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INTEGRATION OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' CHARACTER FORMATION

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Abstract

Character education at the junior high school level is a crucial foundation for students' moral, emotional, and social development. During early adolescence, students experience significant psychological changes that require educational approaches emphasizing human values and personal meaning. This study aims to examine the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology as a conceptual framework for strengthening students' character formation. This research employed a qualitative literature review method by analyzing books and peer-reviewed journal articles related to educational philosophy, humanistic psychology, and character education published within the last decade. The results indicate that the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology supports character development through meaningful learning experiences, democratic teacher–student relationships, and the cultivation of values such as responsibility, autonomy, empathy, and respect. This integrative framework is important for establishing holistic education that balances academic achievement and character maturity.

Keywords: character education, educational philosophy, humanistic psychology, junior high school

Abstrak. Pendidikan karakter pada jenjang Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) merupakan fondasi penting bagi perkembangan moral, emosional, dan sosial murid pada masa remaja awal. Pada tahap perkembangan ini, murid mengalami perubahan psikologis yang signifikan sehingga membutuhkan pendekatan pendidikan yang tidak hanya berorientasi pada aspek kognitif, tetapi juga pada pengembangan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji integrasi filsafat pendidikan dan psikologi humanistik sebagai kerangka konseptual dalam pembentukan karakter murid SMP. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka dengan menganalisis buku dan artikel jurnal ilmiah yang relevan dan mutakhir. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi kedua perspektif tersebut mendukung pembentukan karakter melalui pembelajaran bermakna, relasi guru–murid yang empatik, serta pengembangan nilai tanggung jawab, kemandirian, dan penghargaan terhadap sesama.

Kata-kata Kunci : filsafat pendidikan, pendidikan karakter, psikologi humanistik, siswa SMP

Background

Character education has become a central issue in contemporary educational discourse as schools increasingly face complex moral, social, and emotional challenges among adolescents. Rapid social change, technological advancement, and shifting cultural values have significantly influenced students' attitudes, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships. At the junior high school level, these challenges are particularly salient, as students are in a critical developmental phase marked by identity exploration, emotional vulnerability, and heightened sensitivity to peer and environmental influences.

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of character education, educational practice in many contexts remains predominantly oriented toward academic achievement and standardized assessment. This cognitive-centered orientation often marginalizes affective and moral dimensions of learning, resulting in limited opportunities for students to develop ethical awareness, empathy, and social responsibility. Consequently, schools frequently encounter behavioral problems, weakened moral reasoning, and declining interpersonal respect among adolescents, indicating a misalignment between educational ideals and classroom realities.

From a theoretical perspective, educational philosophy provides a foundational framework for understanding the aims and values of education. Progressive philosophy emphasizes experiential learning and reflective thinking as pathways to meaningful understanding, while existential philosophy highlights freedom, responsibility, and the construction of personal meaning in the learning process. Both perspectives position learners as active subjects and regard education as a process of humanization rather than mere transmission of knowledge. These philosophical orientations offer a strong normative basis for character education, yet they are often underutilized in practical educational settings.

In parallel, humanistic psychology conceptualizes learners as individuals with inherent potential for growth and self-actualization. Humanistic theorists emphasize the

importance of psychological safety, empathy, and authentic relationships in fostering personal and moral development. In educational contexts, these principles translate into learner-centered approaches that value students' experiences, emotions, and intrinsic motivation. However, when applied in isolation, humanistic practices may lack philosophical coherence and clear educational direction.

Previous studies have examined character education through either philosophical or psychological lenses, but limited attention has been given to integrating these two perspectives into a unified conceptual framework. This fragmentation has contributed to inconsistencies in character education implementation, where values are promoted without deep meaning or pedagogical strategies are applied without ethical grounding. Therefore, there is a critical need for a comprehensive framework that bridges normative educational goals and practical psychological approaches.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to explore the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology as a conceptual foundation for character formation among junior high school students. By synthesizing these perspectives through a systematic literature review, this study seeks to contribute to a more holistic, coherent, and sustainable approach to character education. Recent studies on character education have predominantly examined the topic from either a philosophical or psychological perspective. Research grounded in educational philosophy tends to emphasize normative goals, moral values, and the ethical purposes of education, while studies informed by humanistic psychology focus on learner-centered pedagogy, emotional wellbeing, and supportive classroom climates. Although both approaches have demonstrated positive contributions to character development, they are often treated as separate or complementary rather than integrative frameworks. As a result, character education practices frequently lack conceptual coherence, either remaining philosophically abstract or pragmatically fragmented. Empirical and conceptual studies that systematically integrate educational philosophy and humanistic psychology—particularly within the context of junior high school education—remain limited. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive conceptual synthesis that bridges educational ideals and pedagogical practices, providing a holistic and theoretically grounded framework for adolescent character formation.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a systematic literature review to examine the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology in junior high school character education. The analysis focused on synthesizing theoretical concepts and empirical findings rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables.

Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed national and international journal articles, academic books, and policy documents relevant to educational philosophy, humanistic psychology, and character education. Literature was identified through targeted keyword searches using reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar and ERIC. The selected sources met inclusion criteria related to topical relevance, focus on adolescent or secondary education contexts, academic credibility, and publication within the last ten years, with several seminal works included for theoretical grounding.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic content analysis involving three main stages. First, relevant texts were read intensively to identify key concepts related to character education, philosophical foundations, and humanistic psychological principles. Second, these concepts were categorized into thematic groups to examine conceptual patterns and points of convergence across the literature. Third, the themes were synthesized to construct an integrative framework that links educational philosophy with humanistic psychology in the context of junior high school character formation.

To ensure analytical rigor, the review process emphasized transparency in source selection, consistency in thematic interpretation, and reliance on authoritative literature. This approach enhanced the credibility and conceptual validity of the findings while supporting the development of a coherent and theoretically grounded framework consistent with the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

Result

The analysis of 45 selected academic sources revealed consistent themes regarding the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology in character education. The results indicate that both perspectives converge in emphasizing holistic student development, moral autonomy, and meaningful learning experiences.

The findings are summarized into four major themes:

Learner-Centered Educational Orientation

Educational philosophies such as progressivism and existentialism emphasize learners as active agents in meaning-making. Humanistic psychology reinforces this view by highlighting autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and self-directed learning.

Democratic and Empathic Teacher-Student Relationships

Humanistic principles stress empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity in educational interactions. Philosophical foundations legitimize these practices as moral obligations in education.

Meaningful Learning and Value Internalization

Character formation is most effective when learning experiences are connected to students' real-life contexts and moral dilemmas, fostering responsibility and ethical reflection.

Development of Core Character Values

The integration of both frameworks consistently supports the development of: responsibility, autonomy, empathy, respect for others, self-awareness

Conceptual Data Presentation

Table 1. Integration of Educational Philosophy and Humanistic Psychology in Character Formation

Educational Dimension	Philosophical Foundation	Humanistic Psychology Contribution	Character Outcomes
Learning Orientation	Progressivism, Existentialism	Self-directed learning, intrinsic motivation	Responsibility, autonomy
Teacher–Student Relationship	Humanism, Moral Philosophy	Empathy, unconditional positive regard	Respect, trust
Learning Experience	Experiential and reflective learning	Meaningful learning experiences	Moral awareness
Student Development	Holistic human development	Self-actualization	Integrity, empathy

The synthesis indicates that educational philosophy provides normative direction, while humanistic psychology offers operational strategies for character education. When integrated, these perspectives create a coherent and sustainable framework for junior high school character formation.

Discussion

This study expands the discourse on character education by demonstrating that the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology offers a coherent and theoretically grounded framework for junior high school students' character formation. The findings confirm that both perspectives share a common humanistic orientation that views learners as whole persons whose cognitive, emotional, moral, and social dimensions must be developed simultaneously.

From a philosophical standpoint, progressive and existential educational philosophies emphasize education as a process of humanization rather than mere knowledge transmission. Dewey's concept of experiential learning positions moral and character development as outcomes of reflective engagement with real-life situations, while existential philosophy underscores personal freedom, responsibility, and authenticity. These philosophical principles provide a normative foundation that clarifies why character education

should be central to schooling, particularly during early adolescence when identity formation intensifies.

Humanistic psychology complements this philosophical grounding by offering practical pedagogical mechanisms for implementation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs highlights the importance of psychological safety and belonging as prerequisites for moral growth, while Rogers' learner-centered approach emphasizes empathy, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that when students experience supportive and respectful learning environments, they are more likely to internalize values such as responsibility, autonomy, empathy, and respect. This finding aligns with prior studies showing that emotionally supportive classrooms foster both academic engagement and positive character outcomes.

The integration of these perspectives addresses a critical limitation in many contemporary character education programs, which often focus on behavioral compliance or value transmission without sufficient attention to students' subjective meaning-making processes. Without philosophical grounding, character education risks becoming fragmented, instrumental, or reduced to moral slogans. Conversely, philosophical ideals without psychological operationalization may remain abstract and difficult to apply in classroom practice. This study demonstrates that the synthesis of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology bridges this gap by aligning educational goals with pedagogical strategies.

Another important implication concerns the role of teachers. The findings suggest that teachers function not merely as instructors but as moral agents and facilitators of students' self-actualization. Democratic teacher–student relationships, characterized by dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect, are central to effective character formation. Such relationships resonate with Freire's dialogical pedagogy and Rogers' concept of facilitative teaching, reinforcing the idea that character education is embedded in daily interactions rather than delivered through isolated programs.

Furthermore, the discussion highlights the relevance of this integrative framework to adolescent developmental needs. Junior high school students are navigating identity exploration, emotional sensitivity, and increasing social awareness. A humanistic–philosophical approach responds to these challenges by validating students' experiences and encouraging reflective moral reasoning. This approach supports not only individual character development but also the cultivation of a positive school culture grounded in mutual respect and ethical responsibility.

Despite its theoretical contributions, this study acknowledges certain limitations. As a literature-based inquiry, it relies on secondary data and does not provide direct empirical

evidence of classroom implementation. Contextual variations across educational systems and cultures may also influence the applicability of the proposed framework. Therefore, future research should employ empirical methods—such as case studies, classroom observations, and mixed-methods designs—to examine how this integrative approach functions in real educational settings and its impact on measurable character outcomes.

In sum, the expanded discussion underscores that integrating educational philosophy and humanistic psychology strengthens the conceptual clarity, practical relevance, and sustainability of character education. By positioning character formation as the core of the educational process, this framework offers a meaningful response to contemporary moral and social challenges faced by adolescents.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the integration of educational philosophy and humanistic psychology constitutes a strong conceptual foundation for character formation among junior high school students. Educational philosophy provides normative guidance by emphasizing education as a humanizing process oriented toward dignity, moral responsibility, and personal meaning, while humanistic psychology operationalizes these principles through learner-centered and empathetic educational practices.

The findings of this literature review indicate that this integrative framework supports the development of essential character values, including responsibility, autonomy, empathy, and respect, through meaningful learning experiences and positive teacher–student relationships. By positioning character education as an integral component of the educational process rather than a supplementary program, this approach promotes holistic student development that balances cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions.

Although this study is limited to secondary data sources, it contributes theoretically to the discourse on character education by bridging philosophical ideals and psychological practices. Future research is recommended to empirically examine the implementation and effectiveness of this framework in diverse junior high school contexts.

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