Wisdom of Character Education in the Code of Ethics of Hitmen

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Abstract

Hitmen are not only in movies or abroad; in Indonesia, it has become something real, as confirmed by various cases in recent years. Interestingly, they have an internal code of ethics or unwritten rules that function to regulate behavior in their work. This study aims to determine the wisdom of character education in the code of ethics of hitmen. The study uses a qualitative approach through a phenomenological approach. The research findings show that the code of ethics of a hitman can provide valuable lessons about the importance of ethics in education. Ethics are not only about rules and values, but also about the ability to act responsibly and have clear goals. By understanding ethical principles, teachers and students can build strong character, resolve conflicts peacefully, and think critically, so that they can reach their full potential. This finding denies the ethical code aspect of paid killers, highlighting more on the wisdom of character education from that aspect. The novelty of this study lies in the application of positive values of the ethical code that is common to paid killers systematically in the context of character education which is still rarely done, especially in school environments.

Keywords: wisdom, character education, code of ethics, hitman

Introduction

For some Indonesian people, the figure and existence of hitmen are still imagined as existing only in movies or abroad. In reality, in Indonesia, the figure of a hitman has become a real phenomenon, as evidenced by various cases occurring in recent years and related news reports. According to data, 1,292 murder cases were recorded in 2016. In 2017, the number of murder cases decreased to 1,150, and continued to drop to 1,024 cases in 2018, 964 cases in 2019, and 898 cases in 2020. Specifically for premeditated murder, it can be carried out directly by the perpetrator or by hiring someone else to commit the murder (Pixabay, 2022).

In April 2010, the North Minahasa Regional Police in North Sulawesi uncovered the existence of a syndicate of contract killers suspected of operating professionally throughout Indonesia. The syndicate, consisting of five adult men, was exposed after failing to assassinate Alfrets Kumiliang (31 years old), known by the alias Boteng or Boang. The attempted murder of Alfrets occurred on Wednesday, April 28, 2010, around 9:20 PM WITA. At that time, they were hired by Meidy Umase (37 years old), Alfrets' neighbor in Kaima Village, Jaga Delapan, Kauditan Sub-district, North Minahasa.

An Indonesian hitman was also reported to have operated in Malaysia and was successfully shot dead by local authorities. They were Mat Shaari and Andi, from Madura, East Java. Their targets were also East Javanese citizens working in Malaysia. Uniquely, they were also paid by individuals from East Java, with rates ranging between 3,000 to 7,000 Malaysian Ringgit (approximately IDR 9 million to IDR 20 million per case). Apparently, not only were their fees cheap, but their lives were also valued very cheaply.

In Lumajang, East Java, a woman named Nami (40 years old) hired a contract killer to murder her husband, Samuri (45 years old), out of resentment for being abused by him over the past few years. Both were residents of Krajan Hamlet, Ranuyoso Village/Sub-district, Lumajang. As Nami admitted to the police on October 6, 2010, she hired SW (30 years old) to kill Samuri. Nami was introduced to SW through Tori (35 years old), a resident of Karang Tengah Hamlet, Tegalbangsri, Ranuyoso Sub-district, Lumajang. According to Erlangga Masdiana (a criminologist from Universitas Indonesia), complex cases in Jakarta often involve individuals with armed forces backgrounds who, due to economic pressures, tend to utilize their firearm skills to make a living (Jaiz & Tede, 2011).

The Indonesian public was alarmed by the proliferation of websites offering murder-for-hire services with various execution methods, ranging from shootings disguised as robberies, poisoning, induced heart attacks, to engineered traffic accidents, which became rampant since 2008. At least three websites were investigated by the police, namely the blog Indobelati.com, jasapembunuhbayaran.blogspot.com, and hitmanindonesia.wordpress.com. On the homepage of hitmanindonesia.wordpress.com, for instance, it clearly stated "Hire Paid Services".

It was also explicitly stated on the webpage that the hitmen syndicate secured trained professionals entrusted to fulfill murder or kidnapping orders. A set of "Rules" was listed on the page, including statements such as: "The method of execution can be planned together, or you can 'Just leave everything to us'." Regarding prices, illustrations were provided: "The price for kidnapping is more expensive than murder because the target remains alive." It was also written: "The fee for a Mayor is, of course, different from that for an electronic equipment dealer." On the site, the service provider provided an email address for interested clients to contact. Terrifyingly, they warned consumers not to place orders just for fun (Agustina, 2016; Fadhilah, 2013).

The phenomenon of contract killers emerges due to various factors, including monetary motives, revenge, romantic relationships, or debt. Individuals facing problems they cannot resolve through conventional means may seek solutions by hiring contract killers. Additionally, the presence of "power" or authority on the hiring party's side plays a role, as the killer can calculate the risks and the likelihood of evading punishment (Prasetya, 2022). Interestingly, within the context of the criminal underworld, hitmen may possess an internal code of ethics or

unwritten rules that function to regulate their professional conduct (Krismann, 2009). Therefore, the authors are interested in examining this matter further.

Several literature pieces related to this theme were identified, including: Shanty & Mishra (2008), who revealed that criminal organizations can adopt terrorist techniques, tactics, and supply chains, posing a growing global threat. Ronald Holmes & Stephen Holmes (2010) examined the phenomenon of serial murder, exploring various types of serial killers and presenting a clear overview of typologies, behavioral patterns, and motivations. Zeckul (2013) presented an assassin's code of ethics within specific media or story contexts, usually emphasizing loyalty to their organization, skill and expertise, and strict secrecy. They are required to follow orders meticulously, avoid chaos, and maintain anonymity.

All these studies have examined the code of ethics or rules of engagement for hired organizations; however, none have thoroughly analyzed the contextual application of such ethical codes—especially since they are not explicitly written—and particularly when linked to the wisdom of character education. Thus, this study focuses on a novel perspective not previously explained. This research is crucial as an innovation in character education and an effort to enhance educational quality in institutions. The novelty of this study lies in the systematic application of the positive values found in the informal codes of ethics of hitmen within character education, an approach that remains rarely conducted, particularly in school environments.

Methods

Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative phenomenological approach, which focuses on understanding individuals' subjective experiences regarding a phenomenon. This method emphasizes direct description of experiences without theoretical interpretation or value judgments, aiming to explore consciousness and the deep meaning of those experiences for individuals (De Castro, 2018).

Participants and Data Sources

The object of this research focuses on the code of ethics of hitmen. Data sources were derived from books, scholarly journals, criminological documents, investigative media articles, and other sources relevant to the research theme.

Data Collection and Analysis Technique

To process the data, the authors employed inductive analysis, a method used to resolve specific practical issues by drawing general conclusions from observed phenomena (Bouzioti, 2023).

Results

The term "code of ethics" consists of the words "code" and "ethics". "Code" signifies a set of meaningful, mutually agreed-upon signals or rules, whereas "ethics" originates from the Greek "ethos", meaning character, lifestyle, and behavior (Fuadi & El Syam, 2023). The KBBI (Kemdikbud, 2025) defines a code of ethics as norms and principles accepted by a specific group as the basis for behavior. Professional codes of ethics consist of rules defining what a person can and cannot do while executing their profession (El Syam et al., 2023; Karadeniz, 2020). From

these definitions, it can be concluded that a code of ethics regulates mutually agreed-upon professional conduct.

A code of ethics (code) is a set of guidelines utilized by an organization, profession, or individual to define acceptable and unacceptable behavior. It provides a framework for decision-making, promotes ethical behavior, and upholds core values. These codes cover various fields, from business practices to professional conduct, and are essential for maintaining trust and integrity (Luckett, 2021). The objectives of a code of ethics include: 1) Maintaining the quality and reputation of a profession or organization; 2) Ensuring members act with integrity and professionalism; 3) Reducing conflicts and misunderstandings; and 4) Preventing external interference (Erskine, 2024).

It is said that imperial war makes soldiers of us all, but what kind of person becomes a great or even the ultimate killer? Becoming an assassin is not a job devoid of psychological skills (Zaretsky, 2021). Bradley J. Steiner (1982) noted that reliable government assassins (terminators) are rare. The psychological attributes of a targeted real-life killer do not include criminals or lunatics, as they are generally unprofessional and driven by motives beyond productive execution. To become an efficient predator requires an asocial imperative, which must not be confused with antisociality. Professional assassins must be profoundly cold internally in the deepest philosophical sense regarding others. Professionals regard all other people as metaphysically insignificant. They are not 'human beings' to them, possessing no inherent right to life commonly spoken of by ordinary people.

The code of ethics among hitmen is often referred to as a code of honor, assassin's ethics, or a creed. White (2021) stated that they take pride in a set of principles adhered to at all times. Specific details may vary, but they always involve "honorable" conduct. They will do almost anything—even risking death—to avoid being labeled "dishonorable." They must do more than pay lip service to a set of principles to earn points for an honor code; they must be true followers of the Code! Furthermore, they are often forced into unfair situations because their enemies know they are honorable. An honor code is not identical to duty or a sense of duty. A samurai or British grenadier marches into battle against daunting odds out of duty, not personal honor (though they would lose honor by fleeing). Risks taken for honor are purely for its own sake.

Many introduce a 'code' followed by killers—a set of rules or ethics governing who they may and may not kill. This self-constructed moral framework serves as a mechanism to justify their actions. However, whether that code stands up to ethical scrutiny is another matter. After all, creating one's own moral compass does not necessarily mean heading in the right direction. Ultimately, the ethics of assassination reflect complex real-world morality. There are no easy answers, only shades of grey—some darker and more ambiguous than others.

Assassins serve as a lens through which one can examine their own moral compass, forcing an encounter with uncomfortable questions about the nature of right and wrong. Thus, as we lose ourselves in fantasy worlds, captivated by the mysterious allure of an assassin, we should take a moment to reflect on the ethical implications. For while we may enjoy the escape, these stories compel us to scrutinize the complex and messy aspects of morality, offering us not just a tale, but a provocative ethical exercise (Cronshaw, 2023).

For contract killers, it does not mean that every assassin is a benevolent individual with the soul of an angel. In fact, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted" effectively gives every hitman the ability to determine what they believe to be right or wrong and how to achieve their ultimate goal. It represents the right to self-determination and the acceptance that every individual is the architect of their own actions and consequences. Although reasons for expulsion from an association certainly exist, their rules allow considerable flexibility as long as one does not turn traitor or commit similar acts (Haydt, 2024).

This ethical code emphasizes stealth, secrecy, and upholding mission objectives while minimizing collateral damage. Common elements of a hitman's code of ethics include: 1) Target selection. Hitmen often focus on individuals deemed evil or corrupt, such as oppressors or tyrants; 2) Avoiding innocents. A core principle is protecting innocent lives and avoiding harm to them, even if it compromises the mission in some way; 3) Stealth and secrecy. Hitmen are known for stealth tactics, aiming to remain unseen or undetected; 4) Upholding the mission. The code prioritizes completing assigned tasks, even at personal sacrifice; 5) Respecting agreements. A hitman's code may include honoring contracts and keeping promises; 6) Using lethal force sparingly. Although lethal force is a necessary tool for a hitman, it is typically used only when strictly necessary, such as in self-defense or when targeting specific individuals (Zeckul, 2013).

Fundamentally, creating a hitman character who grew up in an immoral street gang and uses those skills to quietly eliminate targets often involves targets who are innocent people opposing the gang or obstructing its plans. Eventually, it is revealed that the gang exploited the hitman and even killed their family. There are at least several core ethical rules that will not be violated under any circumstances: Never kill innocent people, unless more innocent lives can be saved at the expense of fewer lives; Always research targets prior to execution to ensure they deserve justice; Prioritize the lives of comrades first, and the mission second, but always exert every effort to complete the mission as long as it targets someone deserving of death (Mysterio, 2017).

One must not discuss hitmen in public forums or reveal targets to anyone. Doing so is highly unprofessional, and exposure could lead to being eliminated oneself. Weapons must be concealed without boasting. Glory is achieved through reports from the Chairman. Killings cannot be conducted just anywhere; specific places are off-limits, alongside rules regarding civilian presence. Once an assassination occurs, all involved parties must contact the chairman via secret email to report and receive the next target. Those who have executed a hit must craft a creative story describing the event, as the chairman favors creativity. Requesting weapons requires engaging qualified individuals (professors, postdocs, graduate students), who must first submit an email application stating: "Dear Chairman, I submit myself to your secret group." These hitmen must follow identical rules. Traps are permissible provided they comply with all rules. If a tripwire or device can eliminate a target legally when no one else is around, that is acceptable; however, setting traps that injure the wrong person or are discovered beforehand leads to severe penalties. Violating rules, inactivity, or public disclosure leads to being placed on a wanted list (Duke People, 2024).

For a cold-blooded killer, coldness does not imply a complete lack of morality. Some hitmen simply care about executing their job with absolute mastery. They take pride in sneaking

up on victims and vanishing without a trace, like phantom entities from another reality. Assassination is treated as a performance art, and they spend careers perfecting this craft for a memorable masterpiece. If they die, it is because death made the execution that much more artistic. Yet regardless of who the victim is, death remains a tragedy, and targets deserve to know their demise is imminent (Hitman, 2016).

The hitman code of ethics, also known as the Creed, represents a guiding philosophy upheld from the Middle Ages into the modern era. This Creed restricts unnecessary slaughter of innocents, safeguards personal and Organizational reputation, and aims to foster peace globally and internally within the individual (Gerstmann, 2016). Formed around 38 BCE when Medjay Bayek of Siwa and Aya of Alexandria founded the Hidden Ones, the Creed was passed down orally across generations to ensure compliance, formalizing into three core tenets by the 9th century. Mentor Al Mualim noted that members are nothing without adherence to the Creed. In the Levantine Assassin Codex, Altaïr Ibn-La'Ahad asserted that the Creed itself cannot be killed; as an idea, it can be re-created even if all records and followers are destroyed (Wallace, 2017).

The Creed emphasizes three core moral principles focused on mission success, emotional mastery, and Brotherhood safety. The ultimate goal is achieving peace through targeted political assassinations of corrupt figures, believing this restores genuine security to the public. Unnecessary killing of innocents breeds discord and tarnishes the Order's reputation, preventing them from fulfilling higher objectives as precision instruments rather than indiscriminate butchers. This principle was reinforced by Bayek after Nabataean rebel leader Gamilat sacrificed innocents to recruit more followers from Sinai (Reparaz, 2017).

The objective is stealthy approach and rapid escape. In ancient times, public executions were dramatic to create the illusion of appearing from nowhere, eliminating corrupt figures, and dissolving into crowds. Discovery during target tracking reduces this supernatural effect and complicates the mission. Furthermore, individual actions must never compromise the group; captured members must never reveal details connecting them to the Brotherhood (Lacoste, 2024).

In summary, formal codes of ethics for hitmen do not exist within legal or official systems. However, within the criminal underworld, unwritten rules regulate professional conduct for several reasons: 1) Reputation management: Maintaining a reliable name attracts more contracts; 2) Behavioral regulation: Establishing boundaries, such as prohibiting unauthorized hits or civilian harm; 3) Relationship strengthening: Fostering trust between clients and peers; 4) Risk minimization: Reducing chances of arrest or retaliation from dissatisfied clients; 5) Secrecy preservation: Protecting operational confidentiality. Violating these unwritten rules results in severe sanctions from peers or clients.

Discussion

Although an assassin's code of ethics directly conflicts with an educator's ethical standards, it provides profound insights into actionable ethics, discipline, and purpose alignment. In education, ethics forms the foundation for strong character, responsible behavior, peaceful conflict resolution, and critical thinking. Key educational lessons derived from these principles include:

Clear Learning Objectives: Assassins operate with absolute goal clarity to execute missions efficiently. In education, this translates to establishing specific, measurable, and achievable learning objectives that teachers clearly communicate to students (Anam et al., 2022).

Discipline and Openness: High discipline allows assassins to maintain composure under extreme conditions. In education, discipline drives consistent learning and goal achievement. Openness is equally critical—teachers must remain open to new pedagogical methods, while students must accept constructive feedback (Fitriatin et al., 2023).

Contextual Understanding: Assassins thoroughly analyze situational contexts to act appropriately. Educators must similarly understand students' diverse backgrounds and needs, selecting instructional strategies tailored to specific learning environments (Yenti & Darmiyanti, 2023).

Deep Knowledge: Mastery over targets and environments is essential for assassins. In education, teachers must possess deep domain expertise and pedagogical competence to teach effectively (Sitanggang & Naibaho, 2024).

Ethics in Action: Adhering to codes during high-stakes situations highlights ethical commitment. Teachers must demonstrate honesty, fairness, professional integrity, and accountability at all times (Amalia et al., 2022).

The comparison between teachers' codes of ethics and hitmen's codes of conduct is summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Comparison between Teachers' Code of Ethics and Hitmen's Code of Conduct

Code of Ethics	Description / Elaboration
Teacher	Emphasizes professionalism, integrity, and responsibility toward students, society, and the teaching profession.
Hitman	Emphasizes discipline, loyalty to the organization, and the capability to achieve objectives effectively.

Source: Authors' interpretation

Research findings offer significant practical implications for education, particularly within formal schooling. Implementing ethical frameworks in instructional processes enhances student learning outcomes, subject comprehension, motivation, and active participation. Selecting appropriate ethical codes directly influences educational goal attainment.

Practically, these findings encourage teachers to be innovative in implementing classroom ethical guidelines tailored to subject matter and student characteristics (Hakim et al., 2023). Ethics serves as a moral and professional guide for teacher-student and peer interactions, creating conducive learning environments and fostering high moral character (Yenti & Darmiyanti, 2023).

Institutionally, schools can establish institutional codes of ethics to foster supportive learning environments and elevate educational quality. Theoretically, this research provides empirical support for ethics-based instructional strategies as effective tools for improving academic outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that analyzing the hitman code of ethics yields valuable insights regarding the importance of ethics in character education. Ethics extends

beyond static rules and values; it represents responsible action and purpose-driven focus. Internalizing ethical principles enables teachers and students to build strong character, resolve conflicts peacefully, and think critically to reach their full potential. This study transcends the illicit context of contract killing to highlight the abstract wisdom of character education. The novelty lies in systematically extracting positive structural principles from informal codes of conduct and applying them to character education in school settings.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no financial, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest regarding the collection, analysis, interpretation, writing, and publication of this manuscript.

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