

The Evaluation on Character Education in Indonesia in the Last Ten Years: Policy, Pedagogy, Management, and Assessment Perspectives

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of character education in Indonesia from 2011 to 2022, focusing on its focus, scope, and achievements. Library research, in which articles are examined, was used as the method of this study. A semi-systematic literature review was conducted using predefined keywords on Google Scholar. Articles were screened with structured inclusion criteria based on citation counts and topic relevance to improve transparency and reduce selection bias. The review examines four analytical dimensions: policy implementation, pedagogical models, management strategies, and assessment practices. Findings indicate strong regulatory commitment, particularly through Curriculum-13 and subsequent policy reinforcement. However, operational implementation varies across institutions due to differences in teacher capacity, leadership, and organizational readiness. Pedagogically, character education is integrated through thematic instruction, habit-building practices, and project-based learning, yet often lacks prioritization of constructs and alignment with developmental stages. Management capacity significantly influences sustainability, while assessment remains the most methodologically fragile dimension due to difficulties in measuring affective and virtue-based constructs. Overall, although character values are widely emphasized, structural coherence, standardized evaluative constructs, and developmental-stage alignment remain limited. This study provides an evaluative framework to strengthen policy relevance and operational consistency in future character education reforms in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Evaluation, Character Education, Curriculum-13, policy implementation, pedagogical models, management strategies, assessment practices.*

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INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of character education policy in Indonesia has become a strategic agenda, considering its uneven implementation across educational units. Recent evidence shows that the effectiveness of character education programs is shaped by policy governance, indicator traceability, and the availability of structured, evidence-based evaluation instruments (Jalwis, 2023; Naufal & Maksum, 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2023). The rapid and inevitable advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has further transformed long-established lifestyles, influencing how students interact, learn, and internalize character values. Amid these challenges, schools are required to strengthen strategic collaboration with the government to ensure that character education policies and curriculum design remain contextual, measurable, and aligned with Indonesia's sociocultural foundation, including Pancasila values and the national curriculum

ecosystem (Naufal & Maksum, 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2023). Therefore, the synergy between educational institutions and the state becomes a key premise for structured policy evaluation, enabling the formulation of accountable and replicable recommendations to improve the implementation and governance of character education policy in Indonesia.

The changing nature of work, driven by rapid technological advancement, is projected to reshape the labor market. The *World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report 2025* projects 170 million new jobs created and 92 million displaced globally by 2030 (Economic Forum, 2025). About 39% of core job skills will shift, increasing demand for technical competencies (AI, big data, digital literacy) and human-centered capabilities such as analytical thinking, resilience, flexibility, lifelong learning, and collaboration (Economic Forum, 2025). In Indonesia, national education policy emphasizes character formation aligned with Pancasila values, integrity, cooperation, responsibility, and digital ethics to support adaptive and productive citizens. The global workforce shift reinforces the urgency of evaluating Indonesia's character education policy to ensure these traits are translated into measurable curriculum indicators and structured evaluation frameworks, enabling accountable governance and evidence-informed, replicable policy improvement.

In Indonesia, character education began to appear in the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas) No. 20 of 2003 in which national education functions to develop and build character and civilization to be adherent, creative, and independent society. The discussion became more serious in 2008 as there was *Pendidikan Agama dan Budi Pekerti* (religion and manner education) followed by a type of education known as *Revolusi Mental* (mental revolution) that pursued character education. The use of the term revolution showed the passionate sincerity. Prior to Presidential Regulation No. 87/2017, character education had been embedded within curricular discourse but lacked a consolidated regulatory framework. The 2017 regulation institutionalized character education as a national movement, emphasizing collaboration between schools, families, and communities. This shift indicates a transformation from curriculum-based value integration toward systemic governance of character development.

Character education in Indonesia had been promoted since a long time ago in many institutions such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) where manners were taken into account. In formal educational institutions, character education had been enthusiastically promoted in the schools, families, and societies since 1900s by the remarkable figure Ki Hajar Dewantoro with his famous jargon *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tulada, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, Tutwuri Handayani* (Asnawan, 2020; Bustomi et al., 2022; Hikmasari et al., 2021). He focused on continuity, convergence, and concentricity in promoting character education.

Some preceding points are important to be concerned about since characters are the vital foundation in facing challenges in this era. A professor, Empirical studies offer academic grounding to assess Indonesia's *Gerakan Nasional Revolusi Mental* (GNRM) within the character education agenda. Technological advancement and workforce shifts require education systems to cultivate measurable, human-centered character traits aligned with Indonesia's socio-cultural values, particularly Pancasila, and supported by transparent evaluation frameworks for accountable policy improvement. In this case (Dwi Yulianto & Dwi Saputra, 2021) frame GNRM as an ethical citizenship and character-building initiative embedded in formal education. Hartono's school-level evaluation reports measurable improvements in student character outcomes-integrity, responsibility, and cooperation-while identifying persistent regional disparities in implementation support (Hartono, 2017). These findings emphasize the urgency of strengthening Indonesia's character education policy evaluation through measurable curriculum indicators and evidence-based, replicable frameworks to ensure effective governance and sustainable national impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on character education in Indonesia has largely centered on conceptual discussions and descriptive school-level implementation, with limited emphasis on systematic policy evaluation. Scholars underline that character education policy should ensure governance traceability and measurable curriculum alignment. Empirical analyses show contrasting diagnoses: policy ineffectiveness is driven either by regulatory fragmentation that weakens institutional consistency (Baihaqi et al., 2023; Jemani, 2023; Tilaar, 2008) or by cultural-symbolic school compliance that results in formalistic adoption without behavioral indicators (Choli, 2020). Although both perspectives recognize implementation barriers, neither offers validated evaluation tools to assess structural and cultural coherence across education units.

Another prominent body of literature positions religion and Pancasila as the ethical foundation of character education, emphasizing integrity, cooperation, responsibility, and moral awareness. Researchers argue these values are essential for shaping ethically grounded citizens, and school-based studies confirm strong conceptual alignment between religious awareness, civic identity, and national character expectations (Annur, 2016; Budiyo et al., 2024; Hermawan, 2025; Munawir et al., 2024; Noer & Sarumpaet, 2017). However, these studies are predominantly philosophical or instructional in orientation, providing limited measurable curriculum indicators that could be operationalized as standardized policy evaluation metrics.

A substantial stream of research also confirms teachers as the most influential role models, strengthened during the pandemic through holistic reinforcement and habit formation. Prior studies demonstrate strength in model and strategy design but reveal clear weaknesses in evaluation and assessment frameworks, such as comprehensive school culture approaches without measurable evaluation indicators (Eka Santika, 2020), lesson-plan-integrated character models without standardized assessment instruments (Hartono, 2017), and insufficient teacher training in consistent character and attitude scoring (Aziz et al., 2025; Faiz et al., 2021; Tanjung et al., 2023). These findings affirm the urgency of developing structured, replicable, and empirically validated character education policy evaluation instruments aligned with national curriculum indicators.

This study presents an integrative and comprehensive literature review of character education research in Indonesia by synthesizing multiple thematic domains (policy, implementation, educational models, school management, and evaluation) that have previously been examined in isolation. Unlike prior studies that are predominantly descriptive or conceptual, this research explicitly identifies underexplored areas in character education policy evaluation. The review employs a semi-systematic approach using narrative and thematic synthesis to support the development of a policy evaluation framework aligned with the national curriculum, measurable indicators, and replicable instruments. The novelty of this study lies in strengthening evidence-based, accountable, and context-adaptive policy evaluation frameworks and instruments to accommodate diverse educational settings in Indonesia, providing a more measurable and scalable foundation for broader policy improvement and implementation.

METHOD

This study is evaluative research that employs a library research approach to systematically review previous studies on character education in Indonesia published over the last ten years. The evaluation focuses on policy implementation, pedagogical models, management strategies, and assessment practices as reflected in peer-reviewed scholarly publications. A qualitative content analysis is conducted using a rigorously structured coding scheme: the unit of analysis consists of individual research articles, and each article is coded according to predefined thematic categories, including policy frameworks, implementation strategies, evaluation instruments, and reported challenges.

The coding procedures involve identifying relevant textual segments, assigning them to corresponding categories, and synthesizing findings across studies to assess strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the implementation of character education. To enhance methodological rigor, the study

applies data triangulation by cross-verifying findings from multiple sources and incorporates peer debriefing to ensure coding validity. An audit trail is meticulously maintained to document all steps of coding and analysis, thereby ensuring transparency and replicability. Additionally, reflexivity is applied throughout the research process to minimize potential bias. This structured and methodologically robust approach facilitates a comprehensive and replicable evaluation of the literature, linking descriptive findings to broader policy evaluation objectives and providing evidence-based insights into the factors influencing the effectiveness of character education programs in Indonesia.

Research Design

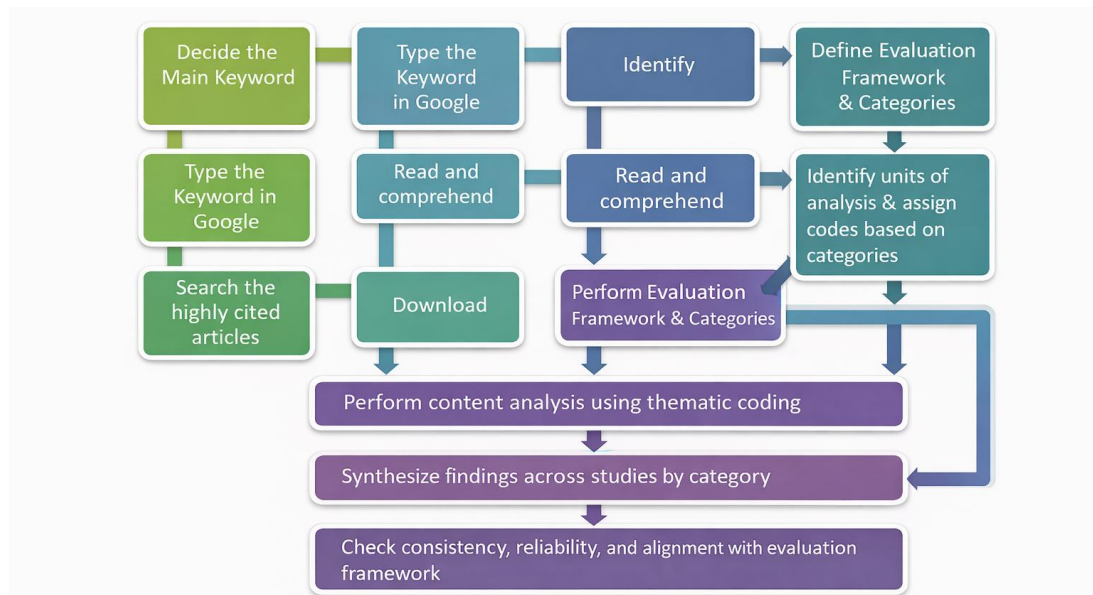


Figure 1. Research Design

This study applies a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology (Snyder, 2019) with an evaluative orientation to examine the implementation of character education in Indonesia over the past ten years. The review process consisted of four structured stages. In the initial stage, the main keyword “character education” and related terms (e.g., “moral education,” “student character development”) were predetermined to guide the search. Relevant literature was retrieved exclusively from established academic databases, using a fully documented search strategy that incorporated Boolean operators (AND, OR), language filters (English and Indonesian), publication year limits (2011–2022), and document types restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings.

In the second stage, articles were screened through a two-step selection process, involving title-and-abstract relevance assessment followed by full-text eligibility review, based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure representative and unbiased coverage. The inclusion criteria required that studies (1) be conducted in Indonesia, (2) focus specifically on character education in school or higher education contexts, and (3) employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods designs. Exclusion criteria eliminated editorials, opinion papers, non-academic reports, and studies outside the scope of character education.

The third stage involved data extraction and structured qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) using a rigorously developed coding scheme, in which each article served as a unit of analysis and was coded into predefined thematic categories, including policy frameworks, pedagogical models, management strategies, assessment practices, and reported implementation challenges. These thematic categories were subsequently operationalized as the four analytical

dimensions guiding the interpretation and presentation of findings in this study: policy implementation, pedagogical models, management strategies, and assessment practices. This framework ensured alignment between research objectives, analytical procedures, and reported results.

In the final stage, findings were synthesized across studies by category and evaluated against broader policy implementation objectives. To strengthen methodological trustworthiness, the study employed data triangulation, peer debriefing to validate coding decisions, and a detailed audit trail to document the review and analytical procedures. Researcher reflexivity was also maintained to minimize interpretive bias. This systematic and transparent protocol ensures a comprehensive, credible, and replicable evaluative review, aligned with the methodological standards expected in international indexed publications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

General Overview of the Reviewed Articles

This study conducts a literature review with an evaluative orientation using 54 articles published in Indonesian local journals indexed in Sinta, a national scientific index managed under the authority of the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Sinta was purposively selected because it provides comprehensive national benchmarks, including citation metrics, institutional research performance mapping, trend analysis, expert directories, and collaboration partnership insights. The citation distribution within the dataset ranges from 4 citations (lowest) to 543 citations (highest), reflecting a broad spectrum of academic influence and supporting the representativeness of national scholarly discussions on character education.

Most reviewed studies (90% of 54 articles) employed library-based research designs, indicating that character education was largely analyzed through indirect observation and conceptual interpretation. To strengthen the macro-level policy evaluation perspective without altering the core dataset, international journal articles and official government evaluation reports specifically addressing character education implementation in Indonesia were also consulted as complementary sources. The synthesis confirms that, despite the indirect nature of observation in many studies, context-specific challenges were explicitly addressed through clearly defined pedagogical models, implementation strategies, and evaluation instruments, ensuring their relevance for evaluative interpretation within national policy objectives on character education. To ensure analytical rigor and transparency, findings were cross-verified conceptually across sources, interpreted using predefined evaluation categories, and aligned with policy implementation evaluation principles emphasizing credibility, traceability, and replicability.

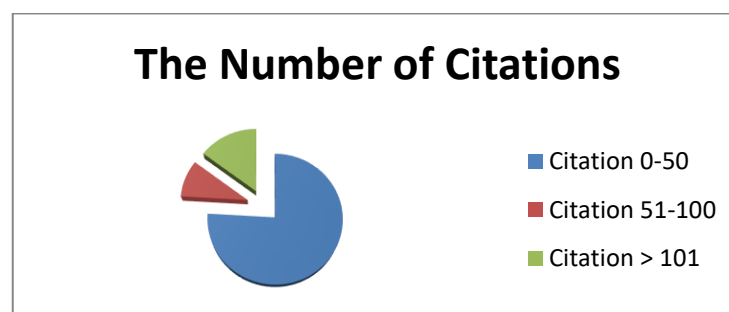


Figure 2. The Number of Citations

Figure 2 shows that there are 15% articles having more than 101 citations while those having 51-100 citations are 9% and the rest having 4-10 citations are 76%. The number of citations represents how an article becomes a medium to discuss the opinions as well as the findings. Thus,

citation counts are not positioned as indicators of the quality or superiority of research findings. They are used solely to map the landscape of academic visibility and scholarly influence, while the depth of opinions and significance of findings are interpreted based on thematic relevance, methodological rigor, and alignment with national policy-evaluation frameworks. It also proves that the articles have a good significance on the topic studied.

The results of the study of the contents of these articles are as follows:

First: Character Education Content. The content of character education, widely discussed in Indonesia, is dominantly about the implementation of character education methods and strategies, like exemplary, habituation, greetings-smiles-greetings; and both are done inside and outside the classroom. These strategies have been studied repeatedly.

Second: Article Focus. The reviewed Sinta-indexed articles consistently discuss character values such as discipline, tolerance, responsibility, democratic attitudes, and religious-oriented virtues (e.g., honesty and moral integrity). However, none employ hierarchical categorization (primary vs. secondary constructs) or provide a prioritization rationale for implementation or assessment. This limits cross-study comparability, as all character domains are treated equally without strategic weighting. Comparative mapping to international frameworks shows a key gap: unlike developed countries that apply core priority-character models (e.g., seven-domain national curricula in the US, Japan, or the UK), Indonesian studies remain non-clustered and non-tiered in character emphasis. This signals a lack of standardized evaluative constructs, weakening policy alignment and synthesis. Future reviews should adopt priority-based character clustering to strengthen comparative evaluation and improve policy relevance.

Third: Character Education Policy. In terms of national level, character education policies are reverberated through Curriculum 13 which then followed by a mental revolution. Character education has taken a big portion within these two curricula, yet the focus is still on the sole of character education without the concern of the sustainability government programs regarding the concept, management, and impact of the implementation of curriculum 13 itself, including the one happens in the mental revolution.

DISCUSSION

The comparative mapping conducted in this study constitutes the core analytical output of the evaluation framework used to interpret character-domain emphasis across 54 Sinta-indexed studies. In Indonesia, policy support for character education is legitimized through national regulations, and operationalized into 18 mandatory character values in Curriculum 2013. Scholarly analysis confirms that these values are designed to be integrated throughout instructional planning, learning materials, assessment, and monitoring activities (Huda et al., 2025; Kabalmay et al., 2025; Rukiyati et al., 2025; Sutrisno et al., 2025). This evidences strong policy intent and curricular breadth, yet interim findings from the screening stage show that Indonesian studies predominantly discuss values in general and equivalent constructs.

Table 1. The mapping results

Aspect of Mapping	Indonesian Sinta Studies (n=54)	Core Priority Frameworks in Developed Countries	Evaluative Interpretation
Number of domains	18 values, broadly emphasized	7 core domains in national curricula	Broad coverage but non-clustered, limiting comparability
Domain hierarchy	No primary/secondary tiering	Core vs supporting tier/cluster structure	Lack of tiering limits strategic weighting
Prioritization logic	Not documented in strategy or assessment design	Prioritization embedded in curriculum evaluation	Standardization gap in evaluative constructs
Developmental alignment	Rarely based on moral development stages	Often aligned to moral/developmental stages	Gap in developmental appropriateness
Citation use	4–543 citations, mapped as visibility only	Supplementary visibility metrics	Citations not used as quality indicators

The mapping results are synthesized in Table 1, positioned as the primary evaluative lens rather than a quality ranking tool. The table reflects Indonesian studies emphasize 18 Character values but do not employ hierarchical tiering or core-domain clustering. This contrasts with developed countries that operationalize character education using standardized core-domain clusters, commonly structured into seven priority character domains. The absence of clustering in Indonesian literature reduces interpretive clarity and limits benchmarking alignment.

A key evaluative question addressed in this study is: Have Sinta-indexed studies on character education in Indonesia considered students' moral-development stages when designing their implementation strategies and evaluation instruments? Thematic coding and cross-article synthesis indicate that only approximately 6% (3 out of 54 articles) explicitly refer to moral-development staging in pedagogical or assessment design.

For instance, Izzati et al., (2019) examine moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action components in character education, yet do not operationalize sequential moral-development stages as a basis for instructional or evaluative instrument design. Likewise, the theoretical review by (Aslihah & Washudin, 2023; Budiyo et al., 2024; Cahyani et al., 2026; Hussain, 2025; Maulida et al., 2025; Samdani et al., 2025) discusses moral, cognitive, and social foundations of character education but remains conceptual rather than empirically staged. Case-based work by Susilowati et al., (2023) also addresses moral knowing in religious character education without applying structured moral-stage categorization or tiered indicators in strategy or assessment constructs. These converging patterns empirically substantiate the presence of a developmental alignment gap in Indonesian character-education evaluation research. Moral-stage mapping is methodologically critical in evaluative policy studies to ensure that implementation and assessment frameworks extend beyond normative claims, and instead provide measurable and staged behavioral trajectories that can be systematically compared across studies and aligned with broader educational policy-evaluation objectives.

The review of various studies on character education in Indonesia indicates that the standardization of evaluation instruments and evaluative constructs remains generally inconsistent. Some studies have developed specific instruments that were tested for validity and reliability, such as the development of an affective character assessment instrument for students that underwent validity and reliability testing (Arizona et al., 2025; Azhar & Halwati, n.d.; Fatah et al., 2025; Hasanah & Husna, 2025), as well as a character assessment model applied in elementary social studies instruction (Wiliandani et al., 2026). However, many other studies remain descriptive or merely list character values reflected in evaluation tools without a measurable and replicable evaluative framework, as found in analyses of character values within Indonesian language learning assessments (Safi'i, 2018) and character studies in history curriculum research that lack systematically standardized evaluation constructs. Although some instruments have been developed, this situation demonstrates that gaps in the standardization of character education evaluation instruments are still significant and need to be addressed to support robust and comparative policy interpretation across studies.

This study therefore contributes a validated policy insight: the most substantial national gap lies in the absence of priority-tier clustering, standardized evaluative constructs, and developmental-aligned instrument design, rather than the absence of character values themselves. Strengthening future reviews and empirical policy studies with priority-tier domain clustering, documented coding protocols, and developmental-stage mapping is methodologically critical to enhance policy relevance and comparative validity (Kumalasari & Idawati, 2023; Suyatno et al., 2019).

Western frameworks conceptualize character using structured dimensions. For example, (Shields, 2011) classifies character into intellectual, moral, civic, and performance domains, while (Baehr, 2017) differentiates virtue-based constructs (moral, intellectual, civic) from future-oriented performance character. Further (McGrath, 2015) synthesizes character into two core domains moral and intellectual as key transferable constructs in educational evaluation. When this

framework is mapped against findings from the 54 reviewed Sinta-indexed studies, a clear operational construct gap emerges. Unlike Western models that employ clustered domains, tiered indicators, and explicit priority constructs in both pedagogical and assessment design, Indonesian character-education studies treat values at an equivalent and non-tiered level, without a documented rationale for core-character prioritization or developmental moral staging. This lack of standardized evaluative constructs reduces cross-study comparability and limits the interpretive power of literature-based policy evaluation, which ideally requires structured and replicable instruments for policy-implementation judgment.

Thus, the Western models are not presented here as superior benchmarks, but as an analytical evaluation lens revealing that Indonesia's scholarly discourse on character education over the past decade remains loose, non-clustered, and non-prioritized operationally. This condition may contribute to why implementation challenges reported in the literature appear burdensome and unfocused, as strategies are designed without a core priority-character framework to guide measurement, intervention, and policy interpretation. Future review-based evaluations should integrate priority-based character clustering and tiered construct operationalization to strengthen methodological alignment with global evaluative standards and support more robust policy inference.

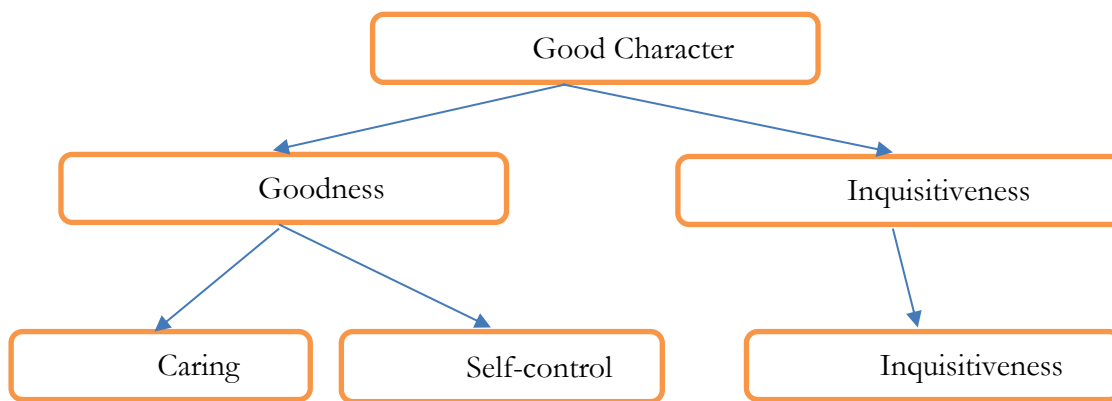


Figure 3. Good Character McGrath

The McGrath character model is included in this study as an evaluative analytical lens, not as a theoretical exposition. The model clusters character into two key constructs: moral character (virtue-based) and performance character (future-oriented behavioral enactment). When this framework is mapped to the 54 Sinta-indexed articles reviewed (2011–2022), the synthesis shows that 0% of studies applied construct clustering, tiered indicators, or an explicit priority-character rationale in pedagogical strategy or instrument design. Furthermore, while 6% of the articles (3 out of 54) referenced moral development conceptually, none operationalized sequential moral-development stages as a basis for strategy formulation or evaluation-instrument construction.

This comparison substantiates a construct and developmental alignment gap in Indonesian character-education literature, indicating that character constructs are largely non-clustered, non-tiered, and without documented prioritization logic, which limits cross-study comparability and weakens literature-based policy inference. The absence of a core priority-construct framework may also help explain why implementation challenges reported in the literature often signal unfocused and burdensome character-education practices, as measurement and intervention are not guided by staged or weighted evaluative constructs.

Lickona himself also provides reinforcement that the character consists of primary and secondary characters as described in the chart below (Figure.4). The structured frameworks proposed by Lickona (Figure 4) and McGrath (Figure 3) provide essential benchmarks for character development, emphasizing a systematic progression from *moral knowing* to *moral action*. However, a

critical evaluation of our findings reveals a significant structural weakness in the Indonesian context. Unlike these Western models that establish clear dimensions and operational priorities, the discourse on character education in Indonesia remains conceptually loose. Our analysis suggests that the current implementation fails to translate the visionary ideas of Ki Hajar Dewantoro into a practical, prioritized hierarchy. While Western models focus on specific human strengths such as intelligence, social interaction, and self-regulation the Indonesian approach often attempts to cover an exhaustive list of virtues simultaneously. This lack of a focused framework is not merely a theoretical gap but a practical failure; it creates an overwhelming burden for educators and results in a fragmented implementation that lacks depth. Consequently, without adopting a simplified and fundamentally strong priority framework as seen in Lickona’s model character education in Indonesia risks remaining a symbolic administrative requirement rather than a transformative pedagogical tool. However, all of these must be monitored optimally from various parties. On the one hand, the government always tries to continuously create a curriculum with priority on character and intelligence. One the other hand, educational institutions also have to ensure that they have implemented and maximized character education for their students, and one of the efforts is to improve teachers’ disposition in developing a character development system and implement it (Tadege et al., 2022) and the role of experts and practitioners in the field of education who continuously provide criticism and suggestions that are fundamental for total improvement.

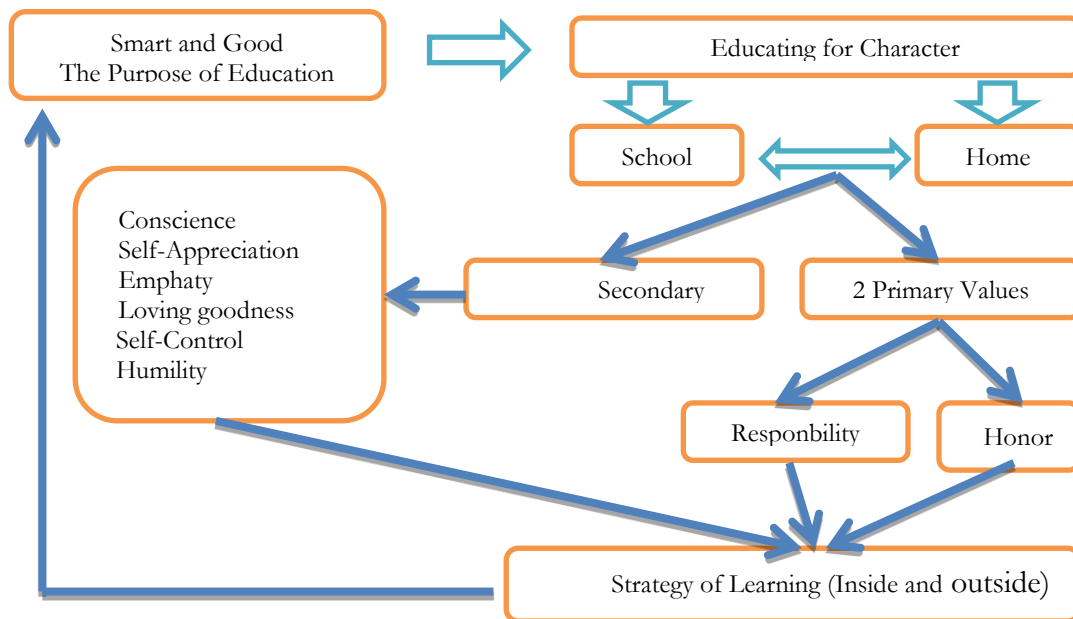


Figure 4. Concepts created by researchers from reading the book *Educating for Character* (Lickona, 2009)

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Fortunately, countries in East and Southeast Asia, where they have an inherent cultural system, including religious beliefs and state policies in making national laws, have become a central point for strengthening character education in the country. (Arthur, 2019). Furthermore, legal policies at the state level, clear goals, guarantees of human resources and various training programs including control over the implementation of ongoing character education are very good steps and strategies for the success of a country's character education (Arthur, 2019). In this case, at least the implementation of character education in Indonesia is in a position that is still running on its foundations and even very much in accordance with the indicators described above.

In welcoming *Indonesia Emas* in 2045, educational institutions should not be a place for the transfer of knowledge only, but also a place for developing attitude, behavior, character, and youth leadership (Rokhman et al., 2014), and educational institutions must be more prepared for these challenges that are getting more complicated and disruptive from time to time. Therefore, good characters are needed by every individual, institution, and even a country.

The latest curriculum, *Merdeka Belajar*, may open up new opportunities to fix the problems of character education that have been conducted so far. However, as stated on the aforementioned discussion, character education does not stop in the curriculum level, but also in the real practice starting from the organization, control, and evaluation of that practice. The results of the study reveal that more than 90% of students agreed to hold a subject that involves environmental awareness (Pane & Patriana, 2016). This is a breath of fresh air for the future of character education in Indonesia where students are well prepared to welcome environmental awareness in every discussion on campus.

The preceding comparative analysis indicates that Indonesia's character-education discourse is normatively robust but operationally less structured when examined through the clustered and developmental constructs proposed by Lickona and McGrath. To translate this theoretical observation into systematic policy evaluation, the discussion is organized into four analytical dimensions: policy implementation, pedagogical models, management strategies, and assessment practices. These dimensions enable an integrated examination of how character constructs are institutionalized, enacted, managed, and measured within the Indonesian education system.

Policy Implementation. The reviewed literature highlights significant regulatory shifts in Indonesia's character education policy over the past decade. The reviewed literature consistently identifies 2013 as a pivotal moment with the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, which formally integrated character values into national educational standards. However, prior to 2017, character education remained largely embedded within curricular discourse rather than supported by a consolidated regulatory framework. The issuance of Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 marked a significant policy shift by institutionalizing character education as a national movement. The regulation emphasized collaboration among schools, families, and communities, positioning character education as a systemic governance agenda rather than solely a curricular component. This shift signaled a transition from normative value integration toward structured policy implementation. Across the reviewed studies, implementation outcomes appear uneven. While

regulatory frameworks provide structural legitimacy, practical realization depends on institutional readiness, regional disparities, and teacher capacity. Several studies highlight gaps between policy mandates and classroom-level practices, indicating that regulatory strengthening alone does not guarantee consistent implementation. From a theoretical standpoint, policy institutionalization reflects an attempt to structurally embed what Lickona conceptualizes as moral knowing and moral action within formal educational governance. However, the absence of construct clustering, as suggested in McGrath's model, indicates that policy commitment does not necessarily translate into prioritized character domains at the operational level. Thus, the literature suggests that Indonesia's character education reform demonstrates strong structural commitment but variable operational execution.

Pedagogical Models. In pedagogical practice, character education is primarily operationalized through curricular integration and school-based experiential learning. Thematic learning under the 2013 Curriculum allows character values to be embedded across subjects, while project-based learning and contextual instruction are frequently cited as effective strategies for internalizing moral and social competencies. Habituation practices also emerge as a dominant pedagogical model. Daily routines, school culture development, extracurricular activities, and community service programs function as mechanisms for reinforcing character formation beyond formal instruction. These practices reflect an understanding of character education as both instructional and cultural. However, the literature reveals inconsistencies in depth and intentionality. In some cases, character integration remains implicit, lacking clearly articulated instructional objectives or measurable outcomes. The effectiveness of pedagogical models depends heavily on teachers' conceptual understanding of character education and their ability to translate abstract values into structured learning experiences. Overall, pedagogical integration has progressed, but methodological coherence and teacher professional development remain critical challenges. While pedagogical strategies appear aligned with the behavioral enactment dimension emphasized in both Lickona's moral action construct and McGrath's performance character domain, the absence of staged moral-development alignment limits instructional coherence and long-term developmental tracking.

Management Strategies. Effective implementation of character education is closely related to school leadership and institutional management capacity. School leadership and institutional management play a decisive role in sustaining character education initiatives. The reviewed studies emphasize that principals function as key policy translators, responsible for embedding character education into school planning, program coordination, and institutional culture. Effective schools typically integrate character education into strategic documents, allocate resources for character-based programs, and establish internal monitoring systems. In these contexts, character education becomes embedded within governance structures rather than treated as a supplementary initiative. Nevertheless, disparities across institutions remain evident. Some schools demonstrate symbolic compliance without systematic program design or evaluation mechanisms. The literature indicates that management capacity, leadership vision, and organizational culture significantly influence the sustainability of reform. Therefore, character education reform is not merely a pedagogical issue but also a managerial and leadership challenge. School management functions as the institutional carrier of character constructs. Without leadership-driven prioritization, moral and performance character domains remain rhetorically endorsed but structurally unsupported.

Assessment Practices. Assessment emerges as one of the most challenging dimensions in character education reform. Among the four analytical dimensions, assessment emerges as the most complex and contested component. The 2013 Curriculum introduced mechanisms for evaluating students' attitudes and character development, including observation sheets, reflective journals, and behavioral reports. Despite these formal instruments, the literature highlights persistent methodological difficulties. Character traits and affective dispositions are inherently difficult to measure reliably and objectively. Teachers often rely on subjective observation, leading to concerns regarding consistency and comparability. Several studies also report that assessment procedures

sometimes become administrative formalities rather than authentic evaluative practices. The integration of character assessment into formal reporting systems may increase documentation demands without necessarily improving measurement validity. Consequently, assessment remains the most fragile dimension of character education reform. While policy mandates recognize its importance, practical implementation requires clearer operational standards, simplified instruments, and capacity-building initiatives. Assessment difficulties reflect a deeper theoretical challenge: the operationalization of affective and virtue-based constructs. Without clustered domains and tiered indicators, as emphasized in McGrath's structured framework and Lickona's developmental progression, character assessment risks becoming administrative rather than developmental.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide critical implications for the trajectory of character education in Indonesia. Theoretically, this research serves as an evaluative critique of the current tendency to adopt Western frameworks without establishing a localized operational priority. It suggests that the loose nature of character discourse in Indonesia is not a minor pedagogical flaw but a fundamental theoretical gap that hinders the practical translation of moral values into consistent behavior. Practically, these results necessitate a radical shift in policy and classroom implementation. The current broad-but-shallow approach, which attempts to integrate an exhaustive list of character values, is evaluated as counterproductive, as it leads to teacher burnout and fragmented student comprehension. Therefore, policymakers must move away from a symbolic checklist of virtues and instead develop a streamlined, hierarchical framework. By prioritizing a few foundational strengths "analogous to the clear dimensions in Lickona's model" schools can transition from a burdensome administrative obligation to a focused, high-impact pedagogical practice that fosters genuine character transformation.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has several limitations, including the keyword being used to search for articles is very limited to the word "Character Education". Thus, themes that are within the scope of character education or keywords that are similar but different in writing do not immediately appear on google-search. This happens considering that in Indonesia the dominant religion is Islam who are more familiar with using the word "Akhlaq or Adab". Another limitation is that this research only uses the platform from *Sinta* or only refers to articles published in local journals in Indonesia. In this case, it could open up very wide opportunities for articles on character education published in international journals. To address the conceptual limitations of this study, future research should conduct a systematic literature review using more comprehensive and culturally integrated keywords, such as 'akhlaq', 'moral values', and 'school culture'. By incorporating broader international databases, subsequent studies can gain a more holistic understanding of how character education is structured globally. Furthermore, future research should focus on evaluating the transition from the current 'loose' discourse in Indonesia toward a more focused and operational priority framework, ensuring that the implementation of character education becomes more impactful and less burdensome for practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study include, first, the findings show that character education in Indonesia is dominantly focused on implementation methods and strategies. This indicates a critical stagnation in the 'how' phase, where the discourse remains preoccupied with procedural variety rather than the effectiveness and transformative impact of these methods. Consequently, a significant gap persists between administrative execution and actual character development. Second, the existing articles only talk about general characters such as: discipline, tolerance, responsibility, democracy, and characters with religious nuanced characters such as honesty, exemplary, noble character, and the other characters. Third, at the national level, the concept is basically reverberated by the government through the implementation of Curriculum 13 which is then followed by a mental revolution program.

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