

**RESEARCH ARTICLE****THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILY EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING 21ST-CENTURY SKILLS AND CHARACTER VALUES AMONG YOUTH****Suardi<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Asri<sup>2</sup>, Sitti Fatimah Achmad<sup>3</sup>, Asmar<sup>4</sup>, Ryan Rayhana Sofyan<sup>5</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia<sup>3</sup>Department of Education of Maros Regency, Maros, Indonesia<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia<sup>5</sup>Faculty of Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia**Article History**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to understand the challenges faced by families in instilling character and supporting the development of 21st-century skills among youth. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, respondents were parents with children enrolled in secondary schools or equivalent in Maros Regency, South Sulawesi. The findings indicate that families have not yet fully optimized their role as primary supporters in building a young generation ready to face global challenges. Difficulties in supporting digital skills, a lack of role models at home, and negative influences from external factors such as social media are key issues. Families struggle to provide opportunities for relevant skill training, leading to low readiness among youth to compete in the era of globalization. This study underscores the importance of improving family literacy in character education and 21st-century skills. Practical training-based interventions for families and policies that enhance access to training, along with strengthened synergy between families, schools, and communities, are identified as strategic solutions.

**Introduction**

The social and scientific construction of youth often portrays them as navigating a developmental transition from childhood to independent adulthood (Swanson, 2016), a period transitioning from education to employment and from their family of origin to a family of their own (Llyod, 2005). In the context of development, youth are seen as competent citizens capable of active participation rather than passive recipients of services (Hornyak et al., 2022). Similarly, the United Nations (2010) in The World Programme of Action for Youth positions youth within three dimensions: as agents of change, beneficiaries, and major victims of social change. The concept of youth, according to WHO, is referred to as "young people," encompassing individuals aged 10-24 years, while "adolescence" falls within the age group of 10-19 years (Supratman, 2018). Linguistically, Abdullah (2010) explains that youth are males and females who have entered the stage of transitioning to and/or reaching adulthood. Demographically, youth fall into the productive and innovative age group expected to shoulder the burden of the non-productive population. Therefore, youth are required to excel not only in quantity but also in quality and competitiveness in the process of national development. From a role perspective, youth represent the future of a nation and are a group that drives change. The role of youth in the transformation of a nation holds a central position (Nur Bintari & Darmawan, 2016). As viewed, youth are considered the heirs of ancestral traditions, individuals seen as having the potential to access broader knowledge and information, as well as possessing stronger physical abilities compared to other members of society (Istriyani, 2018). Similarly, research by Mulyono M (2020) highlights that youth have two important roles: as agents of social

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change and agents of modernization. Therefore, youth development holds critical and strategic value that impacts national progress. Supporting youth in their development and innovation becomes essential. One of the key factors influencing the unique potential and energy of youth to drive positive change and future progress is having healthy, prosperous, educated, equal, and participatory youth (Izzati et al., 2022). These factors underline that the primary challenges in youth development are closely linked to strategic issues such as education, health and welfare, employment opportunities, participation and leadership, as well as gender and discrimination. Additionally, challenges related to the utilization of technology also play a significant role.

In Indonesia, youth enter the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, facing dynamic challenges marked by changes in economic structure, education, employment, urbanization, and rapid advancements in information technology. Under such conditions, for youth to thrive in the context of global competition, they must adapt, be critical, independent, and visionary (Directorate of Family, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports, 2021). Furthermore, preparing a resilient future generation capable of contributing to national development becomes even more urgent when considering the demographic bonus currently experienced by Indonesia. It is concerning to imagine Indonesia's future if most youth, expected to be the driving force of national progress, lack quality of life, competitiveness, and productivity, as shown in research by Beatty et al., where gaps between students' abilities and national curriculum standards are evident; for instance, the average numeracy skills of 7th graders in 2014 were equivalent to those of 4th graders in 2000 (Beatty et al., 2021). Such disparities could hinder the demographic bonus. Amid this phenomenon, character and mastery of 21st-century skills are crucial to ensuring their success in navigating global dynamics.

Character and mastery of 21st-century skills are closely linked to the quality of education youth receive, both formal and non-formal, such as family education. According to a study by Albrecht et al. (2020), family education plays a significant role in shaping the emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills of youth, which are essential for navigating the challenges of the 21st century. The family, as the first educational institution, helps in laying the foundation for character development, personal values, and life skills, which are critical for youth to become independent, responsible, and competitive individuals (Kara & Arslan, 2020). In their study, Hsieh et al. (2020) found that the supportive role of family education positively affects students' academic achievement, personal well-being, and social behavior, which are key components of the 21st-century skills framework. Furthermore, research by Lopez et al. (2022) emphasized that family involvement in education directly influences not only academic outcomes but also youth's ability to adapt to changing environments and engage in problem-solving tasks, essential skills for future success. Thus, enhancing youth capacity as agents of change relies not only on formal education but also on how family education provides the necessary support to foster these essential competencies.

Despite the acknowledged role of family education in youth development, research on this topic remains limited, as most studies focus on formal education and government policies in developing character and 21st-century skills. There is insufficient attention on how family education specifically develops youth's character and skills to become agents of change. This includes addressing gaps in research by exploring the factors hindering family education and providing recommendations for optimizing the family role. With this perspective, this study aims to explore how family education can be optimized to enhance youth competitiveness, offering novelty in the form of practical recommendations for parents and policymakers to build a family education ecosystem that supports the inculcation of character values and 21st-century skills among youth.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study was designed using a descriptive quantitative approach to explore specific challenges faced by families in instilling character values and 21st-century skills in youth. A total of 278 parents from Maros Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, were involved as the research sample. These

parents had children enrolled in junior high schools or equivalent and/or senior high schools or equivalent.

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire instrument developed with closed-ended questions. The questionnaire indicators included family knowledge, developmental challenges, financial constraints, and policy support. The questionnaires were delivered to parents, who addressed by selecting the most detailed and representative answers through an online survey via Google Forms.

Data analysis was carried out in several steps. First, data management involved grouping the questionnaire responses, coding them, and organizing them into a unified dataset in the data format. Next, the data were analyzed in percentages, with the results presented in table. Finally, the findings were interpreted by the researchers based on established, relevant, and up-to-date theories and research to provide meaningful insights.

## Results and Discussion

### Challenges of Family Education in Supporting Youth to Develop 21st-Century Skills

The skills of the 21st century are essential for youth to thrive in a progressively sophisticated global workforce. Families play a vital role in guiding youth in the development of these qualities. A lack of knowledge among families can create major challenges in encouraging youth development. Research findings on family knowledge in supporting education revealed that the majority (89.9%) of respondents felt they lacked adequate knowledge to support the development of 21st-century skills. This lack of knowledge limits families' ability to act as primary supporters.

Table 1. Challenges faced by families in supporting youth to develop 21st-century skills

Variables	Very High		High		Low		Very Low	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Family knowledge in supporting the development of 21st-century skills	7	2,52	21	7,55	171	61,5	79	28,4
Difficulties in helping children develop digital skills	19	6,83	29	10,4	119	42,8	111	39,9
Opportunities for youth to develop entrepreneurial skills	6	2,16	49	17,6	102	36,7	121	43,5
Access to training or courses relevant to skill development	6	2,16	61	21,9	99	35,6	112	40,3
Support for social and leadership skill development	6	2,16	66	23,7	105	37,8	101	36,3
Financial challenges in providing education or skill development facilities	188	67,6	67	24,1	11	3,96	12	4,32

One of the primary foundations of the modern workforce is digital literacy. Research on families' roles in youth digital skill development revealed that only 6.83% of respondents reported no challenges, while the majority (82.7%) faced significant difficulties, including lack of knowledge and technical issues. These technical challenges are both individual and systemic, mirroring wider concerns regarding technological literacy, accessibility, and supportive policies.

The dynamic nature of the workforce and globalization require professionals who are innovative, adaptable, and proactive. Providing youth with opportunities to build entrepreneurial skills provides enduring advantages for both individuals and society, equipping them with essential life skills for today's society. However, Findings indicated that a majority (80.2%) of respondents perceived that youth lacked adequate support for the development of entrepreneurial skills.

Participating in pertinent training or courses is a strategic measure to reconcile academic competencies with vital life skills required for professional and daily contexts. Inclusive, accessible, and future-oriented training programs are essential for preparing adaptable, innovative, and globally competitive youth. However, the study indicated that 76% of respondents recognized a lack of opportunities for youth to engage in relevant training or courses. This signifies that most youth face obstacles in enhancing their competitiveness, thereby risking the chance of developing the creativity and innovation necessary for the 4.0 and 5.0 industrial eras.

Active participation in 21st-century life, characterized by essential cross-cultural collaboration, requires a range of skills, particularly social and leadership skills. These skills cannot evolve independently without support from family, community, and government. Therefore, social and leadership skills are fundamental for enhancing personal, community, and professional life. Continuous support from families and government guarantees that youth are both competent and equipped to lead with integrity. Research findings reveal that a majority (74.1%) of respondents deemed the support for the development of youth's social and leadership skills to be inadequate. Financial support for family education in providing facilities for youth significantly influences their skill development. Findings reveal that the majority (91.7%) of respondents faced financial challenges in supporting their children's skill development.

Table 2. Challenges faced by families in instilling character in youth

Variables	Very High		High		Low		Very Low	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Support for family education at home	11	4,0	97	34,9	81	29,1	89	32,0
Challenges in teaching moral values and work ethics	2	0,72	61	21,9	78	28,1	137	49,3
Challenges in teaching social or life skills	7	2,52	67	24,1	141	50,7	63	22,7
Role modeling at home for youth character development	0	0	88	31,7	103	37,1	87	31,3
External factors (e.g., social environment, media) influencing character development	15	5,4	98	35,3	87	31,3	78	28,1

Table 2 shows that the majority (66%) of respondents feel that their time to be involved in their children's education is limited or even insufficient. This indicates that time constraints are one of the challenges faced by families. This constraint can reduce the effectiveness of character education within the family. Nearly half of the respondents (49.3%) admit they don't know how to teach moral values and work ethics, while 28.1% of respondents often experience difficulties. In other words, the majority (77.4%) of respondents feel they lack the ability to teach moral values and work ethics. This lack of ability can result in the insufficient internalization of strong character values in youth.

The research also shows that more than half (50.7%) of respondents often struggle to teach social skills, such as communication and cooperation. Meanwhile, 22.7% admit they don't know how to teach social skills. It means that the majority (73.4%) of respondents face difficulties in teaching social skills. These findings underscore the urgency of increasing parents' capacity to assist with the youths' interpersonal development.

Regarding of role modeling, A significant majority (68.4%) believe that their children frequently or consistently lack role models at home. It signifies that role models within the family are essential yet frequently lacking. The absence of role models can undermine attempts to foster character values in young

individuals. A significant majority (66.6%) recognize that social environments and media play a pivotal role in shaping children's character development. This underscores the crucial influence of external factors on youth development, posing a challenge if families cannot offer sufficient guidance or supervision.

## Discussion

This study provides an in-depth picture of the challenges families encounter in supporting youth to develop 21st-century skills. As the primary educational environment, families serve as the principal educational setting, significantly influencing the development of character, skills, and the readiness of youth to confront global challenges. Nevertheless, the study indicates that the majority of families perceive a gap in their knowledge to adequately perform this role. 89.9% of respondents realized their insufficient knowledge, which constitutes a substantial challenge to promoting the development of 21st-century skills. This constraint affects the family's ability to offer the necessary support for youth, particularly within evolving social and technological changes.

The study found that the majority of Indonesian families still face difficulties in supporting 21st-century skills. Only 6.83% of families feel capable of supporting youth's digital skills, while the majority (82.7%) face significant challenges related to technology literacy and access to digital resources. UNESCO's (2022) report emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in family education to prepare a competitive generation. OECD's (2021) research also shows that skills such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and cross-cultural collaboration are at the core of 21st-century skills. This study's findings, which reveal deficiencies in digital literacy and access to technological resources, may intensify social and economic disparities, particularly in the context of the swift advancements of the 4.0 industrial era and society 5.0. Research from the Pew Research Center (2021) shows that individuals with low digital literacy tend to face limitations in obtaining quality jobs and participating in technology-based economic activities. This situation corresponds with the Digital Divide theory proposed by Norris (2001), which claims that inequalities in technology access and utilization generate structural disparities that impede social and economic advancement.

The study's findings regarding the lack of entrepreneurial skills and cross-cultural collaboration suggest that youth may struggle to develop creative solutions to global challenges. Schwab's (2016) study on the fourth industrial revolution underscores the significance of these skills in fostering innovative enterprises, establishing global collaborations, and promoting sustainability across various sectors. This circumstance may result in Indonesia sacrificing its opportunity to leverage its demographic dividend. Young individuals lacking pertinent skills will be unable to capitalize on top employment opportunities, as indicated in the World Economic Forum's (2020) report on the future of work.

The lack of familial support in acquiring 21st-century skills could worsen intergenerational gaps, preventing youth from establishing a solid basis for comprehensive development. This pertains to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, which underscores that microsystems, such as the family, exhibit a direct influence on an individual's development. Inadequate familial support adversely affects the development of character, adaptability, and critical thinking abilities in young individuals. Comprehensive interventions from diverse stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and communities, are essential to assist families in improving digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and cross-cultural collaboration competencies in youth.

This approach may also refer to the whole-family education model (Weiss et al., 2009), which incorporates family training with formal education to create synergy between the home and school environments in facilitating the development of 21st-century skills. Therefore, joint efforts to increase family capacity will not only assist individuals reach their full potential but also strengthen national competitiveness at the global level.

These findings also indicate a gap between theory and practice. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human development ecology theory asserts that the family is a microenvironment that greatly influences individual development. Continuous support from family is anticipated to equip individuals to confront challenges in macro systems, including globalization and advancements in technology.

Nonetheless, the research findings indicate that the family constitutes a significant weakness within the 21st-century skills education ecosystem. Factors including financial limitations affecting 91.7% of families and the lack of opportunities for training or courses (76%) demonstrate that families remain incapable of fulfilling their strategic role effectively.

This study explicitly emphasizes the obstacles encountered by Indonesian families in promoting 21st-century skills. The results underscore the necessity of enhancing family digital literacy via participatory training initiatives. Furthermore, governmental policies aimed at decreasing financial obstacles and enhancing access to relevant skills training are essential recommendations from this study.

The second part of this study reveals the challenges associated with character education within the family situation. The findings indicate considerable obstacles families encounter in building character in youth, with multiple factors influencing the efficacy of this endeavor. A primary obstacle identified is the restricted time families possess to participate in character education at home. A significant proportion of respondents (66%) acknowledged that they lack sufficient time to spend with their children. This condition emphasizes that quality family interaction, as stated by Zahra et al. (2021) in their study on the significance of parental involvement, profoundly influences the efficacy of character development. When time together is constrained, opportunities to express core values through communication and shared activities are significantly reduced.

In addition to time limitations, this study also shows that many families struggle to teach moral values and work ethics. A total of 77.4% of respondents feel they lack the adequate ability to convey these values. A survey by Li et al. (2022) indicates that parents' capacity to impart moral values is significantly associated with low family educational literacy. This underscores that the challenges faced are not only technical but also include parents' understanding of how to teach relevant moral learning methods. As a solution, intervention programs based on practical skill development for parents are required to enable them to play a more effective role in their children's character education.

Another aspect of concern is the difficulty parents face in teaching social skills to children, such as communication and cooperation. The results indicate that 73.4% of respondents often encounter obstacles in this area. However, social skills are an essential foundation for a child's interpersonal development. Research conducted by Han et al. (2023) underscores the significance of experiential learning approaches in teaching social skills in the family. Thus, a possible solution is to provide practical guidance for families to assist children in developing these skills through daily activities including family discussions or cooperative game.

One striking finding in this study is the lack of role models at home. More than two-thirds of respondents (68.4%) admitted that their children often do not receive strong role models in the family environment. Role modeling is a fundamental element in character education, as explained by Kim et al. (2022), who emphasize that consistent behavioral models from parents significantly influence the internalization of positive values by children. The lack of role models indicates that character education is not sufficient when based solely on verbal instruction but requires evidence through parents' actions.

External factors also play a significant role in character formation. This study shows that 66.6% of respondents identified social environments and media as significant influences on children's character. This phenomenon aligns with findings from Liu and Zhang (2023), who show that social media often serves as a source of values that contradict family teachings. Without adequate control and guidance from families, children may be exposed to norms and values that are inconsistent with the desired character education goals. Therefore, integrated interventions between families and communities are needed to mitigate the negative impact of these external factors.

Overall, this study provides a perspective on the issues of character education in families, particularly in the local context. The novelty of this research lies in identifying the specific challenges faced by families, including time limitations, lack of parental ability, inadequate role modeling, and the dominance of external influences. The findings reinforce that character

education is not only about transmission values but also about creating a family ecosystem that supports holistic character development. This study devotes both theoretically and practically by emphasizing the necessity of improving family education literacy and reinforcing collaboration among families, schools, and communities in instilling character in the younger generation.

### Conclusions

The results of this study show that families face significant challenges in facilitating character building and the development of 21st-century skills for youth. Key findings include parents' limited knowledge in supporting digital, entrepreneurial, and social skills, as well as the absence of role models at home. The majority of respondents realized that time constraints, financial barriers, and external influences such as social media further intensify these conditions. These difficulties show that families are not yet able to play an optimal role as primary supporters in building a generation ready to face global challenges.

This research reveals new insights by highlighting the gap between the necessity for 21st-century skills and the capacity of families to assist the youths' development. The novelty of this study lies in reinforcing the strategic role of family education within the local context of Indonesia, which has been overlooked. The findings have implications for the government to improve families' access to 21st-century skills training through affordable and inclusive community-based programs, particularly to support digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and social skills. Educational institutions can strengthen synergy with families through whole-family education programs, where family involvement becomes an integral part of children's learning.

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