

IMPLEMENTATION OF HONESTY AND RESPONSIBILITY CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH THE HONESTY CANTEEN PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of honesty and responsibility character education through the honesty canteen program at SD Negeri 2 Lumbungkerep. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, and documentation studies. Data were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results showed that repeated, unsupervised independent transaction habits fostered honesty and responsibility in students more effectively than purely theoretical instruction. Indicators of success included minimal monthly financial discrepancies, spontaneous student admissions and return of found items, and parental reports of increased openness at home. The main contribution of this study is proving that direct, trust-based experience is key to internalizing moral character, beyond adherence to external rules. The obstacles identified, namely the limited numeracy of lower-grade students and the still-simplistic canteen management, require numeracy assistance and improved governance. The practical implications of this study emphasize the need to synchronize honesty values between school and home, strengthen the role of teachers as role models and facilitators, and involve parents more broadly so that character education runs consistently and sustainably.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education in Indonesia places honesty and responsibility as fundamental values mandated nationally, especially through Government Regulation Number 4 of 2022. Honesty is a central value recognized in everyday life as a measure of human goodness ((Ningsih et al., 2023) while responsibility is an essential character value that directs students to carry out their duties and obligations with full awareness (Hayat et al., 2024).

These three components must be reflected in every character education program, including in Indonesia, so that values such as honesty and responsibility do not stop at the cognitive level. Practically, many character education programs remain trapped in mere ceremonial and administrative activities, without addressing changes in students' authentic behavior (Mawadda et al., 2024). This gap can also be explained through Kohlberg's moral development perspective, which asserts that elementary school-aged children generally enter the stage of conventional morality, where adherence to rules relies heavily on authority figures and external supervision. Weak program evaluation and follow-up render character values merely formal documents, widening the gap between ideal policies and everyday character learning practices (Malawi, 2024; Tohri et al., 2022). This situation highlights the need for a learning approach that can translate the values of honesty and responsibility into students' real-life experiences.

One experiential learning model developed in response to these conditions is the honesty canteen. This model encourages students to pick up items themselves, pay the price without cashier supervision, and participate in maintaining the cleanliness and sustainability of the facility (Djuaini, 2025; Garcia et al., 2024). From an experiential learning theory perspective, this model aligns with Dewey (1938), notion of learning by doing, namely that internalization of values occurs precisely when students gain direct experience and then reflect on it, rather than through lectures or mere memorization of norms. More than just a place for transactions, this canteen becomes a vehicle for cultivating habits of honesty, responsibility, discipline, and self-confidence because all processes are based on personal awareness (Altassan, 2023; Riyatin, 2025). The success or failure of a canteen is also a concrete indicator of the level of collective honesty of students—the canteen's survival indicates that the values it espouses are truly internalized, while its failure reflects a lack of honesty and responsibility (Sar baitinil et al., 2023).

The honesty canteen program at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School has been implemented to foster honest and responsible behavior. However, field observations indicate that its effectiveness is uneven. Students are still found to lie to avoid punishment and to be dishonest in canteen transactions (Ullah, 2022). Santosa et al., (2025) more specifically emphasized that character education must be able to build students' sense of responsibility towards their environment, including the school environment in which there are shared facilities such as the honesty canteen, so that dishonest behavior in transactions also reflects the lack of development of this responsibility. Similar findings were revealed by Astari et al., (2024) who showed that some students had difficulty internalizing the value of honesty consistently despite the ongoing habituation program through the honesty canteen. This gap between the program's intent and actual behavior indicates that implementation has not fully succeeded in shaping students' moral character authentically.

Several previous studies have highlighted the role of honesty canteens in character education. Ilham et al., (2025) emphasized that honesty canteens are an important medium for character formation in students. Furthermore, Idris & Munif (2025) described the implementation process for improving students' honesty and responsibility. Research by Nuryadi et al., (2025) provides additional evidence that character learning must involve direct experience so that these values are firmly embedded in students' behavior. However, these studies have not specifically analyzed the implementation of these two values systematically and integratedly within a program evaluation framework. In other words, no study has in-depthly evaluated how the values of honesty and responsibility are implemented simultaneously through honesty canteens at the elementary school level.

This gap represents both a gap and a novelty in this research, which presents a systematic analysis of the implementation of honesty and responsibility values in the evaluation of honesty canteen programs. By focusing on these two values, this study aims to analyze the implementation of honest and responsible character education through the honesty canteen program, while also producing practical recommendations for schools, teachers, and policy makers so that similar programs can run more effectively and shape students' characters authentically and sustainably.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to in-depth examine the implementation of honesty and responsibility values through the honesty canteen program at SD Negeri 2 Lumbungkerep. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore students' meanings, experiences, and daily practices within a natural and holistic educational context (Muzari et al., 2022). A case study design was used to focus on a specific,

unique context. SD Negeri 2 Lumbungkerep was selected as the research location because the school has actively implemented the honesty canteen program and, based on initial observations, demonstrated contrasting dynamics between the program's objectives and the actual behavior of some students, making it suitable for intensive analysis.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Thomas, 2022). Informants consisted of the principal (one person), three teachers who directly supervise and guide the honesty canteen program, and six students in grades four through six. Student selection criteria included: (1) level of honesty assessed by teachers based on daily behavioral observations, and (2) active student involvement in managing the honesty canteen. This diversity of informants is expected to provide rich and varied data while also allowing for cross-checking. The research was conducted over three months, from September to November 2024.

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participant observation focused on activities in the honesty canteen, teacher-student interactions, and daily behavior in the classroom and school environment (Gessiou, 2022). In-depth interviews were conducted separately with the principal, teachers, and students to explore their understanding, experiences, and challenges in instilling the values of honesty and responsibility. Documentation in the form of canteen regulations, transaction records, and photos of activities served as supporting data.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification (Saktisyahputra et al., 2023). Data reduction was carried out by filtering and summarizing important information from the interviews and observations; the researchers also discussed with colleagues to sharpen the focus of the analysis. The reduced data is presented in narrative form and concise tables to facilitate drawing conclusions. Conclusions are drawn by carefully and continuously interpreting emerging themes throughout the research process.

Data validity is ensured through source and technical triangulation (Donkoh, 2023). Source triangulation involves comparing and verifying statements from three types of informants (principals, teachers, and students) to test data consistency. Technical triangulation involves matching interview results, field observations, and supporting documents. Direct quotations from the interviews are presented in the report to provide a rich contextual picture and strengthen interpretations. This procedure ensures the data obtained has a level of credibility that can be accounted for.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The honesty canteen program at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School is part of the character development program for students, particularly in areas of honesty and responsibility. The honesty canteen operates by serving food and drinks with clearly labeled prices. The honesty canteen operates on a self-service concept, with customers picking up and paying for their meals without vendors demanding or increasing the amount. Customers pay by placing money in a provided cash box.

Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it was stated that the honesty canteen can train students' honesty according to the following statement.

"This activity is not simply a financial transaction, but rather a form of ongoing moral training. Students are given the freedom and trust to pay without supervision. The school instills the principle that honesty is the highest form of personal responsibility."

The honesty canteen is always busy during break time. Positive social interactions are evident in its implementation. Students learn to queue orderly, help each other count, and remind each other when mistakes occur. According to Widariyati et al., (2025) students do the same by learning to manage their emotions while waiting their turn, not cheating, not taking what is not theirs, looking after shared belongings, and admitting mistakes and apologizing when necessary. This aligns with Bandura's Social Learning theory (Rumjaun & Narod, 2025), which states that learning can occur through observation and imitation of social behavior around them. Older or more knowledgeable children become role models for their peers in carrying out honest transactions (Agnew et al., 2025). The following documentation of students queuing to buy food and drinks at the honesty canteen.



(source: personal document)

Figure 1. Students queue to buy at the honesty canteen

This program also reinforces value formation through verbal and symbolic reinforcement from teachers, such as praise, star awards, and moral slogans like "honesty is cool; honesty is the key to success; and honesty is the key to personality" displayed in the honesty cafeteria area. This type of reinforcement is crucial because elementary school children tend to respond well to positive rewards and encouragement from their environment (Fatima et al., 2023).

Students' honesty is also quite high, as evidenced by their consistently increasing sales and relatively small income gaps. This statement is supported by the following interviews with teachers.

"Students expressed their satisfaction at being trusted to purchase items independently without supervision, although some were tempted to be dishonest. However, most students recognized that honesty impacted the canteen's sustainability."

This also aligns with the analysis of student attitude assessment diary documents, which show that many students still demonstrate honest behavior, such as not cheating, admitting mistakes, truthfully recounting events, and returning borrowed items. The following documentation shows students purchasing food and drinks at the honesty canteen.



(source: personal document)

Figure 2. Students put money in the place provided

Indicators of successful internalization are evident in students' spontaneous actions: admitting mistakes, returning found items, and honestly recounting incidents without coercion (Cooper et al., 2023). In interviews, teachers

confirmed that most students felt intrinsic satisfaction from being trusted, and they understood that dishonesty directly impacted the canteen's sustainability. These findings indicate a shift from extrinsic motivation (fear of punishment) to intrinsic motivation and social responsibility, albeit within the conventional moral framework typical of elementary school children. Parents also reported increased openness and responsibility in their children at home, indicating that the program's effects extend beyond the school setting (Asri & Deviv, 2023; Manson et al., 2025).

Teachers remind students to be honest before making transactions, and when they encounter fraudulent behavior, they investigate and provide educational reprimands. This practice serves as concrete evidence that honesty is cultivated in simple, everyday social situations. This is in line with the opinion of Yani et al., (2025) who stated that honesty is fostered through trust-based practices, such as students taking exams without supervision and shopping freely in the cafeteria without supervision.

The Honesty Canteen creates an atmosphere where students' honesty is tested in real-life situations. In the absence of supervisors, only honesty can guide student behavior. Independent purchasing transactions through the Honesty Canteen are an effective way to instill the values of honesty and responsibility in students' everyday lives (Darmansyah et al., 2024). This activity not only trains simple transaction skills but also fosters self-awareness that every action has moral and social consequences. According to Harrison & Laco (2022), character traits like honesty can only develop through real-life experiences, not simply through classroom lectures.

Teachers not only provide verbal guidance on the importance of honesty but also embody it as concrete examples in daily behavior, including admitting mistakes and being open. The implementation of an honesty canteen at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School, coupled with an honesty reward program, is a positive reinforcement that strengthens students' intrinsic motivation to behave honestly, consistent with contemporary character education research. A similar sentiment was expressed by the principal, who stated the following.

"Students get used to and cultivate the values of honesty and responsibility from simple things they often encounter in the school environment, such as when they fight with friends, they don't blame each other but instead apologize to each other."

Rewards for students who demonstrate honesty are also given socially, not materially (Putri et al., 2025). Teachers and principals prefer to offer open praise or opportunities to share honest experiences in front of the class (Booker, 2024). In addition to honesty, independent transactions also foster a sense of responsibility for themselves and others. Students recognize that every action impacts the sustainability of the canteen (Wang et al., 2024), thus encouraging them to be honest and responsible to ensure the program continues. Positive changes have also been observed by parents, who state that their children have become more responsible in their daily lives. This is in line with the opinion of (Asri & Deviv, 2023), who stated that the honesty canteen is a form of character education based on direct experience, allowing children to practice moral values in concrete situations.

During each break, the honesty canteen manager routinely collects and counts incoming and outgoing money, ensuring transparency and honesty in transactions (Yele & Litoriya, 2024). Students deposit money immediately after selecting an item and checking the price using a payment box equipped with small change. The honesty box payment system is an important and practical strategy for instilling the values of honesty and responsibility directly in real-world situations. Interviews with teachers demonstrate the success of the honesty canteen program, as stated below.

"Losses from the honesty canteen are very minimal, in fact there are often no financial losses every month, which shows that this system is running well thanks to the honesty and responsibility of the students."

From a habituation theory perspective, the program's success lies in repeating behavior in concrete contexts. Conducting honest transactions every day forms moral habits that are independent of external supervision (Darmansyah et al., 2024; Sutrisno et al., 2023). Teachers reinforce this tendency through verbal and symbolic reinforcement—spontaneous praise, star awards, and slogans like "honesty is cool"—which are particularly effective for elementary school-aged children who are responsive to social rewards (Fatima et al., 2023). Furthermore, teachers not only provide verbal instructions but also provide concrete role models by admitting their own mistakes in front of the class, so students see that honesty is a value to be lived, not simply taught. This principle aligns with Lickona's character education framework, which emphasizes the importance of moral action through concrete examples

(Lickona, 1991), and is reinforced by the finding that character develops only through real-life experiences, not classroom lectures (Harrison & Laco, 2022).

The implementation of the honesty canteen is not without obstacles, which certainly affect its success in instilling honesty and responsibility. Observations revealed several obstacles experienced by lower-grade students, such as their inability to count. This is because when making transactions at the honesty canteen, there are no staff to assist them, so they often ask for help from friends or teachers. Students who do not ask for help tend to ignore prices, potentially causing losses for the honesty canteen. These obstacles can be overcome if students show concern for helping friends or juniors who are experiencing difficulties (Sukarma et al., 2024).

The honesty canteen at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School also faces management challenges. Lack of food shelves or display cases means the management only stocks a limited amount of food and drinks, placing them on tables. The following documentation demonstrates the food and drink layout in the honesty canteen.



(source: personal document)

Figure 3. Arrangement of food and drinks in the honesty canteen

Some parents also have difficulty entrusting their snacks to the school, and only a few have collaborated with the school for a long time. Payment for snacks is managed by one of the teachers who is accustomed to managing the canteen, although it is still a small canteen that is expected to continue in the future. The principal and teachers at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School also hope that the honesty canteen will continue to grow, so that it can accommodate the creativity of parents in selling hygienic and nutritious homemade food. This activity not only helps the family economy but also serves as a means of character education for students to behave honestly and responsibly in their daily lives.

While the program is generally effective, this approach relies on the assumption that all students possess basic numeracy skills. Observations show that lower-grade students often struggle with calculating prices and change, forcing them to ask friends or teachers for help, or neglecting proper calculations. This inability is not a manifestation of dishonesty, but rather a cognitive limitation that can potentially lead to financial discrepancies and is perceived as a system failure by the school. Critically, the honesty canteen program fails to account for differences in numeracy skills between classes, so the values of honesty intended to be instilled can be distorted by factors beyond children's moral awareness.

Furthermore, management aspects also limit the program's optimization. The lack of shelves and display cases results in limited food variety and poorly organized displays, which indirectly reduce appeal and transaction volume. Cooperation with parents as suppliers remains low, as some remain hesitant to consign their goods to the school, while financial management remains largely the responsibility of a single teacher. This situation demonstrates that the canteen's sustainability is not solely determined by student honesty, but also by infrastructure support and the involvement of the broader school community (Sukarma et al., 2024).

Thus, the implementation of the honesty canteen at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School has proven that habituation and social role models can foster honesty and responsibility at an encouraging level. However, for

this program to be sustainable and inclusive, adjustments for lower grades for example, through light numeracy assistance or the provision of visual counting aids in the canteen as well as strengthening management capacity and parental participation. This way, the honesty canteen will not only serve as a moral laboratory but also a reflection of the school ecosystem that supports the holistic character development of each child.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the honesty canteen at Lumbungkerep 2 Public Elementary School effectively instills the values of honesty and responsibility, with the main contribution being the proof that habituation through real and repeated activities such as independent transactions without supervision is far more impactful in internalizing moral character than purely theoretical teaching in the classroom. This direct experience makes students not only know that honesty is good, but also internalize the moral consequences of each action so that these values are ingrained as habits and personal awareness. However, the effectiveness of the program is still hampered by the limited numeracy skills of lower-grade students and simple canteen management, so that it is necessary to strengthen numeracy mentoring for young students, improve canteen governance, and involve parents more broadly. Synergy of all stakeholders is key to ensuring this experience-based habituation model can be inclusive and sustainable.

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