

# Role of Teachers in the Character Development of Students: Findings from a Systematic Review

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## Abstract

*This systematic literature review establishes teachers' interactions in developing character among students in learning institutions. Through a comprehensive analysis of 30 studies published between 2014 and 2024, the review identifies four primary clusters of teacher influence: cultural and religious, discipline, leadership, moral development, and social development. The results indicate that teachers are the primary shapers of character and more than educators: They are the enablers, the navigators, and the helpers of character. The review also shows the general difficulty in character education and how the study highlights the need to focus on culture, use appropriate punishment/ reward interventions, innovative leadership, and equilibrium in moral development. However, the effectiveness of the instructional efforts in essentialist character education has been evidenced by challenges like teachers' preparation and cultural diversity. Lastly, this review discusses the consequences of social integration, future research, and practical work in education. It emphasises the importance of subsequent research and policy initiatives focused on teacher preparation for character education in the context of increasing challenges and diversification in contemporary schools.*

## Keywords

Character development  
Contemporary schools  
PRISMA  
Role of teachers  
Systematic review

## INTRODUCTION

Given the increasing pace of changes at the global level jeopardising societies' sustainable development, character education in the learning process has never been as vital as it is today (Birhan et al., 2021; Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020). Some aspects it comprises, like the ability to understand others, self-endurance, character, and ethical practices, have become core aspects of the current curriculum (Adeoye, 2024). With societies facing different challenges such as social injustice, climatic change, and mental health, among others, there is an urgent need to foster moral and socially sensitive gentlemen. Patterns of education, which were centred on the delivery of academic content and scores, are inadequate to equip learners to face present world challenges (Nurlailah & Ardiansyah, 2022; Pike et al., 2021). Educational institutions today are more inclined to nurture the student's mind. They are charged with shaping responsible learners, thinkers, and future members of society who can think critically, solve problems, and make ethical decisions (Kiptiony, 2024; Pelonis, 2021).

This change can be attributed to the realisation that academic achievement, however valuable as a measure of success, cannot render a human life meaningful, let alone generate social cohesion. Today's world needs new ideas and fresh thinkers to make positive changes towards development. Such people should possess high levels of ethical standards and the capacity to understand different views of others. Therefore, schools are supposed to contribute significantly towards developing such specific attributes (Istiyono et al., 2021; Kiptiony, 2024; Saputro & Murdiono, 2020). This broadened education purpose acknowledges the fact that character is not an indivisible endowment but a composite of skills and virtues that can be built and strengthened through purposive processes of education (Nurlailah & Ardiansyah, 2022; Pike et al., 2021; Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020). In the middle of this shift in the education system, teachers have the most critical functions (Istiyono et al., 2021). Teachers are no longer just vessels that pass down academic information; they are significant builders of character in their students, if not the most influential (Pelonis, 2021; Syarnubi et al., 2021).

Their impact does not stop at offering lessons but rather encompasses all aspects of learning and teaching, as they are not only excellent references but also act as role models (Birhan et al., 2021; Kiptiony, 2024; Pike et al., 2021). Their actions and behaviours are closely watched and copied by their students all

the time. Students' conflicts, empathy, and resilience and how a teacher resolves those conflicts, model those emotions or models those behaviours in terms of facing challenges can significantly influence students' perspectives and behaviours regarding similar events (Hermino & Arifin, 2020; Syarnubi et al., 2021). It is well understood that formal values, ethical standards, norms of conduct, and social norms which mould the learner's character are inculcated both directly and indirectly through the actions of the teachers (Asif et al., 2020; Suryanto et al., 2023). Consciously nurtured by effective teachers, the classroom setting is a space where pro-social, emotional and character development are modelled and rehearsed (Baines et al., 2023; Khanna et al., 2021; Watts et al., 2021).

In the context of character education, teachers use different approaches such as engaging their students in group discussions on moral values, applying group learning techniques that help inculcate team spirit and social norms among learners, and organising service-learning projects that enable citizens to vote or volunteer to help their society (Asif et al., 2020; Hermino & Arifin, 2020; Kiptiony, 2024; Lim, 2023; Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020). Additionally, teachers play a significant role in students' critical thinking and moral reasoning (Baines et al., 2023; Bleazby, 2020; Kiptiony, 2024; Maksum et al., 2021). Teachers help students develop ethical norms by directing them to think about the world's ethical dilemmas critically. This process of guided moral inquiry is critical in helping students develop value and the ability to prescribe the autonomous moral reasoning abilities of the learners in responding to a range of real-life situations.

Although it is a given that teachers play a vital role in the formation of students' character, there is still much confusion as to which techniques and methodologies are the most suitable. Due to several factors, including the difficulty of character education or the differences in the cultural contexts and educational philosophies in various countries, the implementation and results of character education are diverse. A large body of research has concerned different facets of character education (Bleazby, 2020; González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022; Jhon et al., 2021; Lavy, 2020; Suartama et al., 2020), nevertheless, there is a lack of systematic synopses that will facilitate the pinpointing of teachers' contributions to the formation. The fragmented nature of the current literature leaves significant gaps in understanding teachers' impact on students' character development. Given these gaps and variations, a systematic literature review is essential as such a review would synthesise existing knowledge and highlight areas requiring further research in this critical educational domain.

Therefore, the primary aim of this systematic literature review is to evaluate and synthesise existing research on how teachers contribute to students' character development within the educational sector. Specifically, this review seeks to address the following research questions:

- What does research report on teachers' impact on various facets of students' character development focused in the education sector?
- What challenges are faced by teachers in students' character development?
- What future directions can researchers take to improve strategies and practices used in the education sector to enhance teachers' impact on students' character development?

## METHODOLOGY

The present (Systematic Literature Review) SLR adopts an extensive strategy for selecting, assessing, and integrating potential research on teachers' responsibilities in character building within the educational context. The review was conducted according to the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement.

### Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted across five major databases: Taylor & Francis, ERIC, Web of Science, SCOPUS, and Google Scholar. The search strategy aimed to identify studies published between 2014 and 2024 that were interested in character development, moral education, and the position of teachers in

these processes. Table 1 presents examples of search terms applied to each database and their variations.

**Table 1**  
Search Strategy and Results returned

Database	Search Syntax Example	Supplementary Terms	Publication Date	N
Taylor & Francis	("character development" OR "moral education" OR "value education") AND (teacher OR educator) AND (school* OR classroom)	Ethical Development, Virtue Education, Character Education	2014-2024	24
ERIC	("character education" OR "moral instruction" OR "ethical training") AND (teacher OR instructor) AND (student* OR pupil*)	Character Building, Moral Formation	2014-2024	59
Web of Science	("moral development" OR "character formation" OR "ethical growth") AND (teacher OR educator) AND (student* OR learner*)	Character Cultivation, Moral Nurturing, Character Education	2014-2024	101
SCOPUS	("character building" OR "moral shaping" OR "ethical moulding") AND (teacher OR instructor) AND (school* OR education*)	Character Fostering, Moral Guidance, Character Education	2014-2024	245
Google Scholar	("role of teachers" OR "teacher influence") AND ("character development" OR "moral education") AND (student* OR pupil*)	Educator Impact, Teacher Contribution, Character Education	2014-2024	Many pages of results but included 30 papers from initial research results

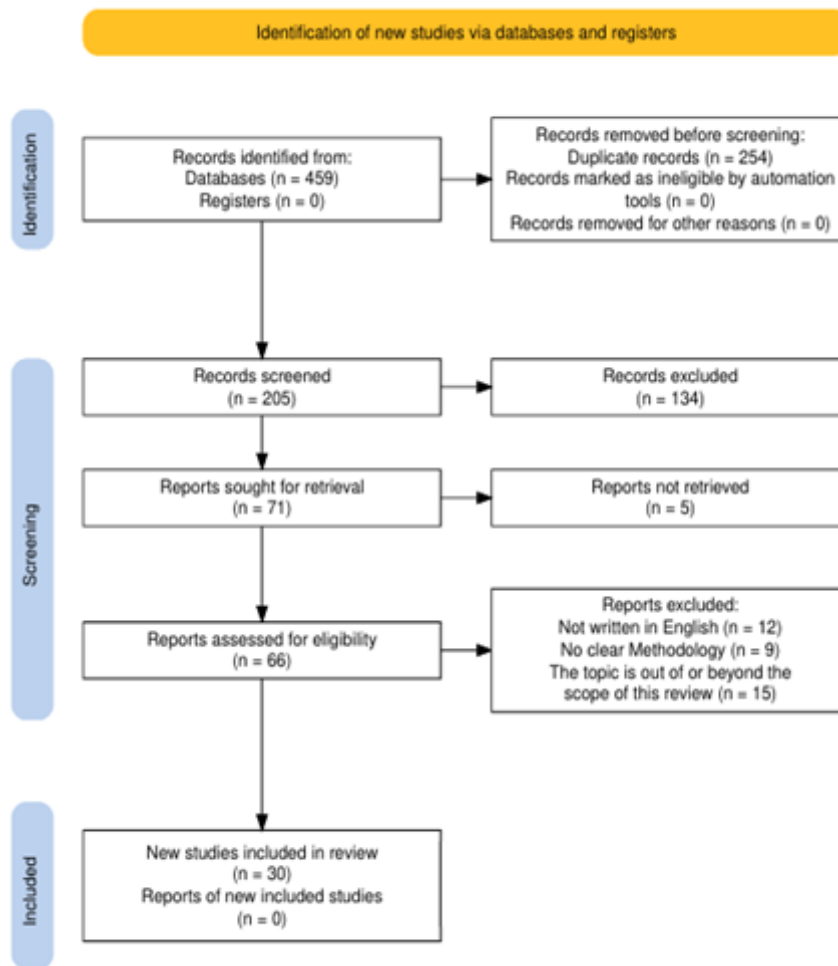
### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

- Published between 2014 and 2024
- Focused on character development, moral education, or related concepts in educational settings
- Examined the role of teachers or educators in the process
- Conducted in school or classroom environments
- Written in English

Exclusion criteria included:

- Publications before 2014
- Studies not directly related to character development or moral education
- Research not involving teachers or educational settings
- Non-English language publications
- Grey literature, opinion pieces, or non-peer-reviewed articles



**Fig. 1.** Flow chart of the systematic review selection process based on PRISMA

### Data Extraction and Analysis

A standardised data extraction form was developed to collect relevant information from each included study. The extracted data included:

- Study characteristics (author, year, country)
- Research design and methodology
- Sample size and characteristics
- Key findings related to teachers’ roles in character development
- Recommendations for future research and practice

The extracted data were then analysed using a thematic analysis approach. This involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and concepts across the included studies. The analysis focused on addressing the research questions.

### Quality Assessment

A quality assessment was conducted to control the quality of the analysed papers, depending on the type of research (CASP checklist for qualitative papers, EPHPP checklist for quantitative papers). The quality assessment results were not used to exclude studies; however, they were analysed considering the methodological quality of each study.

### Synthesis of Findings

The results from the studies selected for review were narratively synthesised using the main themes deduced while analysing the studies. This synthesis was intended to generate state-of-the-art present-

day knowledge about teachers and character development and point out emerging research topics for future research.

## RESULTS & FINDINGS

### Characteristics of Reviewed Research

The systematic literature review synthesised much literature about teachers' involvement in children's character formation. Figure 2 depicts the year-wise distribution of the reviewed studies, which indicates increased research activities on this topic in recent years. This shows a rising scholarly concern about how teachers influence learners' moral and character development.

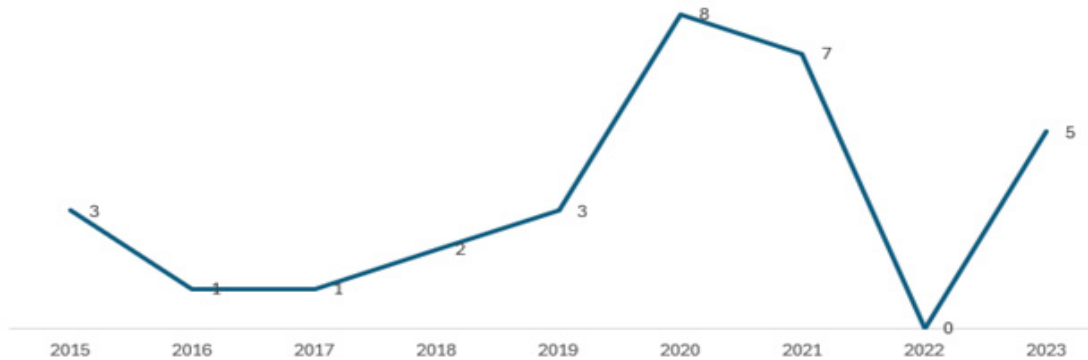


Fig. 2. Year-on-Year Distribution of Reviewed Research

Figure 3 depicts the distribution of the reviewed research by country, indicating a global interest in character education, and highlights the implications of character education across the different cultures represented in the outlined countries. This emphasis on cultural diversity will make the audience feel culturally aware and sensitive in their academic pursuits.

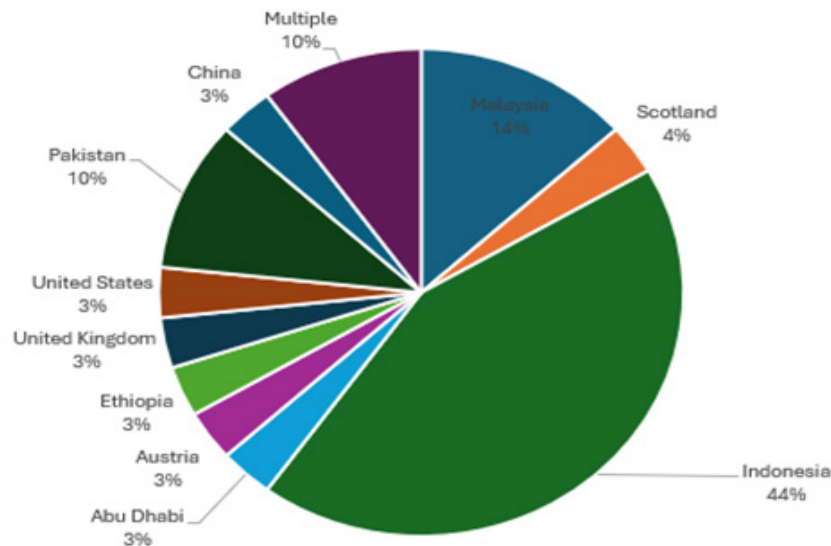
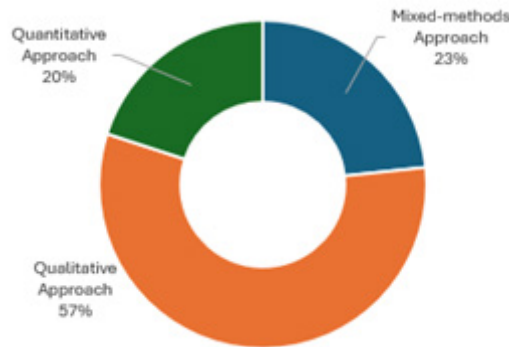


Fig. 3. Country Wise Distribution of Reviewed Research

### Methodological Analysis of Reviewed Research

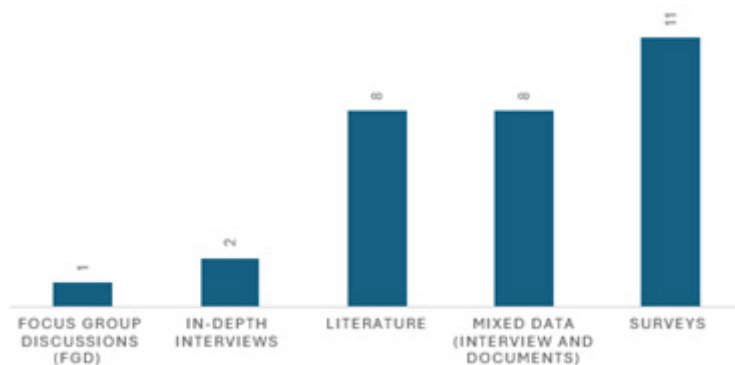
The systematic literature review highlights some intriguing patterns concerning the methodological paradigms researchers chose in this study. From the perspective of the total methodological approach of the included studies presented in Figure 5, it is manifested that qualitative research methods are more dominant, with a percentage of 57%. The second most frequent type of research paradigm belongs to the

mixed methods approaches, used in 23% of the cases, whereas the quantitative approaches are applied in 20% of the studies. Regarding the choice of quantitative and qualitative research, this distribution shows a predisposition towards contextual analysis over quantitative analysis.



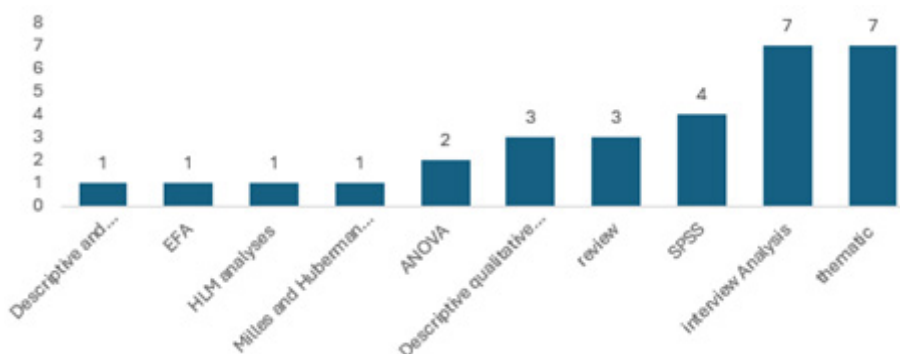
**Fig. 4.** Methodological Approach Wise Distribution of Reviewed Research

As for data collection methods (Figure 5), the survey is the most popular method applied in 11 studies. There are 8 studies using literature review only and 8 studies using a mixed data approach of interviews and documents. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions are adopted less frequently and featured in 2 and 1 studies, respectively. The popularity of surveys has led to an evident shift to collecting more generalisable knowledge. Nevertheless, extensive application of the literature reviews and the mixed data analysis indicate an increased focus on using comprehensive and triangulated data collection strategies.



**Fig. 5.** Data Collection Approach Wise Distribution of Reviewed Research

The characterisation of the data analysis methods used (Figure 6) reveals that thematic and interview analyses are the most employed, both applied in 7 studies. The quantitative aspect is detected in four studies using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, abbreviated SPSS. Several other methods, such as descriptive analysis, ANOVA, and EFA, are applied less often. This observation corresponds to the suggestion earlier that thematic and interview analysis are prevailing when using qualitative approaches.



**Fig. 6.** Data Analysis Approach Wise Distribution of Reviewed Research

This methodological landscape is characteristic of a field that values contextual data and quantitative analysis. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods signifies a shift in how multifaceted processes are perceived. Authors of the works under analysis increasingly incorporate various methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding. This trend towards methodological variation indicates a well-developed line of scholarly inquiry, where practitioners are adept at selecting and integrating the most suitable methods for their problems and goals.

### Authorship Analysis

Figures 7 and 8 provide valuable insights into research collaboration in character development in education. Figure 8, a co-citation map of all 81 authors included in the review, offers a comprehensive view of the connectivity among researchers. Figure 9, on the other hand, highlights the largest group of authors, providing a more focused perspective. These visualisations are instrumental in understanding the collaborative nature of research in this field.

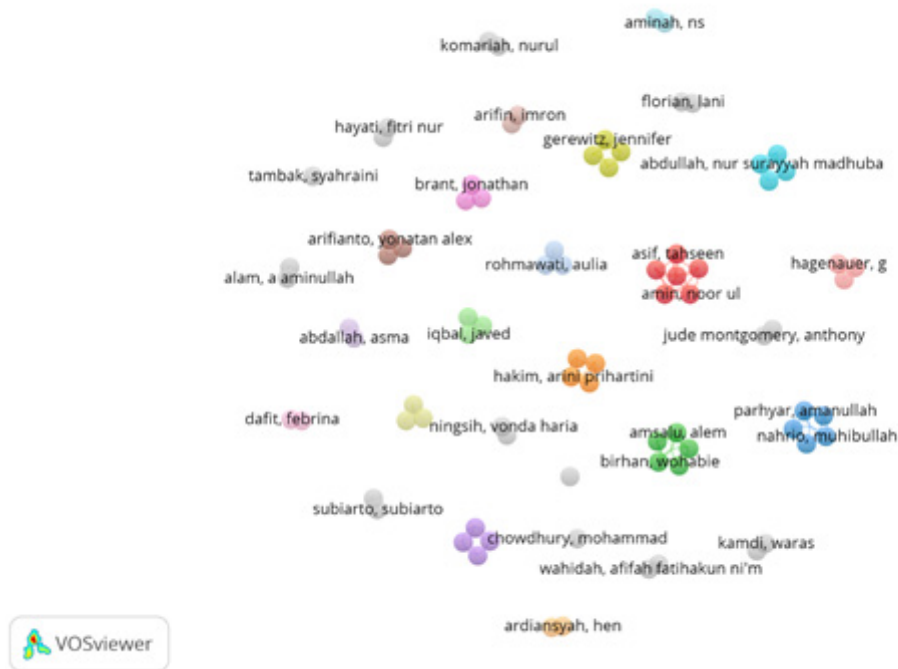


Fig. 7. Authors' co-citation Map (All 81 Authors)



Fig. 8. Authors co-citation Map (Largest Cluster of Authors)

### Keywords and Thematic Division

The keyword analysis in Figures 9 and 10 offers valuable insights into the reviewed research’s main themes and focus areas. Figure 9 shows a title-based keyword map, while Figure 10 displays an abstract-based one. These visualisations help identify the most frequently occurring terms and concepts in the literature, providing a clear picture of the primary areas of interest within the field of character development in education.

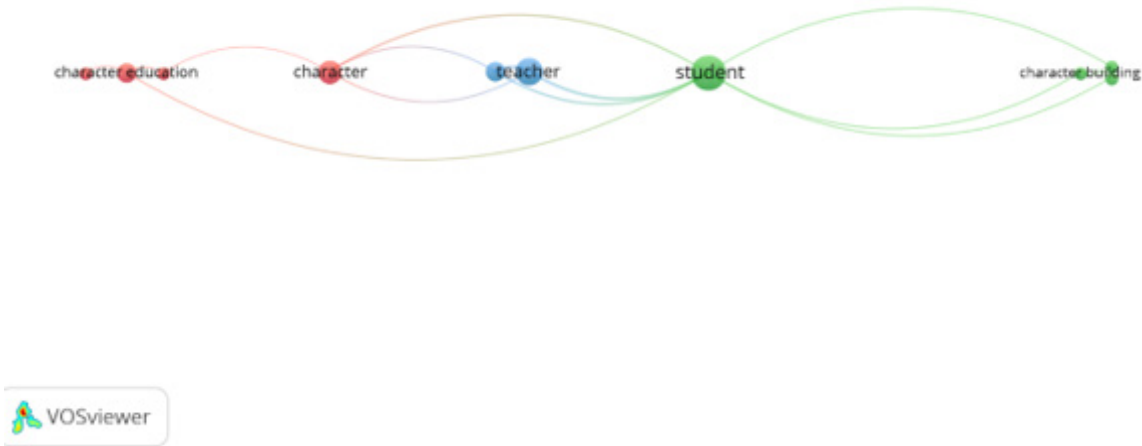


Fig. 9. Title Based Keyword Map

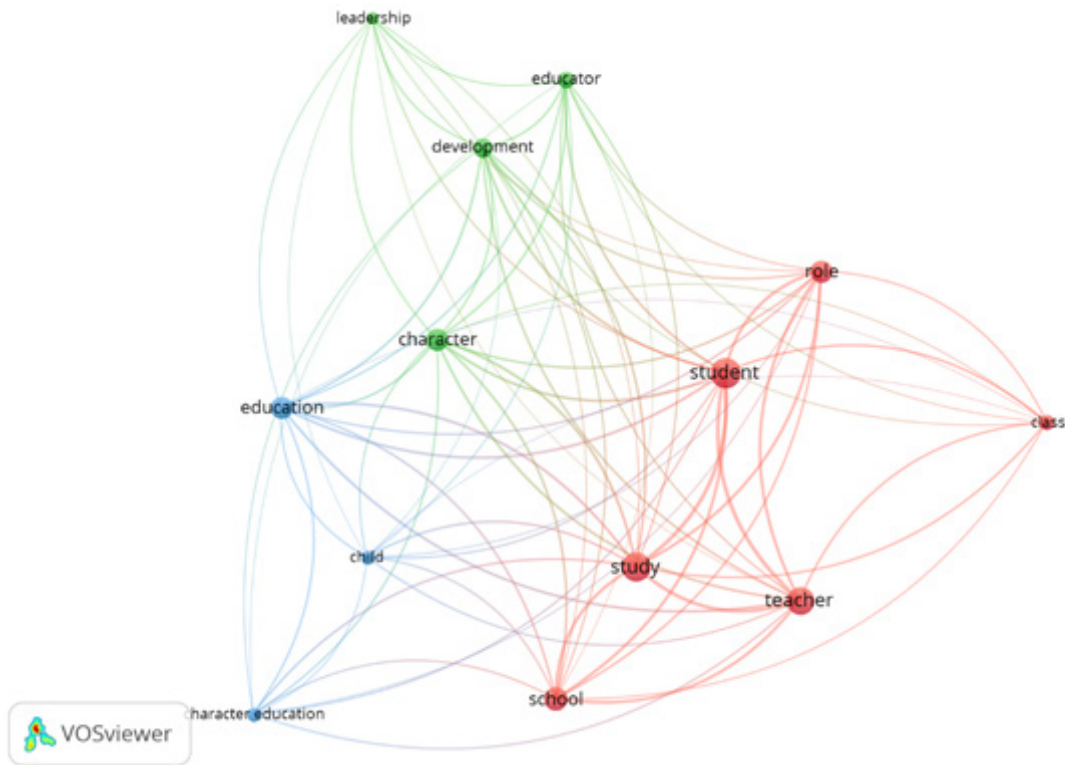


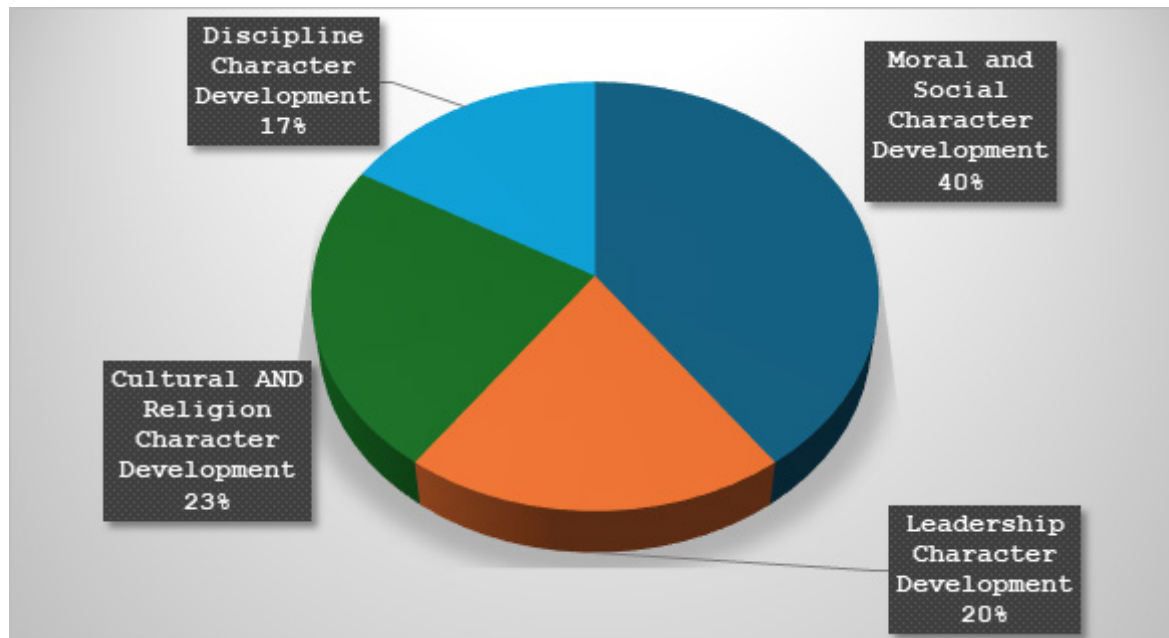
Fig. 10. Abstract Based Keyword Map

Figure 11 illustrates the cluster division according to the aimed character-building facet in the reviewed studies. Based on the information provided, we can justify the following clusters:

- Cultural and Religion: This cluster focuses on religious character education, cultural awareness, and pluralism, reflecting the importance of cultural and spiritual aspects in character development.
- Discipline: This cluster emphasises the role of teachers in improving student discipline and creating a positive learning environment.

- Leadership: This cluster explores leadership development programs and the teacher's influence on building leadership skills in students.
- Moral and Social: This cluster examines the broader aspects of moral and social development, including social-emotional skills, ethical behaviour, and moral reasoning.

These clusters represent the main facets of character development addressed in the reviewed literature, providing a framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of teachers' impact on students' character.



**Fig. 11.** Cluster Division According to Aimed Character Building Facet in Reviewed Study

## Overview of Findings

The systematic review indicates comprehensive findings that show the various ways in which teachers contribute towards the shaping of character in students. Regarding cultural and religious impact, works like Hayati and Susatya (2020), Abdallah and Alkaabi (2023) etc. emphasise the importance of teachers in fostering cultural sensitivity, respecting different religions, and embracing diversity. This makes it even more imperative for educators to promote respect for diversity and pluralistic values in education, which is becoming more multiracial. Another pattern that can be identified concerns teachers and their actions in discipline and behaviour management. Studies like Subiarto and Wakhudin (2021), Rahmawati et al., (2023), etc., show how character education implemented by teachers favourably impacts the discipline of students. Teachers teach by example and, therefore, impact behaviour and teaching methodologies that facilitate the creation of a positive learning environment that fosters an appropriate character. Regarding leadership development, Brooks et al., (2019) and Noori (2021) see teachers as central to cultivating the leadership potential of learners. Consciously and purposefully, teachers promote moral and ethical personalities within leadership training and strive for responsible positions students may occupy within several years. One of the most critical areas of investigation is the effects of teachers on children's moral and social growth. Several researchers, including Watson et al., (2019) and Pantić and Florian (2015), assert that caring teachers are significant to the students, their future, and their characters. These studies place teachers as critical players in promoting social justice, diversity, and respect, which are general character education traits. It also provides insight into the different teaching methods followed for character education instruction, modelling, discussion, and creation of a learning environment. However, difficulties in using these strategies are highlighted in works such as Gui et al., (2020) to urge firm support and training in teacher character education.

**Table 2**  
Summary of Findings in Reviewed Papers

Reference	Cluster Name	Objectives	Main Findings	Teacher Impact on Character Development
Hayati and Susatya (2020)	Cultural and Religion	Examine the implementation of religious character education	Religious character education promotes awareness and tolerance	Teachers contribute to school climate and students' religious awareness development
Abdallah and Alkaabi (2023)	Cultural and Religion	Explore teachers' role in reinforcing cultural awareness	Significant impact of teachers on cultural and heritage awareness	Teachers' interpersonal roles are crucial in creating a supportive learning environment
Komariah and Nihayah (2023)	Cultural and Religion	Study improvement of student character through Islamic education	Two learning strategies were used: direct and indirect instruction	Teachers provide guidance, facilitate instruction, and develop faith
Arifianto et al., (2021)	Cultural and Religion	Examine the need for pluralism in Christian Religious Education	There is a need to increase understanding of pluralism in a pluralistic society	Teachers act as guides to develop attitudes toward a pluralistic society
Retnasari et al., (2023)	Cultural and Religion	Identify factors in implementing religious character education	Religious character is instilled through planning, implementation, and evaluation.	Teachers are role models who significantly influence character formation.
Rachmadtullah et al., (2020)	Cultural and Religion	Determine the role of civic education teachers in multicultural education	Civic education teachers are crucial in implementing multicultural education	Teachers promote anti-discrimination attitudes and foster respect for diversity
Tambak (2021)	Cultural and Religion	Explore methods to counteract radical understanding	Islamic education teachers employ various methods to counteract radicalism	Teachers foster moderate attitudes and prevent the spread of radical ideas
Subiarto and Wakhudin (2021)	DISCIPLINE	Examine the teacher's role in improving student discipline	Effective character education enhances student discipline and character development.	Teachers act as role models, influencing students through behaviour and teaching methods.
Rahmawati et al., (2023)	DISCIPLINE	Determine the school environment's influence on discipline and politeness	School environment significantly influences character development	Teachers influence discipline and politeness through instruction and behaviour
Rafif and Dafit (2023)	DISCIPLINE	Describe the teacher's role in forming disciplinary character	The teacher's role is essential in instilling discipline	Teachers shape disciplinary character through modelling and consistent rule enforcement
Hagenauer et al., (2015)	DISCIPLINE	Explore teacher emotions and their predictors	Positive teacher-student interactions linked to better student engagement and behaviour	Teachers' perceptions of student behaviour influence positive interpersonal relationships.
Gregory et al., (2016)	DISCIPLINE	Explore implementation of restorative practices	Restorative practices implementation associated with improved teacher-student relationships	Teacher respect significantly impacts student engagement and behaviour.
Brooks et al., (2019)	Leadership	Share insights from the Oxford Global Leadership Initiative	University contexts can effectively integrate character formation into leadership development.	Educators foster moral and ethical growth through intentional engagement.
Noori (2021)	Leadership	Explore experiences of leadership development course	Leadership course positively perceived, enhancing leadership skills	Teachers shape students' leadership capabilities through structured programs
Wardani and Aminah (2019)	Leadership	Evaluate E-learning's impact on character achievement	The percentage of student character achievement is still low	Teachers play an essential role in shaping moral and ethical values.
Ningsih and Wijayanti (2019)	Leadership	Illustrate the teacher's influence on the character and soft skill-building	Teachers must master leadership to face 21st-century challenges	Teachers shape student character through actions and classroom leadership
Karagianni and Jude Montgomery (2018)	Leadership	Review leadership development programs for young adults	Young people positively experienced leadership programs	Teachers contribute to improvements in psychological outcomes like self-esteem
Setyosari and Kamdi (2021)	Leadership	Uncover methods for teaching moral integrity and leadership	Integrating character education into the curriculum is important	Teachers contribute to moral education through actions and the educational environment
Watson et al., (2019)	Moral and Social	Integrate focus on social and moral development in schools	Incorporating social-emotional skills positively influences students' development.	Caring teachers are crucial to students' long-term success and character development.
Pantić and Florian (2015)	Moral and Social	Clarify the meaning of teachers as agents of change	Teachers must be equipped as agents of change to promote social justice and inclusion.	Teachers foster positive relationships, influencing students' social and emotional growth.
Hermino and Arifin (2020)	Moral and Social	Explore implementation of contextual character education	Character education is essential for personal and behavioural maturity	Teachers play a crucial role in instilling character education
Nurlailah and Ardiansyah (2022)	Moral and Social	Examine the school environment's influence on character formation	School environment, particularly educators, is crucial in shaping children's character	Teachers foster respectful and polite attitudes among students.
Gui et al., (2020)	Moral and Social	Examine teachers' roles in developing students' morality	Teachers face challenges in moral education methods and assessment	Teachers serve as moral models and mentors, significantly influencing character development
Wahidah and Maemonah (2020)	Moral and social	To explore Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development specifically for early childhood, focusing on children aged 4-6 years, and to analyse how adult role models and the importance of justice in moral education influence their moral growth.	Early childhood moral development occurs in the pre-conventional phase, influenced by adult role models. Effective moral education requires focusing on justice and integrating moral knowledge, feelings, and behaviour.	Teachers play a crucial role as moral models, impacting students' moral reasoning and character by embodying values and promoting ethical discussions.
Dewi and Alam (2020)	Moral and Social	Explain the transformation of character education	Digital literacy is critical in transforming character education	Teachers' vision, responsibility, and social sensitivity influence students' moral values
Shah et al., (2021)	Moral and Social	Explore the effects of teachers' personalities on character-building	Teachers' personalities significantly affect students' character development.	Teachers who manage classroom behaviour effectively positively influence character
Iqbal et al., (2018)	Moral and Social	Examine the role of teachers in moral development	Teachers play a key role in the moral development of students	Teachers maintain good relationships and focus on ethical behaviour
Asif et al., (2020)	Moral and Social	Assess practices and beliefs of teachers regarding moral education	Teachers rely on personal experiences and cultural values for moral education.	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes significantly shape moral education practices.
Birhan et al., (2021)	Moral and Social	Explore contents and pedagogy of moral and character education	Parents and teachers emphasise different aspects of character education	Teachers focus on fairness and respect, using methods like role modelling
Chowdhury (2018)	Moral and Social	Present rationale for morals and ethics in science curriculum	Strong support for the presence of ethics in the science curriculum	Teachers enhance students' critical thinking and motivation in sciences

Other areas of consideration in teaching characters are also evident from these emergent themes. In their study, Dewi and Alam (2020) call for an increased focus on digital literacy to enhance character education, saying teachers must cope with technological advancements. Furthermore, the works of Shah et al., (2021) and Asif et al., (2020) pinpoint how teachers' dispositions and orientations highly influence the practices regarding character education and, therefore, learning. Considering the findings, a comprehensive approach that includes moral knowledge, feelings, and actions is advanced through the lessons postulated by Wahidah and Maemonah (2020). The geographical dispersion of the studies shows that teachers' engagement in the character development process is a concern acknowledged worldwide, and common tendencies are discernible irrespective of culture. These studies prove how complex this process is, and the essential task teachers bear in students' characterisation, hence the need to continue exploring such an area of development to improve modes of practice and results within this student-centred activity.

## DISCUSSION

The studies in this cluster reveal how teachers can foster cultural awareness, religious tolerance, and pluralism. As classrooms become more ethnically diverse, teachers actively promote cultural sensitivity and serve as role models promoting pluralism. For instance, Hayati and Susatya (2020) and Abdallah and Alkaabi (2023) highlight teachers' roles and responsibilities in enhancing the school climate and promoting students' cultural and religious profiles. It highlights the role of educators as transmitters of culture by facilitating students' ability to understand and embrace different cultures. According to the findings of the studies, teachers' interpersonal roles can significantly impact the extent to which learners establish positive cultural relations. Komariah and Nihayah (2023) and Arifianto et al., (2021) also provide more detailed examples of teachers using such strategies. The direct instruction method includes teachers as facilitators to ensure learners develop positive attitudes towards pluralistic societies; the other is the indirect instruction method. Such a dual strategy enables the use of some cultural knowledge and values and appropriate subtle modelling of the target behaviour. The studies of Retnasari et al., (2023) underline the importance of a teacher as a valuable role model in terms of character building, especially concerning religious and civil responsibilities. They state that the teachers themselves substantively help or hinder students' character development, particularly regarding principles preventing discrimination and accepting the differences of others. Tambak (2021) presents another viewpoint about teachers' approaches to preventing radical views in religious studies.

Thus, this study adds to the understanding of teachers' subtle work when they encourage moderate perspectives while not negating the beliefs of individuals who do not share similar views, increasing the layers of teachers' role in shaping character. These studies underscore the importance of preparing teachers for the realities of cultural and religious diversity in schools. They also point to the need for future research to follow up on these more general approaches to culturally responsive teaching practices. This research could examine students' moral growth and perspectives towards society, providing valuable insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers. The cluster discussing discipline and behaviour management demonstrates that the strategies for handling student behaviour and classroom organisation directly affect character. This theme highlights the conflict between providing structure and nurturing moral personality. According to Subiarto and Wakhudin (2021) and Rahmawati et al., (2023), student discipline is improved when teachers promote character education in schools. These studies emphasise the role model function of teachers and the effects of imitation and emulation, which are expressed through their behaviour and teaching approaches. This discovery implies that discipline concerns not only imposing order and restraining the students but also ensuring that students become virtuous individuals in learning. Continuing the exploration of the formation of disciplinary character, Rafif and Dafit (2023) turn further to the position of a teacher. Their research focuses on modelling and favourable rules reinforcement and argues that disciplinary character is developed and maintained through positive teaching, daily practice, and interaction.

Hagenauer et al., (2015) and Gregory et al., (2016) point out the emotional and relational aspects of the discipline, which helps expand the understanding of this concept. These works associate effective

teacher-student relations with improved student attention and conduct. Notably, they underscore how teachers' beliefs about student conduct impact the formation of positive social interactions, which has a bearing on character. In more detail, Gregory et al., (2016) focus on restorative practices, where the authors observe that using the discussed strategies relates to a positive change in teacher-student relationships. These findings suggest that proper discipline strategies address behaviour and play a key role in moulding character. They speak of the necessity for teacher training methods that use various classroom management strategies to achieve other forms of character education. Future research could further analyse the long-term impact of the different disciplinary measures in character formation and determine how culture influences the formative methods used in character education. Reflecting on the leadership development cluster, one sees how teachers directly influence the leadership competencies of students, which is a critical part of student character. This theme focuses on character development and leadership development programs in the school environment. Brooks et al., (2019) and Noori (2021) also highlight how self-assessment and leadership development can be used in purposeful and positive ways to promote moral and ethical education. According to their findings, this notion states that university contexts can also teach character formation along with leadership, which means such approaches can also be implemented at other levels of learning. Wardani and Aminah (2019) and Ningsih and Wijayanti (2019) discuss some of the challenges and opportunities in this area. They acknowledge that the percentage of student character achievement in leadership is comparatively low, but, at the same time, they stress the importance of teachers' role in the moral and ethical development of their students, which takes place during classroom leadership. This finding also highlights the importance of teachers' leadership skills to confront 21st-century educational issues. To get a more global view, Karagianni and Jude Montgomery (2018) discuss leadership development schemes for young people.

Their conclusion that youths thus had positive experiences in such programs means that teacher leadership, as recommended in such programs, can enhance positive impacts on psychological well-being, such as high self-esteem and critical aspects defining character. According to Setyosari and Kamdi (2021), character education should not be separated from the curriculum to promote character, moral integrity, and leadership. This research supports the notion that teachers participate in moral education directly and through demonstrating their behaviours and cultivating classroom ethos. These studies show leadership development is essential to character education, for which teachers seem very influential. This implies that better leadership development programs should be implemented in educational settings with specific ethical dilemmas and moral character considerations. Future studies could examine the sustainable effects of school-based leadership programs on character and ascertain how styles of leadership instruction influence different facets of character. The largest group of articles deals with the effect of teachers on students' morality and character formation, which also encompasses other aspects of character. This theme dwells upon the primary responsibility of the teachers in the ethical, social, and moral development of students. Caring teachers significantly impact the student's success and character development, as noted by Watson et al., (2019) and Pantić and Florian (2015). Teachers highlight the need for character education focusing on social justice, inclusion, and relationships and state that teachers are critical in delivering those values. This finding points to the need to prepare teachers as change agents for schools and classrooms so that they can create moral and social development.

According to Hermino and Arifin (2020) and Nurlailah and Ardiansyah (2022), the school environment plays a crucial role in developing the child's character, specifically educators. From the studies they compiled, they concluded that there is a need for character education for personal and behavioural change, emphasised explicitly by teachers. In the works of Gui et al., (2020) and Wahidah and Maemonah (2020), there is a focus on the problems teachers encounter teaching morality and the steps they take. These studies show that moral education is a commendable effort, especially given that the teacher should act as a role model and a moral compass. Dewi and Alam (2020) emphasise the importance of digital literacy in character education, pointing out that teachers should also recognise shifting technological aspects of moral and social character education. This finding supports earlier work that character education is a fluid concept adapting to the current technology-oriented environment. Similarly, Shah et al., (2021) and Asif et al., (2020) have also highlighted that teachers' personality and belief about students' character

shape their thinking and approach toward character education. Thus, teachers need to appreciate the self-development of teachers to foster character education. Birhan et al., (2021) and Chowdhury (2018) describe the goals of moral and character education involving content and pedagogy, including fairness, respect, and critical thinking. Their research leads them to assert that to enhance moral education, such values should be infused into all subjects, including science. These studies indicate that effective moral and social development requires a holistic approach, integrating various aspects of character education into daily teaching practices. They highlight the need for teacher training programs focusing on academic content and equipping educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster moral and social development effectively. Future research in this area could explore the long-term impacts of different moral education approaches, investigate the role of technology in moral and social development, and examine how teachers' personal moral development influences their effectiveness in character education.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review offers strong arguments regarding the importance of teachers in nurturing students' character in different aspects. The analysis of 30 studies reveals four primary clusters of influence: education, social, cultural, and religious, discipline, leadership, and moral and social. Teachers come out as primary engineers of character development, being more than educators, mentors, and catalysts for transformation. They are not limited to the teaching and learning process but are present in all facets of education. The review argues that character education is not a one-faceted issue but a package that entails cultural sensitivity, implementation of proper discipline, leadership, and ethics. Overall, the studies show that the character education programs led by the teachers are beneficial but reveal several significant issues: the insufficient preparation of teachers, the difficulty in culturally and religiously diverse classrooms, and the modern changes in moral development due to the internet. Thus, it is critical to keep exploring and refining the theoretical framework, promoting relevant educational policies, and developing practical solutions to provide teachers with the adequate tools necessary for character education in the modern, diverse, and challenging educational context.

## Implications

### Social Implications

The findings of this review have significant social implications, particularly in preparing students for the challenges of an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The emphasis on cultural and religious awareness in character education suggests that teacher-led character development initiatives can be crucial in fostering social cohesion and intercultural understanding. By promoting tolerance, respect for diversity, and pluralistic attitudes, teachers can contribute to developing more inclusive and harmonious societies. Moreover, the focus on leadership development indicates that character education can help cultivate a new generation of ethical leaders. This has broader societal implications, potentially leading to more responsible and morally grounded leadership across various sectors of society. The emphasis on moral and social development suggests that teacher-led character education can contribute to developing more empathetic, socially conscious, and ethically minded citizens, which is crucial for addressing complex social issues and promoting social justice.

### Research Implications

This systematic review reveals several important implications for future research in character education. The diversity of approaches and outcomes across different cultural contexts highlights the need for more comparative research. Future studies could explore how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of varying character education strategies, providing insights into culturally responsive character education practices. The review underscores the need for more longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of character education initiatives. While many studies demonstrate short-term positive outcomes, there is a gap in understanding the enduring effects of these interventions on students' character development and life outcomes. Long-term studies could provide valuable insights into character education programs'

sustainability and far-reaching impacts. The emerging theme of digital literacy in character education points to a new frontier in research. Future studies could explore the intersection of technology and character development, investigating how digital tools and platforms can be effectively integrated into character education programs. Lastly, the review reveals a need for more research on teacher training programs specifically focused on character education. Studies could examine the effectiveness of different training approaches in equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful character education implementation.

### Practical Implications

The findings of this review have several practical implications for educational policy and practice. They highlight the need for a more intentional and systematic approach to character education in teacher training programs. Teacher preparation programs, including pre-service and in-service education, should include character education, the teaching of ethical decision making and culturally sensitive practices. The review emphasises the need to establish supportive school environments that enable character development. This suggests that school leadership and management should complement character education initiatives. Schools should adopt full-scale character education programs that embrace character education in all curriculum and co-curricular activities. The evidence on discipline and behaviour management presents a dire call for a shift from aversive, punitive modes of discipline to more positive, restorative, and character-developing approaches to school discipline. Teachers and schools should be encouraged to use disciplinary measures that ensure order and contribute to the moulding of character amongst students. The emphasis on leadership development in character education implies that schools should consider integrating leadership training into their character education programs. This could involve creating more opportunities for students to practice leadership skills in ethical contexts. Finally, the review also reveals an area of concern regarding incorporating cultural and religious perspectives into character education. Schools and educational policymakers must help students learn the importance of valuing other people's cultures to enhance intercultural communication and global citizenship.

### Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

Although this systematic review is comprehensive, there are some limitations that future research should consider. To have a better understanding of character education, it is recommended that future studies consider expanding their research in non-English languages, literature, and various research methods. Future research should focus on long-term research, comparing cultural findings and incorporating technology in character development programs. Foremost, there is a need to foster character development in all dimensions, focusing on leadership character. Future researchers must adopt an approach to consider the effectiveness of different strategies for teacher training in character education, the link between character and academic achievement, and the sustainability of such programmes.

### *Competing Interest*

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

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