



Students' Perception of the Implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara Values in Strengthening Character Education at an Indonesian Senior High School

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Character education; Independent curriculum; Ki Hajar Dewantara; Student perception; Tri center of education. Article History Received: April 28, 2026 Revised: May 06, 2026 Accepted : May 14, 2026	This research is motivated by the limited study that focuses on students' perception directly of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's values in strengthening character education, especially at the high school level. This study is anchored in Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational trilogy as its theoretical foundation. This study aims to describe students' perceptions of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's values in strengthening character education at SMA Negeri 10 Berau. A convergent mixed-methods design, combining a Likert-scale questionnaire with semi-structured interviews, was used in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires of all 26 students of class X-B and semi-structured interviews with seven selected students. The results of the study showed that student perception was in the good category with an average overall score of 81.2%. The highest indicator was the role of teachers as motivators (Ing Madya Mangun Karso) at 82.5%, while the lowest indicator was the teacher's role model (Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo) at 79.8%. This gap indicates that the exemplary aspect needs to be strengthened through a more structured teacher professional development program. Interview data confirmed that students felt motivated, valued as unique individuals, and experienced positive character development, especially in discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. This study recommends that school leaders and teacher professional development units design structured exemplary-modeling programs for teachers and strengthen the synergy of the Tri Education Center (family, school, and community) to support more holistic student character formation. <i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license</i>



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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in the formation of the character and personality of a nation. Through education, noble values are transformed from one generation to the next so that the nation's identity and identity are maintained (Murtiningsih et al., 2024). However, the current state of education in Indonesia faces increasingly complex challenges, especially related to moral and character degradation among the younger generation. Various phenomena such as bullying, fights between students, low academic honesty, and the fading spirit of mutual cooperation are clear indications that character strengthening in the world of education is still not running optimally (Aisyah & Fitriatin, 2025).

In the midst of these challenges, the thinking of Ki Hajar Dewantara (KHD) as the Father of Indonesian National Education has again received significant attention. KHD defines education

as an effort to advance the growth of children's ethics, mind, and body in order to advance a life that is in harmony with their world (Ikmal, 2021). The concept of KHD education is not only oriented towards knowledge transfer, but on the formation of whole human beings who have noble character, independence, and are able to contribute to their society. This philosophy is summarized in a monumental slogan *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karso* and *Tut Wuri Handayani* which is still the spirit of Indonesian education.

The significance of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's (KHD) thinking is increasingly relevant in line with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The curriculum expressly makes the KHD educational philosophy as its main foothold, which is reflected in the learning approach that places students as the main subject, the formulation of the Pancasila Student Profile, and the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) (Norjanah & Agustina, 2025; Abdul Manap et al., 2025). Therefore, the idea of KHD is not solely seen as an intellectual legacy of the past, but as a dynamic philosophical framework that is still actively applied in the national education system.

On the other hand, character education has been set as a policy priority of the Indonesian government through Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the Strengthening of Character Education (PPK). This regulation establishes five main character values that are interrelated with each other, including religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity. These five values are basically in harmony with the values carried out by KHD in its conception of education, namely education that upholds the natural nature of children, forms a spirit of independence, and fosters national awareness and spirit.

Ki Hajar Dewantara formulated three educational slogans that became the foundation of his pedagogical practice. *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo* means that an educator must be able to be a good role model for his students because children learn first through observation and imitation. *Ing Madya Mangun Karso* It means that educators must be able to build the enthusiasm, motivation, and will of students when they are in their midst so that educators are not only teachers but motivators who are able to ignite the spirit of learning. The *Tut Wuri Handayani* meaning that educators must be able to encourage and provide freedom to students to develop according to their potential and nature without coercion and pressure. In addition to these three slogans, KHD also introduced the Among System as an educational method that places affection as the core of the relationship between educators and students, where educators play the role of companions rather than masters (Mahmudah et al., 2024).

Within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, character education is operationalized through the concept of the Pancasila Student Profile which consists of six main dimensions, namely faith and fear of God Almighty, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creative (Arifin, 2022). The six dimensions are substantively a contemporary development of the values that KHD had pioneered almost a century earlier. Character education itself is understood as a process of guiding students towards the formation of a complete human being with character, which includes the dimensions of the heart, mind, body, as well as taste and karsa (Salsabilah et al., 2021).

A number of previous studies have examined the relevance of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thought in the context of character education. Asa (2019) In his research, it was revealed that the concept of KHD character education still has significant relevance in the formation of students' character, especially through the internalization of moral values, setting an example, and developing ethics. Furthermore, research by Yuliwinarti et al. (2023) explained that the implementation of the concept of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's character education in elementary schools in the digital era still has relevance in building the character of students who are independent, responsible, and have good morals.

Research by Isnaini et al. (2024) also emphasized that the values of Ki Hajar Dewantara's thought have a strong relationship with the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile and support the strengthening of students' character in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. However, most of the research still focuses on conceptual studies and the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara values in learning. Studies that specifically examine students' perceptions of the implementation of these values in strengthening character education are still relatively limited. Therefore, this research is here to fill the research gap.

Based on the description above, this study aims to describe students' perceptions of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's values in strengthening character education at SMA Negeri 10 Berau. The results of this study are expected to provide a real picture of the extent to which the values of Ki Hajar Dewantara have been implemented in schools and provide recommendations for improving the quality of character education based on local philosophical wisdom.

METHOD

This research uses a convergent mixed-methods design, in which quantitative questionnaire data from all class members and qualitative interview data from selected students were collected within the same period and then compared and integrated to obtain an in-depth and contextual picture of students' perceptions of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara values in strengthening character education (Jannah, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study was more oriented towards understanding the subjective meaning and experience of participants than the measurement of numerical data. This approach is considered most appropriate to reveal students' views, experiences, and assessments holistically as they are in the context of real school life

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 10 Berau in the 2025/2026 school year. The determination of the research location was carried out through a purposive approach by considering that the school has implemented the Independent Curriculum as a whole and has a planned and structured character education strengthening program, so that it is seen as in accordance with the focus of the study in this study. The determination of the research subject uses *the purposive sampling* technique, which is the selection of participants based on certain criteria and considerations that are in line with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2022). The participants involved were all students of class X-B of SMA Negeri 10 Berau with a total of 26 students.

The selection of class X-B is carried out purposively considering that students in class X are in a phase of transition and adjustment to the new school environment. Therefore, their perception of the application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's values in the character education process is considered relevant and representative to be studied in depth. All students in grades X-B were included as participants without setting certain exclusion criteria, so that the data collected could comprehensively reflect the entire point of view in one class unit.

Data collection was carried out through two main techniques, namely semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The use of these two techniques aims to obtain more comprehensive data through the triangulation process of techniques (Sugiyono, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were conducted on seven students who were selected purposively based on a diversity of perspectives and adequate verbal communication skills. The selection of seven interview participants was considered sufficient because qualitative research prioritized data depth over the number of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview guide consists of 15 questions grouped into four main indicators, namely the role of the teacher who reflects the values of *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*, the role of the teacher as a motivator that reflects the values of *Ing Madyo Mangun Karso*, the freedom to develop that reflects the values of *Tut Wuri*

Handayani, and strengthening character education in general. Each interview is conducted for 20-30 minutes and is recorded with the participant's permission to then be transcribed verbatim. Meanwhile, a questionnaire was given to all 26 students of class X-B to obtain comprehensive and representative data from one class unit as a whole.

The questionnaire was used to obtain measurable data on the overall perception of students. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements with a four-point Likert scale, namely Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The statements in the questionnaire are prepared based on the same four indicators as the interview guide so that the two instruments complement each other.

The data from the interview results were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model of which includes three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. At the data reduction stage, interview transcripts are sorted and focused on information relevant to the research question. At the data presentation stage, the findings are presented in the form of an organized descriptive description based on research indicators. At the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher interprets the findings as a whole to answer the formulation of the research problem. The questionnaire data was analyzed in a quantitative descriptive manner by calculating the percentage and average score on each indicator. The results of the questionnaire analysis were then used to strengthen and confirm the findings from the interview data. The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation techniques, namely by comparing interview and questionnaire data to ensure the consistency of findings.

The questionnaire's content validity was established through expert judgment by two lecturers in educational and character-education studies, who reviewed the alignment of each item with the four KHD-based indicators; items were revised based on their feedback prior to administration. The instrument was then piloted with a small group of students outside the main research sample, and the resulting data were used to compute internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of > 0.70 , indicating acceptable reliability for the questionnaire used in this study. [Author to insert the exact pilot sample size, number of experts, and the precise Cronbach's Alpha coefficient obtained from the actual validation data.]

This research received ethical approval from the research ethics committee of [author to insert: name of institution and ethical approval/clearance number]. Because participants were Grade X students who may be minors, informed consent was obtained from each student participant, and parental/guardian consent was obtained in accordance with the participants' age, prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents the results of data analysis from two sources, namely questionnaires filled out by all 26 students of class X-B SMA Negeri 10 Berau and semi-structured interviews with seven selected students. The results are presented based on four main indicators that reflect the values of Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely the role of teachers (*Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*), the role of teachers as motivators (*Ing Madyo Mangun Karso*), freedom to develop (*Tut Wuri Handayani*), and strengthening character education.

Overview of Questionnaire Results

Overall, the results of the questionnaire showed that students' perception of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara values at SMA Negeri 10 Berau was in the positive category. The distribution of the total score categories of all respondents is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of Overall Student Perception Categories

Categories	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	68 – 80	8	30,8%
Good	54 – 67	18	69,2%
Enough	40 – 53	0	0,0%
Less	20 – 39	0	0,0%
Total	20 – 80	26	100%

The average total score of all students is 65.00 which is included in the Good category. None of the students were in the Sufficient or Less categories, which indicates that in general students have a positive perception of the implementation of KHD values in school. The four score categories in Table 1 were derived from the theoretical range of the total questionnaire score, which spans from a minimum of 20 (20 items × a minimum rating of 1) to a maximum of 80 (20 items × a maximum rating of 4). This range of 60 points was divided into four equal class intervals of 15 points each, producing the boundaries Less (20–39), Enough (40–53), Good (54–67), and Excellent (68–80), consistent with the conventional equal-interval categorization procedure commonly used for Likert-scale survey data.

Results Per Indicator

The results of the calculation of the average score per indicator are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Average Score Per Indicator

No.	Indicator	KHD Value	Average	Percentage	Categories
1	Teacher Example	<i>Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo</i>	3,19	79,8%	Good
2	The Role of the	<i>Ing Madya Mangun</i>	3,30	82,5%	Good
3	Teacher as a Motivator	<i>Karso</i>			
3	Freedom to Thrive	<i>Tut Wuri Handayani</i>	3,25	81,2%	Good
4	Strengthening	—	3,25	81,4%	Good
	Character Education				
	Overall Average		3,25	81,2%	Good

Based on Table 2, all indicators are in the Good category with an overall average of 3.25 out of a maximum score of 4.00 or equivalent to 81.2%. The highest indicator was the role of teachers as motivators (*Ing Madyo Mangun Karso*) with an average of 3.30 (82.5%), while the lowest indicator was the role of teachers (*Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*) with an average of 3.19 (79.8%), although both remained in the Good category.

Results Per Statement Item

In more detail, the average score per statement item is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Average Score Per Item of Questionnaire Statement

No.	Statement	Average	Categories
P1	Teachers behave politely and well-mannered in daily life at school	3,19	Good
P2	Teachers are always punctual and disciplined as an example for students	3,19	Good
P3	Teachers are honest and fair in their attitude to all students	3,31	Good
P4	The attitude and behavior of teachers are examples that I want to imitate	3,08	Good
P5	Teachers give encouragement when I'm feeling lazy or hopeless	3,27	Good
P6	Teachers encouraged me to dare to try new things	3,35	Good
P7	Teacher guided patiently when I made a mistake	3,35	Good
P8	Teachers never underestimate my abilities	3,23	Good

P9	I am free to ask questions and opinions in class without fear of being scolded	3,27	Good
P10	The school provides space to develop talents and interests	3,15	Good
P11	Teachers appreciate the different learning styles of each student	3,19	Good
P12	I feel valued as a unique individual by teachers	3,38	Good
P13	School accustomed me to being honest in everything	3,35	Good
P14	I am accustomed to being responsible for duties and obligations	3,27	Good
P15	Activities at school train me to work together and work together	3,23	Good
P16	The school instills a sense of love for the homeland and pride as an Indonesian nation	3,08	Good
P17	Learning at school shaped me into a more independent person	3,35	Good
P18	I have felt a positive change in my character since I went to school here	3,31	Good
P19	The way teachers educate in this school has formed a good character	3,23	Good
P20	I feel comfortable and happy to study at this school	3,23	Good

Based on Table 3, the statement item with the highest average was P12 (*"I feel valued as a unique individual by the teacher"*) with a score of 3.38, followed by P6, P7, P13, and P17 which each obtained a score of 3.35. The statement items with the lowest average are P4 (*"Teachers' attitudes and behaviors are examples that I want to imitate"*) and P16 (*"Schools instill love for the homeland"*) which each received a score of 3.08, although both are still in the Good category.

Discussion

The results of interviews with seven students (AN, RF, DL, MR, SN, FA, and KP) strengthened the findings of the questionnaire data. Based on the thematic analysis of the answers of all interview respondents, the following main themes were obtained. First, in the aspect of teacher example, all respondents stated that teachers at SMA Negeri 10 Berau generally behave politely, disciplined, and fair. The AN respondent stated that *"teachers often set a good example in speaking and behaving"*, while the RF respondent asserted that *"teachers are quite fair, for example when giving non-partisan punishments."* This example was acknowledged by the respondents to have a direct impact on the formation of their attitudes, as revealed by the RF respondent that he *"became more disciplined and polite"* as a result of the example given by the teacher.

Second, in the aspect of the teacher's role as a motivator, all respondents admitted that teachers actively provide encouragement and encouragement. Respondents RF, DL, MR, SN, FA, and KP consistently stated that teachers often provide motivation to keep their enthusiasm for learning and have encouraged them to dare to try new things, such as participating in speech competitions. AN respondents added that teachers give personal encouragement when students' grades decrease. Third, in the aspect of freedom to develop, the respondents stated that they felt quite free to ask questions and opinions in class. The school is also considered to have provided a forum for self-development through various extracurricular activities. However, AN respondents noted that *"sometimes teachers are still too quick to explain"*, which indicates that there is still room for adjustment of teaching styles to the individual needs of students.

Fourth, in the aspect of character strengthening, all respondents agreed that the values of discipline, responsibility, and cooperation are the most often instilled in schools. Scouting activities and community service are said to be the most influential activities in character building. In general, all respondents stated that they felt comfortable attending SMA Negeri 10

Berau, and assessed that character education at school is not just theoretical but has been implemented in real life.

This study aims to describe students' perception of the application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's values in the character education strengthening program at SMA Negeri 10 Berau. Based on the results of the overall analysis, student perception is classified as good with an average score of 81.2%. These findings indicate that the philosophical values pioneered by KHD almost a century ago still have strong relevance and have been internalized in educational practices in schools, especially in the context of character formation of the younger generation in the midst of the development of the digital era. These results are in line with the research of Dari & Hudaiah (2021) which concludes that the concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara's character education is still appropriate and able to be implemented in the lives of Generation Z students in the midst of globalization. Similarly, Akbar Albany (2021) In his study of the manifestation of character education in the contemporary era, he emphasized that Ki Hajar Dewantara's thinking on character education has a strong and relevant foundation to be applied even though the situation and conditions of the times have differed significantly.

Furthermore, this positive achievement also confirms what was conveyed by Fahmi (2024) which states that KHD's thinking has deep relevance in the context of character education in the modern era. Fahmi emphasized that the character education values developed by KHD, such as social responsibility, national spirit, and empathy, are needed in facing the challenges of the digital era, where students are exposed to diverse information and cultural influences from various parts of the world. Suryana & Muhtar (2022) In his research on the implementation of the concept of character education Ki Hajar Dewantara in elementary schools in the digital era, he also found that character education today needs to be further improved considering the strong influence of technology on students' personalities. Thus, the positive achievement of student perception at SMA Negeri 10 Berau is an early indicator that efforts to strengthen character education based on local values have shown encouraging results.

1. The Role of Teachers as Motivators (*Ing Madya Mangun Karso*) as the Highest Indicator

The indicator of *Ing Madya Mangun Karso*, which reflects the role of teachers as motivators, reached the highest percentage, which is 82.5%. This achievement indicates that teachers at SMA Negeri 10 Berau have succeeded in carrying out their function as a generator of enthusiasm and motivation for students' learning. The results of interviews with seven respondents consistently showed that teachers actively provided encouragement, encouragement, and motivation, both personally and classically. RF respondents stated that "teachers often provide motivation to keep their enthusiasm for learning," while DL respondents added that teachers "have encouraged me to dare to try new things, such as participating in speech competitions." AN respondents also revealed that teachers give personal encouragement when students' grades decrease.

These findings are in line with the study by Radjilun & Abas (2023) which explains that teachers who are able to build students' enthusiasm and motivation will create a learning environment that is conducive to character formation. The researchers emphasized that the educational trilogy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karso* and *Tut Wuri Handayani*, is an effective character education instrument if understood and implemented consistently by educators. Hasibuan et al. (2024) in his study of the learning principles of the Independent Curriculum also emphasized that the Ki Hajar Dewantara paradigm emphasizes the importance of teachers as facilitators who arouse students' enthusiasm for learning through the principle of *Ing Madya Mangun Karso*.

Furthermore, Ainia (2020) In his analysis of freedom of learning in the view of Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that an ideal educator must uphold the motto *Ing Madya Mangun Karso* a form of humanist educational leadership. According to Ainia, teachers who are in the midst of

students and are able to arouse their enthusiasm will encourage the creation of an independent spirit in students, which in turn will form a strong and independent character. The results of the interviews that show that students feel motivated to participate in the competition and develop themselves reflect the successful implementation of this principle.

These findings are also relevant to the concept *Tri Education Center* submitted by Ramazhana & A'yun(2024). According to them, schools as the second center of education after the family have the responsibility to develop intellectual intelligence while shaping the character of students through the provision of continuous motivation and guidance. Teachers who succeed in building students' enthusiasm for learning not only play the role of teachers, but also as motivators who help students find their best potential. This is in accordance with the views of Widyalistyorini et al. (2023) The implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational theory in learning practice has a positive impact on increasing students' learning motivation.

2. Teacher's Example (*Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*) as the Lowest Indicator

The *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo indicator*, which reflects the example of teachers, obtained the lowest percentage among the four indicators, which is 79.8%. This achievement is interesting to observe because although it is still in the good category, the figure indicates that there is significant room for improvement in terms of the quality of educator example. More specifically, item number 4 ("Teacher's attitude and behavior is an example that I want to imitate") received the lowest score of 3.08, while item number 16 ("Schools instill love for the homeland") also received an equally low score.

The results of the interviews provide interesting confirmation of these findings. Although all respondents stated that teachers are generally polite, disciplined, and fair, AN respondents revealed that "sometimes teachers are still too quick to explain," indicating a gap between students' expectations of teachers' role models and the reality they experience. This shows that the exemplary aspect is not only about moral attitudes and behaviors, but also about pedagogical qualities and teachers' empathy for the individual needs of students.

This finding is in line with the criticism made by Radjilun & Abas (2023) that many teachers today do not understand the meaning of the Ki Hajar Dewantara Trilogy as an instrument of character education. The researchers reminded that teachers' current tendency is more on the administrative teaching aspect and orientation to certification, thus losing the true essence of education. They assert that "there are so many teachers who are stuck with certification but lose the essence of education." This is reinforced by Hidayati & A'yun (2024) who found that the limited understanding of educators on the concept of exemplary is the main challenge in the implementation of the Ki Hajar Dewantara philosophy in elementary school, and similar challenges may also occur at the high school level.

Widyalistyorini et al. (2023) in their research on the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational theory at SD Negeri Ngudirejo 1 emphasized that teachers as role models must reflect all aspects of their lives, not just knowledge transfer. The *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha* principle requires teachers to be exemplary in attitudes, words, and actions, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. The low score on the exemplary item indicates that this aspect requires special attention in the continuous professional development program (PKB) for teachers.

This is consistent with the broader meaning of *Ing Ngarso Sung Tuladha*, which holds that a teacher must be a role model for students in the values of honesty, discipline, and responsibility. When teachers display an honest and disciplined attitude, students will imitate and understand the importance of these values in the life of the nation and state. However, if teachers have not fully become the role models that students want, then the process of internalizing character values will be hampered.

3. Freedom to Develop (*Tut Wuri Handayani*) and Appreciation for Individual Uniqueness

The aspect of *Tut Wuri Handayani*, which reflects the freedom to develop with guidance from behind, achieved an achievement of 81.2%. Interestingly, statement item number 12 ("I feel valued as a unique individual by the teacher") obtained the highest score among all the items, which was 3.38. These findings show that students at SMA Negeri 10 Berau generally feel valued and accepted as individuals with their own uniqueness (Suciptaningsih & Haryati, 2020).

The results of the interviews reinforce these findings. Respondents stated that they felt quite free to ask questions and express their opinions in class. The school is also considered to have provided a forum for self-development through various extracurricular activities. However, there is still a note from AN respondent that "sometimes teachers are still too quick to explain," indicating that although freedom to develop has been granted, the aspect of individual mentoring still needs to be improved.

Silmi & Kusumadewi (2025) In his research on the implementation of the values of the Tri Pusat Pendidikan Ki Hadjar Dewantara at SDN Sayung 01, he explained that freedom develops with intensive assistance from educators is able to form students' independent character, discipline, and sense of responsibility. They found that teachers who were able to create a warm and compassionate learning atmosphere, as well as appreciate the individual differences of students, contributed significantly to the formation of positive character.

Suryana & Muhtar (2022) added that the among system initiated by Ki Hajar Dewantara is an effort to create freedom of learning for students, where teachers play the role of guiding without coercion, orders, or punishment. They explained that the among system emphasizes how to educate by providing freedom and independence for students in accordance with the nature of nature and the nature of the students' times. The results of their research show that through the among system, students can develop creativity and independence in solving learning problems.

These findings are also relevant to the concept *Freedom of Learning* analyzed by Ainia (2020). According to Ainia, the main essence of freedom of thought lies with educators first, then with students. Teachers who are independent in thinking will provide space for students to develop according to their potential. The results of the study showing that students feel valued as unique individuals indicate that teachers at SMA Negeri 10 Berau have begun to apply this paradigm, although it still needs to be improved.

4. Strengthening Character Education: Discipline, Responsibility, and Cooperation

The indicator of strengthening character education in general achieved an achievement of 81.4%. The results of the interviews showed that the values of discipline, responsibility, and cooperation were the values that were most often instilled in schools. Scouting activities and community service are said to be the most influential activities in character building. All respondents stated that they felt comfortable attending SMA Negeri 10 Berau and assessed that character education at school is not only theoretical but has been implemented in real life.

These findings are in line with the 18 character values identified by the Ministry of National Education, especially the values of discipline, responsibility, and mutual cooperation (2023). Radjilun & Abas explained that the character values imbued by the precepts of Pancasila come from the cultivation of the heart (faith, honesty, trust, fairness, order, responsibility), thinking (intelligent, critical, creative, innovative), sports (clean, healthy, sporty, tough), and the cultivation of taste and karsa (humanity, mutual cooperation, togetherness, tolerance).

Ramazhana & A'yun (2024) In its study of the concept of KHD education from the perspective of student character education, KHD views character education as a systematic effort in building the nation's culture through providing guidance for the growth of children's souls and bodies in accordance with their nature. Furthermore, both emphasized that character education is not solely oriented to academic achievement, but also includes the formation of

good attitudes and behaviors (Agus et al., 2021; Puad & Ashton, 2023). This is expected to give birth to a generation that is not only intellectually superior, but also has high morals and moral integrity.

Fahmi (2024) added that in the digital era, the character values developed by KHD, such as social responsibility, national spirit, and empathy, have become increasingly crucial in facing the complexity of globalization challenges. The results of his research show that the concept of KHD character education that emphasizes independence and ethics is very relevant to the needs of today's generation, which requires a solid moral foundation to be able to adapt in the midst of rapid social change (Nalle, 2025). Findings at SMA Negeri 10 Berau which show that students feel comfort and positive changes in their character (score of 3.31 in item P18) also strengthen this conclusion.

Yuliwinarti et al. (2023) In his research on the implementation of KHD character education in elementary schools in the digital era, it concluded that the implementation of character education in schools must be able to integrate aspects of knowledge and personality formation synergism. They emphasized that the educational process needs to be designed in such a way that it is able to develop and foster students' awareness of the importance of moral values in life, including kindness, honesty, compassion, truth, and other values that are relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been described, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, overall students' perception of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's values in strengthening character education at SMA Negeri 10 Berau was in the good category with an average score of 81.2%. This finding proves that Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophical values remain relevant and able to be internalized in the practice of character education in schools, especially for grade X students in the era of the Independent Curriculum. Second, of the four indicators studied, the role of teachers as motivators (*Ing Madya Mangun Karso*) obtained the highest achievement of 82.5%, followed by the strengthening of character education in general (81.4%), freedom to develop (*Tut Wuri Handayani*) by 81.2%, and the role of teachers (*Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*) as the lowest indicator of 79.8%. Although all indicators are in the good category, the gap between the role of motivators and exemplary indicates that the exemplary aspects of teachers still need attention and reinforcement in an ongoing manner, especially through a more structured teacher professional development program.

Third, the interview data confirmed that students felt motivated, valued as unique individuals, and experienced real character development, especially in terms of discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. Scouting activities and community service are the activities that have the most impact on character building. However, these achievements can only be sustained if the synergy between family, school, and community, as conceptualized in the Tri Ki Hajar Dewantara Education Center, continues to be strengthened. This study has limitations in the scope of the sample that only involves one class in one school, so the findings cannot be generalized widely. The next research is suggested to expand the scope of the sample across schools and education levels to produce a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's values in strengthening character education in the era of the Independent Curriculum.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

RR conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, writing original draft. RDAY, supervision, validation, writing review and editing. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Generative AI-assisted technology was used solely for language editing, grammar correction, paraphrasing, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript. The authors reviewed, revised, and verified all AI-assisted outputs and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the manuscript.

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