



Implementation of Character Education-Based Cooperative Learning Management at SD Negeri 380 Salupao

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe how character education-based cooperative learning management is implemented at SD Negeri 380 Salupao, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and develop strategies to improve the effectiveness of character education in the elementary school setting. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach, collecting data through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings show that the implementation of cooperative learning management at SD Negeri 380 Salupao involves integrating character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and tolerance into each group learning activity. The strengths include students' active participation, which helps build positive character traits. However, the weaknesses involve limited teacher training in creating consistent cooperative learning strategies grounded in character values. Suggested improvements include enhancing teacher skills through ongoing training, fostering better collaboration between teachers and parents, and developing more systematic and contextually relevant learning tools. These findings highlight the importance of a learning management approach that not only emphasizes academic success but also develops students' character through a cooperative method grounded in core values.

Keywords: Learning Management, Cooperative Learning, Character Education, Elementary School.

INTRODUCTION

Education at the elementary level plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and personality. In recent years, social phenomena have shown a rise in cases related to indiscipline, low social awareness, and a weak sense of responsibility among students.

This situation reflects inadequate integration of character values into the educational process, especially at the elementary level, which should serve as the foundation for character development. This challenge requires educational institutions to focus not only on cognitive skills but also on nurturing students' affective dimensions through more humanistic and collaborative learning methods.

SD Negeri 380 Salupao, an elementary school located in a rural area, faces unique challenges in fostering students' character development. The diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of families, limited learning facilities, and low parental involvement position the school as a key institution for character education. Therefore, a learning management approach is needed that emphasizes academic achievement while also internalizing moral and social values that students can practically apply in their daily lives.

Research indicates that the cooperative learning model holds great potential for improving students' social interactions and sense of responsibility. Cooperative learning encourages students to work in small groups, support one another, participate in discussions, and complete tasks collaboratively. Through this process, character values such as cooperation, empathy, tolerance, and honesty are internalized. According to Slavin (1995), cooperative learning is effective not only for improving learning outcomes but also for fostering positive social attitudes (Moningrat, 2023; Saihu, 2022; Siregar & Zakiah, 2024).

Furthermore, literature on character education emphasizes that noble values like integrity, discipline, and empathy must be instilled from an early age through a structured and consistent process. Thomas Lickona (1991) states that character education is a deliberate effort to help individuals understand, internalize, and practice ethical values (Aminah et al., 2022; Lickona, 2021, 2022). Therefore, integrating cooperative learning strategies with character education content is a relevant and effective way to address current educational challenges.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe how cooperative learning management integrated with character education is implemented at SD Negeri 380 Salupao, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and develop strategies to optimize its effectiveness in fostering character development among students through a cooperative learning approach grounded in character values.

This research is significant because it offers a real picture of how learning management that combines cooperative and character-based approaches operates in elementary schools, especially in resource-limited settings. The findings are expected to provide valuable input for schools and serve as a reference for policymakers and educators in designing more effective strategies to promote students' character development from an early age.

Theoretically, this study is rooted in educational management theory, which emphasizes that the success of the learning process depends on well-structured planning, implementation, and evaluation. In this context, managing cooperative learning functions as a strategic tool for teachers to create a supportive learning environment that facilitates character development.

Additionally, this study references cooperative learning theory developed by Slavin, Johnson & Johnson, and other scholars. This theory suggests that positive

student interactions within small groups can improve responsibility, social skills, and motivation, which indirectly promote character development.

An equally important foundation is the theory of character education, which stresses the importance of explicit, systematic, and integrated value education within teaching and learning. Character education not only aims to instill values but also to habituate behaviors and reinforce them through social learning environments. The integration of these theories provides the conceptual basis for understanding how cooperative learning can be managed effectively to foster sustainable character development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for providing an in-depth description of the implementation process of cooperative learning management based on character education, as well as for understanding the context, dynamics, and underlying meanings of practices occurring within SD Negeri 380 Salupao. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to gather comprehensive information through direct interaction with participants and the research setting.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 380 Salupao, located in Lamasi Timur District, Luwu Regency. The school was purposively selected based on the consideration that it has implemented cooperative learning strategies and places significant emphasis on strengthening character education in daily learning activities. The research subjects included the principal, classroom teachers, and students as primary informants, while supporting informants consisted of parents and members of the school committee.

Data collection was carried out using three main methods: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe classroom learning processes, teacher-student interactions, and the application of character values during teaching and learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were held with the principal and teachers to obtain information about the planning, implementation, and evaluation of character-based cooperative learning. Additionally, interviews were conducted with students and parents to gain perspectives on how this learning model influences students' attitudes and behavior. The documentation study involved reviewing documents such as lesson plans (RPP), teachers' daily journals, character assessment books, and school activity records.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved sorting and simplifying raw data obtained from the field to focus on relevant information. The data were then presented in systematic descriptive narratives to provide a coherent and comprehensive overview. Finally, conclusions were drawn through deep interpretation of the organized findings and their comparison with relevant theories.

Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different

informants, while method triangulation was performed by cross-checking data derived from observation, interviews, and documentation. Furthermore, member checking was carried out with the informants to confirm that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of Character Education-Based Cooperative Learning Management

The findings reveal that the implementation of character education-based cooperative learning management at SD Negeri 380 Salupao has been carried out systematically. Based on classroom observations, teachers designed their lessons using the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) approach, which engages students in heterogeneous groups. In their lesson plans (RPP), teachers included attitude indicators such as cooperation, responsibility, and tolerance. The principal explained during an interview:

“Over the past two years, teachers have been encouraged to integrate character education into their teaching strategies, particularly through cooperative learning models.”

During the learning process, students were actively involved in discussions, task sharing, and expressing their opinions within small groups. In the reflection session at the end of the lesson, teachers guided students to evaluate not only the academic material but also their attitudes while working in teams. A fourth-grade teacher stated:

“We don't just assess who is the smartest, but also who is the most responsible in the group.”

The researcher's observations also found that teachers provided recognition not only to the group with the best academic performance but also to those demonstrating solidarity and strong teamwork.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Implementation

Interviews and observations identified several strengths in the implementation. First, cooperative learning fostered positive interactions among students, particularly in communication, empathy, and mutual support. A fifth-grade student expressed:

“I like studying in groups because I can get help when I don't understand, and we can cooperate with friends.”

Additionally, the use of the STAD model increased students' motivation to participate actively because of the group-based evaluation system and the more engaging classroom atmosphere. However, some weaknesses were also identified. One

of the main challenges was unequal participation within groups. Observations indicated that in some groups, high-achieving students tended to dominate discussions while others remained passive. A sixth-grade teacher admitted:

“Some students still lack confidence to express their opinions, so they just follow along.”

Moreover, time constraints hindered the completion of group discussions and the depth of character reflection. Classroom management also posed challenges, especially when the learning environment became too noisy due to active interactions.

Strategies for Optimizing Character-Based Cooperative Learning

To address these challenges, several optimization strategies have been initiated. Teachers and the principal emphasized the importance of enhancing teachers' competence in group management and attitude assessment. Internal training sessions have been conducted focusing on strategies to increase student participation and ensure balanced contributions within groups.

Parental involvement has also been strengthened through regular communication and collaboration in reinforcing students' character development at home. The principal stated:

“We always emphasize that character education cannot succeed only at school—it must be continuous with what happens at home.”

Furthermore, teachers have developed more adaptive learning methods by combining cooperative learning with contextual thematic approaches, particularly in subjects such as Civics (PPKn) and Indonesian Language. This integration enables teachers to embed character values aligned with lesson themes and students' social contexts. Observations revealed that this approach helped students better understand the connection between academic content and the expected behaviors in everyday life.

Overall, the study shows that character education-based cooperative learning management at SD Negeri 380 Salupao has had a positive impact on the learning environment and the formation of students' character. Although some challenges remain, the strategies implemented reflect a constructive direction toward developing a generation that is not only academically capable but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the implementation of character education-based cooperative learning management at SD Negeri 380 Salupao has been carried out in a systematic and structured manner. The lesson planning process includes the integration of character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and tolerance. The learning process applies the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) model, which enables students to learn collaboratively in heterogeneous groups where they share tasks and interact actively. Evaluation does not focus solely on cognitive aspects but also

assesses students' attitudes and character development throughout the learning activities.

The implementation of this cooperative model has produced several positive impacts on students' learning processes. Students became more active, confident in expressing their opinions, and demonstrated greater concern for their peers. In a social context, this approach enhanced communication skills and fostered a collaborative learning environment. However, the implementation also faced several challenges, such as unequal participation among group members, limited time for character reflection activities, and the need for further improvement in teachers' competencies in managing classroom dynamics.

To overcome these challenges, the school has implemented several optimization strategies, including strengthening teacher capacity through training, developing more adaptive teaching materials, and increasing parental involvement in students' character education. These initiatives serve as strategic efforts to sustain the cooperative learning model and integrate it as an essential part of the school's learning culture.

The findings are consistent with Slavin's (1995) cooperative learning theory, which asserts that group-based learning models can enhance academic achievement while developing students' social skills. Similarly, Thomas Lickona's (1991) theory of character education emphasizes that effective character education must be explicit, systematic, and integrated into the learning process. The approach implemented at SD Negeri 380 Salupao reflects the practical application of these theories in the real context of elementary education.

This study also aligns with the results of previous research, which concluded that the integration of cooperative learning and character education fosters positive social attitudes and strengthens moral values developed through group activities (Afresda et al., 2023; Alwi et al., 2020; Angela et al., 2023). Other studies found that the STAD model promotes a democratic learning atmosphere that supports the development of honesty, responsibility, and cooperation among elementary school students (Suparsawan, 2020; Wijaya & Arismunandar, 2018).

The coherence between theory and research findings lies in the way cooperative learning provides a natural space for character formation through social interaction. Within group learning, students internalize values through real-life experiences rather than abstract moral instruction. This makes learning meaningful not only academically but also personally, as it shapes students' personalities through contextual and applicable social processes.

Furthermore, this relevance is reinforced by the understanding that character education cannot stand alone; it must be integrated into learning models that involve students as active participants. Therefore, the use of cooperative models such as STAD is appropriate because it positions students as active agents in developing values and attitudes through equal and collaborative teamwork.

The implications of this research suggest that character-based cooperative learning holds significant potential for broader application in elementary schools, especially in creating a collaborative and meaningful learning environment. This approach not only enriches teachers' instructional strategies but also strengthens the synergy between

academic development and character formation—two essential goals of 21st-century education.

For education policymakers, the findings provide a foundation for designing teacher training programs that emphasize the integration of character values into active learning strategies. Additionally, policies should support the development of teaching materials that explicitly and measurably combine cooperative approaches with character education.

However, this study also has several limitations. It was conducted in a single elementary school, meaning the findings may not be generalizable to schools with different characteristics. Moreover, the observations and interviews were carried out within a limited time frame, so the long-term dynamics of cooperative learning implementation were not fully captured

CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal an important finding: the integration of cooperative learning management with character education at SD Negeri 380 Salupao has successfully created a learning model that not only enhances academic achievement but also significantly shapes students' character through structured social interaction. The novelty of this research lies in the systematic application of the STAD model within a rural elementary school context, demonstrating its effectiveness in internalizing key values such as cooperation, responsibility, and tolerance through value-based planning, implementation, and evaluation. This approach illustrates that character education does not need to be separated from the learning process; rather, it can be fully integrated within active learning strategies to produce a collaborative, meaningful, and holistic educational environment that nurtures students' intellectual and moral development simultaneously.

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