

Integrating an Anti-Drug Curriculum into Character Education: A Qualitative Study on Students' Moral Development in Public Senior High Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates how an anti-drug curriculum can be systematically integrated into formal schooling to strengthen students' moral and character development. It examines the processes, strategies, and impacts of embedding anti-drug education across multiple subjects in public senior high schools, positioning prevention not as an extracurricular activity but as part of daily instructional practices. The study seeks to understand how curriculum integration functions as a preventive mechanism to reduce adolescents' vulnerability to drug misuse while fostering ethical awareness, self-regulation, and responsible behavior. A descriptive qualitative design with a field research orientation was employed. The research was conducted in two public senior high schools in Pangkalpinang that implemented the program in collaboration with the National Narcotics Agency. Participants included school leaders, subject teachers, and students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was applied using iterative coding, categorization, and interpretation, while trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. The findings reveal three interconnected stages of implementation: institutional preparation, collaborative curriculum planning, and classroom-based integration. Integrating anti-drug content into Islamic Education, Civics, Science, and Physical Education enhanced students' knowledge of drug risks, strengthened moral values, and developed life skills such as assertiveness, self-control, and resistance to peer pressure. Although challenges related to time constraints and limited parental involvement remain, the program contributed to improved character formation and healthier behavioral tendencies. This study offers originality by presenting a curriculum-based prevention model embedded within everyday teaching rather than short-term campaigns. It contributes theoretically to interdisciplinary character education and practically provides a replicable framework for schools and policymakers seeking sustainable strategies to address adolescent risk behaviors.

Keywords:

anti-drug curriculum integration; character education; moral development; school-based prevention; qualitative study; secondary education

Introduction

Education is fundamentally not merely a process of knowledge transmission, but also a transformative mechanism through which values, character, and moral orientation are cultivated in learners. Contemporary educational management perspectives position the curriculum as a strategic instrument that shapes both intellectual competencies and ethical dispositions. The curriculum functions as a systemic framework integrating goals, content, learning strategies, and assessment, thereby enabling schools to produce graduates who are cognitively competent while also affectively and morally grounded (Wahyudin & Zohriah, 2023). Within the broader context of national education reform, the integration of moral and character values is regarded as an essential prerequisite for developing holistic human capital rather than focusing solely on academic achievement (Hermanto, 2020).

Normatively, Indonesia's National Education Law No. 20 of 2003 mandates that education aims to develop individuals who are faithful, morally upright, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible citizens. However, empirical realities reveal a persistent gap between these normative aspirations and the increasing prevalence of risky behaviors among adolescents, including violence, bullying, and substance abuse. Drug misuse among secondary school students has become a particularly alarming issue, affecting not only students' physical and mental health but also undermining their moral development, self-control, and social responsibility. These challenges suggest that education systems that prioritize academic performance alone are insufficient to build students' moral resilience.

International research consistently demonstrates that purely punitive or campaign-based approaches to drug prevention tend to produce only short-term effects. In contrast, school-based prevention strategies that are systematically embedded within the formal curriculum show more sustainable outcomes because they address knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral skills simultaneously. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) emphasizes that effective prevention programs should incorporate life skills education, decision-making competencies, and value internalization through structured learning processes. Similarly, Botvin and Griffin (2014) found that curriculum-integrated life skills training significantly reduces substance abuse risks among adolescents. Midford et al. (2012) further reported that prevention programs embedded in regular classroom instruction are more effective than occasional awareness campaigns or one-off interventions. These findings highlight the importance of integrating drug prevention education into the formal curriculum as part of character education rather than treating it as an extracurricular or supplementary activity.

Within Islamic education, moral development or *akhlaq* formation constitutes the core mission of schooling. Character education is not limited to moral instruction but must be systematically embedded in educational management, teacher professionalism, and school culture. Fauzi (2023) argues that effective educational supervision and professional teacher

development are critical for ensuring that character values are consistently internalized in everyday learning practices. Furthermore, data-driven educational management systems support schools in designing targeted and sustainable student development programs (Fauzi, 2025). These perspectives indicate that character education requires institutional and managerial integration rather than normative or incidental approaches.

Recent studies also confirm that character formation becomes more effective when supported by hidden curricula, religious practices, and collaborative school-community programs. Hasanah et al. (2023) demonstrate that hidden curriculum strategies in Islamic boarding schools effectively foster moderate character and social responsibility among students. Huda et al. (2024) show that integrating religious practices with social service programs strengthens empathy and prosocial behavior. In addition, integrative curriculum models that combine local values with global challenges are increasingly recognized as effective frameworks for holistic student development (Aini et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies reinforce the notion that character education requires a structured and sustained curriculum-based approach.

Despite these advances, empirical investigations specifically examining the integration of an anti-drug curriculum into formal character education at the secondary school level remain limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. Most existing studies focus on awareness campaigns, counseling sessions, or short-term interventions rather than systematic curriculum integration across subjects. Consequently, limited evidence is available regarding how anti-drug education can be embedded into classroom instruction, how teachers operationalize such integration, and how it influences students' moral development in practice. This gap highlights the need for more comprehensive qualitative inquiries into curriculum-based prevention strategies.

Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the integration of an anti-drug curriculum into character education through a qualitative approach in public senior high schools in Pangkalpinang. This research seeks to explore the mechanisms of curriculum integration, instructional implementation strategies, and their impact on students' moral development. Theoretically, the study contributes to the development of curriculum integration models for character education. Practically, it provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and educators to design more systemic, contextual, and sustainable school-based drug prevention programs.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a field research design with a contextual case study orientation. This approach was selected because the primary objective of the research was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the processes, meanings, and experiences of participants regarding the integration of an anti-drug curriculum into character and moral education, rather than to test hypotheses or measure causal relationships statistically. A qualitative descriptive design enables researchers to explore educational phenomena in their natural settings and to generate holistic interpretations of curriculum integration practices within specific socio-cultural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim et al., 2017). This approach is particularly appropriate for educational research as it captures the dynamic interactions among teachers, students, institutional policies, and school culture comprehensively.

The study was conducted in two public senior high schools in Pangkalpinang City that had formally signed a memorandum of understanding with the Provincial National Narcotics Agency for the implementation of the Integrated Anti-Drug Curriculum Program. The research sites were selected purposively because both schools serve as pilot institutions for the program. Participants consisted of subject teachers directly involved in curriculum integration, including Islamic Education, Civics, Chemistry, Biology, and Physical Education teachers, as well as school principals, vice principals for curriculum affairs, and students participating in integrated learning activities. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that participants possessed direct and relevant experience with the phenomenon under investigation, thereby providing rich and meaningful data (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted during teaching and learning activities to examine how anti-drug content was integrated into instruction, how teachers facilitated character formation, and how students responded to the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to explore their perceptions, experiences, and reflections regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the Integrated Anti-Drug Curriculum Program. The interview protocol was developed based on frameworks of character education and youth risk-prevention strategies to ensure both flexibility and analytical focus. Document analysis included lesson plans, teaching modules, school policies, activity reports, and partnership documents with the National Narcotics Agency. The use of multiple data collection techniques aimed to enhance data depth and strengthen the validity of findings through methodological triangulation (Abdul Fattah, 2023).

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously from the initial stages of data collection to the conclusion of the study. The analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2024), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing

and verification. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through a coding process that included open coding to identify initial concepts, axial coding to organize categories, and selective coding to construct overarching themes representing patterns of curriculum integration and its impact on students' moral development. This thematic analysis approach is widely recommended in qualitative educational research because it allows for systematic yet context-sensitive interpretation of complex data (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the field. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context so that readers may assess the applicability of findings to similar settings. Dependability was maintained through an audit trail documenting each stage of the research process, while confirmability was ensured by cross-checking data across sources to minimize researcher bias (Husnullail et al., 2024; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations were also addressed by obtaining permission from school authorities, securing informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that participation was voluntary.

Through this rigorous methodological design, the study aims to produce credible, in-depth, and contextually grounded findings regarding how the integration of an anti-drug curriculum is implemented and how it contributes to students' character and moral development.

Results and Discussion

Implementation of the Integrated Anti-Drug Curriculum in Students' Moral Development at Public Senior High Schools in Pangkalpinang

1. Preparation Stage

The preparation stage served as the institutional foundation for the implementation of the integrated anti-drug curriculum. At this stage, the schools formally declared their commitment to becoming pilot institutions for anti-drug education through collaboration with the Provincial National Narcotics Agency. Administrative documents were prepared, an official decree establishing an anti-drug task force was issued, and the entire school community participated in a collective declaration of commitment. These measures were not merely ceremonial but functioned as governance mechanisms that strengthened organizational legitimacy and collective responsibility.

From an educational management perspective, this preparatory process illustrates that curriculum innovation requires structural readiness and institutional alignment before instructional changes can be effectively realized. Wahyudin and Zohriah (2023) argue that educational programs will only be

sustainable when supported by clear policies and administrative coherence. Similarly, Hermanto (2020) emphasizes that systemic engineering within educational institutions is essential for translating national character education goals into concrete school practices. Therefore, the preparation stage ensured that anti-drug education was embedded within the school's formal system rather than treated as a temporary campaign.

2. Planning Stage

During the planning stage, teachers collaboratively designed strategies to integrate anti-drug education into existing subjects. An initial assessment was conducted to identify students' prior knowledge, attitudes, and potential vulnerabilities related to drug misuse. Based on this assessment, teachers developed lesson plans and instructional modules that incorporated anti-drug themes across multiple subjects, including Islamic Education, Civics, Chemistry, Biology, and Physical Education.

This cross-disciplinary integration indicates that anti-drug education was systematically embedded into the formal curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone topic. Each subject addressed the issue from different perspectives. Science subjects explained the biological and chemical impacts of drugs on the body, Civics examined legal and social consequences, Islamic Education emphasized moral and spiritual accountability, and Physical Education promoted healthy lifestyles. Through this approach, students were encouraged to understand drug prevention not only as medical information but also as a moral and social responsibility.

Such a model is consistent with the whole-school approach to character education, where values are reinforced across all learning contexts. When moral messages are consistently integrated throughout subjects, students experience them as part of everyday learning rather than as isolated moral instruction. Consequently, the planning stage contributed to curricular coherence and pedagogical consistency.

3. Implementation Stage

The implementation stage translated these plans into classroom practices. Observations revealed that teachers employed interactive and student-centered strategies, including group discussions, case analyses, simulations, role-playing, and reflective dialogues. These approaches encouraged students to actively engage with the material and relate it to their personal experiences. Rather than merely receiving information about the dangers of drugs, students were trained to develop decision-making skills, emotional regulation, and resistance to peer pressure.

Formative assessments were conducted regularly to monitor students' understanding and behavioral responses. In addition, collaborative activities such as the "BNN Goes to School" program connected classroom instruction with real-world experiences by involving external stakeholders. These experiential components strengthened the relevance and authenticity of the learning process, making anti-drug values more meaningful to students.

This finding aligns with international evidence that prevention programs are most effective when integrated into everyday instruction and focused on life skills development. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) emphasizes that effective prevention education must address cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies simultaneously. Botvin and Griffin (2014) similarly demonstrate that life skills training embedded in regular curricula significantly reduces substance misuse risks among adolescents. The practices observed in these schools therefore reflect evidence-based prevention strategies consistent with global standards.

4. Implementation Strategies

Several key strategies characterized the integration of the anti-drug curriculum. First, curriculum integration ensured comprehensive exposure by embedding content across multiple subjects. Second, partnerships with local authorities strengthened program credibility and reinforced real-world consequences of drug misuse. Third, practical and experiential activities enabled students to internalize values through direct engagement rather than memorization.

These strategies highlight that effective character education requires synergy between instructional design, institutional commitment, and community collaboration. When students encounter consistent anti-drug messages across academic, social, and extracurricular settings, value internalization becomes deeper and more sustainable. This integrated approach contributes to both moral awareness and behavioral competence.

5. Challenges and Effectiveness

Despite these positive developments, several challenges were identified. Although students demonstrated increased knowledge about the dangers of drugs, consistent behavioral transformation was not always observed. Teachers reported constraints related to limited instructional time, heavy administrative workloads, and insufficient parental involvement. External influences, such as peer pressure and community environments, also reduced program effectiveness.

This gap between awareness and behavior suggests that knowledge alone is insufficient to produce lasting moral change. Midford et al. (2012) emphasize that behavioral transformation requires long-term reinforcement and supportive social contexts. Therefore, continuous evaluation, sustained implementation, and broader stakeholder involvement are necessary to ensure program effectiveness. These findings indicate that the success of anti-drug curriculum integration depends not only on classroom practices but also on family and community support systems.

The Impact of the Integrated Anti-Drug Curriculum on Students' Moral Development

The integration of anti-drug education into the formal curriculum demonstrated meaningful contributions to students' moral development. Interviews and observations indicated improvements in three primary

domains, namely knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Students exhibited increased understanding of the health, psychological, and legal risks associated with drug misuse. More importantly, they developed stronger rejection attitudes toward harmful behaviors and greater confidence in resisting negative peer influence.

The program also enhanced social and emotional competencies, including assertiveness, empathy, responsibility, and ethical decision-making. Teachers reported improvements in student discipline, participation, and cooperation in school activities. These indicators suggest that anti-drug education not only increases awareness but also supports broader character formation.

These results are consistent with studies on character education and hidden curriculum practices. Salim et al. (2024) demonstrate that moral internalization becomes more effective when reinforced through daily habits and school culture. Mukni'ah and Fauzi (2023) highlight the importance of professional supervision and teacher consistency in sustaining character education efforts. Furthermore, effective educational management systems enable continuous monitoring and improvement of student development programs (Fauzi & Royani, 2025). Together, these perspectives explain how curriculum integration influences both instructional processes and the overall moral climate of the school.

Nevertheless, external constraints such as limited resources, varying family engagement, and social pressures remain significant challenges. These factors indicate that school-based initiatives cannot operate in isolation. Collaboration among schools, families, communities, and authorities is essential for maintaining long-term effectiveness. Without such support, curriculum integration risks losing its sustainability.

Overall, embedding anti-drug education within formal learning structures represents a promising strategy for strengthening students' moral resilience. By combining knowledge acquisition, ethical reflection, and practical life skills, the integrated anti-drug curriculum contributes to holistic character development. Its continued success, however, depends on consistent institutional commitment, adequate resources, and sustained community involvement.

This study offers a distinctive contribution to the growing body of research on drug prevention and character education by moving beyond conventional awareness-based or extracurricular interventions. While most previous studies have focused on short-term campaigns, counseling sessions, or isolated socialization programs, this research examines how anti-drug education can be structurally embedded within the formal curriculum across multiple subjects. By analyzing the integration of anti-drug themes into everyday classroom instruction, this study highlights how prevention efforts can become part of the routine learning process rather than external activities. This curriculum-based approach provides a more sustainable and pedagogically grounded model of prevention, allowing moral values, life skills,

and health awareness to be developed simultaneously through regular teaching practices.

The contribution of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it extends the discussion on character education by demonstrating that moral development can be strengthened through interdisciplinary curriculum integration supported by institutional management and community collaboration. Practically, the findings offer an applicable framework for schools seeking systematic strategies to address adolescent risk behaviors without adding excessive curricular burdens. By documenting real implementation processes, challenges, and outcomes within public secondary schools, this research provides concrete insights that policymakers, school leaders, and educators can adapt to similar contexts. In this sense, the study bridges the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities, presenting a replicable model for integrating health prevention and character formation within formal education.

Conclusion

The integration of an anti-drug curriculum into character education at public senior high schools represents a strategic and contextually relevant response to the growing problem of adolescent drug misuse. Rather than functioning merely as an awareness campaign, the curriculum operates as a structured preventive mechanism embedded within daily teaching and learning processes. By systematically combining knowledge about the dangers of drugs with moral, religious, and social values, the program encourages students to develop both cognitive understanding and ethical responsibility. This integration enables schools to move beyond information delivery toward the formation of students' self-control, resilience, and informed decision-making, thereby reducing their vulnerability to risky behaviors.

The findings indicate that embedding anti-drug education across multiple subjects contributes meaningfully to students' character formation. The curriculum not only strengthens students' awareness of health risks but also reinforces essential virtues such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social accountability. Through reflective learning activities and value-based instruction, students are better equipped to resist peer pressure and navigate complex social situations. In this sense, moral development emerges not as an abstract goal but as a lived practice cultivated through everyday classroom experiences.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of anti-drug education becomes more sustainable when aligned with religious and ethical education that emphasizes personal responsibility and the protection of the body and mind as entrusted values. Integrating spiritual and moral foundations with health education provides students with deeper meaning and internal motivation to avoid harmful behaviors. Such a holistic approach supports the development of balanced individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally grounded and socially conscious.

At a broader level, the implementation of this curriculum demonstrates potential benefits that extend beyond individual students to the wider school and community environment. Students who are equipped with strong moral awareness and preventive knowledge are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyles, avoid destructive behaviors, and contribute positively to their social surroundings. Consequently, the program supports the creation of a safer and more responsible school culture.

However, the success of curriculum integration cannot rely solely on classroom instruction. Sustainable impact depends on active collaboration among schools, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. Anti-drug education requires consistent reinforcement across home, school, and social environments to ensure that values learned in the classroom are supported in everyday life. Therefore, long-term commitment, adequate resources, and multi-sector partnerships remain essential for maintaining the effectiveness of character-based prevention initiatives.

Overall, integrating anti-drug education within the formal curriculum offers a practical and sustainable model for strengthening students' moral resilience. By linking prevention efforts with character formation, this approach provides an educational pathway that addresses both health risks and ethical development simultaneously, making it a promising framework for schools facing similar challenges.

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