



Character Education in Modern Schooling Values, Implementation, and Impact

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Abstract. The decline of moral values among elementary school students in the digital era demands the active role of educational institutions in strengthening character education. This study aims to examine the core values, implementation strategies by educators, and the impact of character education in modern elementary schools. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) adapting the PRISMA reporting guidelines. A total of 38 scientific articles published between 2022 and 2026 were comprehensively analyzed. The review results indicate five dominant values instilled in elementary schools: responsibility, discipline, honesty, cooperation, and empathy. The implementation of these values is most effectively carried out through daily habituation, integration into learning activities, extracurricular programs, and modeling by educators. The success of character education heavily relies on a paradigm shift toward a student-centered approach. This structured implementation is proven to have a significant positive impact, not only in improving morals, ethics, and social empathy but also in fostering holistic personality development and motivating the cognitive growth of students.

Keywords: Character Education, Elementary School, Systematic Literature Review, Students, Student-Centered.

1. Introduction

Elementary education constitutes a crucial early stage in character development, as it is during this phase that young learners begin to internalize values, norms, and behavioral patterns within their daily lives. The educational process at this level extends beyond mere academic achievement; it concurrently focuses on the cultivation of attitudes and behaviors that reflect moral values. The early instillation of character is widely believed to foster positive habits that persist into subsequent educational stages. This aligns with the perspective that character education in elementary schools plays a significant role in sustainably shaping students' attitudes and behaviors [1]. Furthermore, this is reinforced by the assertion of [2], who posit that primary education serves as the foundational cornerstone for a child's character

development, necessitating the integration of character values from the outset through formal educational processes.

Character development in elementary schools is not solely achieved through formal instruction; rather, it is significantly fostered by the school culture and the exemplary conduct of teachers. A positive school environment facilitates students' comprehension and application of moral values in their daily lives. The role of the teacher as a behavioral model is of paramount importance, as young learners exhibit a strong tendency to emulate the attitudes and actions they observe firsthand. This is corroborated by the findings of [3], who assert that character education is most effective when integrated into both instructional practices and the broader school culture. Furthermore, [4] elucidates that teacher engagement and the school environment are critical determinants in the successful cultivation of student character, thereby necessitating the implementation of character education through diverse activities, both within and beyond the classroom setting.

Fundamentally, elementary school-aged children are situated at a highly critical stage of moral and social development, as it is during this phase that they begin to comprehend the concepts of right and wrong. This developmental trajectory is characterized by the child's emerging capacity to evaluate conduct and adapt to the prevailing norms within their immediate environment. Interactions with peers and educators serve as primary catalysts in the cultivation of social dispositions and empathetic capacities. As articulated by [5], character education plays a pivotal role in the moral formation of elementary-aged children. Consequently, social experiences within the school setting exert a profound influence on the overarching character development of learners.

Conversely, the moral and social character development of elementary-aged learners is simultaneously shaped by external factors, particularly the familial sphere and technological advancements. This is corroborated by [6], who articulates that the formation and cultivation of a child's character are contingent upon multiple ecological contexts, specifically the family, the school, and the broader social environment. The family unit, ideally functioning as the primary foundational bedrock for a learner's initial social dispositions, can yield adverse developmental outcomes if the interpersonal socialization models within the household are inadequate. Furthermore, the educational environment exerts a substantial influence on character development, wherein the institutionalized routines and culture function to instill and reinforce positive attitudes. Beyond these spheres, the broader social milieu also critically dictates character trajectory. For instance, should a child reside in an environment characterized by the pervasive use of profane or harsh language, there is a high probability that the child will adopt similar linguistic behaviors. This phenomenon occurs because young learners inherently construct their cognitive and moral understanding through observational learning and active engagement with their immediate surroundings.

Technological advancement arguably exerts the most profound impact on children's character development. This phenomenon presents a distinct challenge, as it

possesses the potential to significantly alter the cognitive paradigms and behavioral patterns of learners if not counterbalanced by the robust reinforcement of character values. Consequently, educational institutions bear a pivotal responsibility in providing structured guidance and direction for the moral trajectory of these learners. However, rather than viewing technology solely as a disruptive force, character education can actually be cultivated by strategically leveraging the technological advancements characteristic of the contemporary modern era. Ultimately, the systematic reinforcement of character from the elementary school level is of paramount importance in molding capable, resilient learners who are adequately equipped to navigate future complexities.

The aspirations for ideal character development are currently confronted by a disconcerting empirical reality. A phenomenon characterized by a marked degradation of moral values is increasingly observable among elementary-aged learners. This behavioral shift is evidenced by the gradual erosion of fundamental values within their everyday conduct; this includes diminished classroom discipline, a deficit in accountability regarding both academic obligations and environmental stewardship, and the waning of empathetic capacity and prosocial concern toward peers. If left unaddressed, this early-age moral deficit has the potential to severely impede their character development trajectory across subsequent educational tiers.

This decline in moral consciousness exhibits a robust correlation with the pervasive influx of globalization and the rapid advancement of information technology. In the current digital epoch, learners possess virtually unrestricted access to information. This often precipitates exposure to foreign cultural paradigms and instant gratification lifestyles, thereby gradually eroding local wisdom [7]. The utilization of digital devices and social media platforms, in the absence of adequate adult supervision, further exacerbates this predicament. Furthermore, learners' habitual interactions within virtual environments catalyze the emergence of individualistic tendencies and progressively diminish the etiquette of face-to-face communication [8].

The moral degradation precipitated by this influx of digitalization places educational institutions in an increasingly critical position. In the contemporary era, the role of schools can no longer be confined solely to acting as conduits for cognitive knowledge transfer; rather, they must serve as the vanguard in systematically guiding and directing the moral development of learners [9]. Educational institutions are compelled to function as environments capable of mitigating the adverse impacts of technology while simultaneously reinstilling the ethical values that have begun to erode.

To mitigate the crisis of moral degradation, it is imperative that core character values, namely honesty, discipline, accountability, and collaborative teamwork, are instilled from the onset of elementary education. This premise is rooted in the fact that character formation initiates in early childhood, heavily mediated by the immediate environment. This character-building endeavor can only be actualized effectively if the strategies employed by schools are contextualized to contemporary realities.

Educators and educational institutions can no longer rely on instilling moral values dogmatically through unidirectional didactic instruction. A paradigm shift is necessitated, transitioning toward a student-centered pedagogical approach [4]. Within this framework, learners cease to be mere passive receptacles of moral prescriptions; rather, they are actively engaged in the internalization of virtuous values. Consequently, authentic character education is actualized through continuous habituation practices, exemplary educator modeling, and meaningful, everyday social interactions within the school ecosystem.

Nevertheless, in practical applications, the implementation of character education in elementary schools frequently lacks optimal integration within the instructional process. Character education is persistently construed merely as a supplementary activity; consequently, it fails to assimilate consistently into classroom content delivery and daily institutional routines. Empirical research indicates that the reinforcement of character education ought to constitute an integral component of instructional design across all educational tiers [10]. This prevailing condition underscores the necessity for character education to be executed through premeditated, sustainable frameworks, coupled with the unified support of the entire school community, thereby ensuring the maximal instillation of character values among learners.

In addressing these prevailing challenges, educators occupy a pivotal role as behavioral exemplars in the character formation of learners within the school milieu. The daily conduct, verbal discourse, and overarching attitudes exhibited by educators are meticulously observed and subsequently emulated by learners as a fundamental component of the social learning process. Consequently, educators are tasked beyond the mere delivery of instructional content; rather, they manifest as tangible embodiments in instilling the core values of discipline, accountability, integrity, and courtesy. Pedagogical modeling thus constitutes an indispensable element in underpinning the efficacy of character education among learners, as corroborated by [11], who elucidates that educator engagement is a critical determinant in the successful cultivation of student character.

Character education has emerged as a national movement, positioning educational institutions as primary agents in the character development of learners through both pedagogical instruction and behavioral modeling. This educational initiative is executed to facilitate learners in actualizing their full potential by systematically instilling virtuous characteristics. Character education serves to embed positive character values within individuals, which subsequently function as a foundational framework guiding their daily conduct [12]. Consequently, character education transcends the mere formation of individuals with high integrity; it concurrently cultivates a generation capable of making constructive contributions to the broader society. Therefore, in practice, its implementation necessitates a consistent and sustainable approach within the educational ecosystem.

It is imperative to critically examine the values, implementation, and impacts of character education within the elementary educational context in an effort to

comprehend the extent to which character formation can be effectively actualized. Facilitated by multifaceted interactions, instructional activities, and comprehensive support from all stakeholders, character education is anticipated to cultivate learners who exhibit virtuous character, demonstrate accountability, and are adequately equipped to confront global challenges [13]. Consequently, the reinforcement of character education within educational institutions constitutes a vital foundation in shaping the personality and character of learners, necessitating an implementation process that is both purposefully directed and sustainable.

Premised on the aforementioned problem statement, the present study endeavors to critically examine the essence of foundational character values, comprehensively analyze the implementation strategies employed by educators and the broader school community, and evaluate their consequent impact on the behavioral development of learners within modern elementary educational settings. Particular emphasis is placed upon the paradigm shift toward a student-centered pedagogical approach, positioning it as a strategic intervention to mitigate the moral crisis precipitated by rapid digitalization and to cultivate a resilient generation adequately equipped to navigate global challenges.

2. Methods

This section outlines the systematic approach used to review literature on character education in elementary schools. It details the research design, eligibility criteria for article selection, and the data collection procedures.

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, adapting the updated 2020 PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting guidelines. As articulated by [14], the utilization of the PRISMA framework serves as a standardized reporting protocol to ensure transparency, accuracy, and comprehensiveness throughout the identification, screening, and selection phases of a systematic review. The PRISMA guidelines inherently guarantee that, through rigorous screening and targeted quality appraisal criteria, only high-quality academic articles are included, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings. Furthermore, a PRISMA-based SLR affords complete transparency within the study selection process, enabling the replication of research outcomes and providing a robust reference for educators regarding methodology, implementation, and evaluation.

2.2. Eligibility Criteria

The inclusion criteria for the selected articles are as follows: (a) Articles published within the last five years (2022–2026); (b) Articles written in either Indonesian or English; (c) Publication types consisting of scientific articles (primary research or literature reviews); (d) The research focus encompasses the values, implementation,

and impact within the modern school system; and (e) The full text of the articles is accessible and available to download for free. The exclusion criteria for the selected articles are as follows: (a) Publication formats outside of scientific journals, such as books, news articles, popular opinions, or seminar proceedings; (b) Paywalled articles or articles that only provide an abstract; and (c) Duplicate articles found during the search process.

2.3. Data Collection

Research data were acquired through systematic literature retrieval across reputable journal databases, predominantly Sinta-indexed Google Scholar. The search protocol was executed systematically employing the following keywords: values, implementation, impact, character education, modern era, and elementary school. To broaden the scope of relevant literature, the Publish or Perish software was utilized. Furthermore, English-language articles were translated using the DeepL machine translation tool to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the source materials. To maintain data consistency and relevance, inclusion criteria and analytical boundaries were established based on the alignment of titles, abstracts, and keywords with the research focus. Data validation was conducted through informal peer review mechanisms, specifically, unstructured discussions and interviews with colleagues, as well as through formal academic consultations with lecturers and domain experts. These measures were intended to enhance the credibility, validity, and reliability of the data utilized within the study.

3. Results And Discussion

The article selection process within this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is visualized through the PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1. During the initial identification phase, literature searches across the databases yielded a total of 720 articles. Following the identification and removal of duplicates, 397 articles remained for the screening phase. Subsequent screening was conducted based on the relevance of titles and abstracts to the research focus, resulting in the exclusion of 342 articles. Subsequently, during the eligibility phase, 55 articles underwent a comprehensive full-text assessment. From this procedure, 17 articles were excluded for failing to meet the inclusion criteria. The final outcome of this PRISMA-based selection process yielded 38 studies that fulfilled the inclusion criteria for further analysis.

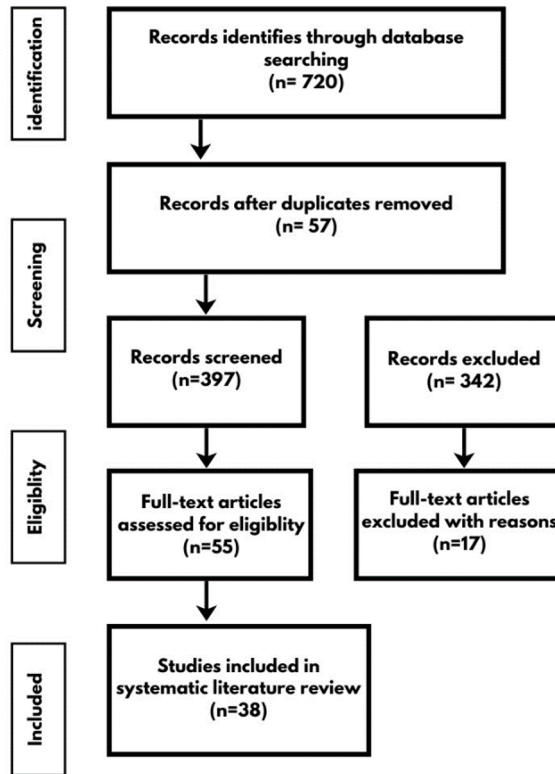


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process.

All 38 of the reviewed scholarly articles were published within the past five years, spanning the period from 2022 to 2026. The in-depth analysis of this aggregated literature focused on three primary variables within the modern elementary education system: the essence of the instilled character values, the implementation strategies driven by educators and the school community, and the subsequent impact on learners. A comprehensive breakdown of the data extracted from the reviewed articles is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Data extraction of the representative literature.

Authors & Year	Title	Values	Implementation	Impact
Cahyanto et al. (2022)	Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter	Religious Character, Discipline, and Accountability	Routine habituation of reciting Asmaul Husna, Qur'anic literacy activities, and the systematic	Enhanced Qur'anic reading proficiency among learners, coupled with the practical application of spiritual

	Di Sekolah Dasar: Studi Implementasi Di Sd Brawijaya Smart School		monitoring of learners' discipline and accountability during virtual sessions via Microsoft Teams.	values in their daily lives, spanning both the school and home environments.
Prayatni et al. (2025)	Analysis Of Problems In Implementing Character Education At The Islamic Elementary School Level	Religious Values, Discipline, Accountability, Prosocial Concern, and Collaborative Teamwork.	Integrating character education into institutional management, Lesson Plans (RPP), and extracurricular programs, specifically Scouting (Pramuka) and Qur'anic memorization (Tahfidz).	The implementation of character education via this holistic approach has proven relatively effective in fostering the character development of learners within the madrasah environment.
Hasibuan & Nasution (2024)	Character Education Through Social Studies Learning In Elementary Schools	Accountability, Mutual Respect, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Discipline, Communicative Competence, Tolerance, Empathy, Mutual Cooperation, Fairness, and Respect for Human Rights.	Instructional phases encompassing: Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation (specifically, the assessment of attitudes and behavioral conduct).	Learners demonstrate the capacity for critical, creative, and innovative thinking, engage in collaborative and tolerant practices, and successfully resolve problems through comprehensive and prosocial approaches.

Due to publication space constraints, the remaining 35 relevant articles are not delineated within this table; nevertheless, they are comprehensively analyzed within the ensuing discussion subsection.

3.1. Values

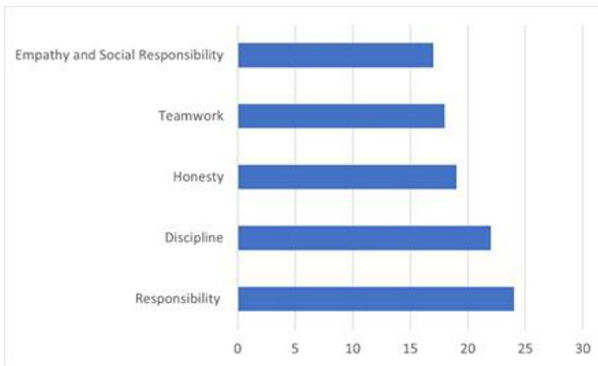


Figure 2. Frequency of character education values identified in the literature.

Based on the diagram above and the analysis of the 38 articles cited in this study, five dominant character education values were identified in the context of modern education for the 2022–2026 period. The value of responsibility ranked highest, as it appeared in 24 articles [2], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [31], [32], [33], [34], [35], [36], [37], [38], [39]. This indicates that responsibility is a key foundation in the character development of students, particularly at the elementary school level. Furthermore, the value of discipline ranks second, appearing in 22 articles [2], [15], [16], [17], [18], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], [29], [30], [31], [32], [34], [35], [39], [40], [41]. The high frequency of this value highlights the importance of instilling rules and discipline in shaping student behavior. The value of honesty ranked third and was mentioned in 19 articles [2], [16], [18], [22], [24], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [31], [32], [33], [34], [36], [37], [39], [42] which emphasizes that moral aspects are a primary focus in character education.

In addition, the value of cooperation or mutual assistance is also one of the dominant themes that emerges in the 18 articles [2], [15], [16], [18], [21], [22], [25], [26], [27], [29], [34], [35], [37], [43], [44], [45]. This finding reflects the importance of social skills and collaboration in community life. Finally, the values of empathy and social concern were identified in 17 articles [15], [16], [18], [19], [22], [23], [28], [29], [32], [33], [34], [36], [42], which indicates that modern education emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also the development of students' social sensitivity. In addition to these five values, several additional character values were mentioned in the 38 articles analyzed by the researchers. These include religiosity, tolerance, independence, creativity, good manners, environmental awareness, critical thinking, integrity, and nationalism. Nevertheless, these values collectively indicate that character education in the modern era tends to focus on a balance between the formation of individual morality and social skills, both of which serve as crucial foundations for shaping students who possess strong character and are adaptable to the changing times.

3.2. Implementation

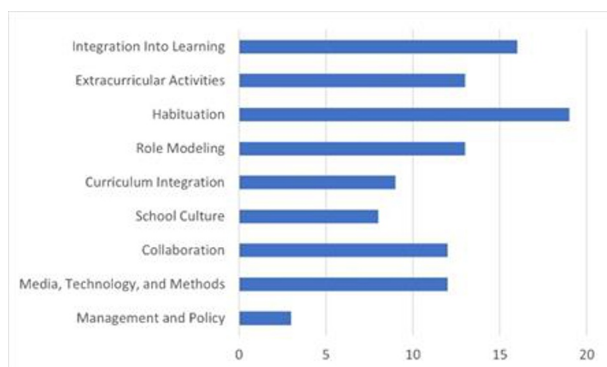


Figure 3. Frequency of character education implementation strategies identified in the literature.

Based on the diagram above and the results of the analysis of the 38 articles identified, it is evident that the implementation of character education in elementary schools is carried out through a variety of approaches. There are 9 forms of implementation used, namely habit formation, learning activities, extracurricular activities, modeling, collaboration, learning methods and media, curriculum, school culture, and management. The diversity of these implementation forms indicates that character education is not carried out in just one way, but through various complementary and continuous strategies aimed at shaping students' character holistically.

Implementation through habituation was found in 19 articles [2], [18], [19], [21], [24], [25], [27], [29], [30], [31], [32], [36], [38], [39], [41], [43], [46], [47], [48] which indicates that character education is most commonly implemented through routine activities and habits carried out continuously in students' daily lives. These activities include religious practices, the enforcement of discipline, and the cultivation of polite behavior such as respecting teachers, greeting peers, and maintaining proper conduct within the school environment. Through consistent practice, students not only understand character values but also become accustomed to practicing them without coercion. This demonstrates that character development is more effective when carried out through repeated direct experiences, so that these values are naturally ingrained and become part of the students' personalities.

Implementation through learning activities was found in 16 articles [2], [15], [17], [21], [22], [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [34], [37], [40], [46], [47] which indicates that character values are integrated into the classroom learning process. Teachers not only convey academic content but also link it to relevant moral and social values, whether through teaching methods, discussions, or assignments. As a result, students can understand the connection between knowledge and the application of values in daily life. Additionally, implementation through extracurricular activities was found in 13 articles [2], [16], [19], [21], [22], [26], [27], [28], [29], [34], [35], [36], [48] which shows that out-of-class activities provide students with opportunities to learn firsthand through experience. Activities such as scouting, sports, the arts, and

religious programs foster cooperation, responsibility, leadership, and discipline, as students are actively involved in various activities that require social interaction and decision-making.

The concept of leading by example is discussed in 13 articles [2], [18], [24], [27], [29], [30], [31], [32], [34], [36], [43], [46], [47] which indicates that teachers and the entire school community play a crucial role as role models in behavior. The attitudes and actions demonstrated by teachers serve as a guide for students in their own behavior, as students naturally tend to imitate what they observe directly. Therefore, setting a good example is one of the most effective strategies for shaping students' character indirectly. Additionally, implementation through collaboration was identified in 12 articles [17], [18], [21], [23], [28], [32], [33], [36], [38], [39], [45], [49] which demonstrates the involvement of schools, parents, and the community in supporting character education. Through this collaboration, the character values instilled in school can be reinforced within the family and social environments, making the character-building process more consistent and sustainable.

Implementation through teaching methods and media was found in 12 articles [17], [18], [24], [26], [31], [33], [35], [39], [41], [42], [43], [50] which shows that the use of digital media, educational games, and innovative teaching methods can help students understand character values in a more engaging and accessible way. This approach also keeps pace with the times, making learning more relevant to students' lives. In addition, the implementation of these methods through the curriculum was documented in 9 articles [18], [19], [23], [26], [28], [32], [44], [47], [49] which indicates that character education has been formally integrated into the education system through instructional planning and curriculum policies. Implementation through school culture was found in 8 articles [25], [26], [34], [38], [39], [40], [43], [49] which indicates that the school environment, rules and regulations, and collective norms play a role in shaping students' character indirectly. Meanwhile, implementation through management was found in 3 articles [39], [42], [49] which indicates that the role of the school principal and the management system is crucial in designing, organizing, and ensuring the continuity of character education programs in a structured and consistent manner within the school environment.

3.3. Impact



Figure 4. Frequency of character education impacts identified in the literature.

Based on the diagram above and the analysis of the 38 articles identified, it was found that 7 of these articles did not discuss the impact of character education implementation in the context of modern education, particularly in elementary schools [2], [16], [21], [22], [24], [40]. Meanwhile, the remaining 31 articles discuss the impact of character education implementation, from which five dominant impacts can be identified. First, the impact of improved morals, ethics, and positive behavior, which is mentioned in 15 articles [18], [19], [23], [26], [28], [30], [31], [32], [36], [38], [43], [44], [47], [49]. According to the article, the implementation of character education generally helps shape students into individuals who are moral, possess integrity, and have positive habits to apply in their daily lives. These include speaking politely, showing respect to elders, and avoiding negative behaviors such as bullying. This demonstrates that character education plays a significant role in shaping students' ethics from an early age.

Second, it contributes to the development of social skills and empathy, as mentioned in 9 articles [15], [19], [28], [29], [32], [33], [36], [46], [50]. Character education plays a significant role in helping students build healthy social relationships, collaborate, and demonstrate care for their peers, others, and the environment. Additionally, it fosters a spirit of tolerance in students, enabling them to appreciate differences and demonstrate prosocial behavior. This is supported by several articles noting that character education leads to a reduction in negative behaviors such as bullying. This demonstrates that the purpose of character education is to create a harmonious social environment for students.

Third, it leads to greater discipline and responsibility, as mentioned in the 8 articles [20], [23], [27], [29], [31], [34], [37], [48]. The implementation of character education will encourage students to be more compliant with rules, take responsibility for their tasks or actions, be disciplined, and be mindful of their duties. This is supported by several articles indicating a decrease in disciplinary violations at schools. This serves as evidence that students have successfully applied these values in their daily lives.

Fourth, it plays a role in shaping the holistic personality and character mentioned in the 8 articles [18], [23], [25], [27], [35], [43], [48], [49]. Character education also plays a significant role in fostering a balanced development of moral, social, spiritual, and emotional aspects. This means that students will not only thrive academically but will also develop into more independent, resilient individuals capable of becoming agents of change in society. This demonstrates that character education shapes students into well-rounded, holistic individuals.

Fifth, it has been shown to improve students' cognitive abilities and motivation to learn, as cited in six articles [15], [18], [29], [37], [38], [42]. Character education can enhance students' cognitive abilities, including critical thinking, creativity, and motivation to learn. This is supported by several articles mentioned above, which note an increase in student engagement and understanding during the learning process. This demonstrates that character education is not only about improving student behavior but also about enhancing their academic abilities.

In addition to the five dominant impacts listed above, there are also articles that do not fall under those five categories. There are four articles that also discuss the impacts of the existence or implementation of character education in elementary schools, which can be considered supplementary but not dominant, namely the articles [17], [39], [41], [45]. These four articles describe impactful character education in a more contextual and detailed manner. Article [17], reveals that character education makes the learning process interactive and enjoyable, enhances students' motivation to learn, and encourages them to develop self-awareness so that they apply character values of their own volition rather than out of obligation to others. Article [41], reveals that character education can be instilled through religious values; these values will help improve students' ability to read the Quran and apply religious teachings in their daily lives. Meanwhile, the article [39] and [45], It does not directly address the impacts of character education but rather highlights supporting factors, one of which is the role of teachers in fostering the success of character education in elementary schools. This can enrich the five dominant impacts mentioned above, as the effects of character education are not merely assessed based on students' final outcomes or behavioral changes but also through the learning process and the supporting factors that influence it.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 38 scientific articles published between 2022 and 2026, it can be concluded that the essence of character education in modern elementary schools focuses on five dominant values: responsibility, discipline, honesty, cooperation, and empathy. In the implementation phase, these values are most extensively instilled through daily habituation, integration into learning activities, extracurricular programs, and modeling by educators. The success of this implementation heavily relies on a paradigm shift toward a student-centered approach, where students are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants involved through meaningful experiences.

Furthermore, active collaboration between schools, families, and the community is a crucial factor for sustainability. Overall, structured and adaptive character education in the digital era is proven to have a significant positive impact. This impact is not limited to improving the morals, ethics, and social-empathy skills of students, but also contributes to fostering a holistic personality and increasing cognitive learning motivation.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to the conceptualization of the study and the drafting of the introduction. Furthermore, specific responsibilities were distributed as follows: Naeny Mahesty drafted the discussion section concerning character education values; Salfina Damayanti elaborated on the implementation of character education; Luthfi Rahmania developed the abstract and eligibility criteria, while also leading the English translation of the manuscript; Naila Bintang Titania Putri Riyadi formulated the research design and assisted with the translation process; and Dea Amelia authored the discussion regarding the impact of character education. All authors have critically reviewed, read, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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