

Analysis of Character Education for Social and Emotional Development in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the role of character education in improving social-emotional development in early childhood. The problem in this study is that character education in early childhood education settings still faces various challenges such as a lack of training for educators, limited resources and a lack of parental involvement. This research method is conducted through a literature review and empirical analysis of various character education programmes in early childhood education institutions. The participants in this study were researchers, educators, parents and early childhood practitioners. The results show that character education can have a significant impact on children's ability to manage emotions, build social relationships and adapt to the environment. The follow-up to this research is to design a character education programme that is structured and adapted to the stage of early childhood development, and that integrates values such as empathy, cooperation, independence and tolerance into children's daily activities.

Key Word:

Character building, Social Emotional Development, Early childhood

Article history:
Received October 10, 2024
Accepted December 25, 2024
Available online December 30, 2024

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Introduction

Early childhood is the period from birth to six years of age, the golden age of human development. During this time, children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development takes place very rapidly, thus having a significant impact on their future lives. (Isjoni, 2011) explains in his book that Maria Montessori emphasised the importance of children's independence in learning. A well-organised learning environment can help children to develop optimally according to their interests and needs.

According to (Ndari, S. S., Vinayastri, A., & Masykuroh, 2019), education in the context of early childhood is a process of providing planned and directed stimulation to support the physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development of children from birth to 6 years of age. Education at this stage aims to provide a strong foundation for children's growth so that they can reach their maximum potential in the future. In addition, Isjoni (2011) quotes Sigmund Freud as saying that play is a way for children to develop their emotional skills, help them understand themselves and overcome frustration or traumatic experiences.

Character education is one of the most important issues in the world of education, especially in early childhood, as this is a golden age of development where the foundation of children's character is formed during this period. Based on observations related to the implementation of character education in early childhood education institutions, there are still various challenges such as a lack of training for educators, limited resources and a lack of parental involvement. Therefore, in-depth analyses are needed to explore the relationship between character education and children's social-emotional development, as well as effective strategies to overcome the barriers. According to (van der Ploeg, 2016), character education should include direct experiences through social activities. Children learn values such as cooperation, tolerance and leadership by interacting in groups.

From the observations described above, the researcher took as a reference the alternative character education that will be instilled in their early childhood towards their social emotions, because this is the ideal time to start forming moral values such as empathy, responsibility and cooperation, which will be the foundation of their

character in the future. In interviews with the child's teachers and parents, the teachers' and parents' opinions about the child's behaviour in terms of social-emotional aspects are still not good. Teachers reported that the children lacked social skills and responsibility towards their peers in class, while parents also reported that the children were more empathetic towards their siblings and friends at home than their parents.

Character education is a process of forming moral values, ethics and positive behaviour that aims to develop individual personalities to be able to live well in society. According to (Yakup & Suyadi, 2023) character education is a learning process that aims to form and develop moral values, ethics and positive behaviour in individuals. This process focuses on the formation of attitudes, habits and mindsets that are consistent with the social, cultural and religious norms prevailing in the society. Character education focuses not only on knowledge but also on the practice of these values in everyday life.

Character education plays an important role in shaping a young generation that is not only academically intelligent but also emotionally balanced and socially skilled. At an early age, children are at a critical stage of development where the formation of moral values and social-emotional skills becomes an important foundation for their future success. Character education offers a strategic approach to guiding children in recognising positive values such as empathy, responsibility and honesty. (Lickona, 2001) defines character education as education that aims to develop individuals who have good moral habits and values and behave according to these values. On the other hand, according (Rustini, 2018), character education focuses on the formation of positive values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy and cooperation. On the other hand, social-emotional development includes children's ability to understand and manage emotions, establish interpersonal relationships, and demonstrate appropriate social behaviour.

Both character education and social-emotional education are interrelated. Character education helps children identify and practice values that support the development of social-emotional skills. For example, empathy training can help children understand the feelings of others, making it easier for them to build healthy social relationships. Therefore, it is expected that through character education, social-

emotional development in early childhood will develop as expected. Character education plays an important role in improving social and emotional development in early childhood. Several studies have shown that effective implementation of character education can shape positive attitudes, improve social relationships and help children manage their emotions.

As explained by (Hartati, 2023), this research shows that character education has a positive impact on the social and emotional development of students. Children with strong character tend to have better emotional well-being and can manage their emotions more effectively. Then Nassarudin and Fitri (2024) research shows that the implementation of character education in early childhood social-emotional development includes the values of discipline, independence and caring. Children who receive character education tend to have a better ability to manage their emotions and form healthy social relationships. Social-emotional development is an important foundation for children's future success. (Suyitno, 2023) Children with good social-emotional skills tend to be more adaptable, build positive relationships and overcome emotional challenges. Character education is one way of shaping these aspects at an early age.

Social-emotional development in early childhood includes the ability to understand and manage emotions, build healthy interpersonal relationships and demonstrate pro-social behaviour in everyday settings. These skills are strongly influenced by interactions with parents, teachers and peers. Character education integrated into the early childhood education system provides opportunities for children to learn values that support the holistic development of social-emotional skills.

However, not all educational institutions recognise the importance of integrating character education into the early childhood curriculum. Therefore, the researcher wanted to conduct this study to assess the role of character education in improving early childhood social-emotional development. This research is expected to provide insights for educators, parents and policymakers in creating an environment that supports children's character development from an early age.

Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a literature review research approach by analysing various journal articles, books and research reports related to character education and early childhood social-emotional development. In addition, case studies of several character education programmes implemented in early childhood education settings were analysed to provide empirical data.

Reason for choosing this method A literature review allows the researcher to review the research that has already been done, to understand the existing findings and to find out if there are any gaps or unexplored areas. This allows the researcher to develop more specific and relevant research questions. The literature review allows the researcher to review previously conducted research, understand existing findings and find out if there are any gaps or unexplored areas. This allows researchers to develop more specific and relevant research questions.

In research on character education and its impact on early childhood social-emotional development, participants play a very important role in providing rich and diverse information. Each group of participants, from children to parents and educators, provides different perspectives that can help researchers understand more about the impact of character education on children's development.

Below is a diagram explaining the procedures, instruments and data analysis techniques used in the literature review. The research procedures in the literature review can be described in the following diagram:

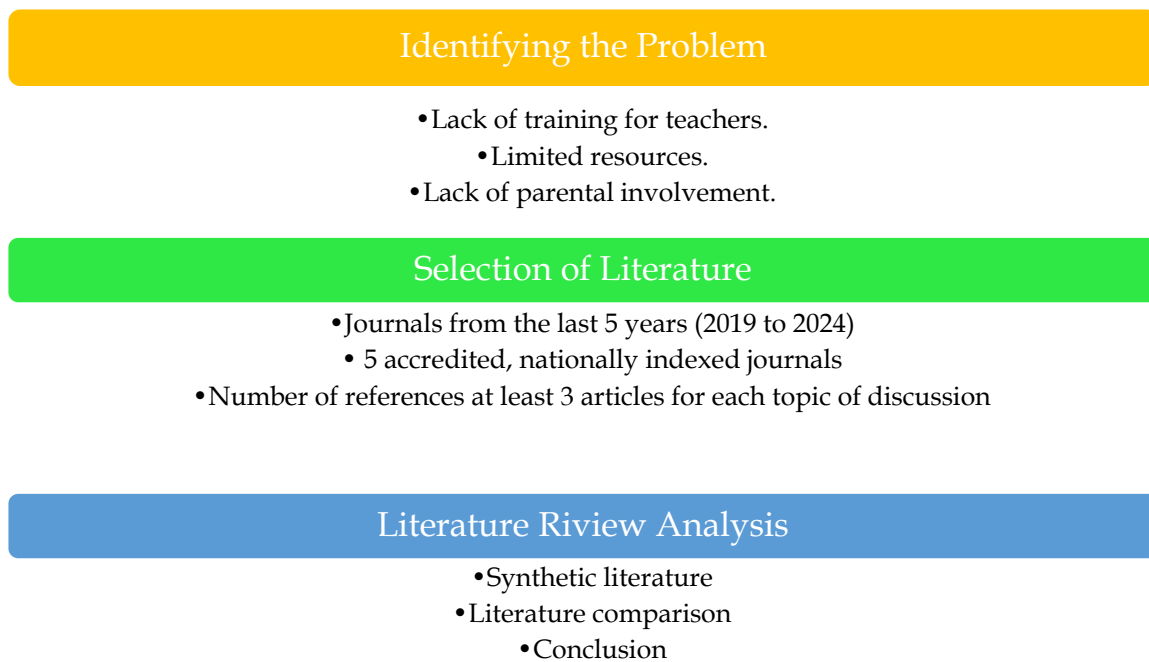


Figure 1: Literature Review Research Methodology

Data analysis in the literature review was carried out qualitatively with the following steps: Content analysis, reading and understanding the content of the literature in depth to find patterns, themes or relationships between concepts. The content analysis steps in this research include 1) synthesising the literature, integrating different findings from the literature into a systematic narrative; 2) comparing the literature, comparing the findings of different studies to find similarities, differences or research gaps; c) drawing conclusions, synthesising the findings of the analysis to provide answers to the research questions or support the arguments made.

Results and Discussion

The results showed that the implementation of character education has a significant impact on early childhood social-emotional development. The following data were used in the analysis of the literature review used in this study:

Table 1. Data Literature

Author	Year	Title
Rahayu et al.	2024	Implementation of character education in the social-emotional development of kindergarten children.
Rahman Izhama & Muarifuddin	2024	Implementation of Character Education in Early Childhood in Social Emotional Development of Children in PAUD Alam Jungle School Sekaran, Gunungpati District.
Berutu & P	2023	Teachers' efforts in improving social emotional development in early childhood.
Syamsul Hadi	2013	Social Emotional Learning as the Basis of Early Childhood Charcter Education.

Based on the data obtained from the literature review, there are several key findings:

1. Improved social skills in children

Children who participated in character education programmes showed improvements in their ability to share, cooperate and resolve conflicts constructively. For example, 85% of children who participated in character-based activities such as group games and discussions showed an increase in pro-social behaviour.

Character education not only helps children understand social concepts but also encourages them to practise social skills in everyday life. With the right approach, young children can develop good social skills, build harmonious relationships and become empathetic and responsible individuals.

2. Developing Emotional Management

Character education helps children to better recognise and manage their emotions. 78% of children showed a decrease in aggressive behaviour and were better able to express their feelings verbally after participating in reflection and character education activities.

Character education provides an important foundation for young children to manage their emotions well. By introducing values such as patience, empathy and self-control, children can develop the emotional regulation skills that will set them up for

success in social relationships and in life. Character education not only builds emotionally stable individuals, but also prepares them to face life's challenges positively and constructively.

3. The role of parents and teachers

Cooperation between parents and teachers is a key factor in the success of character education. Parents who are actively involved in school activities and who set a good example at home create a consistent environment for children's character development.

To achieve maximum character education, cooperation between parents and teachers is very important. Both parties must have the same vision for the education of children and support each other in implementing character values both at home and at school. This synergy creates continuity in learning and strengthens children's character.

Overall, parents and teachers play an inseparable role in the formation of children's character. Good character education will produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also moral and responsible in their social lives.

4. Effective methods of character education

Play-based learning methods, such as role-playing, storytelling and art activities, are more effective in instilling character values in early childhood.

The above methods can be used simultaneously to create a holistic character education. With consistency and proper reinforcement, character education can shape children into individuals who are not only intelligent but also noble, responsible and sensitive to their social environment.

The following is a comparative description of the research participants, research methods and research findings from the listed literature:

1. From (Rahayu et al., 2024), the participants in this study were early childhood in kindergarten. The research method used is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The results showed that the implementation of character education is

- proven to contribute positively to the social and emotional development of children in kindergarten.
2. From (Rahmah Izhama & Muarifuddin, 2024), the participants in this study were children in PAUD. The research method used is qualitative research with observation and interviews. The results showed that character education helps to shape social-emotional skills in early childhood with a nature-based approach.
 3. From (Berutu & P, 2023), the participants in this study were early childhood and parents. The research method used is a literature review with a theoretical analysis. The results showed that social-emotional learning is used as a basis for character education in early childhood, with an emphasis on the importance of teacher and parent involvement.
 4. From (Lutfiyah, 2023), the participants in this study were teachers and early childhood. The research method used is a case study with interviews and observations. The results showed that teachers have an important role in promoting social-emotional development through interactive teaching strategies.
 5. From (Syamsul Hadi, 2013), the participants of this study were early childhood in educational institutions. The research method used is literature analysis and observation. The results showed that social-emotional learning is an important foundation in character education to shape children's personalities in terms of play-based learning.

The similarities of the 5 libraries used are as follows: 1) focus on early childhood as research participants; 2) examine the relationship between character education and social-emotional development; 3) use qualitative research methods, either through observation, interviews or literature reviews.

Differences between the 5 references used include 1) participants, some studies are specific to certain institutions (kindergarten, early childhood education) while others are more general; 2) research methods, variations between descriptive approaches, case studies and literature reviews; and 3) research findings, the focus of the findings varies from the role of teachers, parents, children, nature-based environments to social-emotional learning approaches.

The discussion of this research follows the explanation of the research results:

1. The impact of character education on social development

Character education directly supports children's ability to interact with others. Children who are familiar with values such as cooperation, empathy and responsibility are better able to develop positive interpersonal relationships. This is in line with Vygotsky's theory of social development, which states that social interaction is the main basis of children's learning (Trisnadewi et al., 2024).

Examples of implementing character education in the classroom, such as role-playing or group discussions, give children practical experience in applying social values. Rather than being taught in theory, children are encouraged to practice these values in real-life situations. In line with the findings of (Rahayu et al., 2024), the implementation of character education has been shown to contribute positively to the social and emotional development of children in kindergarten.

2. The impact of character education on emotion management

Early childhood emotional development is strongly influenced by the ability to recognise and manage emotions. Character education teaches children to recognise and manage emotions such as anger, sadness or happiness. For example, activities such as telling stories about emotional experiences help children understand that all emotions are natural and can be expressed in a good way (Hadisi, 2015).

This approach supports Goleman's research on emotional intelligence, which emphasises the importance of the ability to manage emotions in achieving success in life. Through character education, children can build emotional resilience that will help them face future challenges. (Rahmah Izhama & Muarifuddin, 2024) Character education helps shape social-emotional skills in early childhood with a nature-based approach.

3. The joint role of parents and teachers

The success of character education depends heavily on the synergy between the school and home environments. Teachers act as facilitators of character education programmes, while parents are the main supporters at home. Inconsistency in the application of values in these two environments can hinder children's learning.

According to (Adolph, 2016), research shows that children who receive consistent character support from teachers and parents tend to have better social-emotional development than children who receive support from only one party. Therefore, training and communication between teachers and parents are important aspects of character education. (Berutu & P, 2023) Social-emotional learning is the foundation of character education in early childhood, with an emphasis on the importance of teacher and parent involvement.

4. Effective learning methods

The methods used in character education greatly influence its effectiveness. Play-based learning is the most effective method because it matches the characteristics of young children who learn through exploration and hands-on experience. For example, role-playing allows children to understand other people's perspectives, while storytelling helps them to absorb values through engaging stories. According to (McInnes, 2019), play plays an important role in helping children develop gross and fine motor skills, as well as social and language skills. Well-designed games can stimulate children's curiosity and provide an enjoyable learning experience.

This method also supports Piaget's theory of development, which states that young children learn through concrete and active experiences. By using this method, character values become easier for children to understand and apply. According to Lutfiah (2023), teachers have an important role in promoting social-emotional development through interactive teaching strategies. Then (Syamsul Hadi, 2013) explains that social-emotional learning is an important foundation in character education to shape children's personalities in terms of play-based learning.

Conclusion

Character education is central to improving social-emotional development in early childhood. With the right approach, character education not only instils positive values in children but also helps them develop social and emotional skills that are essential for their future success. Therefore, the integration of character education into the early childhood curriculum needs more attention from various stakeholders, including educators, parents and policymakers.

Recommendations from this research include: 1) Improve the training of educators to effectively implement character education; 2) Develop an integrated character education programme in the early childhood curriculum; 3) Encourage cooperation between educational institutions and parents in supporting children's character development.

From the explanation of results and discussion, this study implies that the results of this study provide implications that character education should be an integral part of the early childhood education curriculum. In addition, training for teachers and parents on how to implement effective character education needs to be improved. Collaboration between school and home should also be strengthened to create an environment that supports children's overall character development. Overall, character education not only helps to improve social-emotional development in early childhood but also builds individuals with strong character who are ready to face future challenges.

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