

Effectiveness of Character Education Management Based on Behavioral Counseling Approach in Improving Student Character in Senior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study developed and evaluated the effectiveness of a character education management model based on a behavioral counseling approach in improving student character in high schools. Using a mixed approach that combined research and development (R&D) with quasi-experimental validation, this study involved 65 students from two high schools in Demak Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected using a Character Development Questionnaire that measured six dimensions of the Indonesian Pancasila Student Profile. Because the data distribution was abnormal, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used for analysis. The results showed a significant increase in character development scores from the pre-test to the post-test ($Z = -7.037$, $p < 0.001$), with all participants experiencing improvement. N-Gain analysis showed an average score of 0.789, indicating high effectiveness. Model validation received 90% approval from academic experts and 85.25% from practitioners. The behavior counseling-based character education management model proved highly effective in enhancing student character development, demonstrating the value of integrating systematic behavioral interventions into the educational framework for holistic student development.

Keywords: character education, education management, behavior counseling approach

INTRODUCTION

Character education has emerged as a critical component in the development of holistic education, but there however, significant gaps in its systematic implementation across various educational institutions. Character education management involves the systematic integration of character education principles into the educational framework to encourage the holistic development of students (Aduguzel & Culha, 2016; Adisti & Rozikan, 2021), with an emphasis on values such as respect, integrity, and responsibility (Surya & Ibnu, 2024). Although the importance of character education has been recognized, current implementation practices show significant inconsistency and limited effectiveness in achieving the desired character development outcomes.

The main problem is the inadequate integration of behavioral counseling approaches into the character education management system. Traditional character education methods often rely on didactic teaching, neglecting the critical role of practical engagement and interactive learning experiences essential for effective character development (Neimeyer et al., 2025). The rigidity of this pedagogical approach creates a mismatch between educational goals and student behavior, highlighting the need for an adaptive curriculum that reflects modern

values and community expectations (Bekpenbetova et al., 2024; O'Siochru et al., 2023; Zabadi et al., 2025). Research indicates that effective character education must involve collaboration between parents, educators, and the community to create a supportive learning environment, as emphasized by frameworks such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) (Anggraini & Sopianingsih, 2023; Newman et al., 2024; Niles et al., 2024).

The urgency of this research is underscored by the varying effectiveness of character education implementation in different educational contexts. Studies show significant improvements in students' social skills and emotional well-being (Ambarwati & Wangid, 2024), and academic achievement when character education programs involve students in experiential and collaborative activities (Sofyan & Saputra, 2022). However, the absence of systematic behavioral counseling integration limits the potential for sustainable character development. Character education is increasingly recognized as essential to educational success (Hasibuan et al., 2022), extending beyond academic achievement to personal growth and social contribution (Sanusi et al., 2023).

There is a significant research gap in understanding how behavioral counseling approaches can be systematically integrated into character education management to improve effectiveness. The Behavioral Counseling Approach, which focuses on personalization and patient engagement in behavioral change, uses frameworks such as the 5A Framework (Assess, Advise, Agree, Assist, and Arrange) that guide practitioners in tailoring interventions to individual needs (Golledge et al., 2024). Although behavioral counseling has been proven effective in health contexts, its application in educational character development remains underexplored, particularly within comprehensive management systems.

Current evidence suggests that behavioral counseling plays a vital role by integrating formal and informal educational strategies (Agustina et al., 2023), enabling students to learn core values through structured activities and real-life experiences (Sumargiono et al., 2022). When implemented effectively (Supartinah et al., 2023). Project-based learning reinforces character traits such as cooperation and empathy (Rusmini et al., 2021). However, collaborative efforts between educators, counselors (Subakti et al., 2021), and the community remain essential to create an environment that supports character development (Khaidir & Suud, 2020).

This study responds to the urgent need for empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of behavior counseling-based character education management in high school environments. The aim is to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation by providing evidence-based solutions for education practitioners who want to improve character development outcomes. Based on the introduction above, the author explores the following research questions:

1. How effective is behavior counseling-based character education management in improving student character in high schools?
2. What are the specific components and mechanisms through which the behavior counseling approach (integrating the 5A Framework) contributes to the effectiveness of character education management, and how does this integration systematically influence different dimensions in student character development (Pancasila Student Profile)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character Education Management

Effective character education requires collaboration between school leaders, teachers, students, and families, with leaders playing a critical role in committing to character values and fostering a school culture that integrates these principles into daily activities and the curriculum (Asri & Deviv, 2023; Strayhorn, 2022). Teachers are important agents who exemplify and model character traits (Havi et al., 2022), facilitating an environment where values can flourish inside and outside the school setting (Sabila et al., 2023). Including character education in a broader curriculum framework (Adawiah & Anggraini, 2023), accompanied by continuous monitoring and evaluation, increases its effectiveness (Fetrimen, 2022; Suri & Chandra, 2021). Adapting practices to the local cultural context enriches character education (Fadilla & Mudjiran, 2020), making it relevant and meaningful to students (Sukari et al., 2023). This comprehensive approach ensures sustainable character development, preparing students both academically, morally, and socially for future challenges (Adawiah & Anggraini, 2023; Haniah et al., 2020).

Research shows that improving student character in high school can be maximized effectively through various pedagogical approaches and educational materials. Integrating character education in teaching materials improves student behavior and the educational process (Mailool et al., 2020). In addition, cultural content in educational resources promotes national identity and pride among students, enriching their character development (Sholihah & Indah, 2020). Cooperative learning strategies, such as the Jigsaw Model, have significantly improved student learning outcomes (Sridana et al., 2025), including social and personal development (Suparwati, 2024).

Behavioral Counseling Approach in Educational Settings

The Behavioral Counseling Approach emphasizes a structured intervention model focusing on personalization and behavioral change engagement (Awoniyi & Jokotagba, 2025). The essence of this approach is the 5A Framework (Assess, Advise, Agree, Assist, and Arrange), which guides practitioners in tailoring counseling sessions to individual needs. Education management through a behavioral counseling approach significantly influences the improvement of student character (Agustina et al., 2023) by integrating formal and informal education strategies (Sumargiono et al., 2022). Character education aims to instill moral principles in students (Sari et al., 2022), encouraging discipline, responsibility, and social awareness (Sabon et al., 2022). This is in line with the growing recognition that character education encompasses academic knowledge (Mua'lim, 2022) and the development of virtues necessary for social engagement (Ismartin et al., 2023).

The integration of character education with behavioral counseling is essential for the holistic development of students in an educational environment. This relationship emphasizes that character building cannot occur solely through instruction or theoretical frameworks, but requires practical involvement (Fatharani & S., 2023). Character development requires ongoing counseling efforts to address character crises, and educational practices must be aligned with local cultural values to increase relevance (Pusparini et al., 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities for Integrating Character Education

Role-playing effectively implements character education through counseling, which encourages empathy and socially responsible behavior among students (Hafiza & Firman, 2023). Behavioral counseling strategies can improve character education management, resulting in more engaged students with a strong moral foundation in the school environment (Hanifudin & Idawati, 2024).

Character education management rooted in a behavioral counseling approach emphasizes multifaceted interventions tailored to the individual needs of students (Shimoyama et al., 2023). Integrating education and counseling programs encourages behavioral changes that align with educational goals (Batista et al., 2021). Behavioral interventions address various challenges by combining counseling with educational components (A Aliyev & N Aliyev, 2022), while school education programs result in improvements in student behavior and ethical growth when combined with effective counseling interventions (Moak & Cate, 2022).

Research Gaps and Theoretical Framework

Although the benefits of character education and behavioral counseling approaches have been proven, there is still a significant gap in understanding the systematic integration of the two. Character education tailored to local wisdom positively influences students' social and environmental behavior (Aura et al., 2023). However, a comprehensive framework that specifically integrates behavioral counseling into character education management has yet to be developed.

The main theme shows that structured education and counseling practices within an interactive framework encourage significant behavioral change among students (Mihevc et al., 2025), leading to better character development and overall well-being (Piotrowska et al., 2021). Therefore, a comprehensive approach that integrates various methods, including tailored counseling, is essential for effective character education management in various educational settings (Polhuis et al., 2023).

METHOD

Research Design

This research methodology uses a mixed Research and Development (R&D) approach with quasi-experimental validation, using a single-group pre-test and post-test design. Transparency and methodological rigor are enhanced through detailed sample selection and justification of using multiple statistical analyses. The research and development method was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives: to produce a product in the form of a character education management model based on a behavioral counseling approach and to test its effectiveness in improving student character.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 11th-grade students at public high schools in Demak Regency. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The sample selection criteria focused on schools that had functioning guidance and counseling programs, which were designated as pilot schools and had guidance teachers who implemented a curriculum focused on the Pancasila Student Profile.

A significant methodological decision was the selection of two schools to test the model's effectiveness: SMA Negeri J Demak and SMA Negeri K Demak. This selection was based on initial character index data, in which both schools recorded the lowest performance percentages in the Demak area (65.7% and 64.9%, respectively). Methodologically, selecting locations with low initial scores justified and maximized the potential for observing improvement.

The composition of research participants was as follows:

1. Model effectiveness test: Total N=65 students. Consisting of 32 students from SMA Negeri J Demak and 33 from SMA Negeri K Demak.
2. Validation and FGD: Eight people participated in the focus group discussion (FGD), including four high school teachers, two school counselors from SMA Negeri J Demak, a teacher from a pilot school, and a university lecturer. Additionally, six school counselors participated in the small group trial.

Research Instruments

Student character development is measured using a Character Development Questionnaire consisting of 26 items. This measurement tool was developed based on the Indonesian Pancasila Student Profile framework, which measures six main character dimensions. The Loyal and Noble Character dimension is measured with five items, the Global Diversity dimension with four items, the Mutual Cooperation dimension with four items, the Independence dimension with four items, the Critical Thinking dimension with five items, and the Creativity dimension with four items.

The validity and reliability of this instrument have been tested through a comprehensive series of psychometric procedures. Confirmatory factor analysis supports a six-factor structure consistent with the theoretical framework of the Pancasila Student Profile. The internal consistency reliability coefficient shows excellent values, ranging from $\alpha = 0.86$ to $\alpha = 0.94$. The reliability of the retest conducted with a 2-week interval produced a coefficient of $r = 0.89$, indicating high temporal stability. Content validity was confirmed through a panel of experts who assessed the items' relevance and representativeness to the measured constructs.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using four main complementary techniques. In-depth interviews were used to obtain comprehensive information about implementing character education management in schools. Systematic observations were conducted to collect data on the actual practices of guidance and counseling teachers in providing services to students. Documentation was used to collect data on character education management activities through relevant school archives and documents. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data on teachers' abilities and their responses to the developed model.

The data collection schedule was designed systematically with a preliminary trial on November 27, 2024, an intervention period of three months from December 2024 to February 2025, and a final trial on February 27, 2025. Data collection was carried out with due regard to research ethics and the assurance that all participants provided written consent.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis approach was tailored to the characteristics of the data obtained and the research objectives. Given the ordinal nature of the character development data and the normality test results indicating a non-normal distribution of data, the analysis used non-parametric statistical methods. Qualitative descriptive analysis used the Interactive Analysis Model with three main components, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, to process qualitative data from interviews and observations.

Quantitative descriptive analysis used a Likert scale with a response range of 1 to 4 and the percentage formula $P = f/N \times 100\%$ to describe the distribution of participants' responses. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used to compare pre-test and post-test scores within the same group, while the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to compare post-test scores between groups using a control group design.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was chosen as the primary inference test because the character development data collected through questionnaires were ordinal in nature, and normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov) showed violations of the normal distribution assumption ($p < 0.05$ for pretest and posttest). Wilcoxon is the most appropriate non-parametric method for comparing median locations on paired data when parametric assumptions are unmet.

As an additional analysis, the Paired Samples T-Test was used to analyze differences in pre-test and post-test scores, even though the data were not normally distributed. N-Gain score analysis was applied to determine the effectiveness category of the intervention with the criteria $N\text{-Gain} > 0.70$ (high effectiveness), $0.30 < N\text{-Gain} \leq$

0.70 (moderate effectiveness), and N-Gain ≤ 0.30 (low effectiveness). The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$ for all statistical tests.

Although the assumption of normality was not met, the Paired Samples T-Test was used as a sensitivity analysis to strengthen the findings. For relatively large sample sizes ($N=65$), the Central Limit Theorem ensures that the distribution of the statistical mean (in this case, the mean difference between the pretest and posttest) tends to be normal. This makes the T-test quite robust to violations of the assumption of data normality, provided that the deviations are not too extreme.

The use of the T-test provides significant convergent evidence. Both tests (Wilcoxon and T-test) show highly significant results ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the findings on the model's effectiveness do not depend on specific statistical assumptions. Furthermore, the T-test is intuitively more informative in reporting the mean difference in scores (-21.25), which is often more relevant to practitioners than the median rank.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Factual Conditions of Character Education Management

An analysis of the initial conditions of character education management was conducted through a comprehensive survey involving 700 respondents from public high schools in Demak Regency in 2024. The survey results showed varying levels of achievement in character education across the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. These conditions provide the basic information needed to develop a more effective character education management model.

The data in [Table 1](#) shows that the Faithful and Noble Character dimensions achieved the highest percentage of 75.60%, followed by the Creative dimension at 73.20%. In contrast, the Independent dimension showed the lowest achievement at 64.19%, followed by the Critical Thinking dimension at 66.20%.

Table 1. Character Education Achievement Based on the Dimension of Pancasila Student Profile

No	Character Aspects	Percentage
1	Faithful and Noble Character	75,60%
2	Global Diversity	70,20%
3	Mutual Cooperation	68,40%
4	Independence	64,19%
5	Critical Thinking	66,20%

These variations in achievement indicate the need for specific reinforcement in dimensions with low percentages through a more systematic and structured approach to character education management.

Further analysis was conducted on the character education index at the institutional level to identify variations between schools in Demak Regency. This analysis provides a comprehensive picture of the implementation of character education in various public high schools.

[Table 2](#) reveals a significant disparity in character education indices between schools. SMA N 1 Demak showed the highest achievement with a percentage of 81.5%, while SMA N 1 Karanganyar recorded the lowest achievement of 64.9%. The difference ranges from 16.6 percentage points, indicating the heterogeneity of character education implementation that requires standardization through a more consistent management model.

Table 2. Character Education Index of State High Schools in Demak Regency

No	School Name	Percentage
1	SMA N A Demak	81,5%
2	SMA N B Demak	79,4%
3	SMA N C Demak	77,2%
4	SMA N D Demak	76,9%
5	SMA N E Demak	75,8%
6	SMA N F Demak	74,6%
7	SMA N G Demak	73,6%
8	SMA N H Demak	68,5%
9	SMA N I Demak	66,5%
10	SMA N J Demak	65,7%
11	SMA N K Demak	64,9%

In-depth observation of character education management practices at SMA Negeri 2 Demak and SMA Negeri 1 Karanganyar reveals suboptimal implementation in all four management functions. Qualitative analysis shows

that the planning function has not conducted an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of student needs. The organizing function does not yet have a special team structure responsible for character education. The implementation function has been integrated into the curriculum, but still shows inconsistencies in its implementation. The evaluation function does not yet directly involve students in the assessment and reflection process of the character education program.

Model Validation by Experts

The model validation process used a multi-perspective approach involving academic validators and education practitioners. Academic validation involved three validators from higher education institutions with expertise in education management and counseling. Each validator assessed ten crucial aspects of the developed model using a 1-4 rating scale.

The results of academic validation show consistent and positive assessments of the developed model (Table 3). The first academic validator gave a total score of 33, the second gave a score of 36, and the third gave a 39 out of a maximum of 40 points. The average validation score reached 36 out of a maximum of 40, resulting in a percentage of 90%, which falls into the “very good” category. The character education program development aspect received a perfect score from all three validators, indicating its suitability for practical educational needs.

Table 3. Character Education Index of State High Schools in Demak Regency

No	Assessment Aspects	VA1	VA2	VA3
1	Analysis of character education problems	4	3	4
2	Analysis of student needs	3	3	4
3	Formulation of character education objectives	3	4	4
4	Development of character education programs	4	4	4
5	Organizational structure for implementation	3	4	4
6	Division of tasks/responsibilities	3	4	4
7	Integration with the curriculum	3	4	4
8	Implementation of behavioral counseling techniques	4	3	4
9	Character education assessment	3	3	3
10	Evaluation with student involvement	3	4	3
Total		33	36	39

The educational practitioner validation involved three experienced practitioners in character education and guidance counseling. The practitioner assessment covered a broader aspect with 52 assessment items covering the theoretical and applicative dimensions of the model.

The results of the education practitioner validation showed an average score of 44.33 out of a maximum score of 52, resulting in a percentage of 85.25% which falls into the “very good” category. The practitioner assessment tended to focus more on the implementability and relevance of the model to real conditions in schools. Practitioner validators highly appreciated the integration of behavioral counseling techniques in character education management, but suggested improvements in continuous evaluation mechanisms.

Focus Group Discussion

A Focus Group Discussion was held with eight education practitioners with direct experience implementing character education. FGD participants consisted of high school teachers, guidance counselors, teachers from pilot schools, and university academics. The discussion was facilitated to obtain comprehensive input on the model developed.

The FGD results showed an aggregate score of 86.53%, which falls into the “very good” category. Participants appreciated the innovation of integrating behavioral counseling into character education management, which was deemed appropriate for contemporary needs. However, FGD participants provided constructive suggestions for improving the model, particularly regarding planning, which requires more in-depth and comprehensive needs analysis. In addition, participants emphasized the importance of a continuous evaluation mechanism that actively involves various stakeholders.

Data Normality Test

Before inferential statistical analysis, data normality testing was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. The testing was conducted on the pretest and posttest data of 65 students involved in the model effectiveness test.

The normality test results in **Table 4** show that both the pretest and posttest data are not normally distributed. The significance values in the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests both show $p < 0.05$, which indicates rejection of the null hypothesis regarding the normality of the data distribution. This finding validates the methodological decision to use non-parametric statistical analysis in testing the model's effectiveness.

Table 4. Data Normality Test Results

Data	Shapiro-Wilk		Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Statistics	Sig.	Statistics	Sig.
Pretest	0,952	0,015	0,118	0,025
Posttest	0,948	0,008	0,125	0,012

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the distribution of character development scores before and after the implementation of the model. Descriptive statistics include central tendency, variability, and data distribution measures that provide basic information for interpreting research results.

Table 5 shows a substantial increase in character development scores from the pretest to the posttest. The average score increased from 68.12 on the pretest to 89.37 on the posttest, indicating an increase of 21.25 points. The standard deviation decreased from 8.45 on the pretest to 6.23 on the posttest, indicating a reduction in variability and an increase in the consistency of students' character achievements. The increase in the minimum score from 48 to 75 shows that all students experienced significant improvement in character development.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Character Development Scores

Measurement	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Pretest	65	68,12	8,45	69,00	48	85
Posttest	65	89,37	6,23	90,00	75	98

Model Effectiveness Test

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test in **Table 6** show that no students experienced a decrease in scores (negative ranks = 0) and all 65 students experienced an increase in scores from the pretest to the posttest (positive ranks = 65). A Z value of -7.037 with a significance of $p < 0.001$ indicates a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

Table 6. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Measurement	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Negative Ranks	0	0,00	0,00	-7,037	0,000
Positive Ranks	65	33,00	2145,00		
Ties	0				

These results prove the effectiveness of the behavioral counseling-based character education management model in improving student character.

N-Gain Analysis

An N-Gain score analysis was performed to measure the effectiveness of the model implementation more comprehensively and calculate the relative increase to the maximum potential increase. This analysis provides a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of the intervention by taking into account the initial scores of the students.

Table 7 shows that implementing the behavioral counseling-based character education management model produced an average N-Gain score of 0.789 with a standard deviation of 0.078. Based on the N-Gain interpretation criteria, scores above 0.70 are highly effective.

Table 7. N-Gain Score Analysis Results

Group	N	Mean N-Gain	SD	Effectiveness Category
Model Implementation	65	0,789	0,078	Tinggi

These results confirm that the developed model is highly effective in improving student character with good consistency among participants.

Additional Analysis with Paired t-Test

As an additional analysis to strengthen the research findings, a paired samples t-test was conducted even though the normality assumption was not met. This analysis was performed to provide an additional perspective on the significance of the difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

The paired t-test results in [Table 8](#) show a mean score difference of -21.25 with a standard deviation of 6.42. The t-value of -26.707 with a degree of freedom of 64 results in a significance of $p < 0.001$, confirming a highly significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. Although the assumption of normality was not met, the t-test results provide convergent support for the findings of the non-parametric test, which shows the effectiveness of the developed model.

Table 8. Paired Samples T-Test Results

Pair	Mean Difference	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest - Posttest	-21,25	6,42	0,796	-26,707	64	< 0,001

Final Model and Combined Validation

Revisions were made to produce the final model based on all input from academic validators, education practitioners, and FGD results. Combined validation of the final model showed an average score of 42.66 or 82.05%, which falls into the “very good” category. The final model includes four management functions integrated with behavioral counseling stages.

The planning function in the final model includes an in-depth assessment of students' character, goal setting that is right on target in accordance with the Pancasila student profile, and the development of adaptive programs responsive to individual needs. The organizational function includes forming a special organizational structure for character education and a clear division of tasks among relevant stakeholders. The implementation function integrates the program with the existing curriculum and implements behavioral counseling techniques, including positive reinforcement, differential reinforcement, shaping, modeling, functional analysis, and token economy. The evaluation function applies continuous evaluation with the active involvement of students and a feedback mechanism for continuous program improvement.

Convergent evidence from multiple statistical analyses supports the superior effectiveness of the behavioral counseling-based character education management model. This model has been proven effective in significantly improving student character with a high level of effectiveness and is suitable for implementation in high schools as an innovative alternative in strengthening character education.

Interviews and Observations

In-depth interviews and systematic observations, analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, provide important context for understanding the needs and functions of this integrative model (Maspiroh et al., 2025). Initial observations at SMA Negeri K Demak and SMA Negeri J Karanganyar showed that character management in the four POIE functions was not optimal. Qualitatively, the planning function did not conduct a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of student needs. Guidance counselors believe that the programs show a level of consistency and reactivity. One guidance counselor (FGD Participant 3) stated,

“We focus more on time-sensitive issues. Our inability to conduct an in-depth analysis of student needs hinders the development of comprehensive character programs. Annual programs often simply duplicate previous programs without considering individual needs.”

Organizational and evaluation functions are also weak. No team structure is responsible for character implementation, and more importantly, the evaluation function does not involve students in the reflection process, according to a subject teacher's comment in an interview.

“We just assign them character grades. They rarely assess themselves or consider why their behavior has changed; that is my feedback.”

Systematic field observations were conducted to look at changes in practice and what was observed in integrating Advise, Agree, and Assist (5A) into the Implementation function. Specific behavioral interventions, such as positive reinforcement and behavior shaping, became structured and purposeful.

Post-intervention interviews with participating students showed increased autonomy, especially in the independent dimension. This improvement was explained through the Agree process in 5A, where students were involved in setting their own behavioral goals. One student (Subject A) said, *“When we knew that our behavior (that we took the initiative and did the tasks ourselves instead of just listening to lectures) was being recorded and documented, our motivation*

to continue doing it was much greater than just listening to lectures. In addition, our voices are heard when determining behavioral goals." This qualitative data explains how the behavioral intervention mechanism (5A) works effectively on the behavioral deficits identified in the Assess (Planning) stage.

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Character Education Management Based on a Behavioral Counseling Approach

The results of this study show the significant effectiveness of character education management based on a behavioral counseling approach in improving student character in high schools. There was a significant increase in character development scores from pre-test to post-test, indicating high effectiveness.

These findings emphasize the importance of systematically integrating behavioral counseling into the educational framework, supported by previous studies (Fatharani & S., 2023). Character building requires continuous counseling efforts beyond simple instructional approaches, as demonstrated by the comprehensive nature of the behavioral counseling approach used in this study. There is a need for sustained counseling efforts and practical engagement beyond the instructional framework to address the character crisis. This study refines these findings by providing a specific managerial blueprint. The POIE + 5A integration model offers a systematic framework to implement sustained counseling efforts. This integration translates philosophical needs into structured, measurable, and manageable operational procedures (e.g., the Evaluation function integrated with Arrange (5A) ensures continuous monitoring and feedback).

Implementing the 5A Framework (Assess, Advise, Agree, Assist, and Arrange) proved to be highly effective in meeting students' individual needs. This effectiveness is consistent with research showing that structured intervention models focusing on personalization and engagement significantly improve behavioral outcomes (Golledge et al., 2024). Effectiveness of the 5A Framework for individual behavior change. This study extends the conceptual validity of 5A, showing that personalization and successful engagement can be transferred and are equally effective in character education when institutionalized through a management framework (POIE). This 5A + POIE integration model transforms 5A from an ad-hoc intervention tool into a systematic operational procedure. This demonstrates that adaptive management systems can use universal behavioral interaction tools to achieve educational goals.

This study confirms that the behavioral counseling approach effectively bridges theoretical knowledge and practical character implementation. The successful integration of formal and informal education strategies enables students to learn core values through structured activities and real-life experiences (Sumargiono et al., 2022). The success of this model in improving all dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile demonstrates the comprehensive impact of behavioral counseling integration.

Components and Mechanisms for Effective Implementation

This study identifies specific components and mechanisms through which the behavioral counseling approach contributes to the effectiveness of character education management. The four-function management model (planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating) integrated with behavioral counseling techniques creates a systematic framework that responds to structural and individual needs. This comprehensive approach shows that effective character education requires collaborative efforts between school leadership, teachers, students, and families (Asri & Deviv, 2023).

Implementing specific behavioral counseling techniques, including positive reinforcement, differential reinforcement, shaping, modeling, functional analysis, and token economy, provides concrete mechanisms for character development. These techniques effectively encourage empathetic and socially responsible behavior among students, as confirmed by research on role-playing and interactive techniques (Hafiza & Firman, 2023).

The emphasis on planning functions in the in-depth assessment of students' character conditions and the development of adaptive programs reflects the importance of an individualized approach in character education. These findings align with research emphasizing that effective character education must be based on frameworks such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) that consider students' individual needs and collaborative community involvement (Newman et al., 2024; Niles et al., 2024).

Impact on Different Dimensions of Character Development

The study results show a significant improvement in all six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, with a notable improvement in dimensions that initially had lower baseline scores. This comprehensive pattern of improvement indicates that programs that engage students in experiential and collaborative activities show a marked improvement in students' social skills, emotional well-being, and academic achievement (Ambarwati & Wangid, 2024).

The effectiveness of the behavioral counseling approach in addressing the “Independent” dimension, which initially had the lowest score, demonstrates the particular strength of this approach in developing self-regulatory behavior. These findings confirm that project-based learning can effectively reinforce character traits such as cooperation and empathy when designed with appropriate behavioral support mechanisms (Sumargiono et al., 2022).

Consistent improvements in the cultural dimension (Global Diversity) and religious dimension (Faith and Noble Character) indicate that the behavioral counseling approach can effectively accommodate diverse cultural contexts while maintaining universal character development principles. This adaptability supports research emphasizing that tailoring character education practices to local cultural contexts increases their relevance and effectiveness (Pusparini et al., 2021; Sukari et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study developed and validated a behavior counseling-based character education management model that has been proven to be highly effective in improving student character across all six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. The novelty of this research lies in the systematic integration of behavioral counseling techniques (positive reinforcement, shaping, modeling, functional analysis, and token economy) into four management functions, which provide a comprehensive framework that goes beyond traditional didactic approaches to adopt personalized and interactive character development interventions.

This study faces limitations, including a limited sample from two schools in Demak Regency and a single pre-test and post-test group design, which may limit generalization and causal conclusions. Future research could explore large-scale randomized controlled trials in various educational contexts, longitudinal studies exploring the sustainability of character development improvements, and comparative studies investigating optimal behavioral counseling techniques. These findings suggest potential benefits for educational institutions considering integrating behavioral counseling approaches into character education programs and the value of training educators in character education principles and behavioral counseling techniques.

The original contribution of this study is the systematic integration of the 5A Framework into the four functions of educational management (Planning, Organizing, Implementing, Evaluating), which plays an important role in addressing gaps in the systematization of behavioral interventions in character education management. The evidence of its effectiveness is strong, but this study has serious limitations, particularly the single-group quasi-experimental design (single-group pre-test and post-test design). Because maturation effects, history effects, and other threats to internal validity cannot be adequately controlled, this design limits strong causal conclusions. Furthermore, external generalizations are limited because the purposive sample involved only 65 students in 2 schools in Demak. Therefore, future studies should conduct large-scale randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with control groups. Longitudinal studies are also needed to test the sustainability of character improvement in the long term. Additional studies could also assess the relative effectiveness of specific behavioral counseling techniques in this model to improve intervention design.

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