Teachers' Efficacy, Knowledge, and Professional Development in the Implementation of Character Education

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Abstract

Character education is deemed as an essential aspect to be disseminated to the students in enabling them to be prepared to face real-world society. It can be incorporated into formal education with the support of school staff, teachers, and parents. Hence, this study investigates the relationship between teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and professional development in implementing character education. Using a quantitative correlational approach, data was obtained from 384 secondary school teachers on character education efficacy belief, character education knowledge, belief and practice instrument, and character education professional development. The data was analysed using multiple linear regression analysis scales. The findings postulated that teacher's professional development and knowledge were able to predict the implementation of character education while efficacy was deemed an insignificant variable. Therefore, understanding the relationships between the factors is essential to train future teachers for character education. In conclusion, the findings from this study are expected to benefit the Ministry of Education, school administrations, teachers, and the community in identifying ways to enhance the implementation of character education.

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Abstract

Character education is deemed as an essential aspect to be disseminated to the students in enabling them to be prepared to face real-world society. It can be incorporated into formal education with the support of school staff, teachers, and parents. Hence, this study investigates the relationship between teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and professional development in implementing character education. Using a quantitative correlational approach, data was obtained from 384 secondary school teachers on character education efficacy belief, character education knowledge, belief and practice instrument, and character education professional development. The data was analysed using multiple linear regression analysis scales. The findings postulated that teacher's professional development and knowledge were able to predict the implementation of character education while efficacy was deemed an insignificant variable. Therefore, understanding the relationships between the factors is essential to train future teachers for character education. In conclusion, the findings from this study are expected to benefit the Ministry of Education, school

administrations, teachers, and the community in identifying ways to enhance the implementation of character education.

Keywords: Teachers; Efficacy; Knowledge; Professional Development; Character Education.

1.1.Introduction

Character education has become a central issue in education as it provides students with enhanced values to live in harmony with others and to face obstacles with integrity. Philosophers and researchers Lickona et al. (2007); Pietig (1977) have long recognised the concept of character education. According to Curren (2016), the most suitable model for educating future generations is through character education, whereby schools are the best place for character building for young people. Dewey, a philosopher and educator, also added that character accepts all purposes, interests and behaviours that influence human actions. So, people with good character will also have behaviours that help create peace and live in harmony (Williams et al., 2003).

Hiratsuka (1980) suggested that, since character education can help establish human characteristics and habits that are important for the future, governments and education institutions need to seriously consider developing it. For instance, several public colleges conduct professional skills curriculum for new students to teach positive character qualities during the first year of college in the United States of America (USA) (Sanderse, 2013). Japan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have adopted character education for students similar to the US model (Revell & Arthur, 2007; Turan & Ulutas, 2016; Yolcu & Sari, 2018). Meanwhile, in Turkey, teachers use storybooks to teach character education. These teachers claim that students respond to storybooks positively because they read how good characters behave (Chan et al., 2016).

Malaysian government intends to provide the best education system for the children to raise the expectation and trust of the public towards the education system. According to the

Ministry of Education (MOE), an education system that includes Islamic and moral values can be a solution for behavioural issues, including corruption, sexual immorality, smoking, addiction like drug abuse, lack of ethics, etc. (Salleh & Zainal, 2014). However, the recent trend of substance abuse has become a significant national concern. In 1983, the Malaysian government identified drug abuse as the nation's number one public enemy. According to the United Office on Drugs and Crime (2007), as cited by Zaini (2018), the number of adolescents involved in drugs is growing globally.

On the other hand, the number of behavioural cases involving students has also increased over the years. Bullying was determined as one of the most prevalent problems that has not been resolved as no effective solutions have been identified to kill the problem (Dewi et al., 2021). This serious discipline problem can inhibit other students from learning in a safe and comfortable environment. There are cases related to bullying which ended up in serious injuries and even death (Muscott & O'Brien, 1999). Bullying which is perceived to occur due to the lack of humanity and moral values among students cannot be solved by including the Islamic and moral values in the school curriculum, as so for some other behavioural issues. Hence, the previous education minister, Dr Maszlee Malik, emphasised all teachers to include humanity as an added value during the teaching and learning process. He claimed that the government perceives human values as an essential aspect to produce Malaysians with good attitudes and that it should be introduced during early education (pre-school until secondary level) (Vessels & Boyd, 1996).

Character education has been implemented by some governments in schools because they perceived their citizens can be great people and positively impact their community (Schaeffer, 1999). Therefore, in many societies, the schools take responsibility for teaching students how to build a character that can be applied in the classroom and outside the school environment (Chiu et al., 2019; Lickona, 1997; Ribble, 2020; Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). Teachers can also share their real-life experiences as part of the character education program as it is mentioned in Glanzer et al. (2003).

Transferring of knowledge by teachers is referred to conveying content knowledge such as math, sociology, geography, politics, and other knowledge of material during a lesson without incorporating personality education (Juuti et al., 2018). However, a teacher's role in society not only involves transfer knowledge but also includes instilling character values during their teaching (Ribble, 2020). Hence, teachers are also expected to inspire students to practice character values such as fairness, empathy, living in harmony, etc. during teaching. However, the challenges for pre-service teacher qualify systems for characters education are encouraging their teachers not only to present information about characters education but also to actual form students' characters (Reid & Reid, 2017).

In Finland, the teachers who were hired held at least a Master's degree from a reputable higher education institution (Sarkadi et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in Canada, pedagogical universities were forced to pump additional effort into training their pre-service mathematics teachers following a dramatic drop in math scores among students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The authors also stated that content awareness plays an important role in shaping teacher competencies. Therefore, as trained educators, pre-service teachers should show mastery of both pedagogical and material knowledge. However, in Indonesia, the one-year professional development program was shaped to enable pre-service teachers to achieve the four competencies and prepare them for Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG). The four competencies included pedagogy, professional (content knowledge), social, and personal competencies (Indonesian Law- UU Guru dan Dosen, 2015).

This study developed a framework to describe the relationships between the study variables which are teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and professional development as follows:

1.2. Teachers' Efficacy and Implementation of Character Education

Teachers' efficacy refers to the confidence of teachers in influencing and motivating students to perform well in school (Yolcu & Sari, 2018). When teachers believe in their efficacy, they

will feel motivated to promote conducive learning conditions that they have created to increase the progression of academic achievement among students (Milson & Mehlig, 2002).

A study by Milson and Mehlig (2002) concluded that the efficiency of teachers in the implementation of character education is important. It is good to integrate the fundamental qualities of teachers in teaching character education to enhance character building among students. According to Yolcu and Sari (2018), teachers could openly communicate with the students on good and bad characters by implementing effective approaches to drive constructive changes in the character-building of students. However, the study also added that the teachers felt inefficient or lacked confidence when teaching students on character building. In short, the teachers displayed a high level of efficacy in both personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE) during the implementation of character education, whereby GTE items indicated more uncertain believes than PTE (Ampel, 2009). According to other factors associated with the teachers' efficacy in implementing character education, Sorrells-Blackmon (2017) revealed no significant differences between gender. However, female teachers scored slightly higher in terms of self-efficacy based on the qualities of a character educator.

On the contrary, Milson (2003) indicated a significant difference between gender apart from the combination of dependent variables: teachers' efficacy, importance, and practice in character education. The differences between other variables such as gender and teacher's qualification were minimal. However, no statistical difference was observed between teachers' efficacy with the type of schools they were affiliated to, either public, private or religious-based schools (Sadler et al., 2013). Contrarily, Jakubowski (2013) confirmed that graduated teachers from private and religious-based colleges were more self-efficacious than those from public and secular colleges. Teachers need to feel efficacious and self-confident in their abilities to build students' character and promote character education. A recent study by (Ribble, 2020) assessed the influence of age, experience, and religiosity in developing students' character. The author revealed that age and teaching experience did not

significantly influence teacher efficacy. However, religiosity was identified to significantly influence teacher's efficacy.

In this study, teacher's efficacy is referred to their beliefs in their ability to affect students' motivation and performances in crucial processes and outcomes in secondary schools. Teachers' efficacy in this study was analysed using two components namely PTE and GTE. PTE according to the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), indicates efficacy as the teachers' personal beliefs in their ability. While GTE is related to the outcome expectancy, which relies on the teachers' beliefs in influencing students despite their family background, schools surroundings, and IQ (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In this study, teachers' efficacy is measured using the Character Education Efficacy Belief Instrument (CEEBI) by Milson and Mehlig (2002). Thus, this paper proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' efficacy is positively correlated with the implementation of character education.

1.3. Teachers' Knowledge and Implementation of Character Education

Knowledge is defined as the common conceptual understanding of a certain field achieved by the teachers by attaining the required coursework (Williams, 2000). The teachers would have to understand the content before they could teach and help their students. Enhancing the teachers' knowledge will increase the effectiveness of implementing character education and vice versa(Dewi et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers with a high level of knowledge could efficiently implement character education into the classroom curriculum. Moreover, Williams (2000) also revealed that the teachers' knowledge in terms of their familiarity with the current character education information is still low. Besides that, the results also indicated that the teachers' practice in character education is strongly influenced by their knowledge in character education. According to Guskey (2002), every school follows a specific set of ethics in the school curriculum including pedagogies, conditions, systems, and management to influence students' moral and character values. However, the lack of knowledge regarding

character education among teachers has led to obstacles during the implementation. Hence, Williams stressed the importance of knowing the ways to efficiently influence students' character development and produce positive impacts among students among teachers. Therefore, Guskey (2002) examined the teachers' experience and knowledge in the implementation of character education among high school students. The teachers agreed that they would need to construct a diverse perspective towards character education because character education can act as a mechanism to improve students with lower character values and to maintain the attitude among promising students. Teachers with knowledge of character education strategies like cooperative learning, service learning, and class meetings, are more likely to implement character education into the daily routine and curriculum (Latifah et al., 2020).

Teachers' knowledge refers to their interpretation of character education. This study assessed teachers' perceived knowledge of current character education information that will influence their perceptions and the implementation of character education. Teacher's knowledge in this study was measured based on the respondents' scores obtained using the Character Education Knowledge, Belief and Practice (KBP) Instrument that was developed by Jakubowski (2013). Thus, this paper proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Teachers' knowledge is positively correlated with the implementation of character education

1.4. Teachers' Professional Development and Implementation of Character Education

Professional development can enhance a teacher's understanding, skills, and efficiency in dealing with students. Therefore, professional development programs are created to improve the teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes in class behaviours and practices which could directly increase the performance and achievements of the students (Gates, 2008).

Today, professional development has gained much attention because schools are pressured to reform using highly qualified teachers. Ledford (2011) added that schools could comply

with the reformation only through staff development. Moreover, Milson (2001) confirmed that teachers who attended and received more professional development training tend to practice better teaching methods and approaches in character education. Gates also postulated so due to a positive relationship between teachers' professional development and the implementation of character education (Gates, 2008). Similar to Gates, Schreiber-Gregory and Jackson (2017) also revealed that teachers who received training in character education (workshop, training, conferences, and coursework) during their study and those who acquired professional development in character education are more likely to be efficacious than those who did not receive proper professional development. Hence, this study suggested strengthening professional development among teachers should involve character education and be integrated into the curriculum. Milson and Mehlig (2002) also reported that most teachers did not receive adequate and proper pre-service or in-service training regarding ethical opportunities. Therefore, they may be incompetent in this area of expertise (Latifah et al., 2020). Lastly, providing educators with professional development opportunities in content areas, teaching strategies, and learning strategies to implement in classrooms is essential in character education. However, Iyer (2011) emphasised that training in character education is limited and that it also receives minimal attention. Due to the limited professional development of character education, elementary schools across the nation may not be fully implementing character education in their system. Consequently, a discrepancy in teachers who received professional development in characters education and the number of teachers who efficacity implement its (Patel, 2009) . Thus, it is not known how and to what extent does professional development among teachers can assist in the implementation of character education.

Professional development content in this study is adapted from an article by Iyer (2011). Iyer in the study stated that professional development consists of individual opportunities, individual schools, or school districts that occur onsite, online, workshops, conferences, and in-services. It is measured in this study based on the scores obtained using the Character Education Professional Development Needs Assessment (CEPDNA) (Gates, 2008).

Hypothesis 3: Teachers' professional development is positively correlated with the implementation of character education

The teacher's efficacy, knowledge, and professional development as a character educator have received limited research attention (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). In reality, the three aspects need to be investigated among teachers to facilitate a positive learning atmosphere for all students by efficiently implementing character education programs. Generally, the success of the implementation of character education relative to the teacher's effectiveness, knowledge on character education, and professional development in Malaysian elementary schools is not known. So, this study aims to use a quantitative correlational approach to examine this relationship between elementary school teachers in Malaysia. The level of teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and professional development are categorised as independent variables, while the implementation of character education is a dependent variable.
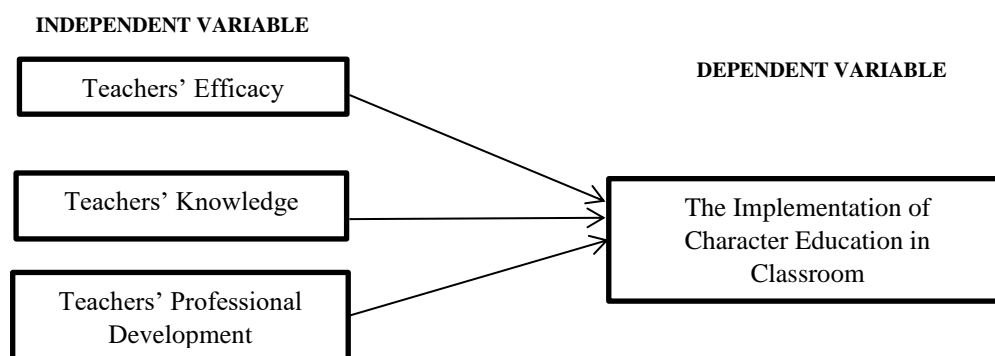

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hence, this study hypothesises:

Hypothesis 4: Teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and professional development can positively predict the implementation of character education

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants and procedure

Teachers (N = 909) working in secondary schools in Kelantan, Malaysia were recruited for this study. According to the Ministry of Education (2017), Kelantan was acknowledged as the state with the highest number of students involved in drugs. Table 1. lists the total number of schools and teachers in Kelantan.

Table 1: Total Number of Secondary Schools Teachers in Kelantan

	Secondary		
District	**School**	**Teacher**	**Class**
Kota Bharu	48	3,791	1,638
Pasir Mas	25	1,677	707
Pasir Puteh	16	1,095	464
Tanah Merah	16	1,175	480
Kuala Krai	13	926	384
Gua Musang	9	609	279
Bachok	18	1,308	532
Tumpat	13	1,116	486
Machang	10	824	350
Jeli	6	371	157
Jumlah	**174**	**12,892**	**5,477**

(Retrieved from: *Portal Rasmi Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Kelantan*).

The sample size in this study was determined using the sample size formula by Cochran (1977) because incorrect, insufficient, and excessive samples can lead to error and imprecision of research (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins, 2001). The sample size should represent the population with a 95% level of confidence. Hence, the sample size calculated using this formula indicated a minimum number of 260 samples. The district that was randomly chosen for this study was Bachok. Of the many schools in Bachok, seven out of 14 schools were randomly picked for this study. Hence, each school had an equal chance to be chosen as a respondent.

Before the commencement of data collection, permission from the Ministry of Education through their website, Educational Research Application System (eRas 2.0) was acquired. Once the schools were chosen, the school authorities were approached and were consulted for approval to run the study at their respective schools. The approval letter for the study from the Ministry of Education and UPM were emailed to the respective schools before conducting the study. When approached through phone calls, the school authorities were briefed about the study. Moreover, the privacy of the respondents was maintained confidential.

A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed among the selected school teachers along with tokens for those who participated in this study. However, not all questionnaires were retrieved, while some questionnaires were incomplete. Hence, only 384 questionnaires were included in the study. It was still an adequate sample size for correlational analysis as it was well within the estimations of Cochran's and Salkind's sample size formula.

2.2. Measurement

The three instruments used in this study included Character Education Efficacy Belief Instrument by Gates (2008), Character Education Knowledge, Belief and Practice Instrument by Jakubowski (2013),and Character Education Professional Development Needs Assessment by Nimon (2010) as follow;

i) **Character Education Efficacy Belief Instrument (CEEBI)**

In this study was used the CEEBI Gates (2008) questionnaire, The questionnaire was adapted from CEEBI by Milson and Mehlig (2002). Section one consisted of five questions related to the teachers' background information like age, gender, grade level taught, and teaching experience. Meanwhile, items in section two were developed to determine the efficacy beliefs of elementary teachers regarding character education. CEEBI consists of 24 questions with a 4-point Likert Scale (strongly agree – 4, agree – 3, disagree - 2 and

strongly disagree – 1). The items in CEEBI were derived from two dimensions, namely GTE and PTE. Some of the examples of items in the questionnaires included "I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students", "When I have students who lie regularly, I can usually convince him/her to stop lying", and "I often find it difficult to persuade a student that respect for others is important".

ii) Character Education Knowledge, Belief and Practice (KBP)

KBP was developed by Jakubowski (2013). The questionnaire was used to assess the teachers' knowledge in the implementation of character education. A 4- point Likert scale was used (strongly agree - 4, agree – 3, disagree – 2, strongly disagree – 1) (section three). A few of the examples for teachers' knowledge on the interpretation of character education included "An important goal of character education is to integrate the teaching of character into academic subject areas" and "Character education is aimed at developing performance character by teaching students to treat others with respect and care".

The familiarity of the teachers with the given information was used to measure their perceived knowledge of current character education information (section four). This section also used a 4-point Likert scale (very familiar – 4, familiar – 3, unfamiliar – 2, very unfamiliar – 1). The examples of items for this section of teachers' perceived knowledge of current character education information included "How familiar are you with the practice and strategies used in character education?" and "How familiar are you with the effect of character education has had on academics, behaviour and culture of some schools?"

The last section (section five) assessed the scores for the implementation of character education in the classroom. This section used a 4-point Likert scale (frequently – 4, occasionally – 3, rarely – 2, and never – 1). Some examples of items included "I foster students' development to be life learners and critical thinkers" and "I foster students' development to be self-discipline individuals who pursue healthy lifestyles".

iii) Character Education Professional Development Needs Assessment (CEPDNA)

CEPDNA was developed to assess the professional development implementation of character education among teachers in schools and to explore a correlation between professional development opportunities and character education among teachers (Gates, 2008). This section used a 4-point Likert scale (strongly agree - 4, agree – 3, disagree - 2 and strongly disagree – 1). The examples of items in this section were "My school has an administrator to support the school's character education effort" and "I would participate in character education professional development".

The reliability of this instrument is defined as the degree to which the research instruments can produce similar results when repeated in a similar condition. Reliability is associated with the consistency of the instruments used (Heale & Twycross, 2015). In this study, the reliability of the instruments was based on Cronbach's α value. According to Cronbach (1951), this formula was created to determine the internal consistency of the dichotomous score of the items in the instruments. Cronbach's α is broadly used in studies related to education when items in the instruments are scored in a range of values, and the items' responses are continuing as it needs to look into the discrepancy of each item. Therefore, the reliability of instruments that have been used in this study was (CEEBI) Milson and Mehlig (2002)=.770. (KBP) Instrument Jakubowski (2013) 1.) Teachers' Knowledge = .872; 2.) Implementation of Character Education in Classroom=.773. (CEPDNA) Gates (2008)= .901. In this study, the reliability for teachers' efficacy was estimated at 0.750, while teachers' knowledge was at 0.718, professional development at 0.730, and implementation of character education at 0.811.

Validity is the extent to which the scores from a measure represent the variable they are intended to.. In a quantitative study, validity refers to the extent to which a concept is accurately measured. Validity is based on the instrument, clarification, and measuring scores (Oluwatayo, 2012). In this study, content validity and face validity were utilised. For content validity, the instruments used can presentably investigate all the content that is supposed to be related to the variable (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Meanwhile, face validity refers to the

researcher's judgment of the applicability and presentation of the instruments and whether the items are significant, correlated, precise, and clear (Oluwatayo, 2012). The content validity and face validity of the instruments were assessed before the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents.

2.3.Statistical analysis

The current study used descriptive analysis to describe the demography characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, and teaching experiences. This analysis was also performed to assess the level of secondary school teachers' efficacy, knowledge, professional development, and the implementation of character education in classrooms using mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage.

Pearson correlation was used to measure the presence and strength between variables in a linear relationship. The correlation was applicable when the hypotheses were satisfied and a relationship between the variables was observed with significant outcomes (Samuel & Gilchirst, 2014). The Pearson correlation was used in this study to identify the relationships between the independent variables (teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development) and the dependent variable (the implementation of character education).

Regression analysis is an approach that is used to measure the relationships between variables to determine which one is a reason and which one is a result in the relations (Uyanik & Guler, 2013). Multiple linear regression analysis is an extension of simple linear regression. Multiple linear regression analysis is implemented to predict the values of the dependent variables according to a set of p explanatory variables (Tranmer & Elliot, 2008). In this study, the predictor of teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development in the implementation of character education was analysed using Multiple Linear Regression.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary Analysis

Data were examined for data normality, missing value, outliers, and assumption criteria, all analysis data were conducted using SPSS version 22.0. The preliminary results demonstrated the data's univariate normality (skewness and kurtosis ranged between -1.05 to .394 and -0.589 to 0.401, respectively). The skewness and kurtosis of the variables (values fall within the range of ±1.69) were deemed as normally distributed. Meanwhile, the missing data analysis exposed 50 incomplete cases that were later excluded from the analysis. The missing data analysis identified 24 incomplete cases that were also excluded from the analysis using several missing value analysis methods (e.g., pairwise deletion, listwise deletion or series mean). A previous study emphasised the importance of handling missing values(Raykov et al., 1991). If the missing values are not random, then, pairwise and listwise deletion methods are not recommended (Schreiber et al., 2006). The present study employed the listwise deletion because the missing values were random. Furthermore, the univariate outliers were screened from the data entry result and truncated to –3 SD from the mean. All preliminary analyses indicated acceptable internal reliability.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis in this research focused on describing the demographic characteristics of the respondents including age, gender and teaching experiences (Table 2). A total number of 121 male teachers (31.5%) and 263 female teachers (68.5%) participated in this study. There were more female teachers in this sample population compared to male respondents. These teachers were divided into 4 age range between 20 years to 50 years old. Most of the teachers were in the age range of 40 to 49 years old (N=161, 41.9%), followed by more than 50 years old (N=122, 31.8%), 30 to 39 years old (N=90, 23.4%), and 20 to 29 years old (N=11, 2.9%). In terms of teaching experiences, most teachers have been teaching for more than 15 years

(N=250, 65.1%), compared to 11-15 years of experience (N=77, 20.1%), below than 5 years of experience (N=33, 8.6%) and teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience (N=24, 6.3%).

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency (N=384)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	121	31.5
Female	363	68.5
Total	384	100
Age		
20-29 years old	11	2.9
30-39 years old	90	23.4
40-49 years old	161	41.9
More than 50 years old	122	31.8
Total	384	100
Teaching Experiences		
Below 5 years	33	8.6
6-10 years	24	6.3
11-15 years	77	20.1
More than 15 years	250	65.1
Total	384	100

3.2. Correlation Between the Main Variables

Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to evaluate the bivariate relationships between the study variables (teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development) with the implementation of character education. According to Table 3, all relationships were positively significant. Teachers' implementation of character education was positively correlated with teachers' efficacy (r= 0. 369, p=0.001), teachers' knowledge (r= 0.458, p=0.001), and professional development (r= 0.485, p=0.001).

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation Coefficients between Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Teachers' efficacy	2.948	.286	1			
2. Teachers' knowledge	3.319	.386	.660**	1		
3.Professional development	3.180	.339	.561**	.666**	1	
4. The implementation of character education	3.669	.396	.369**	.458**	.485**	1

3.3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the best set of the predictor variable. This study aimed to determine whether the independent variables like teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development could significantly predict the implementation of character education. Therefore, regression analysis was implemented in this study as it is used to measure the relationships of variables that have cause and effect relations (Pallant, 2020). In this study, the predictors of teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development in the implementation of character education were analysed.

Table 4: Predictors of the Implementation of Character Education

Models for sample	B (Unstandardised Coefficients)	Std. Error	β	T	p-value
Constant	1.640				
Teachers' Knowledge (X1)	.249	.060	.243	4.127	.000
Professional Development (X2)	.379	.069	.324	5.509	.000

Note: R = 0.518; R2 = 0.268; Adj. R2= 0.265, F(17.030) = , p <0.001

According to Table 4, a significant regression was recorded between teachers' knowledge and professional development to statistically predict the dependent variable ($F_{(2,381)}$=17.030, p<.000). Based on the findings, professional development was indicated as the best predictor for the implementation of character education (β=0.324, p<0.001), followed by teachers' knowledge (β=0.243, p<0.001). Meanwhile, teachers' efficacy was insignificant in predicting the implementation of character education in the classroom among secondary school teachers. The results also stated that professional development and teachers' knowledge accounted for about 27% ($\Delta R2$ = 0.265) of the variance in the implementation of character education. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was accepted.

In general, the tolerance statistic values of all the predictive variables of the multicollinearity results should be less than 0.10 with VIF not more than 10 to avoid multicollinearity ((Milson, 2003). However, according to Table 5, multicollinearity results for teachers' efficacy (tolerance statistic value = 0.538, VIF = 1.860), teachers' knowledge (tolerance statistic value = 0.436, VIF = 2.293), and professional development (tolerance statistic value = 0.530, VIF = 1.887) indicated no multicollinearity between the variables. Hence, the multicollinearity assumptions were not violated.

Table 5: Multicollinearity between Teachers' Efficacy, Teachers' Knowledge and Professional Development in the Implementation of Character Education

Variables	Tolerance Statistic	Collinearity VIF
Teachers' Efficacy	.538	1.860
Teachers' Knowledge	.436	2.293
Professional Development	.530	1.887

4. Discussion

This research aims to find out the importance of teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development in the implementation of character education among secondary

schools' teachers in Kelantan. Also, this study used a correlational quantitative approach to examine this relationship among elementary school teachers in Malaysia. the level of teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development are under independent variables, and the implementation of character education is the dependent variable. Through this information, schools and districts will find the value of building trust, understanding, and self-efficacy for teachers by using professional development in the implementation of successful character educator programs that can ultimately impact student achievement and create a positive character in students. Based on the findings of the analysis, as follows;

4.1. Teachers' Efficacy in the Implementation of Character Education

Based on the Pearson correlation analysis, a significantly positive relationship was observed between teachers' efficacy in the implementation of character education. The efficacy among teachers influenced the implementation of character education during teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Teachers' efficacy is used to acquire their beliefs in their abilities to achieve the desired outcomes. According to Iyer (2011); Romanowski (2005), efficacy and desired outcomes were described as important components to motivate teachers and to predict their behaviours. As a teacher, they need to have the courage to construct students' character and reduce the external negative influences for effective character education. Based on this study, teachers' efficacy was measured at a moderate level indicating that a majority of the teachers do not possess sufficient levels of efficiency. A moderate level of efficacy was observed because teachers might find it quite hard to persuade and influence problematic students to change for the better. Milson and Mehlig (2002) also added that teachers might possess low efficacy when required to teach students that demand more character guidance and surveillance.

The findings in this study were also in line with that of Iyer (2011) and Sadler et al. (2013), where a majority of the teachers agreed that they need to have high efficacy and confidence to create a caring, supportive, and comfortable classroom. In such environments, students

will become more passionate and enthusiastic to study. Hence, teachers must feel efficacious to integrate character education in their lesson plan and confident to implement it in the classrooms. Therefore, it can be inferred that teachers with high efficacy in implementing character education can create a caring and supportive environment for the students.

4.2. Teachers' Knowledge in the Implementation of Character Education

The relationship between teachers' knowledge in the implementation of character education indicated a significantly positive and moderate relationship between the variables. In other words, knowledge among teachers impacted the implementation of character education during the teaching and learning processes in the classrooms.

According to Milson (2003) and Romanowski (2005), teachers' knowledge is crucial for a successful implementation of character education. Teachers need to be knowledgeable in creatively preparing and adjusting curriculum or lesson plans when needed to fit the changing needs of the secondary school students. The type of pedagogical strategies that are going to be used in the daily curriculum is also very crucial, and to do that, teachers need to be knowledgeable (strategies like cooperative learning, service learning, and class meetings) to creatively integrate character education into daily class. Teachers need to know how to engage students to participate and concentrate in the class so that everyone will benefit from it   (Ledford,   2011).

4.3. Professional Development in the Implementation of Character Education

A significantly positive and moderate relationship was observed between the professional development among teachers and the implementation of character education. Professional development among teachers can influence the implementation of character education during teaching and learning processes. Therefore, teachers claimed that available training and resources would help them improve their practice in character education in the classroom.

According to Iyer (2011), teachers who received proper character education, staff development training and those who attended conferences possessed high levels of efficacy compared with those who were not exposed to such training. Mehlig (2002) stated that staff development and conference presentations related to character education could highlight particular practical implications for the implementation within school settings. Quality training for character education should be held during pre-service and in-service training. Hence, teachers are recommended to receive proper professional development to implement proper and effective character education.

On the other hand, Yolcu and Sari (2018) stated that schools in each district should be responsible for preparing teachers with fundamental skills so that they are capable of implementing effective character education. Hence, districts authorities could prepare sufficient resources and chances for professional development among teachers. Professional development is important as teachers need training with necessary materials as an initiative to implement character education in the classroom.

4.4. Predictors of the Implementation of Character Education

This study employed multiple linear regressions to identify the predictors among the independent variables towards the implementation of character education. The findings indicated that professional development and teachers' knowledge predicted the implementation of character education, but not the teachers' efficacy.

Professional development and teachers' knowledge were determined as predictors because most of the respondents were senior teachers. A majority of them have been teaching for more than 15 years, hence, they have undergone professional developments and have more knowledge on integrating character education in the daily curriculum. According to Kamaruddin (2012), experienced teachers who have been teaching for several years are more likely to acquire higher understanding and knowledge with high professional development.

Nevertheless, teacher's efficacy cannot be used to predict the implementation of character education probably because this study was conducted in secondary schools. Students in

secondary schools are known to be more rebellious and stubborn compared to those in primary schools. According to Yolcu and Sari (2018), self-efficacy among primary school teachers and their efficacy on character education is more commendable compared to secondary and high schools teachers.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations were suggested for future research related to the implementation of character education. This study can also be replicated in primary school settings with similar variables. The implementation of character education is also important for primary school teachers. The relationship between teachers in primary schools and their students is important as the students are the most vulnerable. Hence, the replication of this study could provide information to design programs for the improvement of the implementation of character education in primary schools. Therefore, the government should increase the professional development programs among teachers as a measure to improve students who are weak in academics, with poor manners, and have a low sense of leadership. Furthermore, government and private entities should develop professional programs to encourage teachers to promote unity among Malaysians without being bias towards different races and cultures. Every student deserves to be treated equally without any judgments.

5. Implications of the Study

The study was expected to present experimental evidence on teachers' efficacy, teachers' knowledge, and professional development in the implementation of character education. The current study used Bandura's (1977) reciprocal determinism theory as a theoretical framework. Based on the theory, the implementation of character education exhibited a bidirectional relationship with professional development, teachers' efficacy, and teachers' knowledge. Bandura's theory suggested that an individual and the environment are crucial elements in constructing the desired behaviours in a person. This theory did support the

findings of this study where teachers with professional development training, high efficacy and knowledge were able to effectively implement character education.

In terms of practical implications, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for the Ministry of Education, Malaysia in enhancing the qualities needed to implement character education among teachers. One of the suggestions would be providing more professional development for teachers to improve and upgrade their skills, understanding and knowledge related to character education. Professional development was regarded as the best predictor for enhancing the implementation of character education.

Apart from the Ministry of Education, respective school administrations should also play crucial roles in enhancing character education in schools. School administrative should be alert in supporting teachers to implementing character education in the classrooms. Character education is important to improve students' character-building whereby the good implementation of character education can reduce disciplinary issues in schools. Therefore, staff developmental training or seminars, adequate resources, curriculum materials, and proper planning programs should be conducted for teachers with low efficacy and knowledge in the implementation of character education.

Conclusion

The loss of moral values inherited in our community includes honesty, unity, common sense, and politeness. Therefore, it is vital to instil these values back into our community systems by enhancing our educational system through character education (Kamaruddin, 2012). Based on previous literature, limited studies were conducted on the implementation of character education in Malaysia. Hence, this study aimed to contribute to teachers' efficacy, teachers' understanding, and professional development in the implementation of character education in schools.

The study also revealed that professional development was the best predictor for implementing character education, followed by teachers' knowledge. Meanwhile, teachers'

efficacy was identified as an insignificant predictor. Hence, it can be concluded that for a successful implementation of character education, teachers need to be exposed to programs related to character education. The Malaysian Ministry of Education should provide teachers with necessary opportunities and exposures to become influential character educators.

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