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Parenting for Children's Character in Multicultural Context: Insights on Trust, Caring, Tolerance, and Forgiveness

Siti Aisyah¹, Dian Novita¹, Nina Mariani Noor², Erie Siti Syarah¹,
Noviana Mustapa¹, Musakkid Himphinit³

¹Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia, ²Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia, ³Fatoni university, Thailand

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Correspondence to

Siti Aisyah, Master of Early
Childhood Education
Study Program,
Postgraduate Program,
Universitas Terbuka,
Indonesia.

e-mail:

sitia@ecampus.ut.a.id

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Abstract

Parenting is a central site of children's character formation, especially in culturally diverse societies where values are learned, negotiated, and reinforced through everyday relationships. Drawing on character education and informed by broader discussions in social and emotional learning (SEL) and SDG 4.7, this study examined how value-based parenting dimensions, namely trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness, are associated with children's character development in Indonesia's multicultural context. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 112 female primary caregivers from five regions of Indonesia, Kuningan, Bogor, Tasikmalaya, Manado, and Jayapura, and the proposed model was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings show that trust, caring, tolerance, and forgiveness are significant positive predictors of children's character development, reflected in honesty and integrity, empathy and care, respect for difference, and constructive conflict resolution. Helpfulness, however, did not show a statistically significant direct effect once the other parenting dimensions were examined simultaneously. These findings suggest that children's character development is better understood through an integrated moral-relational configuration of parenting values than through any single value considered in isolation. The study contributes to scholarship by clarifying which parenting values retain distinct explanatory relevance within a combined model and by showing that helpfulness may operate in a more indirect or context-dependent way. It also offers a modest global contribution by bringing evidence from a multicultural Indonesian setting into wider debates on family-based character development in diverse societies. The findings have practical implications for parenting education, early childhood programmes, and family-school partnerships that seek to strengthen value-based character formation.

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Introduction

Despite the formal incorporation of character education into national curricula, its substantive meaning often remains only partially understood by parents and educators, particularly when it is reduced to a set of school-based moral messages rather than approached as a lived developmental process. This limitation is significant because character formation is not simply a matter of teaching children what is right, but of cultivating dispositions such as trust, care, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness through sustained relational experience. A growing body of research shows that effective character education strengthens moral capacities such as empathy, integrity, and prosocial responsibility, all of which are increasingly necessary in both face-to-face and digital social life (Hukubun et al., 2024; Takiling, 2023). In this respect, character education is not peripheral to children's development; it is central to how they learn to relate to others, manage difference, and participate ethically in contemporary society. Recent scholarship has further linked these concerns to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and SDG 4.7, while also

showing that positive parenting practices strengthen children's socio-emotional growth and moral development across home and school contexts (Howard et al., 2024; Choquette et al., 2024).

This broader discussion is especially relevant in Indonesia, a multiethnic and multireligious society in which character education is closely entangled with questions of national identity, coexistence, and social cohesion. Although character education has been embedded in the national curriculum, many families continue to place stronger emphasis on academic attainment than on moral and emotional formation. This imbalance matters because the family remains the child's earliest and most enduring site of value formation. When parenting is shaped by authoritarian control, uneven educational access, or limited attention to emotional development, children's opportunities to develop empathy, tolerance, and reflective moral judgement may be constrained. In some communities, these challenges are intensified by social fragmentation, rural inequality, and the persistence of exclusionary attitudes (Idris et al., 2024; Saputri et al., 2024). For that reason, the issue is not merely whether character education exists as policy, but whether value-based parenting practices are able to sustain the moral and relational conditions through which children's character can actually develop.

Among the values most frequently invoked in discussions of children's moral formation, tolerance and forgiveness occupy a particularly urgent place in the Indonesian context. In a plural society, tolerance is not an abstract civic ideal but a practical social necessity, especially where ethnic, cultural, and religious boundaries can become sites of tension rather than mutual recognition. Forgiveness is similarly important because it shapes how children learn to repair relationships, regulate hurt, and respond to conflict without reproducing hostility (Bychkova, 2021). Yet these values do not emerge in isolation. They are cultivated, weakened, or reconfigured through parenting practices that structure children's everyday encounters with authority, affection, discipline, cooperation, and difference. This makes the family a crucial analytical space for examining how moral dispositions are reproduced not only as personal traits but also as relational capacities with wider social consequences (Tiwari, 2022; Irawan et al., 2024).

Parenting values such as trust, care, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness have long been associated with children's socio-emotional and character development. Yet this relationship should not be understood as a simple input-output process in which parental values automatically produce desirable child outcomes. What matters is how these values are enacted, repeated, and made meaningful within everyday family life. Children do not merely receive moral instruction; they interpret relational patterns, observe how adults respond to conflict, and gradually internalize norms through lived interaction. In this sense, parenting functions less as the transmission of abstract virtues than as a continuous moral environment in which empathy, trust, and responsibility are modelled, negotiated, and rehearsed. Existing studies suggest that such environments can strengthen children's empathy, prosocial behaviour, self-esteem, social competence, emotion regulation, and constructive conflict resolution, especially when supported by positive parent-child interaction and productive parent-school relationships (Choi & Park, 2021; Bullough, 2023; Cox et al., 2021; Riyanto et al., 2022; Yang, 2024).

These parenting values should not be treated as isolated traits. Trust, care, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness appear to work relationally and cumulatively, shaping not only children's immediate behaviour but also the deeper moral orientations through which they engage with others. Culturally grounded approaches such as ethnoparenting further show that parenting is never value-neutral, but is embedded in local moral worlds that mediate how children learn to relate to authority, difference, and communal responsibility. Collaboration between parents and educators may deepen these processes by extending moral consistency across home and school settings, thereby reducing behavioural difficulties and strengthening children's social competence (Cook et al., 2024). Even so, much of the existing literature still examines these values separately or only indirectly, which limits understanding of how they operate together as an integrated moral ecology of parenting. This unresolved issue is

analytically important because character formation is unlikely to emerge from a single parental dimension alone; rather, it is shaped through the intersection of multiple value-based practices that together cultivate empathetic, morally grounded, and socially responsible children (De Ruyter et al., 2022; Omar et al., 2024; Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2019; Tongbin & Ma'rof, 2024).

Although previous studies have identified the influence of individual parenting dimensions on children's development, far fewer have examined how multiple value-based parenting practices operate together in shaping children's character. This gap is especially visible in Indonesian scholarship, where character education research has tended to focus more on school-based programmes than on the family as the child's first moral environment (Cook et al., 2024; Pane et al., 2024). As a result, the role of parenting in children's character formation is often acknowledged normatively but less frequently tested through an integrated empirical model. This creates both an empirical and a theoretical limitation. Empirically, it remains unclear which parenting values are most strongly associated with children's character development when examined simultaneously. Theoretically, the limited positioning of Indonesian evidence within wider international debates has restricted the broader relevance of findings that might otherwise contribute to discussions of family-based character formation in culturally diverse societies (Murano et al., 2020).

This study addresses the gap in three ways. First, it examines trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness simultaneously as an integrated set of value-based parenting predictors of children's character development. Second, it positions Indonesia's multicultural setting not merely as a local backdrop, but as an analytically meaningful case through which wider debates on parenting, moral development, and diversity can be reconsidered. Third, it gives particular attention to Helpfulness Parenting, a dimension that remains less clearly theorized than the others despite its potential relevance to prosocial development. From a prosocial socialization perspective, repeated helping practices within the family can be understood as a form of value enactment through which children observe, practise, and gradually internalize moral norms such as fairness, responsibility, and concern for others (Streit et al., 2023). Even so, helpfulness may not operate in a straightforward manner, as its influence may also depend on children's emotional regulation, opportunities for participation, and culturally specific expectations about helping behaviour.

This study draws on Lickona's theory of character education, particularly the integration of knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good as the basis of moral development (Lickona, 1992). This perspective is complemented by global SEL frameworks, which highlight empathy, interpersonal competence, and tolerance as essential capacities for social participation and twenty-first-century citizenship (Lee, 2022; Mori, 2023). Bringing these perspectives together allows the study to connect culturally grounded parenting practices with broader international discussions of character education, rather than treating local parenting merely as descriptive context. Such a framing is important because it enables the analysis to speak beyond Indonesia while remaining attentive to the social and moral specificities through which parenting values are enacted.

Against this background, the study investigates the influence of trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness in parenting on children's character development within Indonesia's multicultural context. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with data collected from mothers across diverse regions, the study seeks to generate empirical evidence that contributes both to Indonesian scholarship on parenting and early childhood education and to wider international discussions of how family practices support children's moral and socio-emotional formation in culturally diverse societies. More specifically, the study aims to identify which value-based parenting dimensions show the strongest associations with children's character development and to translate these findings into implications for parenting education, early childhood character programmes, and family-school partnerships. To guide this inquiry, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) In what ways do parenting practices grounded in trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and

forgiveness support children's character development in culturally diverse settings? (2) How can insights into parenting values inform educators and policymakers in designing programmes that strengthen children's social and emotional learning?

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine how value-based parenting practices, namely trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness, are associated with children's character development. The proposed model was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This analytic approach was selected because it is well suited to the examination of latent constructs within a relatively complex model, is less restrictive in relation to data normality, and allows the measurement and structural components of the model to be assessed simultaneously.

Participants

The study involved 112 female primary caregivers, including mothers and other women who were primarily responsible for children's day-to-day care, from Kuningan, Bogor, Tasikmalaya, Manado, and Jayapura. These locations were selected purposively to represent both western and eastern Indonesia and to reflect the multicultural settings central to the study. Female caregivers were prioritised because, in many Indonesian families, they remain the main figures involved in everyday caregiving and in the transmission of values during early childhood. This focus, however, also narrows the range of caregiving perspectives represented in the dataset, particularly those of fathers and other male caregivers.

The respondent profile shows several notable patterns. A relatively large proportion of participants were in the 51 to 55 age group, which may indicate the presence of multigenerational caregiving arrangements in some families as well as the influence of local recruitment networks across the study sites. Eligibility was established through screening questions that required respondents to be the child's primary caregiver in daily parenting routines. Most participants held a bachelor's degree, while smaller proportions had completed senior high school or a master's degree. The children under their care were between three and seven years old, with six-year-olds forming the largest age group. These characteristics should be read as part of the sample profile rather than as population patterns, and their implications for interpretation are considered in the limitations of the study. A fuller summary of the respondents' age, educational background, and the children's age distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	N	%
Age of Female Caregivers		
26–30	12	10.7
31–35	26	23.2
36–40	27	24.1
41–45	6	5.4
46–50	12	10.7
51–55	29	25.9
Total	112	100
Education of Female Caregivers		
Senior High School	15	13.4
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	86	76.8
Master's Degree (S2)	11	9.8
Total	112	100
Age of Children		
3 years	1	0.9
4 years	9	8.0

Characteristic	N	%
5 years	26	23.2
6 years	60	53.6
7 years	16	14.3
Total	112	100

Although purposive recruitment of female primary caregivers made it possible to capture focused insights into family-based character formation, the strategy also imposes clear methodological limits. Because the sample was non-probabilistic, the findings cannot be generalised broadly. In addition, the strong concentration of female respondents narrows the gendered range of perspectives represented in the study. Future research would benefit from including fathers, grandparents, and other caregivers, as well as from employing probability-based sampling where feasible in order to strengthen external validity.

Instrument

The study included five independent variables: Parenting Trust, Parenting Caring, Parenting Tolerance, Parenting Helpfulness, and Parenting Forgiveness. The dependent variable was Children's Character Development. To operationalise these constructs, the questionnaire was adapted from several internationally recognised instruments in the fields of parenting, prosocial behaviour, and character education. Across the six dimensions, each construct was translated into a set of indicators and measured through Likert-type items that were adjusted to the Indonesian socio-cultural context.

Rather than merely borrowing established scales, the instrument was refined to ensure conceptual fit and linguistic clarity within the context of this study. Content validity was established through expert review, and the wording of the items was revised to improve clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness. The trust dimension focused on consistency, honesty, and the child's sense of security. Caring addressed empathy, attentiveness to children's feelings, and supportive responses to behaviour. Tolerance captured respect for children's opinions, openness to difference, and fair conflict resolution. Helpfulness emphasised prosocial modelling, responsibility, and helping without reward expectations. Forgiveness focused on apology, letting go of resentment, and modelling reconciliation. Children's character development was reflected through honesty, responsibility, empathy, care, conflict resolution, and respect for difference. The constructs, indicators, and sources of adaptation are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Instrument

Construct	Indicators	Source of Adaptation
Trust Parenting Pattern (PAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency in keeping promises Honesty in communication Child's sense of security 	Parent-Child Relationship Scale (Pianta, 1992); Trust Scale (Rempel et al., 1985)
Caring Parenting Pattern (PAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empathy toward child's needs Attention to child's feelings Positive responses to child's behavior 	Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner & Khaleque, 2012); Prosocial Scale of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997)
Tolerance Parenting Pattern (PATO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respecting children's opinions Teaching respect for differences Modeling conflict resolution fairly 	Multicultural Tolerance Scale for Children (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002); Intercultural Competence Framework (Deardorff, 2006)
Helpfulness Parenting Pattern (PAH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging helping without expecting rewards Modeling prosocial helping behavior 	Prosocial Tendencies Measure (Carlo & Randall, 2002); Altruism scale (Rushton et al., 1981)

Construct	Indicators	Source of Adaptation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching responsibility to help others 	
Forgiveness Parenting Pattern (PAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging children to apologize Teaching forgiveness toward others Modeling non-resentment 	Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (Enright., 2000); Forgiveness Scale (McCullough et al., 1998)
Children's Character Development (PKA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honesty and responsibility Empathy and care Conflict resolution skills Respect for differences 	Character Growth Index (Lickona, 1992)

The theoretical framework guiding the study positioned trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness as parenting values that shape children's character development. These constructs were measured through an adapted instrument informed by internationally established scales, including those concerned with parent-child relationships, prosocial tendencies, forgiveness, and character development. Framing the model in this way allowed the study to connect local parenting realities with broader conversations in character education and social-emotional learning, while also maintaining methodological continuity with prior research. The conceptual relationships among these variables are illustrated in Figure 1.

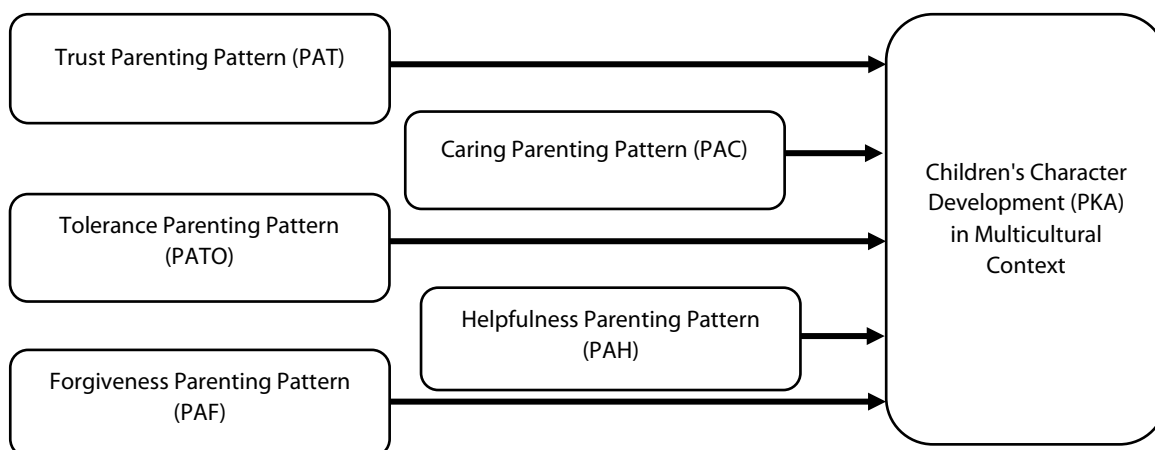


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The model shown in Figure 1 reflects the proposition that value-based parenting practices shape children's character development through distinct yet related pathways. In this way, the figure does not function merely as a visual summary, but as an analytic representation of how the study links parenting values with broader questions of moral and socio-emotional formation in multicultural settings.

Hypotheses

The study tested five hypotheses concerning the relationship between value-based parenting practices and children's character development. The first hypothesis proposed that Parenting Trust is significantly associated with Children's Character Development. The second proposed that Parenting Caring is significantly associated with Children's Character Development. The third proposed that Parenting Tolerance is significantly associated with Children's Character Development. The fourth proposed that Parenting Helpfulness is significantly associated with Children's Character Development in a multicultural context. The fifth proposed that Parenting Forgiveness is significantly associated with Children's Character Development.

Procedure

Data were collected between January and July 2025. Participants were recruited through community groups, parent associations, and school-based networks across the five selected

regions. Recruitment focused on female primary caregivers who were directly involved in children's everyday care and parenting practices.

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms after undergoing expert review by scholars in early childhood education. This review was conducted to improve cultural appropriateness, content validity, and clarity of wording. No pilot sample was used, as the instrument refinement process relied on expert judgement and the sampling strategy was purposive. Before completing the questionnaire, participants received an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and the confidentiality procedures. Informed consent was obtained electronically. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were free to discontinue at any point. After incomplete responses were removed, 112 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. The final dataset was then prepared for statistical analysis using SmartPLS.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method was chosen because it is appropriate for testing models that involve multiple latent constructs and relatively modest sample sizes. The analysis followed two stages. The first stage evaluated the measurement model by examining indicator loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The second stage evaluated the structural model by estimating path coefficients and testing their significance through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. Model quality was also assessed using R^2 , predictive relevance, and overall goodness-of-fit indicators. The findings from both stages are presented in the results section.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures involving human participants followed general ethical standards for educational research. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Terbuka – LPPM under approval number B/955/UN31.LPPM/PM/01.01/2025. Before data collection began, participants were informed about the aims of the study, the research procedures, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Electronic informed consent was obtained through the survey platform prior to completion of the questionnaire. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, no personally identifying information was collected, and all responses were used solely for academic purposes. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Result

The results are presented in line with the two-step procedure commonly used in PLS-SEM. The first stage evaluates the measurement model in order to establish the adequacy of the constructs, while the second examines the structural model and the hypothesised relationships between parenting values and children's character development. Reporting both significant and non-significant paths is important here because the study does not assume that all value-based parenting dimensions operate in the same way or with the same strength. The section therefore presents the evidence sequentially, moving from measurement quality to structural relationships and overall model performance.

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed to determine whether the adapted indicators measured the intended latent constructs with sufficient reliability and validity. This stage involved examining factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and discriminant validity. Establishing these properties was particularly important because the instrument drew on multiple adapted scales and was applied within a specific socio-cultural setting.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was examined through the loading factors of individual indicators and the AVE values for each construct. In PLS-SEM, loading values above 0.50 are generally regarded as acceptable, while higher values indicate stronger convergence between indicators and their respective latent variables (Hair et al., 2019) . Figure 2 presents the standardised loading factors for the full model.

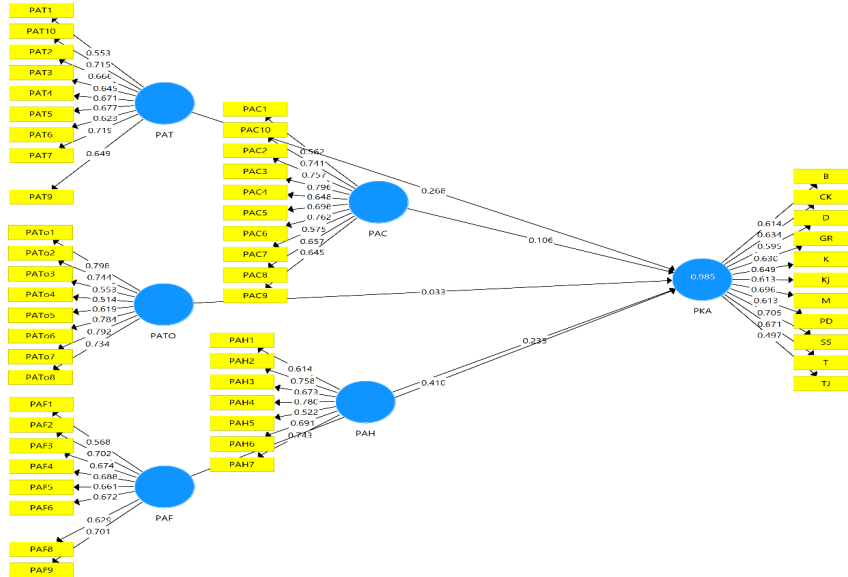


Figure 2. Standardized Loading Factor Values for the Full Model

The full-model estimation showed that several indicators loaded below the recommended threshold of 0.50. This suggested that not all indicators functioned adequately as measures of their intended constructs in the initial specification. Those weaker indicators were therefore removed from the model in order to improve measurement quality. The revised solution is presented in Figure 3.

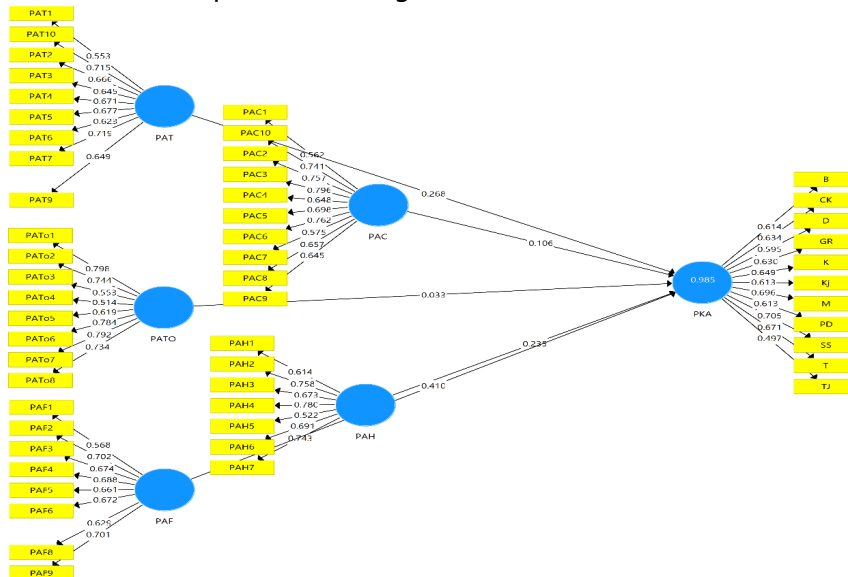


Figure 3. Standardized Loading Factor Value for the Reduction Model

After the reduction step, the retained indicators showed acceptable loading values, indicating that the revised measurement model provided a more reliable basis for representing the latent variables. This refinement strengthens confidence that the remaining items captured the constructs more coherently and with greater empirical stability.

Average Variance Extracted

AVE was then used to assess the extent to which each latent construct explained the variance of its indicators relative to measurement error. In general, AVE values above 0.50 indicate adequate convergent validity, meaning that the construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators. The AVE results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. AVE Value

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Trust Parenting Pattern (PAT)	0.534
Caring Parenting Pattern (PAC)	0.540
Tolerance Parenting Pattern (PATO)	0.591
Helpfulness Parenting Pattern (PAH)	0.574
Forgiveness Parenting Pattern (PAF)	0.540
Child Character Development (PKA)	0.598

As shown in Table 3, all AVE values exceeded the 0.50 threshold. This indicates that each construct demonstrated acceptable convergent validity and that, on average, the latent variables accounted for more than half of the variance in their respective indicators.

Composite Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability. Values above 0.70 are typically interpreted as evidence that the indicators measure their latent construct consistently. The Composite Reliability results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Composite Reliability Value

Variable	Composite Reliability (CR)
Trust Parenting Pattern (PAT)	0.873
Caring Parenting Pattern (PAC)	0.899
Tolerance Parenting Pattern (PATO)	0.883
Helpfulness Parenting Pattern (PAH)	0.861
Forgiveness Parenting Pattern (PAF)	0.862
Child Character Development (PKA)	0.879

All constructs produced Composite Reliability values above 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Taken together with the AVE results, these findings suggest that the measurement model was sufficiently robust to support interpretation of the structural relationships.

Structural Model

After establishing the adequacy of the measurement model, the analysis proceeded to the structural model in order to examine the relationships between the five parenting dimensions and children's character development. The model included five exogenous latent variables and one endogenous latent variable. Figure 4 presents the structural model used for hypothesis testing.

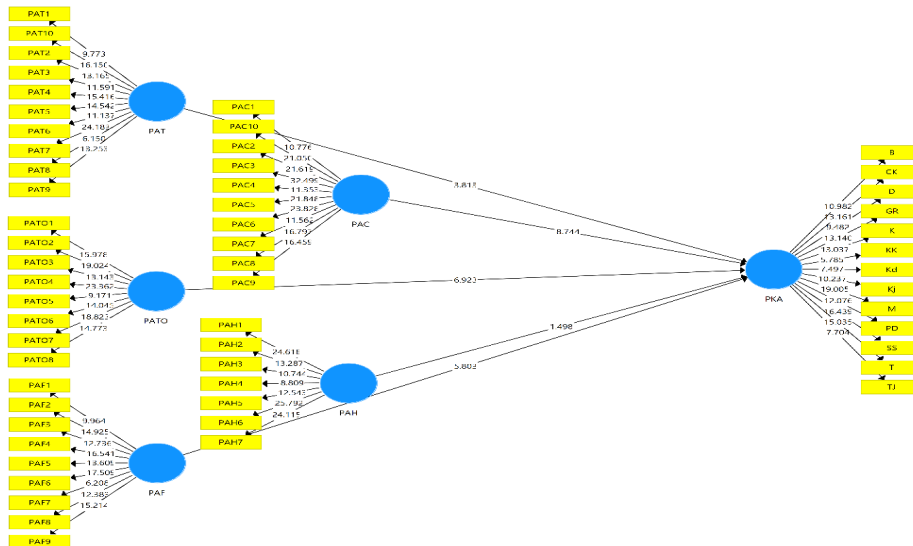


Figure 4. Structural Model

The model in Figure 4 shows the directional paths linking trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness in parenting to children’s character development. Table 5 reports the path coefficients, standard deviations, t statistics, and p-values used to evaluate each hypothesis.

Table 5. Direct Effect of Structural Model Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	p-value
Trust Parenting Pattern (PAT) → Child Character Development (PKA)	0.287	0.075	3.813	0.000*
Caring Parenting Pattern (PAC) → Child Character Development (PKA)	0.167	0.019	8.744	0.000*
Tolerance Parenting Pattern (PATO) → Child Character Development (PKA)	0.236	0.034	6.923	0.000*
Helpfulness Parenting Pattern (PAH) → Child Character Development (PKA)	0.042	0.028	1.498	0.135ns
Forgiveness Parenting Pattern (PAF) → Child Character Development (PKA)	0.330	0.057	5.803	0.000*

Note: * significant at the 5% level; ns = not significant.

The structural results indicate that four of the five parenting dimensions were significantly and positively associated with children’s character development. Trust showed a positive and significant relationship with character development ($\beta = 0.287, p < 0.001$), suggesting that stronger trust-based parenting practices were associated with stronger character outcomes among children. Caring also showed a positive and statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.167, p < 0.001$), indicating that affective attentiveness and supportive parenting responses were meaningfully related to children’s character formation.

Tolerance emerged as another significant predictor ($\beta = 0.236, p < 0.001$), pointing to the importance of parenting practices that cultivate respect for difference and fair conflict resolution in multicultural settings. Forgiveness showed the strongest positive coefficient among the significant predictors ($\beta = 0.330, p < 0.001$), suggesting that parenting practices centred on apology, reconciliation, and the release of resentment may play a particularly important role in children’s character development.

By contrast, Helpfulness Parenting did not show a statistically significant direct effect

on children's character development ($\beta = 0.042$, $p = 0.135$). Although the coefficient was positive, the relationship did not reach the conventional threshold for significance. This result suggests that helpfulness may not operate as a direct predictor in the same way as the other parenting dimensions. Its influence may be more conditional, more indirect, or more dependent on contextual and relational factors not fully captured in the present model. For that reason, the positive direction of the coefficient should be interpreted cautiously and should not be treated as evidence of a confirmed direct effect.

Model Fit and Predictive Relevance

The overall structural model indicates that trust, caring, tolerance, and forgiveness functioned as significant positive predictors of children's character development, while helpfulness did not show a statistically significant direct association in this sample. The model explained a substantial proportion of the variance in the endogenous construct. Even so, explained variance in models based on conceptually related constructs and single-source self-report data should be interpreted with caution, since high R^2 values may partly reflect conceptual proximity, shared measurement method, or sample-specific response tendencies rather than strong causal evidence.

Predictive relevance was assessed using the Stone-Geisser Q^2 procedure obtained through blindfolding. A positive Q^2 value indicates that the model has predictive relevance for the endogenous construct within the sample. This supports the analytical usefulness of the model, although predictive strength in this context should be understood as in-sample rather than out-of-sample performance. A more demanding assessment, such as PLSpredict, would offer a stronger test of predictive generalisation and could be incorporated in future studies.

Because the model relied on several closely related value-based parenting dimensions reported by the same caregivers, the possibility of construct overlap, common method variance, and sample-specific inflation cannot be dismissed. The interpretation of the findings therefore remains deliberately cautious. The results are best understood as evidence of patterned associations within the observed caregiver sample rather than as definitive proof of causal effects. Replication with more diverse caregiver groups, including fathers and male caregivers, as well as the inclusion of multi-informant outcome measures such as teacher ratings, would strengthen the external validity and interpretive range of future research.

Discussion

The overall pattern of results suggests that children's character development is shaped less by isolated parenting traits than by a moral-relational configuration in which trust, caring, tolerance, and forgiveness function as the more direct predictors. This matters theoretically because it shifts the interpretation of family-based character formation away from a checklist of virtues toward a relational ecology of value enactment. Rather than showing that every positive parenting value operates with equal explanatory strength, the model indicates that some values appear more immediately tied to children's moral and socio-emotional outcomes than others. This reading is consistent with broader work showing that character-related outcomes in early childhood are embedded within interacting social-emotional competencies rather than produced by a single dimension alone (Murano et al., 2020). In that respect, the study offers a modest global contribution by showing how a multicultural Indonesian case can refine wider debates on family-based character formation in diverse societies rather than merely adding another local description.

The significant role of Parenting Trust (PAT) indicates that character formation is strengthened when caregiving relationships are marked by honesty, consistency, and emotional security. Trust matters not only because it makes children feel secure, but also because it makes moral guidance more credible and relationally meaningful in everyday life. Earlier work similarly shows that trusting relationships between adults and children create

conditions that support participation, expression, and developmental growth (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). Supportive family environments also appear to amplify the benefits of early educational experiences, while parent-school communication can reinforce emotional resilience and moral continuity across settings (Han et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2019). Parents who are more informed about education may further strengthen children's engagement and adjustment, which helps explain why trust can operate beyond the home as part of a wider developmental ecology (Robinson et al., 2018; Caronia, 2024).

Parenting Caring (PAC) and Parenting Tolerance (PATO) can be read as closely related but analytically distinct dimensions of this moral-relational configuration. Caring points to the importance of empathic responsiveness and attentiveness to children's feelings, while tolerance concerns how children are introduced to difference, disagreement, and fairness in everyday interaction. Both dimensions matter because character is formed not only through explicit instruction, but through repeated experiences of being cared for and being taught how to relate to others without exclusion or hostility. Prior work has likewise noted that children need parental support and demonstration if they are to understand tolerance and respond positively to people who behave differently (Sumadi et al., 2021). The present findings therefore suggest that care and tolerance are not peripheral family virtues, but practical conditions through which children learn empathy, respect, and socially sustainable forms of conduct.

Parenting Forgiveness (PAF) also emerged as a significant predictor and produced the strongest coefficient among the significant paths in the model. This suggests that apology, reconciliation, and the release of resentment may hold a particularly important place in children's moral formation. Earlier research similarly shows that forgiveness is more likely to develop when adults actively model it rather than merely recommend it as a rule of conduct (Haslip et al., 2019). In developmental terms, forgiveness is consequential because it teaches children that conflict does not have to culminate in hostility and that relationships can be repaired through reflection, accountability, and emotional restraint. The relative strength of PAF in this study therefore points to the possibility that restorative moral practices may be especially important in multicultural settings where children must learn not only to differ, but also to recover from interpersonal friction.

By contrast, Parenting Helpfulness (PAH) did not show a statistically significant direct effect, even though the coefficient remained positive. This result differs from work that emphasises parents' responsibility to help and guide children in activities that support development (Anggraini, 2020). One plausible explanation is that PAH overlaps conceptually and statistically with adjacent parenting dimensions such as caring, tolerance, and forgiveness, so that its unique contribution becomes smaller once these correlated constructs are entered simultaneously in the same model (Van Der Storm et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2021). Longitudinal evidence also suggests that the predictive strength of supportive parenting for prosocial tendencies may weaken when overlapping constructs are controlled more rigorously (Yavuz et al., 2022). The non-significant direct path therefore does not make helpfulness irrelevant, but indicates that its role may be less immediate and less independent than initially assumed.

A more defensible interpretation is that PAH may operate through mediating processes such as empathic concern, emotion regulation, and internalised prosocial norms rather than through a straightforward direct route to character outcomes (Martinsone et al., 2022; Ornaghi et al., 2020). This possibility is consistent with evidence that character-related outcomes in early childhood are distributed across broader social-emotional competencies, where multiple capacities interact and no single value domain fully explains development on its own (Murano et al., 2020). Observational and teacher-rated work in preschool settings further shows that helping behaviour is closely tied to children's wider socio-emotional and behavioural profiles, and that its meaning depends on context and quality of enactment (Salerni & Caprin, 2022). Cross-cultural scholarship also reminds us that parenting practices acquire meaning within culturally specific routines and expectations, so helping may function differently depending on whether it is framed as duty, relational harmony, or voluntary altruism (Lansford, 2022;

Rothenberg et al., 2021). For that reason, PAH is better interpreted here as a potentially conditional or indirect pathway than as a failed construct.

These findings should therefore be read as evidence of patterned associations rather than as a definitive causal map of how parenting shapes children's character. The study's contribution lies less in claiming universality than in showing that family-based character formation can be analysed as a differentiated configuration of parenting values whose effects are uneven, relational, and context-sensitive. This has wider relevance for global scholarship because it suggests that multicultural contexts do not simply provide background variation, but can illuminate why some parenting values travel more directly across settings while others depend more heavily on local moral routines and social expectations (Lansford, 2022; Rothenberg et al., 2021). It also implies that interventions aimed at strengthening children's character should move beyond generic moral messaging and attend more closely to the relational processes through which trust, care, tolerance, and forgiveness are enacted across home and school contexts (Johnson et al., 2019; Murano et al., 2020). Future research should test this configuration with more diverse caregiver samples, multi-informant outcome measures, and longitudinal designs so that the present findings can be evaluated with greater explanatory precision.

Conclusion

This study examined how value-based parenting dimensions, namely trust, caring, tolerance, helpfulness, and forgiveness, are associated with children's character development in Indonesia's multicultural context using caregiver-reported survey data. The findings show that trust, caring, tolerance, and forgiveness are significant positive predictors of children's character development, conceptualised here in terms of honesty and integrity, empathy and care, respect for difference, and constructive conflict resolution. Helpfulness, by contrast, did not show a statistically significant direct association once the other parenting dimensions were modelled simultaneously. These results indicate that children's character development is more convincingly understood through an integrated moral-relational configuration of parenting values than through any single value considered in isolation. The study therefore contributes to parenting and SEL-oriented scholarship by showing that relationally grounded and repair-oriented parenting practices retain distinct explanatory relevance when examined within the same model, while also offering a modest global contribution through evidence from a multicultural Indonesian setting that speaks to wider debates on family-based character education in diverse societies.

The findings also refine the theoretical place of helpfulness within family-based character formation. Rather than supporting a straightforward direct-effect interpretation, the results suggest that helpfulness may operate in a more conditional or indirect manner, possibly through empathy, emotion regulation, or the internalisation of prosocial norms. Its developmental role may therefore depend on how it is embedded within wider relational and cultural processes rather than on its isolated presence as a parenting value. For practice and policy, the study points to the need for early childhood programmes, parenting education, and teacher-parent partnerships that move beyond generic moral messaging and more intentionally cultivate trust-building, caring communication, respect for difference, and restorative responses to conflict. Because the analysis was based on cross-sectional data and single-informant caregiver reports, the findings should be read as evidence of patterned associations rather than as proof of causal influence, and future research should replicate the model with more diverse caregiver profiles, multi-informant outcome measures, and designs that can clarify whether helpfulness functions more convincingly as a mediator, moderator, or context-dependent pathway.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Siti Aisyah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft. Dian Novita: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing. Nina Mariani Noor: Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing. Erie Siti Syarah: Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Project administration. Noviana Mustapa: Supervision, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Project administration. Musakkid Himphinit: Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

Additional Information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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