



### Research Article

## Facing Moral Crisis: Character Education Strategies for Millennials and Gen Z in Surakarta City

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**Abstract.** The moral crisis plaguing the Millennial and Gen Z generations in Surakarta City shows complexity and escalation that requires serious attention. This article identifies and analyzes the main moral challenges faced by the younger generation, including the increase in bullying cases, the negative impact of social media, and the shift in social values in contemporary society. Through qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study explores the importance of character education as a strategic solution in responding to this crisis. Case studies from several schools in Surakarta show that the implementation of a holistic and integrated character education program can have a significant positive impact. The use of technology in character learning, the implementation of a value-

based curriculum, and teacher training and development are the main pillars in this strategy. In addition, active involvement of parents and support from the local community also play an important role in shaping strong character and morals in the younger generation. This article contributes to the theory and practice of character education by highlighting the best practices that can be applied in addressing the moral crisis in Surakarta City. The practical implication is that a joint effort from all education and community stakeholders is needed to maintain the moral integrity of future generations. With the implementation of the right strategy and strong commitment, it is expected to build a solid moral foundation for the Millennial and Gen Z generations, creating a more just, harmonious and ethical society in Surakarta City.

**Keywords:** Moral crisis, Character education, Millennial Generation, Gen Z Generation, Surakarta City

## INTRODUCTION

Moral crisis is a condition in which there is a decline in ethical values and behavior that should be upheld in social life.(White, 2015). In Indonesia, this moral crisis is becoming increasingly evident and worrying, especially among the younger generation.(Zainuddin, 2021). Surakarta, as one of the major cities in Central Java, is not free from this phenomenon. The moral crisis in Surakarta covers a wide range of issues, from disrespectful behavior, increasing cases of bullying in schools, to criminal acts by teenagers.

Statistics show an increase in negative moral behavior among the Millennial and Gen Z generation in Surakarta. Based on a report from the Surakarta City Education Office, in the last five years, there has been a significant increase in cases of bullying and violence in schools. In addition, a survey conducted by Sebelas Maret University showed that about 30% of teenagers in Surakarta have been involved in behaviors that violate social norms, such as drug use and minor criminal acts. This indicates a failure to instill strong moral values among the younger generation.(Iriany & Paciana, 2019).

The importance of character education as a solution to this moral crisis cannot be denied.(Arifin et al., 2022). Character education aims to form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have integrity, responsibility, and empathy.(Walker, 2020). In Surakarta City, character education is considered as one of the most effective approaches to address the morality issues faced by the Millennial and Gen Z generations. With proper character education, it is expected that the younger generation can develop positive attitudes and behaviors that will contribute to the creation of a more harmonious and civilized society.(Syafitri & Tursina, 2019).

However, the implementation of character education in Surakarta schools still faces various challenges. One of them is the lack of teacher training and understanding of effective character education teaching methods.(Amini et al., 2017). In addition, a curriculum that is too dense and focused on academic achievement often makes character education neglected.(Marlina et al., 2023).. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of support from parents and the surrounding environment in instilling moral values to their children.(Hakim, 2022).

Seeing these conditions, collaborative efforts from various parties, including the government, schools, parents and communities, are needed to integrate character education in everyday life. (Khawani et al., 2022). . Positive use of technology and social media can also be an effective tool in supporting character education. (Rohaeni et al., 2021) . With comprehensive and innovative strategies, it is hoped that the moral crisis among the Millennial and Gen Z generations in Surakarta City can be better addressed. This article aims to identify the moral challenges faced by Millennials and Gen Z in Surakarta City and explore effective character education strategies to be implemented in Surakarta. In addition, this article also presents practical recommendations for educators and policy makers in Surakarta to strengthen character education among the younger generation. Thus, this article is expected to provide guidance and inspiration for various parties in an effort to build a young generation with strong character and high integrity. **Methodology**

1. **Research Design**  
This research used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain an in-depth understanding of character education strategies for Millennials and Gen Z in Surakarta City. The qualitative approach was conducted through in-depth interviews with teachers, students and character education experts to explore their views and experiences. (Matanda, 2022) . Meanwhile, the quantitative approach is conducted through surveys to collect statistical data on the perception and effectiveness of character education programs that have been implemented in various schools. (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020).
2. **Population and Sample**  
The population of this study included schools in Surakarta that have implemented character education programs. From this population, five schools representing different levels of education and socioeconomic backgrounds were selected using purposive sampling technique.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **1. Research Design**

This research used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain an in-depth understanding of character education strategies for Millennials and Gen Z in Surakarta City. The qualitative approach was conducted through in-depth interviews with teachers, students and character education experts to explore their views and experiences.(Matanda, 2022). Meanwhile, the quantitative approach is conducted through surveys to collect statistical data on the perception and effectiveness of character education programs that have been implemented in various schools.(Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020)..

### **2. Population and Sample**

The population of this study included schools in Surakarta that have implemented character education programs. From this population, 5 schools representing different levels of education and socioeconomic backgrounds were selected using purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of 10 teachers and 25 students from these schools. Teachers and students were selected based on their direct involvement in the implementation and acceptance of the character education program.

### **3. Data collection instruments**

The main instruments for data collection in this study were in-depth interviews and observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 teachers, 25 students and several character education experts to obtain rich and detailed information about their experiences and views on character education. In addition, observations were made in the school environment to see firsthand how the character education program is implemented in daily activities as well as the interaction between teachers and students in the context of character education. The data obtained was analyzed to identify key themes and develop practical and applicable recommendations.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Moral Challenges among Millennials and Gen Z in Surakarta

Millennials and Gen Z in Surakarta City face a number of significant moral challenges, reflecting the changing values and behaviors in modern society. Based on data collected from surveys and in-depth interviews, some of the key issues faced include:

Identification of key issues based on the data collected revealed that there has been a significant increase in bullying cases in Surakarta schools. This phenomenon includes not only verbal or physical bullying, but also cyberbullying which is increasingly rampant among students. This indicates a weakness in the formation of a healthy and just character in the educational environment.

Analysis of the causes of this moral crisis identified several key factors. One of them is the influence of social media and digital content that is not well controlled. Millennials and Gen Z are widely exposed to content that teaches inappropriate values, such as violence, drug consumption, and other unethical behaviors. Increasingly sophisticated technology also exacerbates this problem by facilitating easy access and anonymity in various negative behaviors.

The impact of this moral crisis is not only limited to the individual level, but also affects the overall social stability in Surakarta. An increase in juvenile crime rates, a decline in the quality of interpersonal relationships, and an inability to contribute positively in society are some of the observable impacts (Hart, 2022). This suggests the need for comprehensive and timely interventions in addressing these moral problems. (Hakim, 2022).

In addition, changes in family structure and social dynamics have also played a role in changing the traditional values adopted by previous generations. (Alawiyah & Oktavi, 2019). An unstable family or lack of attention from parents is often a triggering factor in the development of negative behaviors in children and adolescents. (Walker, 2020). This change requires a holistic approach involving education, family and community to rebuild a strong moral foundation for Surakarta's young generation.

In this context, character education is identified as a key strategy to address the moral crisis in Surakarta. By incorporating ethical and moral values in the education curriculum as well as actively involving teachers, parents, and communities in children's character building, it is expected to bring significant positive changes in the behavior and values of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in Surakarta City.

## 2. Effective Character Education Strategies in Surakarta

The use of technology in character education has been one of the main strategies implemented in Surakarta. Technology provides opportunities to integrate moral values in media that Millennials and Gen Z are familiar with. Through digital platforms such as educational apps, educational videos, and interactive games that teach ethical values, students can learn in a way that is fun and relevant to their daily lives. Technology also allows access to wider and deeper information about the importance of morality in social life.

The implementation of a value-based curriculum in Surakarta schools is another important step. This curriculum focuses not only on academic achievement but also on developing students' character. Subjects such as Civic Education, Religion and extracurricular programs are integrated with values such as honesty, responsibility and empathy. The curriculum is designed to provide a holistic learning experience, where students not only acquire knowledge but also develop positive attitudes and behaviors.

Teacher training and development programs in Surakarta are also key in the effective implementation of character education. Teachers are the main agents in shaping students' character, so it is important that they receive adequate training. This training includes effective teaching methods, how to deal with moral challenges in the classroom, as well as strategies to instill ethical values. Well-trained teachers are able to be good role models for students and create a learning environment conducive to character development.

The involvement of parents and communities in character education is also very important. In Surakarta, some schools have developed programs that involve parents in the character education process, such as parenting workshops, regular meetings and community activities that support children's character building. Collaboration between schools and parents ensures that the values taught at school are also applied and reinforced at home.

The community also plays an important role in supporting character education (Afandi, 2018). Community programs that focus on character development, such as social, religious, and sports activities, provide opportunities for children and adolescents to learn and practice positive values. (Aminin et al., 2018). In Surakarta, several community organizations and religious institutions have been active in organizing activities that support the character building of the younger generation.

By integrating technology, value-based curriculum, teacher training, and parent and community involvement, character education in Surakarta is expected to be an effective solution to overcome the moral crisis among the Millennial and Gen Z generations. This effort requires continuous support from all relevant parties to ensure that the moral values taught can be internalized and practiced by the younger generation in their daily lives. (Gierczyk et al., 2017).

### Case Studies And Best Practices In Surakarta

Several schools in Surakarta City have successfully implemented effective character education programs. One example is SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta, which

integrates character education into all aspects of school activities. They use a holistic approach that includes classroom learning, extracurricular activities, as well as fostering moral values in daily interactions between teachers and students. As a result, there was a significant increase in moral awareness and positive behavior among their students.

SMK Surakarta also demonstrated best practices in character education by developing a social entrepreneurship program that not only teaches business skills but also values such as social responsibility and care for the environment. The program involves students in community projects that make a positive impact socially and morally, such as teaching skills to street children or empowering local farmers. In this way, students not only learn to succeed individually but also become agents of positive change in society.

The success of the character education program in Surakarta can be attributed to several key factors. First, the strong leadership and commitment of principals and teaching staff to make character education a top priority. Second, an integrated and holistic approach to teaching moral values in the curriculum and daily school activities. Third, active participation from parents in supporting and reinforcing the values taught at school. Finally, support from the local community and non-profit organizations that collaborate with schools to improve the effectiveness of character education programs.

### **Implications And Recommendations**

This research makes an important contribution to character education theory by identifying strategies and best practices that can be applied in addressing the moral crisis in Surakarta. The theoretical implication is that character education is not only about teaching moral values but also about creating a supportive environment for the development of strong and sustainable character for Millennials and Gen Z generations.

For education policy makers in Surakarta, concrete steps are needed to improve the implementation of character education at all levels of education. Practical recommendations include increased support and resources for teacher training in character education, development of a more structured curriculum and increased collaboration between schools, parents and communities in supporting students' character building. For schools and teachers, it is recommended to continue developing innovative and effective learning strategies in teaching moral values. As for parents and communities, there is a need for education and awareness about the importance of supporting children's character building at home and in the surrounding environment.

With a consistent and comprehensive implementation of this strategy, it is expected that the moral crisis faced by the Millennial and Gen Z generations in Surakarta City can be minimized and slowly overcome in the long run.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the research and discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the moral crisis faced by the Millennial and Gen Z generations

in Surakarta City is a serious problem that requires deep attention. Identification of the main challenges includes an increase in bullying cases, the negative influence of social media, and changes in social values in modern society. An in-depth analysis of the causes and impacts of this moral crisis shows that character education is an effective solution to build a strong moral foundation for the younger generation.

Character education plays a crucial role in overcoming the moral crisis in Surakarta. By incorporating ethical and moral values in the education curriculum, involving teachers, parents and communities in the character building process, and utilizing technology as a supporting tool, it is expected to bring significant positive changes. It is important to continue to encourage the implementation of the proposed strategies, such as teacher training programs, value-based curriculum, and active involvement of parents, in an effort to maintain the morality and integrity of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in Surakarta City. By doing so, it is hoped that the people of Surakarta can build a solid moral foundation and ensure a better future for their children and youth.

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