



Contents lists available at ojs.aeducia.org

Indonesian Journal of Character Education Studies

Volume 2, Issue 1 (2025), [10.64420/ijces.v2i1](https://doi.org/10.64420/ijces.v2i1)

Journal homepage: <https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/ijces>

IJCES

E-ISSN 3063-0401

P-ISSN 3063-1513

Research Article

Read Online: <https://doi.org/10.64420/ijces.v2i1.240>

Open Access

Factors Responsible for the Students Declining Interest in Primary Education in Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Student interest in pursuing primary education has been declining in Anambra State, Nigeria, raising concerns about the future of foundational education and its role in national development. Understanding the root causes of this trend is essential for implementing effective interventions. **Objective:** This study aimed to explore the factors responsible for the waning enthusiasm for primary education among students in Anambra State and to propose strategies to address this issue. **Method:** A survey research design was adopted, targeting students enrolled in primary and early childhood education programs across tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability. Responses from 100 participants were analyzed using SPSS, employing weighted mean scores to determine the perceived influence of various factors. **Result:** The analysis revealed that several interconnected factors contributed to the declining interest in primary education. These included poor educational infrastructure, insufficient funding, low levels of motivation among students and teachers, negative societal perceptions, and a shortage of qualified teaching staff. **Conclusion:** The findings indicate an urgent need for comprehensive reforms in primary education. Addressing these challenges through targeted investment, motivation initiatives, public perception campaigns, and strategic recruitment efforts is essential to revitalize student interest and strengthen the primary education system. **Originality/Value:** This study provides empirical and diagnostic novelty in the field of primary education policy and management by uncovering interconnected determinant factors, including inadequate infrastructure, underfunding, low teacher and student motivation, negative societal perceptions, and shortages of qualified teaching staff, regarding the declining interest of tertiary students in pursuing primary and early childhood education careers within the context of Anambra State, Nigeria, an area where specific grassroots evidence has remained limited. These findings enrich empirical evidence and serve as a strategic reference for educational policymakers and stakeholders to formulate targeted infrastructure investments, public awareness campaigns, and strategic teacher recruitment and retention reforms.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: May 17, 2025

Revised: May 27, 2025

Accepted: July 26, 2025

Published: July 29, 2025

KEYWORDS

Responsible;
Students Declining Interest;
Primary Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The reduction in the desire of students in Nigeria to attend primary school is a complex problem that has several contributing factors. Students engaged interest is very important to ensure the educational experiences they undergo are meaningful. It captures their interest, spike, and enthusiasm for academic work (Jada et al, 2023). The

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How to Cite this Article:

Umeji. I. C (2025). Factors Responsible for the Students Declining Interest in Primary Education in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Indonesian Journal of Character Education Studies*, 2(1), 12-20. <https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/ijces/article/view/240>



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students of Primary education say that when they are interested their participation is enhanced, comprehension improved, academic performance as well enhanced. Primary education is the first level of formal education which is defined for children of age group of 5- 11years. It highlights compulsory education, reading, writing, arithmetic, and other essential knowledge skills as a starting point (Sharp et al, 2017).

Primary school is a critical stage in a child development process as it sets the educational, intellectual, and social foundation. Primary education comprises of the initial stage of learning where students undergo the foundational education, and has to incorporate suitable learning conditions that support young learners, accommodate different learning styles as well as develop skills in critical thinking, creativity and problem solving as highlighted by Van-Werven et al in 2023. Effective education at the elementary level plays a significant role in promoting students' desire, motivation, and readiness to learn further education and acquire relevant skills, knowledge, and character as they pursue their dreams in their academic, career, and life journeys. Among them one can identify the lack of facilities and resources in primary education institutions as one of the most significant (Chepkonga, 2017). Inadequate infrastructure like classroom, library, technology, and other related facilities are another major challenge that schools and colleges face and which hinders the learning advancement of students (Ahmad, 2021). Due to poor resource required they lack effective ways and means of following their classes and as a result they find no interest in their studies.

Moreover, teaching quality also has a significant effect on students' interest towards primary education relevant courses. When teachers are not motivated, or do not have the skills or the passion for teaching, then classrooms become boring and monotonous and students lose interest (Varol & Yildirim, 2018). Inadequate approaches to teaching and trainers who lack the required qualifications can lead to enhanced disinterest among learners, which only adds on to the already existing problems of poor education. Another important factor is the relevance of the contents recorded in the curriculum. Some parts of the curriculum may be too old or not relevant to the everyday life of students or their further careers (Van-Straaten et al, 2016). Learners' understanding and willingness to participate in learning processes is affected when they cannot find the connection with reality and with what is being taught in different classes.

Economic issues including poverty, demerits of having limited educational materials/equipment, and family responsibilities are other reasons that have reduced people's interest in pursuing primary education (Oranga et al, 2020). Disadvantaged students often come with problems, which may interfere with their studies making it difficult for them to focus on studies. Another factor that can significantly affect students' perceptions of education is a peer pressure and influence. Peer pressure, which includes being pressured into participating in non-academic related activities or being encouraged to be careless about education, can discourage students from taking keen interest in primordial education (McCoy et al, 2019). Furthermore, societal attitudes, including prejudice and prejudice, about education may influence how students perceive education.

At the family level, encouragement and support from parents play a very important role in encouraging students to attend school. When parents are involved in a child's learning process, motivating them and supporting them throughout their classes, then students are most likely to continue pursuing academic success (Bettinger et al, 2013). Taken together, these problems clearly demonstrate that there is a critical need for further research for the purpose of examining the causes of the problem in question as well as learning what needs to be done in order to make primary education a quality experience for all students who need it, as well as to give students the best possible chance for success in their academic pursuits. For instance, Chakacha et al (2014) in their study depicted that infrastructure and resource are scarce in many primary schools and consequently affects quality and students' interest.

Likewise, Charalambous et al, (2021) highlight the difficulties associated with the quality of teaching, including the lack of qualified teachers and the application of improper methods that contribute to students' boredom. Furthermore, according to Bartunek & Ren (2022), there was also a question of irrelevance of the curriculum as none of the content was closely related to what the young generation goes through or plans to achieve. Wanti et al, (2023) Wanti et al proposed that socioeconomic factors are other challenges that impact the students' interest and attention in class. These gaps collectively underscore the necessity of conducting a thorough study to identify, analyze, and address the root causes of declining interest in primary education, ensuring the development of effective strategies and interventions to revitalize students' enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the factors responsible for the students declining interest in Primary education in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) examine the factors responsible for the students declining interest in Primary education; (2) determine strategies that could help in motivating students' interest to study Primary education courses; (3) investigate the role of peer influence on students' declining interest

in primary education.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study: (1) what are the factors responsible for the students declining interest in Primary education in Nigeria?; (2) how can students be motivated to take to the study of Primary education courses in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?; (3) what is the role of peer influence on students' declining interest in primary education?.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a survey research design to explore the factors responsible for students' declining interest in Primary Education. The target population consisted of students enrolled in Primary Education, Early Childhood Education, and related programs across tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This design was chosen due to its effectiveness in capturing the perceptions and attitudes of a broad group of respondents through standardized data collection instruments.

2.2 Participants

The participants of the study included 100 students from various tertiary institutions in Anambra State who were enrolled in education-related programs, particularly Primary Education and Early Childhood Education. A pilot group of 10 students, who were not part of the main study, was also selected for the purpose of reliability testing.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire was organized into four sections: (1) Section A contained instructions and gathered basic demographic information; (2) Section B focused on respondent background details and response guidance; (3) Section C and D covered items related to the research objectives. The items were rated on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

To establish content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two lecturers with expertise in measurement and evaluation. They assessed the instrument based on the research purpose, questions, and item relevance, and their feedback informed revisions for clarity and coherence. A pilot test was conducted with ten students who completed the questionnaire twice over a two-week interval. The test-retest reliability was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.84, indicating high reliability.

2.3 Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, responses were exported from Google Forms into SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics, specifically weighted mean scores and standard deviations, were calculated to answer the research questions. Items with mean scores above 2.50 were interpreted as significant or influential, while items scoring below 2.50 were considered less influential, based on the participants' perceptions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Research Question 1: What are the factors responsible for the students declining interest in Primary education in Nigeria?.

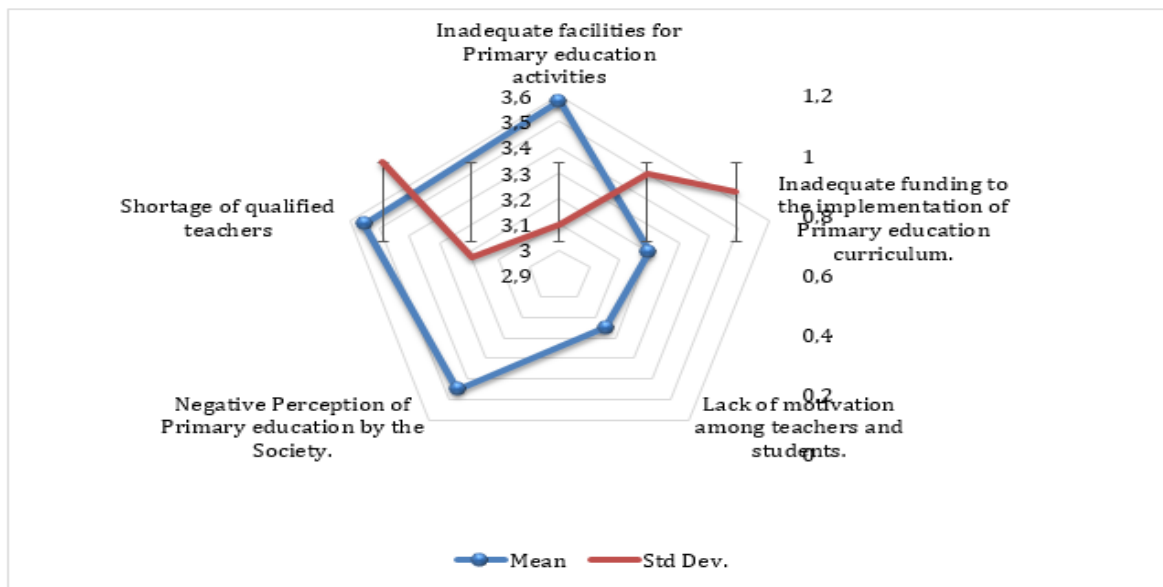


Figure 1. Mean responses and standard deviation on the factors responsible for the students declining interest in Primary education in Nigeria.

Figure 1 offer insights into the factors contributing to declining interest in primary education in Nigeria. With a mean rating of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.98, inadequate facilities stand out as a significant concern. Inadequate funding follows with a mean of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Additionally, lack of motivation among teachers and students garners a mean score of 3.15, with a standard deviation of 0.77. Negative societal perceptions of primary education register a mean of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.94. Lastly, the shortage of qualified teachers receives a mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.88. These figures underscore the multifaceted challenges facing primary education in Nigeria, urging comprehensive interventions.

Research Question 2: How can students be motivated to take to the study of Primary education courses in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?.

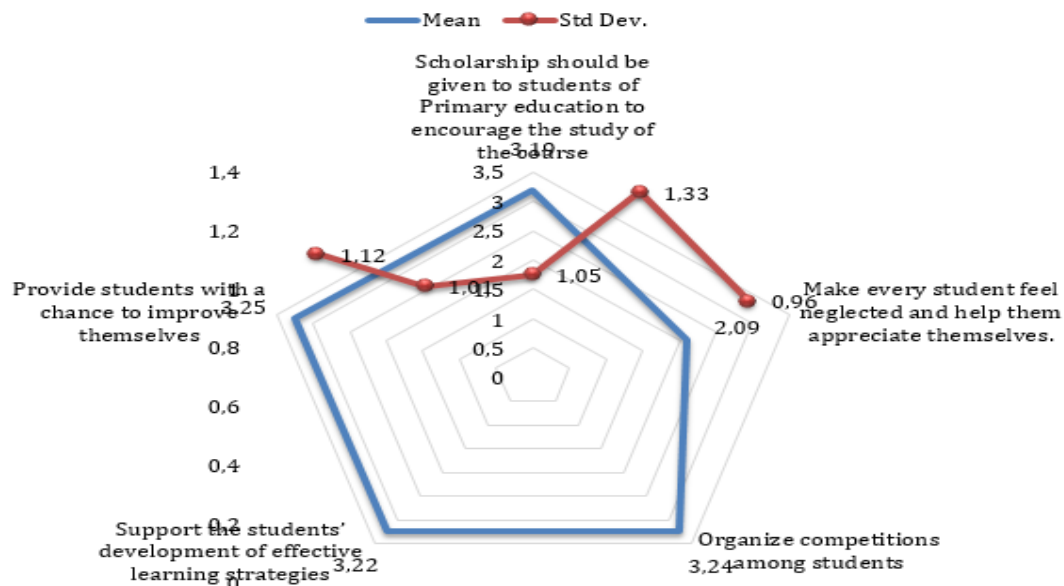


Figure 2. Mean responses on how students should be motivated to choose Primary education as a course

From Figure 2, the data suggests several strategies to motivate students to pursue primary education. Offering scholarships, with a mean score of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 1.12, emerges as a popular option. Organizing

competitions among students, with a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 1.05, also appears promising. Supporting the development of effective learning strategies (mean: 3.22, std dev: 1.33) and providing opportunities for self-improvement (mean: 3.25, std dev: 0.96) are similarly favored approaches. However, the idea of making students feel neglected received lower support (mean: 2.09, std dev: 1.01). These findings suggest a mix of incentivization and supportive measures could effectively boost interest in primary education.

Research Question 3: What is the role of peer influence on students' declining interest in primary education?.

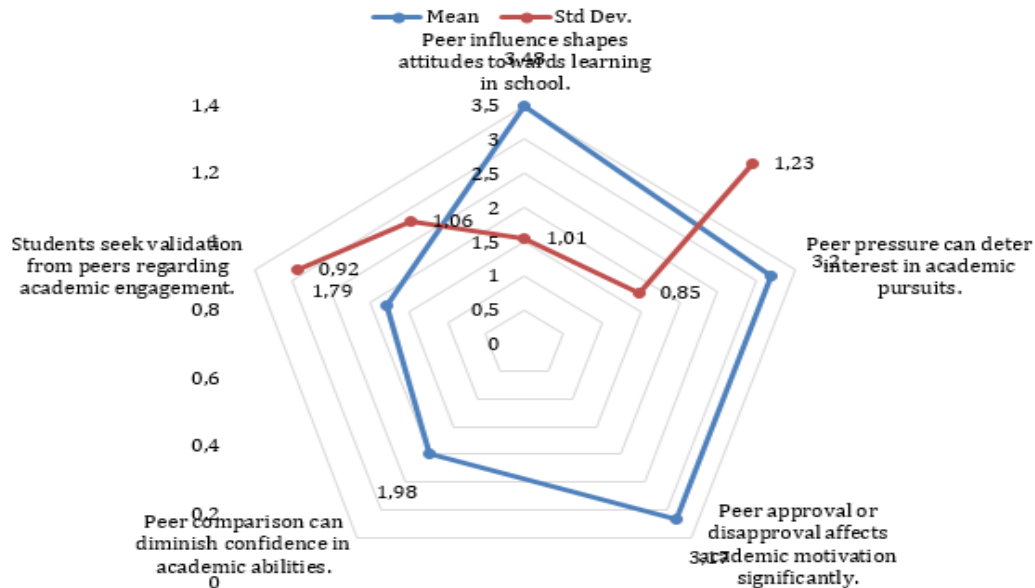


Figure 3. Mean and standard deviation responses on the role of peer influence on students' declining interest in primary education.

Figure 3 outlines responses regarding peer influence on students' declining interest in primary education. On average, participants agreed that peer influence plays a role in shaping attitudes towards learning, with a mean score of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.92. Similarly, they acknowledged that peer pressure can hinder academic interest (mean = 3.20, std dev = 1.06) and that peer approval/disapproval significantly impacts academic motivation (mean = 3.17, std dev = 1.01). However, there were mixed opinions regarding peer comparison, with a lower mean score of 1.98 and a relatively lower standard deviation of 0.85. Validation-seeking behavior from peers also scored lower, with a mean of 1.79 and a higher standard deviation of 1.23.

3.2. Discussion

Research question 1 dealt with the factors responsible for the students declining interest in Primary education in Nigeria. Based on the analysis, the respondents agreed that several factors contribute to the declining interest in Primary education in Nigeria. One major factor is inadequate facilities for educational activities, which hampers effective learning experiences and engagement. This lack of proper infrastructure can lead to disinterest and hinder students' academic progress. In contrast, adequate facilities have been shown to positively impact student motivation and achievement (Sidi, 2019). Additionally, inadequate funding towards the implementation of the Primary education curriculum is a significant issue. Insufficient resources can limit access to quality education and fail to meet the diverse needs of students. This finding agrees with studies highlighting the importance of adequate financial support for educational initiatives to enhance student engagement (Sitopu et al, 2024). Furthermore, the lack of motivation among both teachers and students contributes to declining interest in Primary education. When educators and learners lack enthusiasm or incentives, it can lead to disengagement and apathy towards learning (Schou, 2015). In contrast, motivated teachers and students are more likely to create a positive learning environment that fosters interest and active participation (Scarry, 2020). Negative societal perceptions of Primary education also play a role. When society views Primary education as less valuable or important compared to other levels of education, it can influence students' attitudes and motivation towards learning. In a related study, positive community attitudes towards Primary education were linked to increased student interest and engagement (Tasgin & Coskun, 2018).

Research question 2 examined how students can be motivated to take to the study of Primary education courses in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The respondents were unanimous that motivating students to study Primary education courses involves various strategies. Offering scholarships specifically for Primary education students can incentivize them to pursue the course, as demonstrated in studies highlighting the positive impact of financial support on student motivation (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). Additionally, creating an environment where every student feels valued and supported can help cultivate interest in Primary education. This finding aligns with research emphasizing the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth among students (Waller, 2020). Organizing competitions related to Primary education can also boost motivation by promoting healthy academic competition and recognition for students' efforts. Furthermore, supporting students in developing effective learning strategies can enhance their confidence and engagement in Primary education courses (Sihotang et al, 2017). Providing opportunities for students to improve themselves through mentorship, extracurricular activities, and hands-on experiences can further stimulate interest and investment in the subject. In contrast, neglecting students' needs and failing to create a supportive learning environment can contribute to disinterest and disengagement (Vimbelo & Bayaga, 2024).

Research questions 3 examine the role of peer influence on students' declining interest in primary education. Based on the analysis, the respondents agreed that the Peer influence plays a crucial role in students' declining interest in primary education. Research indicates that peer influence shapes attitudes towards learning, either positively or negatively (Yu et al, 2021). Positive peer influence can enhance motivation and engagement, while negative influence, such as peer pressure, can deter interest in academic pursuits. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing the impact of social interactions on student behavior and academic outcomes (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Moreover, peer approval or disapproval significantly affects academic motivation. Students may seek validation from peers regarding their academic engagement, leading to either increased motivation or decreased interest based on social feedback. In contrast, a lack of peer support or encouragement can contribute to disengagement and declining interest in primary education (Fredricks et al, 2019). Overall, peer influence can either positively or negatively impact students' attitudes and motivation towards primary education, highlighting the importance of fostering a positive peer environment and promoting supportive interactions among students.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The study's findings imply a need for comprehensive policy reforms, improved teacher training, and curriculum redesign to address the declining interest in primary education. Policymakers should invest in infrastructure, funding, and human resources, while teacher education programs must offer engaging and motivating content. Additionally, changing public perceptions through community outreach is crucial to restoring the value of primary education. Future research should assess the effectiveness of these interventions over time.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on teacher education and student motivation by empirically identifying the key factors influencing the declining interest in primary education among students in Anambra State, Nigeria. It provides valuable insights into how infrastructural inadequacies, funding limitations, motivational challenges, negative societal perceptions, and teacher shortages collectively impact students' educational choices. By offering evidence-based recommendations for targeted interventions and policy reforms, the study serves as a practical reference for policymakers, educators, and institutions seeking to revitalize interest in primary education. Furthermore, it lays a foundation for future research aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies in similar educational contexts.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

While this study offers important insights into the factors affecting students' declining interest in primary education in Anambra State, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a survey method relying solely on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or limited respondent introspection. Second, the sample was restricted to 100 students from primary and early childhood education programs within Anambra State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational contexts.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should consider adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus group discussions. This would allow for a deeper exploration of students' personal experiences, motivations, and challenges in pursuing primary education. Additionally, expanding the study population to include educators, parents, policy makers, and school administrators would provide a more holistic understanding of the systemic and cultural factors influencing students' decisions.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has shed light on several critical factors contributing to the declining interest in primary education among students in Anambra State. These factors include inadequate facilities for educational activities, insufficient funding for curriculum implementation, a lack of motivation among both teachers and students, negative societal perceptions of primary education, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Each of these issues presents a serious challenge that undermines the appeal and effectiveness of primary education as an academic and career path for students.

Addressing these challenges calls for a comprehensive and strategic approach that involves all stakeholders in the education sector. The government must prioritize increased investment in educational infrastructure and ensure adequate funding specifically targeted at strengthening the implementation of the primary education curriculum. Alongside this, there is a need for well-designed initiatives to boost the motivation of teachers and students, such as incentive schemes, professional development opportunities, and student engagement programs. Moreover, reshaping public perception through awareness campaigns and community involvement can help restore the value and importance of primary education in society.

Creating a more supportive and attractive environment for primary education will not only reignite students' interest in the field but also enhance educational quality and outcomes. A revitalized primary education sector will serve as a strong foundation for long-term human capital development in Anambra State. With sustained commitment and collaboration among policymakers, educators, and community members, it is possible to transform primary education into a dynamic and respected pillar of the state's educational system and socio-economic progress.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues at the Department of Primary Education, School of Early Childhood Care and Primary Education, Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Author Contribution Statement

The author declares that the entire research and writing process for this article was conducted independently. The author takes full responsibility for all data associated with this research. No other individual contributed as a co-author or made any significant contribution to the content of this work.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received for the conduct or preparation of this study.

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Article Information

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First Publication Right:

Indonesian Journal of Character Education Studies

Article info:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64420/ijces.v2i1.240>

Word Count: 436

Publisher's Note:

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