



## THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN SHAPING THE CHARACTER OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the significant role that preschool educators play in the moral, emotional, and social development of children aged 3 to 6. At this formative stage, children are highly impressionable, and the educator acts not only as a teacher but also as a role model, emotional guide, and moral leader. Through structured routines, consistent behavior, and emotionally supportive interaction, educators influence how children learn values such as empathy, honesty, patience, and cooperation. The study is based on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and curriculum analysis, revealing that educators who intentionally model prosocial behavior and incorporate moral lessons into everyday activities have a lasting impact on children's character development.*

**Keywords:** *Preschool education, educator's role, early childhood development, moral education, character building, behavior modeling, emotional support*

Preschool years are a critical period in a child's life when foundational aspects of personality, behavior, and social understanding begin to take shape. During this stage, children learn not only basic academic skills but also how to behave, cooperate, express emotions, and respect others. The role of the preschool educator is central to this process.

More than just transmitting knowledge, educators in early childhood settings shape children's values and behavior through modeling, emotional responsiveness, and structured environments. Children tend to imitate adult behavior, and in many cases, teachers are the first consistent adult figures outside the family. Their tone of



voice, reactions to conflict, daily routines, and interpersonal communication directly influence the moral development of their students.

This paper explores how preschool educators influence the character formation of young children, with a focus on intentional strategies used to promote positive behavior, the emotional climate of the classroom, and the integration of moral lessons into daily interactions.

This study utilized a **qualitative research design** to explore the practical roles and strategies of preschool educators in supporting character development among children aged 3 to 6. Three primary data collection methods were employed: **non-participant classroom observations**, **semi-structured interviews**, and **document analysis**.

- **Classroom Observations:** Researchers conducted direct observations in six preschool classrooms over an 8-week period. Observers focused on teacher-child interactions during both structured learning activities and unstructured playtime. Specific behaviors noted included conflict resolution, the use of praise or correction, modeling of prosocial behavior (e.g., helping, sharing), and the integration of moral themes in stories or conversations.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 preschool educators (with at least 3 years of teaching experience). Questions were designed to uncover teachers' intentional strategies for character education, their perceptions of their role, and challenges they face when trying to teach values and behavior.

- **Document Analysis:** Curriculum guides, weekly activity plans, and classroom behavior management policies were reviewed to determine the presence of value-based themes such as cooperation, respect, responsibility, and kindness. Materials used for storytelling, group discussions, and educational games were also examined.

All collected data were coded thematically using qualitative content analysis to identify common patterns and practices.



The results of the study revealed that preschool educators play a **central and active role** in shaping children's moral and social development. Their influence extended beyond instruction and included emotional support, behavior modeling, and environment structuring.

**Key findings include:**

- **Role Modeling Is Powerful:** Children closely observed and imitated the educator's tone, problem-solving approach, and reactions to conflict. Teachers who demonstrated calmness, fairness, and empathy encouraged similar behavior in children.
- **Routine and Consistency Shape Behavior:** Educators who established consistent classroom routines (e.g., greeting rituals, clean-up songs, shared meal times) helped children internalize concepts of responsibility, turn-taking, and self-control.
- **Verbal Reinforcement Enhances Moral Learning:** Positive feedback such as "Thank you for sharing" or "You were very kind to your friend" was found to be more effective than punishment in encouraging repeated prosocial behavior.
- **Emotional Support Builds Empathy:** Teachers who acknowledged children's emotions and guided them in naming feelings (e.g., "I see you're sad because...") contributed to the development of emotional intelligence and empathy among their students.
- **Storytelling and Play Reinforce Values:** The use of stories with moral lessons, puppet shows, and imaginative play provided natural and engaging contexts for children to explore concepts like fairness, honesty, and respect.
- **Challenges Identified:** Teachers reported difficulties when dealing with inconsistent parental reinforcement at home or when class sizes limited opportunities for individual attention.

Overall, the findings emphasize that the educator's role is **multi-dimensional**—combining instructional, emotional, and ethical responsibilities. When educators are intentional about modeling values and structuring learning environments thoughtfully, they become key agents in a child's holistic development.





The results of this study confirm that preschool educators significantly influence the character development of young children through a combination of modeling, structured routines, emotional support, and purposeful interaction. The findings align with several key psychological and pedagogical theories.

Bandura's **social learning theory** is reflected in how children imitate the behavior of adults they frequently interact with. When teachers consistently demonstrated fairness, calm conflict resolution, and kindness, children replicated those behaviors in peer interactions. This supports the idea that children learn morality and social behavior not only through direct instruction, but also through **observational learning**.

Vygotsky's concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** is also evident. Children showed greater progress in moral reasoning and emotional regulation when supported by adult guidance or collaborative peer activities. Educators who scaffolded emotional understanding—helping children label and manage their feelings—were more successful in promoting empathy and social awareness.

Routine and structure, though often considered mundane, emerged as **powerful tools** in building self-discipline and responsibility. Predictable transitions, shared group activities, and classroom rituals taught children consistency and cooperation. These findings support **Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory**, emphasizing how the immediate learning environment (microsystem) shapes behavior.

Moreover, storytelling, role-play, and guided play were particularly effective in transmitting moral lessons. Instead of abstract lecturing, teachers who embedded values within stories and creative activities found higher engagement and better retention of moral messages. This underscores the importance of **play-based moral education** in early childhood.

Preschool educators play a foundational role in the moral and social development of young children. Their influence extends beyond teaching basic academic skills—they actively shape children's values, emotional intelligence, and



behavior patterns through modeling, structured routines, emotional support, and meaningful engagement.

Educators who are intentional in their actions—using warm communication, consistent expectations, and value-rich storytelling—create learning environments that nurture empathy, responsibility, honesty, and cooperation. These early lessons form the groundwork for a child’s future relationships, academic success, and role in society.

To maximize this impact, early childhood education systems should:

- Provide training focused on moral development and social-emotional learning;
- Maintain manageable class sizes to allow personal interaction;
- Support educators with curriculum materials that integrate values naturally into everyday learning.

Ultimately, educators are not only instructors—they are character builders, shaping future citizens through daily words, actions, and attitudes.

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