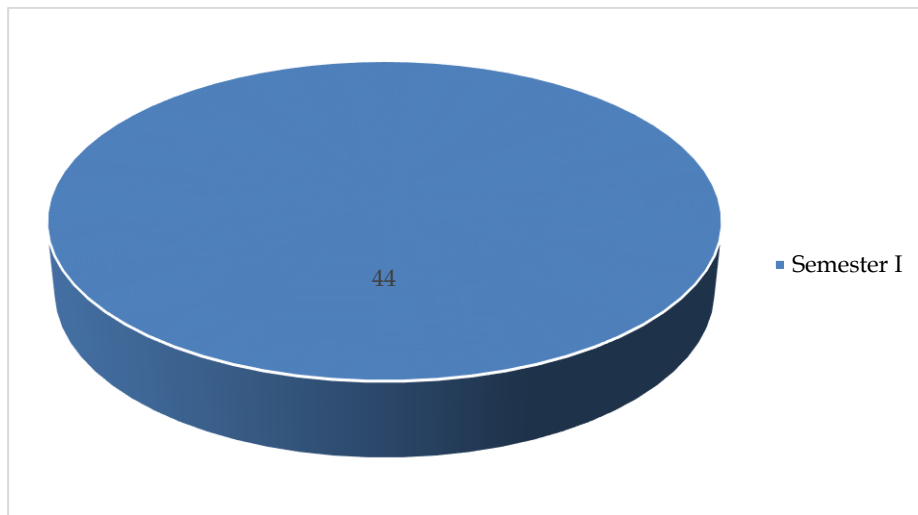
**Figure 1.** Student Distribution by Class

As shown in Figure 1, the students come from two different classes: 15 students (34.09%) belong to Class 01/A, while 29 students (65.91%) are from Class 02/B.



**Figure 2.** Student Distribution by Gender

Figure 2 illustrates that the respondents consist of 31 female students (70.45%) and 13 male students (29.55%).



**Figure 3.** Student Semester Distribution

Figure 3 reveals that all respondents are first-semester students, with a total of 44 participants from the Fine Arts Education Study Program.

Based on data collection and analysis conducted on 44 students enrolled in educational courses within the Fine Arts Education Study Program, responses were gathered regarding the second section of the research instrument, which focused on the impact of character education policy implementation. This section contained four questions; the responses provided by the students are summarized as follows:

a. *“Do you feel any positive changes in your attitude or behavior after taking Introduction to Education or Learning and Instruction? Please explain!”*

- 1) Improvement in academic attitudes: S1, S36.
- 2) Still lacking in ethics: S2.
- 3) Lack of responsibility: S2.
- 4) Better ability to handle different decisions: S3.
- 5) Increased awareness of the importance of character and practicing it: S4.
- 6) Changes in attitude and behavior after learning about conduct in the educational field: S5.
- 7) Positive change after learning about the code of ethics: S6.
- 8) Slight improvement: S7.

- 9) Not fully understanding: S7.
- 10) Increased self-confidence: S8.
- 11) Greater appreciation for the role of education in shaping character: S9.
- 12) Awareness of responsibility: S10, S11.
- 13) Increased discipline and honesty: S10.
- 14) Reflection ability: S10.
- 15) Empathy and cooperation: S10.
- 16) Learning to value time and small details: S11.
- 17) Preparing to become a better individual in society: S12, S13, S18.
- 18) More mindful of speech and valuing time: S14.
- 19) More responsible and open to different opinions: S15.
- 20) More disciplined and motivated to learn and develop: S16.
- 21) Gaining new and better knowledge: S17.
- 22) Increased self-confidence and improved social relationships: S19.
- 23) Positive, but still developing: S20.
- 24) Encouraging positive changes, such as enhancing understanding of education, shaping professional attitudes, improving pedagogical skills, and fostering concern for education: S21.
- 25) The belief that the state is fully responsible for education: S22.
- 26) The course provides a deep understanding of how education focuses on student character: S23.
- 27) After taking the course, experienced positive changes such as increased discipline, responsibility, and teamwork: S24.
- 28) Greater self-awareness, increased motivation, changes in learning approaches, empathy, cooperation, and many other realizations: S25.
- 29) More responsible, empathetic, and better at teamwork, which supports academic and social life: S26.
- 30) Moderate improvement, as some changes are noticeable: S27.
- 31) Changes in learning approaches, shifts in individual mindset, and improved learning quality: S28.
- 32) Improved social skills and better emotional management: S29.
- 33) Increased empathy, awareness of professional ethics, and a sense of responsibility for academic tasks: S30.
- 34) Enhanced self-learning ability: S31.
- 35) Greater awareness of the importance of teamwork and increased responsibility in completing tasks: S32.
- 36) Gained education knowledge but did not personally experience significant behavioral change: S33.
- 37) More sensitive to others, more disciplined, and understanding the importance of responsibility: S34.
- 38) Enhanced understanding of the learning process: S35.
- 39) Improvement in teaching skills: S35.
- 40) The shift in perspective about education: S35.
- 41) Ability to ensure others understand character education as a guideline: S37.
- 42) Yes: S38.
- 43) Gained knowledge about education and learning: S39.
- 44) Increased self-confidence: S40.
- 45) Greater awareness of the importance of empathy in daily interactions: S41.
- 46) Applied explanations led to a change in mindset: S42.
- 47) Positive changes in attitude and behavior: S43.
- 48) More responsible for assigned tasks: S44.

These responses indicate that the implementation of character education policies in higher education has led to varying degrees of positive change among students. Many reported increased self-awareness, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and professional attitudes. However, some students expressed uncertainty about the changes they experienced, highlighting the need for further evaluation of the effectiveness of character education implementation.

b. *“Which character values have you felt the most impact from these two courses?”*

- 1) Responsibility: S1, S15, S17, S18, S24, S25, S26, S30, S32, S34, S38, S41.
- 2) Tolerance: S1, S33.
- 3) Accountability: S2, S10, S11, S12, S13.
- 4) Discipline: S2, S5, S7, S11, S12, S13, S18, S23, S25, S32, S33, S38.
- 5) Ethics: S2.
- 6) Exemplary Conduct: S3.
- 7) Critical Thinking: S4, S36.
- 8) Self-Reflection: S6, S35.
- 9) Values of Being a Good and Proper Educator: S8.
- 10) Empathy and Social Awareness: S9, S12, S13, S17, S18, S25, S34, S35.
- 11) Honesty: S10, S12, S13, S18.
- 12) Collaboration: S10, S12, S18, S19, S24, S25, S30, S32, S38.
- 13) Confidence: S11, S43.
- 14) Increased Confidence and Willingness to Try New Things: S14.
- 15) Integrity: S15.
- 16) Independence: S16, S29, S33, S40.
- 17) Leadership and Politeness: S20.
- 18) Integrity: S21, S26, S29.
- 19) Critical Character Values: S22.
- 20) Respect for Elders: S27.
- 21) Skill Development, Perspective Change, and Attitude Adjustment: S28.
- 22) Religiosity: S29.
- 23) Nationalism: S29.
- 24) Mutual Cooperation (Gotong Royong): S29.
- 25) Adaptability and Flexibility: S31.
- 26) Creativity: S35.
- 27) Ethical Conduct: S37.
- 28) Application of Character Values in Daily Life and Student Interactions: S39.
- 29) Mindset Changes in Academic and Social Life: S42.
- 30) Emotional Management Skills: S43.
- 31) Social Skills: S43.
- 32) Patience: S44.

These responses indicate that students have experienced various positive impacts from character education policies implemented in higher education. The most frequently mentioned values include responsibility, discipline, honesty, empathy, and cooperation, which are essential for both academic and personal development. Additionally, students recognize improvements in critical thinking, self-reflection, adaptability, and leadership skills, highlighting the broader influence of these courses beyond theoretical learning.

c. *“Do the examples given in the course help you understand and apply character education in everyday life?”*

- 1) Helps understand abstract concepts: S1.
- 2) Yes: S2, S3, S6, S9, S14, S16, S17, S19, S22, S23, S37.
- 3) Able to identify important character values: S4.
- 4) Helpful: S5, S36.
- 5) Tolerance: S7, S25, S43.
- 6) Honesty: S7, S25, S33.
- 7) Discipline: S7, S25, S43.
- 8) Hard work: S7, S43.
- 9) Curiosity: S7.

- 10) Independence: S7.
- 11) Democracy: S7, S43.
- 12) Appreciating achievements: S7, S25, S43.
- 13) Environmental awareness: S7, S29.
- 14) Social care: S7, S32.
- 15) Very helpful in cultivating good character in everyday life: S8.
- 16) Case study: S10, S26, S30, S32.
- 17) Group project: S10.
- 18) Applying it in everyday life: S11, S26.
- 19) The examples given in the course not only help me understand the concept of character education: S12, S13.
- 20) Teamwork helps in everyday life: S15.
- 21) Provides practical tools to apply it in everyday life: S18.
- 22) Provides examples of ethical behavior in life: S20.
- 23) The examples in the course can be an effective tool to help people understand and apply character education in everyday life: S21.
- 24) Like case studies that illustrate the importance of responsibility, discipline, and teamwork in real-life situations, which can be applied in daily life: S24.
- 25) Responsibility: S25.
- 26) Cooperation: S25, S41.
- 27) Maintaining politeness: S27.
- 28) Providing good examples, showing care and empathy, creating an enjoyable learning environment, organizing collaborative activities, and appreciating each individual: S28.
- 29) Diligently practicing religious worship: S29.
- 30) Getting into the habit of greeting teachers: S29.
- 31) Running literacy corner activities: S29.
- 32) Like case studies of teachers who successfully build students' character, helping students understand the application of character values in the real world: S30.
- 33) Examples of character-based learning methods: S31.
- 34) Respecting individuals: S33.
- 35) Providing inspiration: S33.
- 36) The examples help us better understand how to be patient and fair in everyday life: S34.
- 37) Identifying patterns and trends: S35.
- 38) Helps me understand and apply character education in everyday life: S38.
- 39) Actively seeking other examples: S39.
- 40) Able to understand and also apply it in my everyday life: S40.
- 41) Patience: S41.
- 42) Understanding and applying character education in everyday life: S42.
- 43) Reasoning in thinking: S44.

These responses indicate that students have experienced significant benefits from the examples provided in their character education courses. The most frequently mentioned values include responsibility, discipline, honesty, tolerance, and cooperation, which play a crucial role in both academic and personal development. Additionally, students acknowledge improvements in ethical reasoning, teamwork, social awareness, and the ability to apply character values in real-life situations. The use of case studies, group projects, and real-world scenarios has further reinforced their understanding, enabling them to integrate character education into their daily lives. This highlights the broader impact of such courses beyond theoretical learning, fostering a well-rounded and ethically conscious mindset among students.

*d. In your opinion, does the integration of character education in these two courses sufficiently help in building competence as a future teacher?*

- 1) The integration of character education in the *Pengantar Pendidikan* and *Belajar dan Pembelajaran* courses is very helpful in building competence as a future teacher: S1
- 2) Very helpful: S2, S3, S5, S6, S9, S14, S16, S19, S22, S27, S33, S36, S37, S38, S39.
- 3) Helps future teachers build relationships with students: S4
- 4) Helps future teachers build relationships with fellow teachers: S4
- 5) Helps future teachers build relationships with students' parents: S4
- 6) Helps create a conducive learning environment: S4
- 7) Builds competence: S6
- 8) Develops a philosophical and ethical foundation in education: S7
- 9) Enhances social and emotional competence: S7
- 10) Shapes the teacher's character as a role model: S7
- 11) Sufficiently teaches how to be a good teacher: S8, S44.
- 12) By understanding and applying character values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation, students not only develop academic abilities but also essential personal qualities for educators: S10
- 13) Covers various aspects of preparation needed to become a teacher, both physically and mentally: S11
- 14) Future teachers will be better prepared to create a positive learning environment and educate students not only academically but also in terms of morality and ethics: S12, S13, S18.
- 15) Highly relevant for developing empathy and effective communication: S15
- 16) Helps future teachers develop professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies: S17, S21.
- 17) In my opinion, it is very helpful: S20
- 18) Yes, because integrating character education equips future teachers: S23
- 19) The integration of character education helps build future teachers' competence by instilling values of responsibility, discipline, and cooperation: S24, S25.
- 20) The integration of character education in these two courses sufficiently helps in building future teachers' competence: S26
- 21) The integration of character education in *Pengantar Pendidikan* and *Belajar dan Pembelajaran* courses is very important and helpful: S28
- 22) In my opinion, embedding character values in all school subjects and learning activities is essential: S29
- 23) By providing a strong foundation in moral values, future teachers can become role models for their students: S30
- 24) Very helpful in building future teachers' competence: S31
- 25) Character education provides an essential ethical and moral foundation for becoming a professional and positively influential teacher: S32
- 26) Extremely helpful in preparing to become a teacher who understands ethics and character: S34
- 27) By implementing values such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect, future teachers can create a conducive learning environment for all students: S35
- 28) Teaches about what it means to be a teacher: S38
- 29) Covers the roles and responsibilities of a teacher: S40
- 30) Quite helpful because these values form the foundation of a teacher's professional competence: S41
- 31) Integrating character education in *Pengantar Pendidikan* and *Belajar dan Pembelajaran* courses can help future teachers develop competence in preparing for character education: S42
- 32) The integrity of character education is necessary to build a better generation, enabling individuals to develop and apply quality personality traits for themselves and their surroundings: S43.

These responses indicate that the integration of character education in the *Pengantar Pendidikan* and *Belajar dan Pembelajaran* courses has significantly contributed to the development of future teachers' competencies. The most frequently mentioned benefits include fostering responsibility, discipline, empathy, cooperation, and ethical awareness—qualities essential for professional educators. Additionally, students recognize that character education enhances their ability to build relationships with students, fellow teachers, and parents while creating a positive and conducive learning environment.

Beyond theoretical knowledge, these courses help shape teachers as role models by strengthening their social, emotional, and ethical foundations. The integration of character education not only prepares future teachers academically but also equips them with the necessary personal and professional skills to instill moral values in their students. This highlights the broader impact of character education in shaping responsible, competent, and ethically grounded educators.

#### 4. Discussion

In the implementation of character education policies in the *Pengantar Pendidikan* and *Belajar dan Pembelajaran* courses, students observe that the integration of character values is carried out through various methods. Discussions, case studies, and personal reflections are the most frequently used approaches. Values such as responsibility, honesty, discipline, cooperation, and tolerance are often incorporated into the learning material. Direct practice, group assignments, and character-based projects are also methods appreciated by students as they contribute to the development of their personalities more comprehensively.

Most students state that the material taught in these courses includes character education values. Examples of values mentioned include honesty, discipline, tolerance, responsibility, empathy, hard work, and love for the country. These values are not only taught theoretically but also applied through interactive learning activities such as group discussions, simulations, and self-reflections. Students consider this approach effective in instilling a deep understanding of the importance of character in both their personal and professional lives as future teachers.

The lecturers are seen as having a significant role in conveying the importance of character education. Many students feel that lecturers can link the relevance of character education values with their academic and social lives. Methods such as interactive discussions, case studies, and personal reflections are considered effective in helping students understand and internalize character values. Additionally, lecturers set direct examples through attitudes and actions that align with these values, which serve as inspiration for students.

However, some students express that the methods used still need improvement to achieve more optimal results. They hope that lecturers can provide more practical guidance relevant to the workplace and real-life situations, especially for those who will become educators in the future. For example, providing teaching simulations that emphasize the application of character values or more contextual case studies related to educational issues.

Most students also feel that the character education values taught are relevant to their academic and social lives. Values such as discipline, responsibility, and tolerance are seen as very helpful in building harmonious social relationships within the campus environment. Furthermore, the integration of these values helps students become more aware of the importance of morals and ethics in daily life, both as students and as future educators.

Nevertheless, some students feel that the implementation of character values has not yet been fully maximized. Some of them mention that not all learning materials explicitly include character values, suggesting the potential for improving the quality of this integration. They also emphasize the importance of evaluations and feedback from lecturers regarding students' character development during the learning process.

Additionally, students assess that the character education policy in higher education provides a strong foundation for shaping students' character. This policy is considered in line with the national education goals to create a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses good morals and ethics. However, the implementation of this policy needs to be more systematic and consistent, particularly in the context of educational courses.

This study also reveals that students appreciate the character education policy, which not only focuses on individual values but also on social values, such as cooperation, social concern, and love for the country. These values are considered important for shaping future educators who can become role models and agents of change in society. In this context, the role of lecturers as facilitators and models is crucial to ensure that these values are truly internalized by students.

#### 5. Conclusion

The implementation of character education policies in the learning process is perceived to have a positive impact on the development of students' character values, such as responsibility, honesty, discipline, tolerance, and cooperation. Students appreciate the approaches used in the learning process, such as discussions, reflections, case studies, and



simulations, which help them understand and internalize these values. Additionally, lecturers play an important role as facilitators and role models in instilling character values through interactive teaching methods.

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