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Nomor: 290/B11/C/IX/2022

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini

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Jabatan: Kepala Pusat Bahasa

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- a) Nama penulis : Umi Anugerah Izzati; Bachtiar Syaiful Bachri; M. Sahid; Dian Eka Indriani
- b) Judul artikel : "Character education: Gender differences in moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action in elementary schools in Indonesia"
- c) Nama Jurnal : Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists (JEGYS)
- d) Vol/No/tahun : Vol.7 No.3, 2019 hal.547-556
- e) Tingkat similaritas : 6%

telah diperiksa tingkat plagiasinya dengan menggunakan program *Turnitin* dengan hasil yang dilampirkan bersama surat ini.

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Bangkalan, 13 September 2022  
Kepala Pusat Bahasa



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**Submission date:** 01-Mar-2020 08:21AM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 1266679849

**File name:** Artikel\_Karakter\_Umi\_Publish.pdf (416.01K)

**Word count:** 3910

**Character count:** 21829



## Research Article

# Character Education: Gender differences in Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action in Elementary Schools in Indonesia

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Received: 29 July 2019

Accepted: 03 September 2019

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine differences in character education between male and female students with a theoretical foundation, which emphasizes three components in character education, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. This study adopted a survey method approach, which was one of the quantitative research methods with explanatory research methods. Data were collected through questionnaires in this study, which were developed based on Lickona's theory. The survey carried out to 219 males and 263 females from 482 students at two selected elementary schools precisely at the sixth grade in 16 sub-districts of Bangkalan District, Indonesia. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. The results showed that there were differences in character education between men and women.

### Keywords:

character education, moral knowing, moral feeling, moral action, gender.

### To cite this article:

Izzati, U.A., Bachri, B.S., Sahid, M., & Indriani, D.E. (2019). Character Education: Gender Differences in Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action in Elementary Schools in Indonesia. *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 7(3), 547-556. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17478/jegys.597765>

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### **Introduction**

Character education is an important thing to give to today's young generation because character education is needed to provide provisions so that they can compete in the global market while upholding their morals and can control themselves from the adverse effects of current technological developments. One place that can provide character education is through educational institutions. Educational institutions have specific programs to provide character education for their students. Character building and character education are a necessity because knowledge does not only make students smarter but also has character and manners so that their existence as community members becomes meaningful both for himself and others (Judiani, 2010).

In line with Indonesia's national education, which has the functions and objectives set out in the law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Article 3 states that national education functions to develop capabilities and form a dignified character and national civilization in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming at the development of potential students to become human beings who believe and fear the Almighty, be noble, healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, and become a democratic and responsible citizen.

The function of national education is to preserve the values that exist in the community so that they are protected, as a means of developing the community to become better. It is also an effort to develop human resources so that the potential of individuals can develop into human beings who are virtuous and fully Indonesian. These functions are burdensome if the government is the only one who is in charge with this task, it requires the support of all parties to carry out the duties and functions of national education (Alfajar, 2014).

The purpose of character education prioritizes individual moral growth in educational institutions. Planting values in students and shared life systems that respect personal freedom is a reflection of character education in educational institutions (Koesoema, 2010). Educational institutions at the elementary school level become the beginning of sowing character education in students. Character education must dominate primary education, for elementary level character education and character education, the proportion is seventy percent, and for junior secondary level as much as sixty percent (Effendi, 2016). Primary schools that have better character development for children are needed to educate children so that children get character education. This character education will build the character of elementary school students to become the forerunners of citizens who are useful to the nation (Sakti, 2017).

Character education applied in schools is not taught in particular subjects. However, it is carried out through daily learning that has been running in schools (Judiani, 2010). Character formation can be done using exemplary. Exemplary begins

with an imitation between humans. Exemplary in the world of education is often attached to a teacher as an educator. Exemplary in the world of knowledge can be interpreted as the behavior and attitudes of teachers and educators in the school environment and outside the school that is used as examples by their students (Kementrian Pendidikan, 2010). In the process of cultural and national character education, students actively develop their potential, carry out internalization processes, and appreciate values that become their personalities in socializing in the community, strengthening the lives of a more prosperous society, and developing a dignified nation's life (Latifah, 2014).

The output or results of character education given to both male and female students can have differences. The difference in acceptance of character education in male and female students makes the behavior shown as character education results. This is because the thinking process is different between men and women. This statement is supported by the report of Pambudiono et al. (2013), where the thinking process and thinking ability between men and women are considered to have differences. Mahanal (2011) also revealed that there was a gender influence on metacognition skills and critical thinking skills of high school students in Malang. While Soraya (2010) also suggested that learning strategies, gender, and interactions between learning strategies and student sex affected the learning outcomes of elementary school students in Malang. This process of thinking that is different in receiving information between male and female students can be the reason for the differences in character education realized by male and female students.

Character students will be able to act and act following the rules or norms that apply in the environment around his residence. In this case, students should be able to be polite, responsible, and uphold local wisdom that is characteristic of the region (Mariatun & Indriani, 2018). Likewise, when students are not provided with the knowledge and planting of moral values, the participants will be easily influenced by negative things from their environment, among others: behaving in a manner that is not polite to speak harshly, ditching, and even being affected to take drugs that have adverse effects like what happened lately (Mustoip, Japar, & Zulela, 2018).

Based on the reality described above, the authors are interested in knowing the difference in character education for male and female elementary school students so that it can be used as an evaluation to make a more compelling character education program for both male and female students.

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This research uses quantitative methods using survey methods approach, and this type of research is included in explanatory research, where research is conducted to

test the truth of predictions from theory, develop theories to new issues or topics, and elaborate and enrich explanations of this theory (Neuman, 2007).

### **Participants**

The study was conducted on the 2018-2019 education year, with subjects were 219 male and 263 female students in 2 selected-superior elementary schools in class VI in 16 sub-districts in Bangkalan District, Indonesia, because in the Madura Island which is very thick with its religion nuances (Indriani, Sahid, Bachri, & Izzati, 2018).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection techniques in this study used a questionnaire. The questionnaire used was namely the character education scale. The scale of character education was developed by the research team based on the concept from Lickona which emphasized three components in character education namely moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action which are included in the elements of good character (Lickona, 1991) as follow:

➤ Moral knowing or moral knowledge.

Moral knowing is an important thing to teach. Moral knowing consists of six elements. It is namely (1) moral awareness; (2) knowing moral values; (3) perspective taking; (4) moral reasoning; (5) decision making; and (6) self-knowledge.

➤ Moral feeling.

The moral feeling is another aspect that must be instilled in children, which is the energy source of human beings to act under ethical principles. There are six things that are emotional aspects that one must be able to feel to become human in character, namely (1) conscience; (2) self-esteem (confidence); (3) empathy (feeling the suffering of others); (4) loving the good; (5) self-control (being able to control themselves); and (6) humility.

➤ Moral action.

Moral action is how to make moral knowledge can be realized in real combat. This noble act of work is the outcome of two other character components. To understand what drives a person in good deeds (act morally) hence three different aspects of character must be seen, namely competence (competence), desire (will), and habits (habit).

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained will then be analyzed. Data analysis is a process of giving meaning to the data to answer the problem and test the research hypothesis (Nasir, 1999). The data analysis technique used in this study was t-test through SPSS assistance because the purpose of this study was to examine whether or not there was a difference in character education between male and female students.

- First, responses from students are collected within 1-2 months. The data inputted into the google docs sheet to obtain a matrix from the Likert scale



1-4, with the criteria for a positive statement that chooses strongly agree to get a score of 4; agree to get a score of 3; do not agree to get a score of 2 and strongly disagree to get a score 1. Conversely on negative statements given a score of 4 for answer choices strongly disagree; score 3 for answer choices disagree; score 2 for agreed answers and score 1 for answers strongly agree.

- The scores are then inputted in the program SPSS, and logical foundations of answers were analyzed, and the responses which did not comply with the logical foundation or not valid were excluded.
- The remaining valid responses were listed, and the number of students (f) and percentages (%) that represented each characteristic were calculated.
- Finally, the response that had common characteristics were gathered under a specific category/aspect — then classified under each gender.

## Results

The results of the study were analyzed using a t-test difference test to determine differences in character education for male and female students. From the results of the t-test with the SPSS program, the results are as follows:

**Table 2.**

*Mean Innovative Behavior Score Independent t-test Result*

Aspect	Sex	N	Average	Sig. t	Exp.
Action	Male	219	2.75	0.007	Significantly different
	Female	263	2.87		
Feeling	Male	219	2.94	0.000	Significantly different
	Female	263	3.11		
Knowing	Male	219	2.85	0.000	Significantly different
	Female	263	3.07		

Table 1 shows that the significance of t generated in the comparison of moral aspects in the male and female groups is 0.007 for action and 0.000 each for feeling and knowing. The significance value is smaller than 0.05 ( $\alpha = 5\%$ ), so it can be concluded that there are significant differences in moral action, moral feeling, and moral knowing between male and female subjects, whereas female subjects tend to have better moral aspects. This shows that female students have more moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action aspects that are better than male students. Moral Action, which is a moral action that is the result of knowledge of moral and moral feeling to fulfill this, students must have three aspects of character, including competence, desires, and habits. These three aspects of characters need to be owned to direct someone to a moral life because all three will form moral maturity (Mustoip, Japar, & Zulela, 2018) (Lickona, 1991) Moral knowing, which is moral knowledge,

is related to how one can identify good and bad things. The dimensions included in this moral knowledge are cognitive domains, including moral awareness, understanding of moral values, the courage to take a position, and self-recognition.

### Moral Aspect

Table 2 shows the moral aspects that stand out and can be seen from the following table.

**Table 2.**

*Description of Moral Aspects Based on Gender*

Moral Aspects	Sex	N	Average	
<i>Action</i>	Male	219	2.75	2.81
	Female	263	2.87	
<i>Feeling</i>	Male	219	2.94	3.03
	Female	263	3.11	
<i>Knowing</i>	Male	219	2.85	2.96
	Female	263	3.07	
Overall		482	2.93	

Table 2 indicates that overall the respondent's answer to the statement about the moral aspects of action, feeling, and knowing is equal to 2.93, where the value is close to a scale of 3 (agree) on Likert 1-4. This shows that respondents have good moral aspects. The highest perception of the respondents regarding the moral aspect is located in the *feeling* aspect, that is, with the highest average of 3.03, while the lowest perception regarding the moral aspect is the *action* with an average of 2.81. If seen by the average based on sex, it can be seen that in general female respondents have a higher moral aspect compared to men. This is shown in the average female respondent group of 2.87 in the action aspect, 3.11 in the feeling aspect, and 3.07 in the *knowing* point.

Overall the subject of this study has the best moral feeling with an average of 3.03 where the moral *feeling* is a strengthening in the emotional aspects to shape a person's character, including awareness of identity, confidence, sensitivity to the suffering of others, love of truth, self-control and humility. This shows that the subject of research has a great sense of empathy and fairness towards others, but this has not been supported by extensive knowledge of morals and concrete actions to implement these morals.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Lickona (Lickona, 1991) (Mustoip, Japar, & Zulela, 2018) interpret moral knowing that is moral knowledge, related to how one can know good and bad things. The dimensions included in this moral knowledge are cognitive domains, including moral



awareness, knowledge of moral values, the courage to take a position, and self-recognition. Moral feeling, namely strengthening in the emotional aspect to shape one's character, including awareness of identity, confidence, and sensitivity to the suffering of others, love of truth, self-control, and humility. Moral Action, which is a moral action that is the result of knowledge of moral and moral feeling to fulfill this, students must have three aspects of character, including competence, desires, and habits. These three aspects of personality need to be owned to direct someone to a moral life because all three will form moral maturity.

The reliability of the moral action aspect was 0.847, the moral feeling aspect was 0.932, and the knowing moral point was 0.951. Cronbach Alpha produced above 0.6; hence, it can be concluded that the items in this study are said to be reliable. The results of the validity test on each item statement on the moral action aspect, moral feeling and moral knowing produce a significance value (P-Value) smaller than 0.05 ( $\alpha = 5\%$ ) so that the statement items in this study can be declared valid.

The results of this study indicate that there are differences in character education between male and female students where female students have more character education consisting of moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action that are better than male students. Female students can process information faster. Female's ethical thinking is better than men. Female also have a greater sense of empathy than men. In addition, female also has socialization skills that are faster and more familiar than men, and female respondents have higher moral aspects compared to men.

The moral aspect of knowing is better in female students than male students. This can be interpreted that female students have better moral knowledge and awareness. This difference may be due to women and men having different thinking processes in understanding the given character education. Research conducted by Setiawati (2016) about the implementation of character education in students in Sinduadi 2 elementary school shows that there are diverse cognitive and emotional development factors of students that influence character education received by students. The research conducted by Pambudiono et al. (2013) state the thinking process and thinking ability between men and women are considered to have differences. The process of moral thinking between men and women are different. This is similar to that expressed by Gilligan (Sarbaini, 2016) (Donenberg, 1988.) (Gilligan, 1982) also emphasized that women did develop differently from men, even in terms of moral thinking (Galotti, 1989) (Sarbaini, 2016). This shows that thinking processes as cognitive abilities have differences between men and women, thus allowing differences in character education understood by students and may reflect different patterns of gender socialization. (Larochette & Craig., 2016). For example, girls are taught and strengthened by parents and teachers to better nurture and sympathize with others than boys, whereas boys are more likely to be socialized to be aggressive (Garaigordobil, 2009).

Thus, moral character behaviors such as cooperation, respect, and kindness can represent behavior that is more likely to be socialized and strengthened in girls by the primary socialization agent. Differences in the association of certain character behaviors between boys and girls can also reflect their peers' interactions. Mathieson and Banerjee (2011) noted that social interaction of girls' peers is more often directed at maintaining strong relationships and building agreements (e.g., Helping and entertaining others), while boys focus more on physical activities and build dominance. Thus, the social interaction of female peers can encourage, model, and support the behavior of moral character more than boys.

The results of this study indicate that there is an imbalance of character education received by male and female students so that recommendations for further studies may include an education program specifically for male students is needed in order to obtain maximum character education results.

### Acknowledgment

Our highest appreciation goes to DRPM KEMENRISTEKDIKTI since this paper is a part of research funded by DRPM KEMENRISTEKDIKTI in PKPT scheme 2018-2019

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