

Integrating Moral Values from Guy de Maupassant's 'The Diamond Necklace' into Character Education: A Literary Approach for Student Moral Development

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ABSTRACT

Character education is crucial in forming a good generation with strong moral values. This study aims to (1) describe the moral values found in the short story "The Diamond Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant and (2) explore how these values can be implemented to build students' character. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyses the moral messages within the story—such as humility, love, patience, independence, responsibility, discipline, social care, and appreciation of achievement—which are reflected in the main characters, Mr. Loisel and Matilda. The findings reveal that these moral values can significantly contribute to character education, equipping students not only with academic competence but also with positive attitudes and behaviours needed in society. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of integrating character education beyond schools into families and communities, as good character must be continuously cultivated through example and practice. In conclusion, "The Diamond Necklace" serves as an effective literary tool for teaching character and moral values to students, ultimately supporting the creation of a noble, honest, and responsible generation.

Keywords: moral values; character education; short story; the diamond necklace; literature; student character

INTRODUCTION

The importance of character education has become increasingly recognized in the global discourse on human development, particularly in the face of rapid technological advancement, globalization, and shifting social norms (Davidson et al., 2011; Hartman, 2006). Across many nations, including Indonesia, educators and policymakers have become acutely aware of rising moral challenges manifested in such phenomena as corruption, youth violence, intolerance, bullying, and a general decline in empathy and civic responsibility among the younger generation (Mayus & Samudra, 2024; Ramadhana et al., 2023). These persistent issues signal the urgent need for a more holistic and integrated approach to education—one that does not merely emphasize cognitive or technical skills but also focuses on the internalization of essential moral values that underpin a healthy, prosperous, and civilized society (Agus et al., 2021; Herlina et al., 2024; Effendi et al., 2020b).

In response to these concerns, Indonesia has made character education a central element of its national education agenda, embedding it within curricula, policy directives, and various educational initiatives. The government has articulated key values—such as honesty, discipline, empathy, and responsibility—as fundamental outcomes of formal education, aiming to prepare students not only for academic success but also for their roles as ethical members of society (Effendi et al., 2020b; Hakam, 2018). However, despite this strong policy commitment, the practical implementation of character education faces significant obstacles. There remains a widespread tendency for schools to prioritize cognitive achievement over the affective and behavioral dimensions of character, resulting in programs that often lack depth and fail to foster genuine internalization of values (Anam et al., 2019; Syabuddin et al., 2020; Winton, 2008).

Scholars and practitioners have increasingly questioned the effectiveness of character education approaches that rely mainly on didactic instruction or rote memorization. A growing body of research indicates that such approaches have limited impact on students' real-world behavior and moral reasoning (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005; Bali & Susilowati, 2019). This has led to a search for alternative methods and media that can more powerfully engage students in moral reflection, value formation, and ethical decision-making. Literature has emerged as one of the most promising vehicles in this regard, due to its unique ability to present complex moral dilemmas, foster empathy, and stimulate critical thinking through narrative immersion and identification with characters (Abramova & Dmitryuk, 2021; Suseno & Zulyanti, 2020; Mosunova, 2023; Dray, 2007).

Drawing from both local wisdom and global literary traditions, educators in Indonesia and around the world have begun to utilize literary works as a means of enriching character education, enabling students to explore diverse perspectives and moral choices in a manner that is both meaningful and memorable (Ibrahim & Abadi, 2018; Kosim et al., 2024; Sauri et al., 2022). Prior research in the United States, China, and various multicultural contexts has demonstrated the effectiveness of literature-based character education in shaping attitudes and behaviors, supporting the argument that narratives can bridge the gap between theory and practice in value formation (Davidson et al., 2011; Chan et al., 2022; Ibáñez Ayuso, 2023; Sinitsyn & Khentonen, 2023).

Despite this progress, the academic literature in Indonesia reveals a significant gap in the systematic analysis of specific works of world literature and their direct application in the Indonesian educational context, particularly with regard to classical European narratives. While many studies have focused on local texts or the general role of literature in character education, few have explored the potential of classic works such as Guy de Maupassant's *The Diamond Necklace* to address the contemporary moral challenges faced by Indonesian youth. This absence of focused inquiry not only limits the diversity of literary sources employed in Indonesian classrooms but also constrains the theoretical development of cross-cultural approaches to value education.

The novelty of the present study lies in its systematic identification, analysis, and contextual adaptation of the moral values embedded within *The Diamond Necklace*, coupled with the development of practical implementation strategies for Indonesian schools. By moving beyond generalized discussions of literature's educational value, this research offers a detailed exploration of how the themes and character arcs of Maupassant's work can be harnessed to foster honesty, humility, gratitude, and personal responsibility among students. This approach represents a unique contribution to the fields of character education and literary pedagogy, bridging classical Western literature with the specific needs and realities of Indonesian learners.

To address these issues, the study sets out to answer two main research questions: What are the core moral values articulated in *The Diamond Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant, and how can these values be effectively implemented to strengthen character education among Indonesian students? The research proceeds from the hypothesis that the systematic identification and contextual application of these values, derived from literary analysis, will result in a more robust and impactful model of character education, both in theory and in classroom practice.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this dissertation aspires to produce practical guidance for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers, offering a replicable model for integrating literature-based character education that is adaptable to the diverse cultural and educational environments found throughout Indonesia (Effendi et al., 2020a; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Furthermore, given the universal themes present in *The Diamond Necklace* and the cross-cultural relevance of its moral lessons, the insights generated by this research have the potential to inform educational practice in other countries, supporting the broader development of global citizenship and ethical literacy.

In summary, as Indonesia and other nations grapple with persistent challenges of moral decline and social disintegration, there is an urgent imperative to rethink and revitalize approaches to character education. Through a deep engagement with the literary and moral dimensions of *The Diamond Necklace*, this study aims to contribute meaningfully to both the academic discourse and the practical

advancement of character education, equipping future generations with the virtues necessary for personal integrity and societal progress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Morality and Values

When discussing morality, it is inseparable from the concept of ethics, as both are fundamental in shaping the social fabric of societies that value ethical conduct (Hartman, 2006; D'Angelo, 2007). Morality is not universally defined, as different cultures and individuals interpret it according to their social norms and personal characteristics (Abramova & Dmitryuk, 2021; Bali & Susilowati, 2019). Nevertheless, understanding the core meaning of morality is crucial for both educational theory and practice.

Morality often serves as the foundational code of behavior within any given society. It acts as a “connector” among diverse societal features and underpins the expectations of public conduct—covering actions, attitudes, obligations, and moral judgments (Effendi et al., 2020b; Furedi, 2012). Scholars have argued that moral values guide individuals not only in their habitual actions, but also in their opinions and consciences regarding what is right and wrong (Hanifi & Gheiasi, 2024; Kurniawati & Sunarso, 2019). Thus, morality is integral to the development of meaningful relationships within a community and the cultivation of personal integrity.

From early childhood, individuals are socialized into moral norms through the family, and subsequently through educational and social institutions (Anam et al., 2019; Darwanto et al., 2024). This process highlights that “moral” is not restricted solely to outward behaviors, but also involves internal processes—opinions, feelings, and the capacity for moral reasoning (Kashekova & Kolosova, 2016). As pointed out by Davidson et al. (2011), effective moral education requires fostering both cognitive understanding and affective commitment, so that students are equipped to judge whether their actions are right or wrong, and understand the implications and consequences of those actions.

Morality also provides the basis for evaluating and justifying one's actions within society (Chan et al., 2022; Syabuddin et al., 2020). According to Hornby (1974, as cited in Ibáñez Ayuso, 2023), morality concerns the principles of right and wrong, the capacity to distinguish between them, and the application of ethics in human behavior. This conceptualization aligns with the view that moral education should go beyond rule-following, encouraging reflective and autonomous decision-making (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005; Hartman, 2006).

Values, on the other hand, represent what is deemed desirable, worthwhile, or necessary in life (Lobzhanidze, 2018; Li, 2021). Values are inherently positive, and most people strive to attain or uphold them in various domains of life (Burki & Ali Shah, 2025; Anshari et al., 2020). When an individual values something, it becomes a driving force in their behavior and decision-making, influencing what they pursue, cherish, and practice (Davidson et al., 2011). The study of values, or axiology, is commonly divided into aesthetics and ethics: aesthetics concerns what people consider beautiful or enjoyable, while ethics concerns justifications for conduct, reflecting on questions of right and wrong (Lynch, 2015; Stegny & Kurbatova, 2013). Ethics, therefore, is inseparable from the moral questions that guide reflective consideration and personal choice (Nakar & Olssen, 2022; Sbitnieva et al., 2020). Values are generally categorized into “values of being,” which are personal and internal, shaping character and individual actions toward others, and “values of giving,” which are realized through social practices and are validated by their acceptance or rejection by others (Jonathan et al., 2020; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Both types of values are essential for holistic personal and social development.

Literature, in turn, is imbued with values—both artistic and moral—that reflect and shape the values of the society in which it is produced (Suseno & Zuliyanti, 2020; Mosunova, 2023; Lopez, 2011). As noted by Smagorinsky and Taxel (2005), literature can serve as both a mirror and a lamp: mirroring lived experience and illuminating new possibilities for ethical reflection and growth. The values embedded in literary works are thus not merely abstract or theoretical but are closely tied to the lived realities and aspirations of individuals and communities (Esparza et al., 2021; Wills, 2012).

In summary, the intertwined concepts of morality and values are crucial for understanding human behavior, and literature serves as a powerful vehicle for conveying and internalizing these values within educational settings (Davidson et al., 2011; Abramova & Dmitryuk, 2021; Bali & Susilowati, 2019).

Moral Values

As previously discussed, both morals and values are fundamental in guiding individual and societal behavior. Every society is built upon its own set of values that help organize social life, reflecting shared principles, ideals, and standards (Hartman, 2006; Bali & Susilowati, 2019). These values act as general guides to behavior and serve as key reference points for individual and collective decision-making (Davidson et al., 2011; Hakam, 2018).

Moral values, in particular, can be defined as the standards of good and bad that govern an individual's behavior and choices (Abramova & Dmitryuk, 2021; Burki & Ali Shah, 2025). The development of these values is complex, often stemming from multiple sources such as family, culture, religion, and personal experience. Parental influence is often cited as a primary foundation for moral development, as parents play a crucial role in modeling and teaching appropriate conduct from an early age (Anam et al., 2019; Darwanto et al., 2024). Research by Davidson et al. (2011) and Hanifi & Gheiasi (2024) further confirms that early moral education—transmitted through everyday interactions and reinforcement—shapes the conscience and decision-making abilities of children and adolescents.

In addition to family, society and culture provide further context and reinforcement for moral values, offering both explicit and implicit expectations for ethical behavior (Effendi et al., 2020b; Kamisi et al., 2020). Religion is also recognized as a significant source of moral guidance, as most religions prescribe codes of conduct and ethical standards for their followers (Islamic et al., 2024; Chan et al., 2022). These codes, as highlighted by Kurniawati & Sunarso (2019), often serve not only as personal guidelines but also as public declarations of one's commitment to shared values.

Furthermore, moral values are not static but evolve with individual growth and social context. According to Hartman (2006) and Smagorinsky & Taxel (2005), individuals internalize, reinterpret, and sometimes challenge the moral norms provided by their immediate environment. Personal moral reasoning, therefore, is shaped by a dynamic interplay between societal expectations and individual reflection (Nakar & Olssen, 2022).

In synthesizing the above, moral values can be understood as the intersection between what is considered right and wrong (morals) and what is deemed important or desirable (values) within a specific cultural setting (Burki & Ali Shah, 2025; Suseno & Zuliyanti, 2020). While morals provide practical lessons on right and wrong conduct, values determine what is ultimately regarded as worthy of pursuit and respect in a given society (Stegny & Kurbatova, 2013). As Sauri et al. (2022) note, understanding moral values in context is essential for effective education, since it enables individuals to navigate complex social realities and make decisions that align with both personal and societal well-being.

Literature—especially classical and culturally significant works—plays a pivotal role in illustrating and transmitting moral values. Through stories, characters, and conflicts, literature offers concrete examples of moral dilemmas and value choices, allowing readers to engage with and reflect upon ethical questions in meaningful ways (Lopez, 2011; Mosunova, 2023; Suseno & Zuliyanti, 2020). In educational settings, the use of literature to teach moral values is increasingly recognized as effective, since it connects abstract ethical concepts to lived experience and cultural narratives (Davidson et al., 2011; Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005).

In summary, moral values are shaped by a complex interplay of family, society, religion, and individual reflection, and their understanding is deepened through engagement with literature and cultural texts. Recognizing and analyzing these values—particularly within literary works such as Guy de Maupassant's *The Diamond Necklace*—is crucial for developing educational strategies that effectively nurture ethical and responsible individuals (Chan et al., 2022; Sinitsyn & Khentonon, 2023).

METHODS

Research Design

This research employs a descriptive qualitative design to explore and analyze the moral values embedded within Guy de Maupassant's short story *The Diamond Necklace*. The qualitative approach is chosen because it emphasizes processes and meanings, seeking to understand phenomena in terms of context, interpretation, and complexity, rather than relying on numerical measurement or statistical generalization (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research, as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), recognizes the socially constructed nature of reality and the value-laden relationship between the researcher and the subject of study. This approach is particularly suited to literary analysis, where the focus lies on interpretation, context, and the nuanced meanings of texts.

The central aim of this qualitative inquiry is to develop a rich understanding of the moral and educational values articulated in *The Diamond Necklace*, and to examine their relevance and applicability to character education. Qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate not only what values are present, but also how they are expressed, constructed, and potentially internalized by readers within specific social and educational contexts (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Data Source

The primary data for this study is the original English-language text of *The Diamond Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant. The version used was retrieved from a reputable public domain literary source (<http://classclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/gdemaupassant/bl-gdemaup-diamond.html>). This text serves as the central unit of analysis, with particular attention paid to narrative events, character actions, dialogue, and descriptive passages that reveal or suggest moral values.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the principal instrument for data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As such, the researcher's interpretative and analytical skills play a critical role throughout the research process. In this study, the researcher's close reading, theoretical sensitivity, and reflexivity are essential for identifying, coding, and interpreting the moral values embedded in the literary text. Additionally, relevant theories of moral and character education guide the analytical framework.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection began with an intensive reading of *The Diamond Necklace*, guided by existing theories of morality and values (Davidson et al., 2011; Hartman, 2006). The researcher read and re-read the story to gain a comprehensive understanding of its themes, characters, and narrative structure. Key textual segments—such as dialogues, character actions, and pivotal narrative events—were identified and marked as potentially significant for the analysis of moral values.

Subsequently, the researcher selected and documented passages from the story that illustrated or implied specific moral and educational values. These passages were systematically recorded, together with their context within the narrative. Relevant data were then categorized according to predefined and emergent themes—such as honesty, gratitude, humility, and responsibility—reflecting both theoretical concepts and insights arising from the text.

Data Analysis

The study employed qualitative content analysis to interpret the data. This method involves organizing the selected textual data into thematic categories, analyzing the ways in which moral values are presented, and relating these findings to established theories and the broader literature on character education (Creswell, 2013). The researcher engaged in iterative coding, constantly comparing and refining categories to ensure coherence and depth of analysis. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, reflective memos and analytic notes were maintained throughout the process, and the interpretations were grounded in both textual evidence and relevant scholarly literature.

In summary, the methodological approach is characterized by its emphasis on context, meaning, and interpretation. This design enables a deep exploration of the moral values present in *The Diamond Necklace*, and provides a sound basis for subsequent discussion of their implications for character education.

RESULTS

This research reveals that *The Diamond Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant is rich in moral messages, offering nuanced insights into human character, social aspirations, and the consequences of personal choices. Through qualitative content analysis, several dominant moral values emerged from the text—humility, love, patience, and, as further analysis shows, gratitude and responsibility. These values are manifested through the actions, attitudes, and transformations of the main characters, particularly Mathilde and Mr. Loisel. The analysis began by systematically coding and categorizing key dialogues, narrative events, and character interactions. Each value was not only identified through explicit dialogue, but also through symbolic actions and the overall development of the story's central conflict.

Humility versus Vanity

The first salient theme is humility, mainly embodied by Mr. Loisel, and contrasted with Mathilde's vanity. Mathilde's dissatisfaction with her social status and outward appearance is repeatedly expressed through her complaints. For instance, when she says, "*Nothing only, I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I am*" (de Maupassant, p. 9-10), the reader is confronted with her sense of inadequacy and her desire for recognition from others. This attitude is symbolic of the danger of excessive pride, as Mathilde equates her worth with luxury and appearance.

In stark contrast, Mr. Loisel demonstrates humility and self-sacrifice, as he willingly offers his savings—intended for his own leisure—so that his wife may feel content and accepted. His understated actions and patience stand as silent moral examples, warning against the destructive consequences of vanity. Mathilde's journey, driven by her pride, ultimately leads to her downfall, suggesting that a lack of humility results not in happiness, but hardship and regret.

Love and Sacrifice

The story also foregrounds the value of love, particularly in the form of selfless devotion. Mr. Loisel's unwavering commitment to Mathilde is shown not through grand declarations but through tangible sacrifices. When Mathilde expresses her need for a new dress, Mr. Loisel responds, "*Very well, I will give you four hundred francs. And try to get a pretty gown*" (de Maupassant, p. 11). He relinquishes his own desires for the sake of his wife's fleeting happiness.

This devotion reaches its peak when the necklace is lost. Mr. Loisel's love is measured by his willingness to endure enormous hardship and financial ruin, borrowing from "one, five hundred of another, five Louis here, and three Louis there," and even risking "all the rest of his life" to restore what was lost. The narrative details, "*he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the jewellery's counter thirty-six thousand francs,*" (de Maupassant, p. 20) reinforcing that genuine love is often expressed through quiet, ongoing sacrifice rather than visible reward.

Patience and Endurance

Patience is a recurring motif, especially in the face of adversity. Mr. Loisel's conduct after the loss of the necklace exemplifies calm endurance: "*I shall go back on foot... over the whole route, to see whether I can find it*" (de Maupassant, p. 19). This quiet determination and refusal to blame Mathilde or despair contrast sharply with Mathilde's restlessness and her search for shortcuts to happiness. The years spent working to pay off their debt serve as a testament to the moral strength that patience and perseverance provide, even when recognition or appreciation is absent.

Gratitude and Social Awareness

A more subtle, but equally important, value is gratitude. Mathilde's lack of gratitude for both her circumstances and her husband's efforts is a core driver of her downfall. Her focus on what she lacks—rather than what she possesses—leads to choices with dire consequences. This absence of gratitude is highlighted when she proclaims, "*It annoys me not have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all*" (de Maupassant, p. 12). The story thus implicitly criticizes a materialistic worldview and underscores the value of being thankful for what one has. The ball itself serves as a social symbol. Mathilde's experience of fleeting admiration and subsequent misfortune reflects the perils of valuing external approval above inner contentment and integrity.

Responsibility and Honesty

As the narrative unfolds, Mathilde and Mr. Loisel's sense of responsibility is tested. Rather than abandoning their obligations, they take accountability for the loss, choosing to work hard and live simply to repay their debt. This acceptance of responsibility—even for an honest mistake—offers a powerful lesson on integrity and the courage to face the consequences of one's actions.

Broader Symbolism and Educational Implications

Beyond these individual values, *The Diamond Necklace* functions as a mirror for societal aspirations and anxieties. The necklace itself becomes a symbol of illusion: what appears to be precious and desirable is ultimately revealed as false. This literary device encourages readers to reflect on the real nature of happiness, success, and personal worth.

For character education, these findings highlight how classical literature can be used to explore and internalize moral values in students. By analyzing both explicit and implicit lessons in stories like *The Diamond Necklace*, educators can foster critical discussion, empathy, and ethical reasoning in learners (Amani et al., 2012; Davidson et al., 2011).

The research demonstrates that *The Diamond Necklace* is an effective vehicle for teaching humility, love, patience, gratitude, responsibility, and honesty. These values are not only articulated through the explicit actions and words of the characters but are woven into the very fabric of the narrative. The story's events, symbols, and consequences combine to offer rich material for reflection, discussion, and the development of students' character.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study confirm that *The Diamond Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant contains a rich tapestry of moral values—such as humility, love, patience, gratitude, and responsibility—which can serve as powerful resources for character education. These values are not only evident through explicit dialogue but are also embedded in the choices, consequences, and symbolic moments throughout the narrative. Literature has long been recognized as an effective medium for moral development and value internalization (Davidson et al., 2011; Chan et al., 2022). In line with previous research, this study demonstrates that classic stories can help students move beyond abstract moral reasoning to understand the real-life implications of their decisions (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005; Suseno & Zuliyanti, 2020). When students encounter characters such as Mathilde, who succumbs to vanity and ingratitude, or Mr. Loisel, who exemplifies humility and sacrifice, they are invited to critically reflect on their own attitudes and actions.

Moral Values and Student Character Formation

The analysis revealed that humility is a central theme, especially in contrast to Mathilde's vanity. This aligns with findings by Bali & Susilowati (2019), who argue that humility, when modeled in literature or the classroom, can temper egocentrism and foster positive social relations. Love—especially in the form of sacrifice—emerges through Mr. Loisel's steadfast support for his wife, echoing research that highlights the formative power of modeling compassion and empathy for young learners (Davidson et al., 2011; Hartman, 2006).

Patience and perseverance, as embodied by Mr. Loisel's tireless efforts to recover from adversity, are particularly relevant in today's rapidly changing world, where students must develop resilience and a willingness to persist despite challenges (Anam et al., 2019; Sinitsyn & Khentonen, 2023). The narrative also points to the importance of gratitude and responsibility; Mathilde's ultimate transformation and acceptance of her fate underscore the need for self-awareness and accountability—qualities at the heart of effective character education (Effendi et al., 2020b; Amani et al., 2012).

Relevance for Indonesian Character Education

Although the setting of *The Diamond Necklace* is in 19th-century France, its moral lessons are highly transferable to the Indonesian context. As emphasized by Agus et al. (2021) and Herlina et al. (2024), character education in Indonesia is designed to produce responsible citizens, who are not only academically competent but also socially and morally upright. Incorporating literature that presents universal human dilemmas and values, as advocated by Kurniawati & Sunarso (2019) and Nashuddin (2020), can enrich students' ethical understanding and foster intercultural awareness. This approach is consistent with the view that character education should be contextually relevant but also globally informed (Abramova & Dmitryuk, 2021; Jonathan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the use of literary analysis as a pedagogical tool aligns with recommendations for active, reflective, and student-centered learning environments (Kosim et al., 2024; Effendi et al., 2020a). The process of discussing, debating, and relating literary characters' actions to students' own experiences encourages critical thinking, empathy, and the development of personal convictions (Hanifi & Gheiasi, 2024; Sauri et al., 2022).

Supporting Evidence from Previous Studies

Many scholars have affirmed that moral and character education is most effective when grounded in relatable narratives and real-life scenarios (Bali & Susilowati, 2019; Davidson et al., 2011). Integrating classic and contemporary literature into school curricula has been shown to support not only cognitive and linguistic skills but also emotional and social competencies (Mosunova, 2023; Young et al., 2013). Research in both Western and Asian contexts suggests that the discussion of values through literature fosters deeper understanding and greater internalization of positive behaviors (Chan et al., 2022; Dray, 2007; Islamic et al., 2024).

This study's focus on *The Diamond Necklace* supports these conclusions and expands them by providing a concrete model for implementing classic texts in Indonesian character education. By analyzing and reflecting on the consequences of the characters' choices, students can better appreciate the complexity of moral decision-making and the importance of core values in shaping one's life path (Burki & Ali Shah, 2025; Sauri et al., 2022).

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The findings of this study on *The Diamond Necklace* have significant theoretical implications for the field of character education, especially as it relates to the development of student character through literature. At a foundational level, the analysis supports classic moral development theories such as Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning, which argue that individuals progress from external to internal sources of moral authority through reflective engagement and real-life moral dilemmas. By presenting Mathilde's and Mr. Loisel's choices and their consequences, the story exemplifies how literary texts can serve as complex, scaffolded case studies for students' moral reasoning (Davidson et al., 2011; Hartman, 2006).

Theoretically, the study reinforces the argument that narrative literature provides a unique space for "moral imagination" to flourish (Dray, 2007; Mosunova, 2023). Through identification with characters and vicarious experience of conflict and consequence, students are encouraged to step into the shoes of others, empathize, and consider alternative moral choices. This aligns with the Aristotelian tradition of character formation, which posits that virtues are cultivated through repeated

exposure to good examples and reflective practice, not simply through rote memorization of rules (Hartman, 2006; Bali & Susilowati, 2019).

Furthermore, the integration of literary analysis into character education aligns with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural artifacts (such as stories) in shaping higher-order thinking and ethical reflection (Anam et al., 2019; Effendi et al., 2020a). Literature, as a form of cultural inheritance, offers a rich terrain for dialogic meaning-making, allowing students to negotiate and internalize values through collective discussion and personal interpretation (Chan et al., 2022).

Empirically, the findings add to a growing body of research showing that literature-based interventions can effectively foster moral reasoning, empathy, and positive behavioral intentions in students (Young et al., 2013; Suseno & Zulyanti, 2020). Previous studies across various educational contexts, from Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Anam et al., 2019; Darwanto et al., 2024) to multicultural classrooms worldwide (Jonathan et al., 2020; Sinitsyn & Khentonen, 2023), have consistently reported positive outcomes when students engage with narratives that present ethical dilemmas and invite moral deliberation.

The empirical connection between literature and student character development is further supported by research demonstrating the "transfer effect" of narrative-based learning. This refers to the phenomenon whereby insights and values gleaned from literary stories are transferred into students' real-world attitudes, behaviors, and social relationships (Davidson et al., 2011; Kurniawati & Sunarso, 2019). For example, students who analyze characters' struggles with humility or responsibility in *The Diamond Necklace* are more likely to reflect on their own behavior and apply similar reasoning in their daily lives.

A key empirical implication from this research is the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. While *The Diamond Necklace* is a product of French society, its universal moral themes—such as humility, patience, and responsibility—resonate with the values emphasized in Indonesian character education frameworks (Agus et al., 2021; Herlina et al., 2024). This cross-cultural relevance is supported by studies showing that exposure to diverse literary traditions can broaden students' moral perspectives and foster intercultural understanding (Abramova & Dmitryuk, 2021; Islamic et al., 2024). Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of guided reflection and teacher facilitation in literature-based character education. Simply reading a story is not sufficient; students benefit most when teachers prompt critical discussion, draw connections between narrative events and students' lived experiences, and scaffold moral reasoning (Effendi et al., 2020b; Kosim et al., 2024). Such dialogic approaches have been shown empirically to deepen internalization of values and increase the likelihood of positive behavioral change (Bali & Susilowati, 2019; Davidson et al., 2011).

From a psychological perspective, the research points to the affective impact of literature on student character. Stories that elicit emotional responses—such as empathy for Mr. Loisel's sacrifices or regret for Mathilde's choices—activate the emotional dimensions of moral learning, which are critical for sustained character development (Burki & Ali Shah, 2025; Hanifi & Gheiasi, 2024). This finding is consistent with empirical work showing that emotion-rich narratives are more memorable and influential in shaping attitudes than abstract moral instruction alone.

Another empirical implication concerns the role of literature in addressing contemporary challenges in student character. The issues of materialism, impatience, and lack of gratitude faced by Mathilde in *The Diamond Necklace* mirror common concerns among students today (Mayus & Samudra, 2024; Ramadhana et al., 2023). By confronting these issues in a safe narrative context, students can critically examine and recalibrate their own values, fostering resilience and ethical growth in the process (Sinitsyn & Khentonen, 2023).

Lastly, the findings reinforce the recommendation that schools should integrate literature-based character education across the curriculum, rather than confining moral lessons to a single subject or occasional activities (Kurniawati & Sunarso, 2019; Winton, 2008). Empirical research demonstrates that consistent exposure to moral narratives across disciplines enhances the coherence and depth of

character formation, supporting the holistic development of students as ethical, responsible, and empathetic citizens (Davidson et al., 2011; Hartman, 2006).

In conclusion, this research on *The Diamond Necklace* illustrates both theoretically and empirically that literature can serve as a powerful catalyst for student character development. By grounding character education in rich, contextually relevant narratives, educators can cultivate the virtues and moral reasoning necessary for students to thrive both academically and as members of a pluralistic, global society.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *The Diamond Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant contains a wealth of moral lessons—such as humility, love, patience, gratitude, and responsibility—that are highly relevant for integration into character education programs. Through qualitative analysis, it has become evident that the values portrayed in the story transcend cultural and temporal boundaries, making classical literature a universally valuable resource for nurturing good character among students. The depiction of the main characters' choices and their consequences provide concrete illustrations of moral dilemmas and personal growth, which are essential for developing empathy, critical thinking, and ethical awareness in learners. As societies become increasingly multicultural and interconnected, literature such as *The Diamond Necklace* offers a meaningful way to engage students in reflection and discussion about the values that underpin harmonious and resilient communities.

Drawing from these findings, educators are encouraged to thoughtfully incorporate both classical and contemporary literary works into the curriculum to stimulate meaningful discussions about character and ethical decision-making. Encouraging students to critically engage with the actions and motivations of literary characters can foster deeper moral reasoning and self-reflection. Moreover, by connecting the universal moral lessons found in literature to students' daily lives and cultural contexts, teachers can help make character education more relatable and impactful. The narrative richness and emotional depth found in stories like *The Diamond Necklace* can serve as effective catalysts for both personal and collective moral development.

Looking forward, there remains a great opportunity for future research to explore how literary works from diverse cultures might be systematically integrated into national character education frameworks. Examining the effects of such integration on students' attitudes, behaviors, and social-emotional growth would offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers. Further studies could also investigate the most effective pedagogical strategies for facilitating reflective discussions and internalization of moral values through literature.

This study, while offering important insights, is not without limitations. The analysis focused on a single short story and its implications within the framework of character education, which may not capture the full range of literary possibilities or cultural variations. Additionally, the research was limited to qualitative content analysis, suggesting a need for broader empirical studies—such as classroom interventions or longitudinal research—to more deeply understand how literary-based character education influences students over time.

In conclusion, literature remains a vital medium for character formation, and its thoughtful integration into educational practice can play a crucial role in developing students into morally responsible and empathetic individuals. Continued research and innovative educational approaches will be essential to further unlock the potential of stories in building the next generation's character.

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