

Character Development and Deviant Behavior: A Systematic Review of Theft Among Students in Educational Environments

Firman Priyanto^{1*}, Triono Ali Mustofa¹, Mutohharun Jinan¹

¹ Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

* Email: o100250005@student.ums.ac.id

Abstract

In schools and colleges theft of students' property is a chronic problem that influences the formation of students' character and social activity. This is not only to the detriment of the quality of education, but it also undermines confidence between teachers and students and parents. So the purpose of this study is to rise over what induced stealing behavior, developing character students stolen acts and what institutions could do not be a person who likes to steal. The research employ method is a systematic literature review with qualitative approach reviewing and analyzing on character building, criminal behavior, and student theft. Searches for literature were made on international databases using the key words "deviant behavior", "theft", "character" and "students in education". The study found that stealing behavior was shaped by both internal elements (personality, self-esteem) and external phenomenon (peer influence, family factors; social injustice). This is not conducive to building good character in students, in particular on issues of honesty, responsibility and empathy. Schools can help to combat stealing by incorporating a character education program built on high morals of honesty, integrity and personal responsibility. In sum, students' stealing behavior is a personal moral issue as well as an indicator of the defected social environment and education condition waiting to be improved. Theoretical implications of the study reported above suggests that a multi level perspective (family, teacher and school) should be used to inspire an environment that's conducive for character formation in students also to minimise stealing behavior.

Keywords: theft, character education, deviant behavior, students, educational environment.

Introduction Section

Recently, theft crime among students in school was a serious issue and influenced on their character development and social manners (Firdasannah et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2024; Tamam, 2025; Villafuerte-Díaz et al., 2024). That phenomenon, widely regarded as deviant behavior, not only has consequences for the quality of education but also can do harm to the social climate in schools (Giri & Pradnyanica, 2023; Nainggolan et al., 2025; Ngidi & Ntinga, 2025; Ningsih et al., 2025; Pertiwi et al., 2025). Stealing behavior may signify the emotional instability (Gini et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2024; Munguía et al., 2025; Noya et al., 2022) or bigger social matters for a student (Pangesti & Dora, 2025; Villafuerte-Díaz et al., 2024) like lack of self-control, low sense of responsibility, or poor coping style with stress and pressure (Cengiz et al., 2025; Hirtenlehner & Leitgöb, 2024; Sánchez-Fernández & Borda-Mas, 2024; Vazsonyi et al., 2025). Spreading of theft in high schools turned off an alert for every education parties as well as parents and authorities to create the strategic method that preventing this phenomenon offer and building children character on a positive countenance (AB. Musyafa Fathoni et al., 2024; Ardi Rafsanjani et al., 2024; Mansyur et al., 2022; Ongo et al., 2025).

Prior studies have established that student deviant behavior such as theft could be under the influence of internal and external factors (Amukeru et al., 2024; Cui et al., 2024; Dullas et al., 2021; Mutia et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Internal factors refer to psychological effects, such as students' poor self-concept, emotional needs not being met as well as the impact of funds on their mental health (Akeren et al., 2025; Al Lawati et al., 2025; Fang et al., 2023; Mori et al., 2024; Susilawati et al., 2023) At the same time, external factors involve peer pressure, school condition and presence of goods which are widely available with less observation (Aisyah et al., 2025; Chiha et al., 2023; Dira & Subardjo, 2025; Medellu et al., 2025; Siddiqua & Mondol, 2020).

Several studies indicate a rise in crimes against minors, such as theft. A research conducted in Bungoma County identified thefts as one of the behaviours with nearly all, 95.6% of high school students owning to have been engaged to theft cases within schools including their classmates and other institution properties (Barasa et al., 2023). In Khartoum State (Sudan), a study of 1851 students indicates that the most frequent act of deviance in schools is theft, accounting for 19.4% and it was found to be one of the most prevalent behavioral problems among middle level school students (Mirghani & Ahmed, 2020).

This delinquent act can harm worse than the goods or money taken, which may also affect student character and morale negatively (Dira & Subardjo, 2025)(Kurniawan et al., 2024; M. Bahtiar Ubaidillah et al., 2024; Ola-Williams et al., 2024; Supriatna et al., 2025). According to research by (Ramadhani et al., 2024) the character education that forms student's responsibility and empathy has been successful in preventing deviant behavior, including stealing behavior in school (Tiara Ramadhani et al., 2024). Character building is considered as one of the priority objectives that every educational institution

should have in relation to education (Daud et al., 2024; Hadi et al., 2025; Kafa Sakinah et al., 2025; Megawati & Prahmana, 2025; Putri Kurniawati et al., 2025). It is necessary, therefore to know the determinants of stealing behavior and its consequences on the character of students.

Tealing is an issue that requires immediate attention as it can affect their future socially and academically (Atmaca & Öntaş, 2024; Zikra Rahma et al., 2023). The act of theft indicates a personal morality issue for the student stealing as well as creates an environment where students do not trust each other as well as teachers and parents (De Buck & Pauwels, 2021; Fenizia & Parrello, 2025; Gavreliuc et al., 2022; Lestari, 2023; Okonkwo & Dlamini, 2024). Statistics from the Institute for Educational Psychology (2024) revealed that more than 30% of students who committed theft witnessed a decline in their academic performance and this curtails their level of education promptly (Zaidah et al., 2023). This decrease is associated with the mental disorder among the students who involve in delinquency. Hence, so prevention is required to diminish stealing behavior and form student character.

A number of educational and psychological authors have studied students theft. A number of studies have reported that students are likely to involve in theft due to environmental elements such as the influence from parents and friends. Study by Rahmat et al. (2024) and Nuariningsing et al. (2023) the article mentions that students with low monitoring supervision in their families are more likely to carry out stealing behavior (Nuariningsih et al., 2023; Rahmat & Amrizal, 2024). Another study by Erliansyah (2023) suggests that character education program with extracurricular activity in schools can decrease deviant behavior, such as theft (Erliansyah, 2023; Saudah, 2023; Siti Masitoh & Novebri, 2024). However, despite the various studies that have been conducted, research integrating students' psychological factors and their influence on character development in the context of theft in educational settings is still limited. What's more, the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the patterns of deviant behavior among students involved in theft is one of the important gaps that need further research.

Although many researches have been conducted concerning deviant behaviors among students, few studies have been concerned with the relationship between stealing behavior and its effects in character building of student. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on the level of responsibility vested in educational institutions for curbing stealing behaviour among students and developing their character. The previous research literature has tended to concentrate on the role of social and environmental factors where there have little empirical scrutiny on how patterns of deviance in students who steal from school could be best tackled within an educational setting.

According to the background and the presented problems, several questions that are related to student's stealing behavior in educational setting can be covered by this research: The research problem that will be addressed in this study is as follows: (RQ1) What are the antecedents of stealing behavior among students at educational settings? (RQ2) How does the act of stealing influence character education among students in school? (RQ3) What are the deviant behavior profiles of students who conduct theft at school? (RQ4) What are the ways for schools to limit stealing from students and foster character development?

It is anticipated that this research will contribute to a greater understanding about how the dynamics of stealing among students plays out and provide suggestions for educational institutions in their efforts to support character development as it is most effective through a more integrated perspective.

Methodology

This investigation is a qualitative research on the method of systematic literature review to find out and assess relatives order amidst character development such as deviant behavior (particularly theft) among students in school. This review will be conducted based on the PRISMA 2020 methods of systematic literature review allowing the article selection and data synthesis process to be transparent and replicable. The central aim of this research is to comprehend the dynamism of deviant behavior, particularly theft, among students and what shape character takes on in an educational environment. Furthermore, this research also intends to identify the major trends and situational factors or parameters in patterns which affect theft and deviance in educational facilities.

Literature search We will perform a detailed literature search containing database (Scopus) and date (from start until 2025). This search will be restricted to English-language articles only and will give preference to studies that were published in open access journals. The search was conducted using keywords: "Deviant Behavior" AND "Theft" AND "Character Formation" AND "Students in Education". The literature search of Web of Science will be searched for title-abs-key (TITLE-ABS-KEY) in the following form:

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(TITLE-ABS-KEY("Deviant Behavior") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY("Theft") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY("Character Formation") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("Students in Education")) AND PUBYEAR = 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO(SUBJAREA,"SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO(SUBJAREA,"ARTS")) AND (LIMIT-TO(OA,"all")) AND (LIMIT-TO(LANGUAGE,"English"))
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The criteria for inclusion are empirical research studies that explored character construction, deviant behavior and theft in school among students; papers written in English language and open access ones that were indexed by the scientific journals either under the subject of "Social Sciences" (sociology) or "Art and Humanities. The included articles are published from 2025 and provide original data, or substantial analytical findings on this subject. The review of literature; Meta-analysis or theoretical papers Articles not related to students or the article does not discuss theft/deviant behavior in education.

An initial search of articles resulted in 845 relevant articles related to the theme use digital learning tools-based learning on secondary school, and impact of this method use of on the outcome of learning. At this point where the screening is done according to inclusion criteria there are 22 articles left. The articles were then screened one more time for the relevance of their title and how they relate to the focus of this study. Therefore, a total of 12 articles were included for the further analysis. The shortlisted articles were then critically reviewed to ensure that their findings reported were in accordance with the research aims and thus had value- added propositions in broadening/ deepening our understanding on how digital learning tools might influence students; academic performance at a secondary school level.

The data selection process starts with an opening round and produces an initial search that returns relevant articles. Relevant articles will be screened on the basis of title and abstract. Full-text screening will then take place to assess suitability of the article against the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This will then lead to the final selection of papers for further analysis. The selection process procedure results will be reflected in a PRISMA flowchart to maintain the transparency of article selection at every stage.

Extracted data will be extracted into a common extraction table and will include details on the author, year of publication, study population (e.g. age, class level), methodological approach (e.g. qualitative; quantitative), main findings related to deviant behaviour, theft or character formation, study design type (e.g. case series; experimental studies) and contextual details including specific education setting and relevant social/cultural influences. Then the data will be analysed by thematic synthesis in order to point out the main trends of studies on character formation and deviant behaviour among students, with regard to theft and what factors could contributed that behaviour, like culture in school settings, peer influence, socio-economic status as well as educational politics.

Critical appraisal tools like the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist, or CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) will be used to determine the quality of the studies included in this review. Clarity in, rigor of, and relevance to the research question will be assessed for each included article. The process of selecting articles can be depicted, with emphasis on each stage from the list of identified studies to the final selection of eligible articles. The purpose of this methodology is to conduct a thorough, systematic, and rigor literature review on deviant behavior, theft and character development in students in educational institutions.

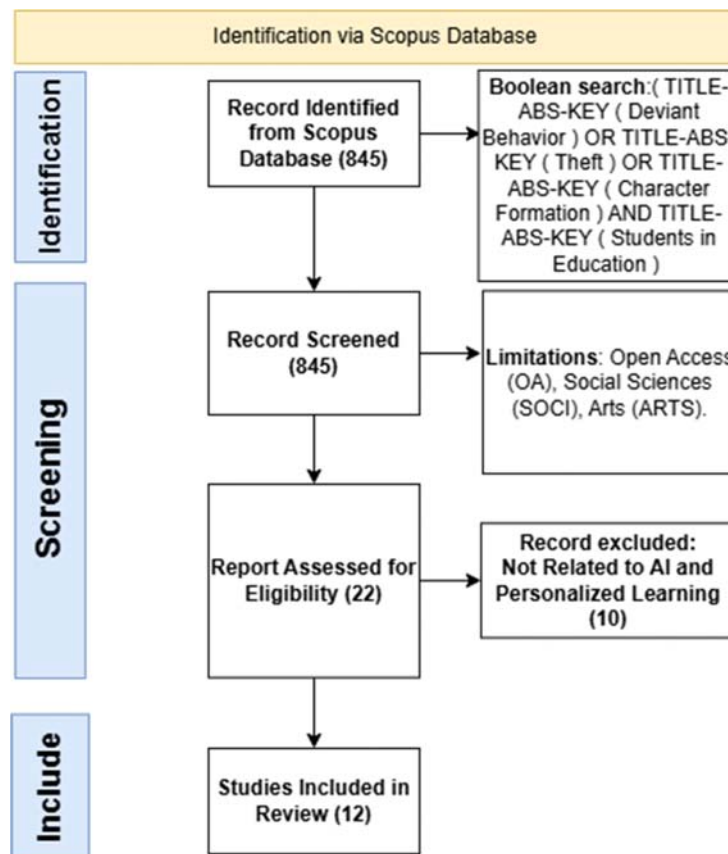


Figure 1. Identification via Scopus Database

Results

Table 1. Main information about data

Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Author Affiliation
Ethical Behavior Intervention Through Group Activities in Secondary Education	Miguel A. Alonso, Inge Schweiger Gallo	2024	Psychology in the Schools	Spain	Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain
The Character Education Revolution: The Impact of Multiple Intelligence-Based Reading Learning on Student Development	Khabib Sholeh, Onok Yayang Pamungkas, Main Sufanti, Semi Sukarni, Umi Faizah, Shaleh Afif	2025	Educational Process: International Journal	Indonesia	University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia
Virtue for Academic Flourishing: An Argument for the Importance of Character in the Higher Education	Brendan W. Case, Tyler J. VanderWeele	2025	British Journal of Educational Studies	USA	Harvard University, USA
The Character Education Model As a Strategic Framework for Nurturing Religious Moderation Within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia	Sarbini, Tahrir, Endi, Salami Mutiu Olagoke, Setia Gumilar, Mursidin	2025	Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies	Indonesia	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Malaysia
Theoretical and Methodological Foundation of a Self-Perception Scale on Personal Competencies and the Cardinal Virtues	Jorge López González, Paula Crespi, Belén Obispo-Díaz, Jesús Rodríguez Barroso	2023	Journal of Beliefs & Values	Spain	Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid, Spain
The Spiritual and Socio-Educational Implications of Geojassi Christian School	Jun-Ki Chung	2025	Pharos Journal of Theology	South Korea	Kwangshin University, South Korea
Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Propensity to Cheat Scale Validation in the Ethiopian Public Higher Education Institutions	Dame Taye, Tesfaye Semela, Samuel Assefa	2025	F1000Research	Ethiopia	Hawassa University, Ethiopia
Religious Values as Foundations of Education: Insights from Teachers' Perspectives	Ghufron Maksum, Muhtolib, Mahmurudin, Sulaeman, Wiwi Pertiwi, Hidayatul Azizah Gazali, Raudhatul Husna, Zuhropatul Jannah, Agus Supriadi, Istiqomah, Muzna Attamimi, A. Syaiful Fahmi, Salman Ali, Dewanti Srihati	2025	Research Journal in Advanced Humanities	Indonesia	PTIQ University Jakarta, Indonesia; Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia; STIT Al-Quraniyah Manna, Indonesia
Integrating Islamic Values and Local Wisdom into Science Education: Enhancing Character Development in Higher Education	Kurniawan Arizona, Joni Rokhmat, Agus Ramdani, Gunawan, AA Sukarso	2025	Ulumuna	Indonesia	University of Mataram, State Islamic University of Mataram, Indonesia

Ibn Miskawaih's Ethical Philosophy and Its Relevance to Moral Education in Indonesian Secondary Schools	Juwaini, Syamsul Rijal, Aminudin Basir @ Ahmad, Harjoni Desky, Moh Tamtowi, Mawardi, Cut Siska Safira	2025	Scientific Journal of Peuradeun	Indonesia	Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh, National University of Malaysia, Lhokseumawe State Islamic Institute, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia
Impact of holistic learning models on character development: a systematic review	B. Bulkani, A. Riadin, N. Ni'mah, M.A. Setiawan	2025	The Education and Science Journal	Indonesia	University Muhammadiyah of Palangkaraya, Indonesia
Epistemic justice: a twofold mission for human rights and social sustainability in teacher education	Marita Cronqvist	2025	Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research	Sweden	Faculty of Librarianship, Information, Education and IT, University of Borås, Sweden

According to the data, there has been growing interest in character education and moral values in the literature of international education, with particular emphasis on secondary education and higher education. Most of the documents collected in this data have been published in 2025, suggesting what are current trends towards the integration of character's values to educational curricula across countries. Studies deal with varying topics, from the role of group activities in value education at high school to application of religious values and local wisdom at college level science education.

It is noteworthy that Indonesia controls as many papers, showing wide concern in the country about the attempt to embed character education at different educational levels. For example, some Indonesian studies by the University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto and the State Islamic University concentrate on models of character education that intertwine local religious and cultural values to enhance student learning. This study proves the attempt of building character being accomplished by an education that does not only focus on academic activities but also develop spiritual and social values.

On the contrary, studies from countries such as the USA, Spain and South Korea also intensified, with themes on character education models in relation to higher education and on student character development for better academic performance. Take Harvard University in the USA: it states its emphasis on character education as part of college education with the intent to influence students' academic and social welfare. Similarly, research from Spain on the methodological bases of quantifying Personal Competence and Cardinal Values in education.

The data coming from these studies demonstrate that there is an increasing urgency to teach morality and ethics in formal education, i.e., moral and character education. This method is not only for academic proficiency, but makes them responsible and has good integrity at home or in the face of society and workplace. In Short, there are prospects for the existence of character education based on local values, religion and cultural wisdom to improve the quality of education, especially in shaping the character of learners. Countries like Indonesia, the USA, Spain and South Korea have recognised the important to develop an education system that not only forms high education, but also good character that is adapt in facing challenges.

Antecedents to Stealing Behavior among Pupils within the School Milieu

Etiology of theft behavior in students is multifactor, including personality, social influence and character education which has not provided sufficient emphasis on ethical values. Their personality traits, including irresponsibility and agreeableness can foster in them an inclination for theft, particularly when living in contexts that do not promote character development (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Peer pressure also an external factor, social influence would likely increase the chance of misconduct (Sholeh et al., 2025). Further, failure to provide students with character education involving honesty and fairness leaves them more susceptible to unethical behaviors (Case & VanderWeele, 2025). The exercise of the cardinal virtues and character's shaping by means of a strong moral education may decrease such probability (López González et al., 2025). Hence, schools should pay attention to students' curricular returning-point, not only centered on academic attainment but also emphasizing in the development of individuals has people with sufficient ethical values.

A variety of factors influence the act of cheating among students, including social influences, family environment and character education set. Peer influence in a less controlled environment may motivate learners to steal just to belong (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Moral value education, more especially if they are based on religious teachings, such as honesty, taking responsibility, and sympathize is essentially in forming students' moral character and reducing the stealing tendency of individuals (Chung, 2025). In the absence of lessons on good character and lack of these values, students can be "vulnerabilized" to commit dishonest acts like stealing. Hence, education with a focus on character and virtues is crucial to avoid the act of stealing among students (Juwaini et al., 2025).

Peer influence, family relationships, social injustices and absence of character education are among the factors explaining stealing behaviour in pupils. Peer pressure in a setting such as the exam-oriented school can motivate students to adopt deviant practices like stealing, in order to win social affirmation (Bulkani et al., 2025). Similarly, social injustice

and implicit bias in education systems make for unfavourable conditions whereby dishonest acts especially stealing are tolerated or overlooked. When schools do not teach for social justice, empathy and moral development, stealing may be a way to respond to injustice (Cronqvist, 2025). Thus, the schools should provide students with a good character education and a fairness environment in order to decrease their stealing behavior.

How Stealing Behavior Affects the Character of Students in School

Students stealing disrupts character-building, where students learn values like honesty, responsibility and empathy. Several studies, while not focusing specifically on the effect of theft, suggest that unethical behaviour such as stealing can harm the moral development of students. For instance, Alonso and Schweiger Gallo (2025) identified that ethical behavior interventions in the form of group activities have potential to modify unethical behaviors like stealing in students with low ethics scores (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Sholeh et al. (2025) reveals that MI-based learning improves the development of positive characters, such as empathy and disciplined that might cause decrease in theft behavior among students (Sholeh et al., 2025). Furthermore, the salience of values such as honesty and fairness for students' personal and academic development was illuminated earlier Case & VanderWeele (2025) in which stealing can have the potential to undermine both (Case & VanderWeele, 2025). Sarbini et al. (2025) also underscore the necessity of character education in virtues such as honesty and integrity, which can assist students in not involving deviant behavior like theft (Sarbini et al., 2025). Consequently, moral values should be nurtured within the education system as a means to cultivate good character and deter bad habits like stealing.

The crime of stealing can impair the creation of students' character as it disrupts the construction and development of crucial moral and ethical values. Chung (2025) points out that Christian values-based moral education would prevent deviant behavior, for example in theft, because of the harm it would do to the students' character as without morals will ruin their lives (Chung, 2025). In addition, Alonso (2025) further explains that when students are engaged in group activities that are geared toward ethical behavior, they see the difference between right and wrong; therefore, responsible character is likely to develop (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Thus, it is crucial to have an educational education that encourages moral and ethical values like honesty and accountability which will prevent deviant behavior and develop student character.

Stealing has caused great pressure of campuses' students, so negative effects on their character is significant damage on moral values and became less empathetic and responsible. Juwaini et al. (2025) purport that students who engage in theft lose trust of their friends and teachers, thus harming social relationships and emotional development (Juwaini et al., 2025). It also gets in the way of students' moral and ethical growth, making it hard for them to grow up responsible, empathetic or self-disciplined. Bulkani et al. (2025) also note that behavioural deviations including the act of thieving have been associated with impairments in the development of fundamental characters such as honesty and responsibility, stress and social isolation (Bulkani et al., 2025). Moreover, Cronqvist (2025) states that an absence of ethical leadership and social responsibility magnify the negative effect of theft; this makes it difficult for students to build trustful personality, positive relationship (Cronqvist, 2025). Unmanaged stealing can have an impact on students' friendships and also ability to be a successful part of the society in future. Thus, ethical and social responsible education is necessary to prevent stealing behavior as well as to cultivate the good characters derived from students.

Deviant Behaviors Among Students Involved in Theft In Educational Settings

The delinquent behavior of students stealing in education area are mostly result from lack character education and moral education. Alonso and Schweiger Gallo (2025) find that students with low scores on ethics are more likely to experience theft following an intervention, but high scoring students steal less (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Sholeh et al. (2025) stress that by cultivating emotional intelligence and social resilience using a multiple intelligence approach, deviant behaviors such as theft can be reduced thanks to the elevated empathy and cooperation of students (Sholeh et al., 2025). Case and VanderWeele (2025) maintain that if moral virtues like honesty, fairness etc are not passed on to the next generation, it fosters an environment wherein deviant behavior in the form of theft can be rationalized and legitimized (Case & VanderWeele, 2025). Sarbini et al. (2025) found that character education if integrates religious and moderate values can prevent deviant behavior, one of which is through the moral thinking system of its students including theft where theft by promoting student morality reflection and social responsibility (Sarbini et al., 2025).

Abnormal behavior of students who commit theft at education institutions is usually associated with absence of educational values and morality. González et al. (2025) find that in case of not paying attention to character education, students however tend to let go of moral values with regard to, for example, theft (López González et al., 2025). Some students who don't have the discernment to know that it hurts others if they steal, nor the emotional courage not to act on temptations should be encouraged. Chung (2025) highlights the way in which moral and spiritual education of the form that Geojassi Christian represents can banish deviant behavior by providing students with a sense of having to consider moral consequences for their actions (Chung, 2025). Alonso (2025) also discovered that students, who do not receive sufficient emotional and moral education are more likely to commit unethical conducts in the form of stealing (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Therefore, this antisocial pattern reveals the necessity of a good character education to avoid an immoral action such as theft.

Deviant Behaviors in School The studies of deviant behaviors among students participating in theft in educational institutions are cheating, concealment and lying. Alonso and Schweiger Gallo (2025) demonstrate that interventions aimed at increasing the standard of ethical conduct can decrease cheating behavior and lying about one's performance among high behaving ethics motivated students, while those with low scores are more prone to stealing after the intervention (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Sholeh et al. (2025) emphasize the role of emotional intelligence and social resilience development through a compound intelligent-based approach (MI) in decreasing exhibition of problematic behaviors such as theft by enhancing empathy and cooperation (Sholeh et al., 2025). Case and VanderWeele (2025) evidence that failure in character formation based on moral values such as honesty and fairness can contribute to deviant behavior, including theft (Case & VanderWeele, 2025). In addition, Sarbini et al. (2025) assert that such a character education program that embeds religious and moderate values could avoid deviant behavior, including theft, by empowering students' integrity as well as social responsibility (Sarbini et al., 2025).

Efforts by Educational Institutions to Prevent Stealing and Develop Student Character

There are several character education programs that can help schools discourage stealing acts from their students and promote good behavior. Ethics interventions using team activities, such as those used by Alonso and Schweiger Gallo (2025), demonstrate that information on what is ethical or unethical behaviour and a group discussion about cheating and stealing can reduce this behaviour among high ones with high ethics scores but increase the same in low ones with low ethics scores (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Several other Multiple Intelligence-based (MI)-based methods have also been effective, as reported by Sholeh et al. (2025), the development of various intelligences in education has implications for student character such as empathy, discipline, and collaborativeness that will lower deviant behaviors like stealing (Sholeh et al., 2025). Moreover, character education that instils moral values, such as honesty and fairness as opined by Case & VanderWeele (2025), will guide students to refrain from the temptation of stealing due to characteristic inculcation of integrity (Case & VanderWeele, 2025). Sarbini et al. (2025) also develops moral character education model consists of three stages, It is: moral knowing, feeling morals morals doing (integrative model), in order to avoid negative behavior through the internalization of moral values into students' everyday life (Sarbini et al., 2025). Through the use of these strategies, schools are able to minimize stealing behavior and promote positive character growth in students.

Schools may prevent pilfering behavior among pupils, and help them to develop their character by different strategies of character education and moral guiding. An educational model based on virtues and formation that involves cardinal virtues such as phronesis, dikaiosune, the resiliency or self-control may help students to develop personal competences derived from critical thinking strategies such as managing emotions or ethical decisions- making which are measurable with the QCV scale in order to evaluate the internalization of these values (López González et al., 2025). Also, schools such as Geojassi Christian School even teach spiritual values from curriculum, focusing on personal responsibility, honesty and social service through spiritual exercising like prayer or worshiping and role of teacher to be ethical model (Chung, 2025). Ethics-driven prescribing performed by groups of students and incorporation of ethical values in the curriculum may also provide an atmosphere conducive to ethical decision-making and decrease stealing behavior (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Furthermore to incorporate character education on honesty, integrity and moral responsibility and their involvement from families and communities in cultivating these values can help consolidate students' morality framework. With these techniques, schools can decrease thefts and promote character growth across its full spectrum.

If the curriculum included character education, schools could help in discouraging stealing and fostering moral values. This approach includes education of ethical values, growth in moral judgement and emotional competencies which would help to make climate suitable for ethical behaviors and also would be useful for preventing deviance behavior such as theft (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). Also the role of teachers as models is very important, since teaching is not simply giving knowledge but also to teach behaviors, values and ethical things like honesty or responsibility. Parents and community involvement in upholding exalted values at home as well as in educational institution were also found to be extremely important (Juwaini et al., 2025). This makes the following is plausible: the extent to which everything can in fact environment and social inequality reduced as transformative teaching and ethical leadership contribute to that students further increase self knowledge, moral courage that it takes for counter deviant behavior (Cronqvist, 2025). Firmness in the stance regarding educational policies aimed at encouraging community service input will also strengthening student moral base, which can reduce thievery (Bulkani et al., 2025). Through these means, universities can play a vital part in preparing students to be better "citizens" – more ethical and responsible citizens of the world.

Discussion

The stealing behaviour among school students is a challenging one and has some factors that influence it (social pressure, family condition, poor character education). This paper is intended to provide a more detailed insight into the impact of these variables, grounded on findings from relevant studies and theoretical approaches. One of the main causes of theft is social influence. As with, for example, a school-age child going to extremes to avoid friends finding out the money they purloined was theirs. As Alonso and Schweiger Gallo (2025) point out, it is common for students to be dishonest such as stealing from others because of peer pressure in settings where ethical principles are not sufficiently

articulated (Alonso & Gallo, 2025). The pressure of peers, particularly within a competitive achievement culture such as in schools, may encourage young people to develop rationalizations that stealing is necessary for them to be accepted or succeed. This is in agreement with the observation of Sholeh et al. (2025) who mentioned the absence of emotional intelligence and social hardiness could intensify such behaviours (Sholeh et al., 2025). Schools that do not foster a climate based on mutual respect and grounded in ethical norms in effect set the stage (or indirectly make up some of the rules) by which "stealing" becomes acceptable or "no big deal".

Family is another important factor that influences the moral compass of students. Lack of parental guidance and misbehaving family members are driving students to petty thieving. They won't have any proper role models in the parents (the children would not be taught good values like honesty, responsibility and empathy if their parents were that uncaring as well). This understanding is a reminder that the struggle to end theft does not just rest with schools, but rather it is vital that we build stronger connections between families and schools as it relates to character education and fundamental values.

Moreover, character education is a very integral as well. According to Case and VanderWeele (2025), lack of moral education that incorporates justice, honesty, can promote a climate for unethical behavior such as stealing to thrive (Case & VanderWeele, 2025). Conversely moral education and a value-based education concentrating on values like honesty, caring, self-discipline may significantly reduce the incidence of stealing among learners. Values The education paradigm that reflects those values, as described by Sarbini et al. (2025) requires a structural cognitive et emotional base to take ethical decisions (Sarbini et al., 2025). Schools can reduce theft and create ethically responsible citizens by creating an environment in which students learn human decency.

Social injustice and disparity should not be underestimated as well. Cronqvist (2025) also asserts that systematic issues, such as social injustice and implicit bias in education, can lead to a belief that misbehavior is the only way to survive (Cronqvist, 2025). And when students experience the present system as unfair or undemocratic if they're not getting an education that's equitable, then they might be more likely to steal something back, in reciprocity. Near or if possible in the educational institutions so that it (ethics) should be taught in the schools but after all it is for their good only! To examine such broader social issues through an educational lens may go some way to help create more level playing fields and learning environments in which students are less likely to have the urge to cheat or steal.

Furthermore, stealing for example is capable of heavily impacting students moral development. Nonetheless, as reported by Juwaini et al. (2025), because one's stealing activities can compromise the trust and personal integrity of peers and teachers, which are primary ingredients to emotional and social development (Juwaini et al., 2025). The trust gap that incidents like this create can lead to lasting social isolation and psychological damage. This deleterious influence is further compounded by the lack of role models amongst peers and adults. Thus, schools need to create and implement the intervention programming which not only addresses (reminding that our savior Christ like backpack return can be obtained without reference to religion so as to make sure we are willing/able to have this within a school setting) directly the theft behavior itself but also act on returning students back into proper relationship with others in general, and for these ends certainly with other school personnel.

In sum, student theft is adequately a result of individual, interpersonal and institutional factors. Educational institutions can be an integral part in ending stealing and enhancing student's moral development through the implementation of a whole child character education curriculum, teaching ethical decision-making, addressing social injustices and creating family school partnerships. According with the research criteria, comprehensive character educational strategy such as emotional intelligence behaviour, value for learning and social tool is effective to reduce student's behaviour of stealing while others deviant acting.

Conclusion

According to the present research findings, student theft in the educational system is affected by many intertwined factors. Endogenous factors, such as low self-esteem, ungratified emotional needs and a weak sense of control on oneself, have a pervasive influence on this deviant behavior. Furthermore, forces outside such as peer pressure; social inequalities and tensions within the family make the matter worse. Thus, stealing not only interferes with the process of education; it cuts at the development of character which is a purpose of educating.

Furthermore, the finding of this study also indicates a character education approach combined with moral-based teaching may be one effective strategy used to decrease stealing behavior. Values-based education systems (honesty / integrity / accountability) can help students think through their actions and the effect said actions have on themselves and others.

We must also bear in mind that stealing among students is not merely a question of moral character, but of the social situation and educational atmosphere which we would seek to change. Thus a more all-encompassing solution that empowers families, teachers and schools to establish a culture conducive for students to engage with their character development is desperately required. Hence, schools have a better chance of reducing theft and fostering the character development of students.

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