



Institutional Strategies and Family Mediation in Shaping Students' Character Education during Emergency Remote Learning

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to examine how institutional strategies and family mediation interact in shaping students' character education during Emergency Remote Learning. Specifically, it explores the mechanisms through which schools design, implement, and coordinate character education policies, and how families mediate, reinterpret, or reinforce these strategies in home-based learning environments. The study addresses a critical gap in contemporary educational research by moving beyond teacher-centered approaches and highlighting the institutional–family nexus in times of crisis.

Methods: A qualitative case study design was employed to capture in-depth perspectives from school leaders, teachers, parents, and students involved in emergency remote learning. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis of institutional policies, and reflective reports from families. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns related to institutional governance, communication strategies, parental mediation practices, and character formation processes. Analytical rigor was ensured through triangulation, iterative coding, and peer debriefing.

Findings: The findings reveal that effective character education during emergency remote learning depends on the alignment between institutional strategies and family mediation. Institutions that provided clear guidelines, value-oriented policies, and consistent communication enabled families to act as active mediators rather than passive supervisors. Conversely, fragmented institutional strategies resulted in inconsistent character outcomes, as families relied on personal interpretations and informal norms. Family mediation emerged as a critical mechanism that translated institutional values into daily student behavior.

Significance: This study contributes to contemporary and applied educational research by proposing an integrative model of institutional strategies and family mediation in character education. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers and educational institutions in designing resilient character education frameworks applicable beyond crisis contexts, making the study relevant to international audiences and applied education discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed educational systems worldwide, forcing institutions to adopt emergency remote learning with limited preparation and uneven readiness. This abrupt transition disrupted not only instructional delivery but also the cultivation of students' character, which traditionally relies on direct interaction, modeling, and institutional culture. While academic achievement has received considerable attention during this period, character education has often been treated as a secondary concern. This neglect is problematic because character development remains central to students' social responsibility, self-regulation,

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and moral reasoning in uncertain contexts. The shift of learning into domestic spaces has further complicated the institutional role in shaping character. Families have become de facto co-educators, assuming responsibilities previously embedded within school environments. These structural changes demand scholarly attention to understand how character education is reconfigured during crises. Therefore, investigating character education under emergency remote learning is both timely and urgent and requires systematic analysis supported by empirical evidence (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022).

Beyond the disruption of learning modes, emergency remote learning has blurred the boundaries between institutional authority and family influence in education. Schools are no longer the sole actors defining behavioral norms, value transmission, and disciplinary practices. Instead, parents and caregivers actively mediate institutional expectations through daily supervision, interpretation of rules, and moral guidance. This mediation process can either reinforce or dilute institutional character education strategies depending on clarity, communication, and shared values. However, existing studies often isolate institutional responses or parental roles without examining their interaction. Such fragmented perspectives limit our understanding of how character education functions as a socio-institutional process during crises. Without examining this interaction, policy recommendations risk being incomplete or ineffective. The absence of integrative approaches creates a conceptual gap in contemporary education research. Addressing this gap is essential for developing resilient educational frameworks applicable beyond emergency contexts (Ossiannilsson, 2022; Tarricone et al., 2025).

The rationale of this study is grounded in the need to move beyond teacher-centered and curriculum-focused explanations of character education during emergency remote learning. Current debates tend to emphasize instructional adaptation and digital competence, overlooking the governance mechanisms that shape value transmission. Institutional strategies such as policy design, communication systems, and value articulation play a decisive role in guiding character education, particularly when direct supervision is limited. At the same time, families act as interpretive agents who translate institutional norms into everyday practices. Understanding this dual influence is crucial for explaining variations in character outcomes across similar learning contexts. This study positions family mediation not as a peripheral factor but as a central mechanism that connects institutional intent and student behavior. By examining both institutional strategies and family mediation, the study provides a more comprehensive analytical lens. Such an approach aligns with contemporary applied studies that emphasize multi-actor governance in education. Consequently, this research responds to theoretical, practical, and policy-oriented demands within international education discourse (Bart, 2024; Warren, 2025).

Recent Scopus-indexed studies have increasingly highlighted the role of family dynamics and mediation in children's educational and psychosocial development. Lindsey, (2025) demonstrates how mediation processes shape decision-making outcomes involving children, emphasizing relational negotiation rather than unilateral authority. Baudinet et al., (2025) reveal that social connectedness mediates adolescents' emotional regulation, underscoring the importance of relational environments. Fajar et al., (2025) show that parental digital illiteracy affects communication patterns and children's behavioral regulation in technology-mediated contexts. Waheed et al., (2025) further argue that parental interpretation of digital content influences children's moral and religious understanding. Tariq et al., (2025) confirm that digital parenting practices significantly impact adolescent mental health and family well-being. Clark

et al.,(2025) extend this discussion by demonstrating how social norms mediate institutional service delivery outcomes. These findings collectively suggest that mediation operates as a critical mechanism linking structural systems and individual behavior. However, most of these studies do not explicitly situate mediation within formal educational governance structures.

Parallel to family-focused research, institutional strategies in value and character education have been examined across diverse educational contexts. Saleh et al., (2025) highlight the role of institutional peace education frameworks in shaping nonviolent dispositions among students. Kholik et al., (2025) propose a strategic model of child-friendly educational climates to prevent social harm, emphasizing institutional design. Kraithep et al., (2025) illustrate how structured mediation training develops ethical competencies among university students. Lyngstad & Skjesol, (2025) analyze legitimacy in institutional mediation, stressing consistency and clarity of organizational norms. Sharma et al., (2025) indirectly contribute by showing how digital transformation affects institutional performance, relevant to educational governance during remote learning. Together, these studies confirm the importance of institutional coherence and strategic design. Nevertheless, they rarely address how institutional strategies interact with family mediation in home-based learning environments. This omission indicates the need for integrative research linking institutional and familial dimensions of character education.

Despite the growing body of research on emergency remote learning, character education, and family involvement, existing studies remain largely fragmented. Research on family mediation often focuses on psychological or cultural outcomes without situating families within institutional educational frameworks. Conversely, studies on institutional strategies tend to emphasize policy formulation and organizational design while overlooking how these strategies are enacted within households. Few studies explicitly examine the interaction between institutional strategies and family mediation as a unified process shaping students' character. Moreover, empirical evidence from crisis contexts remains limited, particularly in qualitative analyses that capture lived experiences. This lack of integrative perspectives constrains theoretical development and weakens policy recommendations. Without understanding how institutional intent is mediated at the family level, character education frameworks risk being ineffective during disruptions. Therefore, a clear analytical gap exists in connecting institutional governance and family mediation within emergency remote learning contexts.

The purpose of this study is to examine how institutional strategies and family mediation interact in shaping students' character education during emergency remote learning. The study seeks to identify the types of institutional strategies implemented to sustain character education under crisis conditions. It also aims to analyze how families interpret, adapt, and mediate these strategies within home-based learning environments. By exploring this interaction, the study intends to uncover mechanisms that facilitate or hinder character development. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach to capture multiple stakeholder perspectives. Findings are expected to contribute to applied educational theory by proposing an integrative model of institutional–family interaction. The study further aims to inform policy design for resilient character education frameworks. Ultimately, this research aspires to enhance the effectiveness of character education beyond emergency contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to investigate how institutional strategies and family mediation interact in shaping students' character education during emergency remote learning. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of processes, meanings, and contextual interactions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative indicators, as argued by Hendren et al., 2023; Maxwell & Levitt, (2023) in discussions of applied social research. The case study design was particularly suitable because emergency remote learning represents a bounded phenomenon shaped by institutional decisions and family-level practices. Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, the study pursued analytical generalization by linking empirical findings to broader conceptual explanations of character education governance, following (Drisko, 2025; Pinar et al., 2025). The research focused on a single educational setting to enable intensive and holistic analysis of institutional and familial dynamics. Emergency remote learning was treated as a critical condition that reconfigured roles, authority, and value transmission mechanisms. This design allowed the researcher to trace how institutional intentions were interpreted and enacted within households. Consequently, the research design aligned closely with the study's objective to uncover interactional mechanisms rather than surface-level outcomes.

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of school leaders, teachers, parents, and students who were directly involved in emergency remote learning. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that participants possessed experiential knowledge relevant to institutional strategies and family mediation processes, consistent with qualitative sampling principles outlined by (Hou et al., 2025; Ramadan et al., 2025). School leaders were selected to provide insights into policy formulation, value orientation, and institutional governance during the crisis period. Teachers were included to represent the implementation of institutional strategies at the instructional level. Parents were selected as primary mediators who translated institutional expectations into daily home-based learning practices. Students participated to reflect how character education messages were experienced and internalized during remote learning. The inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups enabled perspective triangulation, as recommended by (Akwataghibe et al., 2022; Killett et al., 2023). This multi-actor participant structure strengthened the credibility of the study by capturing interactions across institutional and family domains.

Table 1. Participants and Data Sources

Participant Group	Primary Role	Data Source
School leaders	Policy and institutional strategy	Semi-structured interviews, documents
Teachers	Instructional and character implementation	Semi-structured interviews
Parents	Family mediation and supervision	Semi-structured interviews
Students	Experience of character education	Semi-structured interviews

The table summarizes the composition of participants and clarifies the alignment between participant roles and data sources. It enhances methodological transparency by showing how

each group contributed to the analytical process. Such tabular presentation is commonly expected in international journals to support clarity and replicability.

Instrument

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides and institutional document analysis protocols. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide flexibility to explore participants' experiences while maintaining focus on core research themes, as discussed by (Hwang et al., 2023; Olsen et al., 2022). Interview guides for school leaders focused on institutional strategies, policy communication, and value articulation during emergency remote learning. Teacher interviews explored instructional adaptation, character reinforcement practices, and coordination with families. Parent interviews examined mediation practices, interpretation of institutional norms, and challenges encountered in supervising character development at home. Student interviews captured perceptions of behavioral expectations and consistency between school and family guidance. Institutional documents such as policy guidelines, official circulars, and communication records were analyzed to contextualize interview data. The combination of interviews and documents enabled methodological triangulation, strengthening the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns and mechanisms underlying institutional strategies and family mediation. Interview transcripts and documents were initially subjected to open coding to capture meaningful units of data, following procedures outlined by (Al-Eisawi, 2022; Zörgö & Peters, 2023). Codes related to governance, communication, value transmission, and mediation practices were then clustered into broader categories. Through axial coding, relationships between institutional strategies and family mediation processes were systematically examined. An iterative constant comparison process was applied across participant groups to refine themes, as recommended by (Saunders et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2024). Analytical rigor was enhanced through peer debriefing to challenge emerging interpretations. Reflexive memos were maintained throughout the analysis to document analytical decisions and minimize researcher bias. The final themes were synthesized into an integrative explanation of how character education was shaped during emergency remote learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings indicate that institutional strategies played a decisive role in maintaining character education during emergency remote learning. Schools that formulated explicit character-related policies and communicated them consistently were more effective in sustaining behavioral norms among students. Institutional strategies were manifested through written guidelines, virtual assemblies, and routine value-oriented messages delivered via digital platforms. Participants reported that clarity of institutional expectations reduced confusion among families regarding behavioral standards. Conversely, institutions with fragmented or implicit strategies experienced inconsistent character reinforcement. Teachers in such contexts often relied on personal discretion rather than institutional direction. This variability weakened the coherence of character education across learning environments. These results demonstrate that institutional intentionality is a foundational condition for character education during crises.

Family mediation emerged as a critical mechanism that translated institutional strategies into daily student practices. Parents did not merely supervise academic tasks but actively interpreted institutional values within household routines. In families where parents understood institutional expectations, character education was reinforced through consistent rules and moral discussions. However, when institutional communication was unclear, parents relied on personal beliefs to guide behavior. This divergence resulted in uneven character outcomes among students from the same institution. Students reported greater behavioral consistency when family mediation aligned with school messages. In contrast, misalignment generated confusion and reduced adherence to expected values. These findings highlight family mediation as an active, not passive, process.

The interaction between institutional strategies and family mediation determined the overall effectiveness of character education. When institutions provided structured guidance and families acted as collaborative partners, character education was sustained despite physical school closure. This interaction was characterized by reciprocal communication and shared responsibility. Teachers noted improved student self-regulation when families reinforced institutional norms at home. Conversely, weak interaction led to fragmented value transmission and behavioral inconsistency. Students in such contexts perceived character education as optional rather than obligatory. The findings suggest that neither institutional strategies nor family mediation alone are sufficient. Effective character education during emergency remote learning depends on their alignment and integration.

Table 2. Summary of Key Findings

Dimension	Main Findings
Institutional strategies	Clear policies and consistent communication strengthen character education
Family mediation	Parents actively interpret and translate institutional values
Interaction effect	Alignment between institutions and families produces consistent character outcomes

Table 2 summarizes the core empirical findings by mapping institutional strategies, family mediation, and their interaction. The table illustrates that character education effectiveness emerges from relational processes rather than isolated actions. This synthesis clarifies how multiple actors contribute to character formation during emergency remote learning.

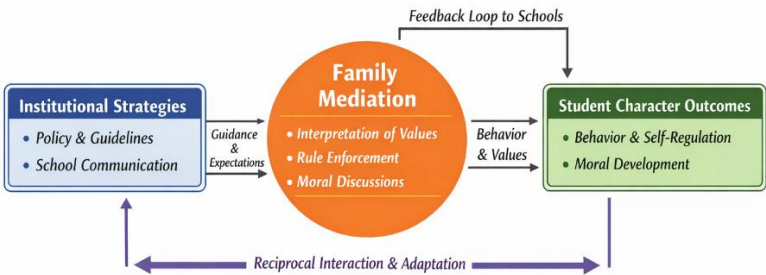


Figure 1. Model of Institutional Strategies and Family Mediation in Character Education during Emergency Remote Learning

Figure 1 conceptualizes the interaction between institutional strategies and family mediation in shaping students' character education. The model illustrates how institutional policies and communication flow toward families, where mediation processes occur before influencing student character outcomes. Feedback loops indicate how family responses inform

institutional adjustments. This model visually integrates the study's main findings into a coherent analytical framework.

Discussion

The findings confirm that institutional strategies are central to sustaining character education during emergency remote learning, supporting prior research on educational governance in crisis contexts (Shaya et al., 2023). Clear policy articulation enabled families to function as effective co-educators rather than isolated supervisors, consistent with Wade, (2025) framework of school–family partnerships. This result challenges assumptions that character education diminishes in online settings by showing that institutional design can mitigate disruption. The study extends Al Rawaf & Alfalih, (2023) by demonstrating that governance mechanisms matter not only for academic continuity but also for moral development. Unlike studies focusing solely on instructional adaptation, this research foregrounds institutional intentionality. The findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which emphasizes multi-level influences on development (Almughyiri, 2025). Emergency remote learning reshaped these levels but did not eliminate institutional influence. Instead, influence was rechanneled through families.

Family mediation functioned as a translating mechanism between institutional intent and student behavior, echoing findings by Tariq et al. (2025) on digital parenting practices. Parents actively recontextualized institutional values within domestic routines, supporting Baudinet et al.'s (2025) emphasis on relational mediation. This challenges deficit-oriented views of families as barriers to education during crises. Instead, families emerged as strategic partners whose interpretive role shaped character outcomes. The study also resonates with Waheed et al. (2025), who highlight parental interpretation of digital content as morally consequential. However, this study advances the literature by situating mediation within formal institutional frameworks. Mediation was not merely cultural or psychological but structurally linked to school governance. This reframing broadens the analytical scope of family involvement research.

The interactional findings reinforce arguments by Baluch et al., (2025) regarding the value of multi-actor qualitative analysis. Character education outcomes were contingent on the alignment between institutional strategies and family mediation, not on isolated interventions. This supports Saleh et al. (2025), who emphasize institutional coherence in value-based education. Fragmented strategies undermined legitimacy, paralleling Lyngstad and Skjesol's (2025) findings on institutional mediation credibility. The study further complements Kholik et al. (2025) by demonstrating how child-friendly institutional climates extend into domestic spaces. Importantly, the findings highlight that misalignment generates normative ambiguity for students. Such ambiguity weakens internalization of character values. Therefore, coherence across institutional and family domains is essential.

This study contributes to contemporary applied education research by proposing an integrative model of character education governance during crises. Unlike prior studies that treat emergency remote learning as a temporary disruption, this research conceptualizes it as a stress test for institutional resilience (Park et al., n.d.). The findings suggest that character education frameworks must be designed with adaptability and family integration in mind. This aligns with Sharma et al. (2025), who emphasize institutional adaptability in digital transformation contexts. The proposed model extends existing theories by explicitly positioning family mediation as a governance mechanism. It also responds to calls for applied, policy-relevant research in

education. By linking empirical findings to institutional design, the study enhances its international relevance. Consequently, the discussion advances both theory and practice in character education.

Implications

The findings imply that educational institutions should institutionalize family-inclusive character education strategies rather than treating parental involvement as supplementary. Policymakers should prioritize clear value articulation and structured communication channels during remote learning. Schools are encouraged to develop guidelines that explicitly support family mediation roles. Teacher training programs should integrate family–institution collaboration competencies. These implications extend beyond crisis contexts and inform long-term educational governance.

Limitations

This study was limited by its focus on a single educational context, which constrains contextual generalization. The qualitative design prioritizes depth over breadth, potentially limiting comparative insights. Participant accounts may also reflect subjective interpretations shaped by crisis conditions. Additionally, the study did not quantitatively measure character outcomes. These limitations suggest caution in extrapolating findings across diverse educational systems.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should examine institutional–family interaction across multiple educational contexts and cultural settings. Mixed-method designs could complement qualitative insights with measurable character indicators. Longitudinal research is needed to assess the durability of character education outcomes post-crisis. Comparative studies across countries would further enhance international relevance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that character education during emergency remote learning is fundamentally shaped by the interaction between institutional strategies and family mediation rather than by isolated instructional practices. The findings demonstrate that clear institutional policies and consistent communication provide a structural foundation that enables families to act as effective mediators of character values. When families understand and internalize institutional expectations, they translate these values into daily routines that reinforce students' moral development and self-regulation. Conversely, weak institutional guidance results in fragmented family mediation and inconsistent character outcomes. The study also shows that family mediation is an active interpretive process that connects institutional intent with students' lived experiences at home. This interactional perspective reframes character education as a shared governance process spanning institutional and domestic domains. By proposing an integrative model of institutional strategies and family mediation, the study contributes to applied education research focused on resilience in times of disruption. Overall, the conclusion underscores the necessity of designing character education frameworks that deliberately integrate families as strategic partners beyond emergency contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Yulianto Nurcahyono was solely responsible for the conception and design of the study, including the development of the research framework and analytical model. The author conducted data collection, including interviews and document analysis, and performed the qualitative data analysis and interpretation. Yulianto Nurcahyono also drafted the manuscript, revised it critically for important intellectual content, and ensured coherence across all sections of the article. In addition, the author approved the final version of the manuscript and takes full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the study.

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