



# The Implementation of Character Education in Elementary School: the Strategy and Challenge

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## ABSTRAK

*Sekolah dasar merupakan tingkatan paling dasar pendidikan formal anak, sehingga pendidikan karakter penting dilakukan pada tingkatan ini. Terlebih lagi, dampak negatif dari keterbukaan informasi dan kemajuan teknologi telah merambah pada perilaku siswa sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi dan tantangan pada implementasi pendidikan karakter di beberapa sekolah dasar berdasarkan pemaknaan umum dari pengalaman praktisi yang ada dilapangan. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Subjek penelitian ini terdiri dari 5 kepala sekolah, 27 guru kelas, dan 55 orang tua. Pengambilan sampel dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik sampel snowball. Metode pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara. Analisis data, meliputi: data display, data condensation, dan conclusion drawing. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi implementasi pendidikan di sekolah dasar, berupa: strategi implementasi pendidikan karakter melalui kegiatan belajar-mengajar, kegiatan ekstrakurikuler, keteladanan, dan pembiasaan. Tantangan yang dihadapi sekolah dasar dalam implementasi pendidikan karakter, berupa: fasilitas sekolah yang kurang lengkap, kondisi keluarga yang tidak baik, dan kondisi masyarakat yang kurang mendukung. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa: (1) sekolah dasar belum menerapkan strategi implementasi pendidikan karakter secara menyeluruh, yakni belum diterapkannya strategi implementasi pendidikan karakter melalui kegiatan kokurikuler; dan (2) tantangan utama implementasi pendidikan karakter di sekolah dasar berupa kondisi keluarga yang tidak baik.*

## ABSTRACT

Elementary school is the most basic level of formal education for children, so character education is important at this level. Moreover, the negative impact of information disclosure and technological advancement has penetrated the behaviour of elementary school students. This study aims to analyse the strategies and challenges in implementing character education in several elementary schools based on general interpretations of practitioners' experiences in the field. This is a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach. The subjects of this study consisted of 5 principals, 27 class teachers, and 55 parents. Sampling in this study used snowball sampling technique. The data collection method used interviews. Data analysis, including: data display, data condensation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study show that the implementation strategy of education in elementary schools, in the form of: character education implementation strategies through teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, exemplary, and habituation. Challenges faced by elementary schools in implementing character education include: incomplete school facilities, bad family conditions, and unsupportive community conditions. The conclusion of this study shows that: (1) elementary schools have not yet implemented a holistic character education implementation strategy, i.e. the implementation of character education through co-curricular activities; and (2) The main challenge of implementing character education in elementary schools is bad family conditions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The accelerating development of human civilisation that has occurred in the era of globalisation has had an impact on the emergence of various challenges in human life which are full of information disclosure and competition in various fields. In fact, globalisation does not only bring progress, but if not

utilised wisely, it can have a negative impact on life (Hendrizal et al., 2022; Prihatmojo & Badawi, 2020; Putry, 2019). Intellectual competence and skills are not enough in living life in the era of globalisation, but good character is also needed for everyone to exist in facing the challenges of life in the era of globalisation (Aningsih et al., 2022; Bates, 2019; Zidniyati, 2019). Indonesia is one of the countries that has realised the importance of developing students' overall competence. This awareness can be observed in the definition of education efforts in Indonesia, namely: education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, and intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation, and state (Arwita et al., 2022; Purnamasari et al., 2022). Through this definition, it can be understood that in addition to academic competence and skills, there are also noble character values that must be developed or instilled in students through character education.

Character is a basic value that affects a person's personality due to the influence of heredity and environmental influences and then manifests in daily attitudes and behaviour, where a person's character can be developed through stages: knowledge, implementation, and habits (Khaidir & Suud, 2020; Prastowo, 2018; Putry, 2019). Meanwhile, character education is a conscious and planned effort in internalising noble character values that make certain character values understandable, lived, and implemented in daily life by students so that they are able to become problem solvers for the surrounding environment (Jeynes, 2019; Putry, 2019; Yuliana et al., 2020). It is through these character education efforts that the hope of building Indonesian human beings of noble character is rested.

In the context of education in Indonesia, the implementation of character education has been carried out since the beginning of Indonesian independence. At least starting in 2010, Indonesia organised a character education programme called Gerakan Nasional Pendidikan Karakter Bangsa to instil 18 character values, namely religious, honest, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, environmental care, social care, and responsibility (Retnasari et al., 2021; Suhartini et al., 2019; Zurqoni et al., 2018). Furthermore, the movement was continued with the *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK) movement in 2017. The noble character values instilled in PPK are: religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity (Hakam, 2018; Veronika & Febrina, 2022). Then in 2022 the PPK movement continued with the term *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*. The noble character values instilled in the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* are: faith in God Almighty and noble character, independence, mutual cooperation, global diversity, critical reasoning, and creativity (F. D. D. K. Putri & Kalstum, 2022; Zakso et al., 2022). All of these movements are essentially the same, namely as an effort to implement character education to instil noble character values in students which are expected to be a provision in facing the challenges of the times and advancing the nation.

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia has provided guidelines related to the strategy and scope of implementing character education in elementary schools. Character education implementation strategies, according to the guidelines issued by the government, include 4 aspects: strategies through teaching and learning activities, strategies through extracurricular activities, strategies through co-curricular activities, and strategies through school culture (Hakam, 2018; Retnasari et al., 2021; Veronika & Febrina, 2022). Teaching-learning activities are students' experiences in learning the lesson content which is the result of memory, cognition, and metacognition in the form of reconstruction of past experiences which then affects their behaviour and capacity (Huda, 2019; Tanjung et al., 2021). Extracurricular is an activity at school to develop the talents and interests of students which is carried out outside the hours of teaching-learning activities and is not directly related to academic experience (Karo-karo et al., 2018; Soria et al., 2019). Co-curricular is an activity where students learn outside the classroom on materials that are directly related to certain learning materials (Indroasayoko et al., 2020; Senok et al., 2022; Soria et al., 2019). School culture is a phenomenon that affects the quality of human relationships in an educational organisation in the form of organisational members' behavioural styles, assumptions, values, beliefs, and other aspects that create the identity of organisational members, so it can also be said that an educational organisation is affected by the quality of human relationships within it (Hakam, 2018; Kalkan et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the scope of character education implementation includes three areas: school, family and community. All of these spheres must support each other in instilling noble values in students (Jeynes, 2019; Paul et al., 2022; Suhartini et al., 2019; Veronika & Febrina, 2022).

Although character education efforts have been made for a long time, some previous research findings have shown the negative impact of information openness and technological advances that have penetrated the behaviour of elementary school students, such as: mocking each other between friends, fights between students, rape, bullying, drug abuse, sexual harassment, drunkenness, smoking in the school environment, and students are more likely to choose to do assignments by copying and pasting from the internet rather than doing analysis with their minds (Panggabean, 2022; Perdana, 2018; Prihatmojo &

Badawi, 2020; Rina et al., 2020). This is very worrying because elementary school is the most basic level of formal education for children, where at this level it is very important to make character education efforts so that children have a good foundation in character building in the future (Prastowo, 2018; Prihatmojo & Badawi, 2020; Rina et al., 2020; Veronika & Febrina, 2022). Here are some of the problems in the implementation of character education in elementary schools (Ferdiansyah & Kaltsum, 2023; Ningsih et al., 2021; Veronika & Febrina, 2022): when participating in learning there are still children who are lazy to learn, children who are too spoiled, children who always bother their friends and tend to want to play rather than learn, there are still many students who do not do homework, some students are still late for school and enter the class when the break time is over, some students still like to cheat and are dishonest in doing assignments, there is still a commotion that occurs between students, there are still students who bully each other, there is still a commotion that occurs between students, there are still students who bully fellow friends, few lesson hours with a lot of subject matter makes it difficult for teachers to complete the subject matter on time, some students are still not disciplined in attending morning roll call, limited facilities and infrastructure in implementing project learning, and limited tools and materials to be used for project-based learning.

Through the description above, it can be interpreted that the implementation of character education in elementary schools has not obtained good results and in the implementation process there are still various problems. Based on this, it is important to conduct research that aims to analyse the strategies and challenges of implementing character education in elementary schools. It is important to analyse the use of strategies and challenges in the implementation of character education in elementary schools based on the experiences of practitioners in the field (Aningsih et al., 2022). Educational institutions or schools as a place to build student character should use certain strategies in implementing character education (Ningsih et al., 2021). In general, the definition of strategy is a way to realise improvement, increase results, and achieve the goals of the education process in schools (Aslan & Aktaş, 2020; Hamuni et al., 2022; Sulistyorini et al., 2022; Wasito et al., 2022). In order for the educational process to obtain good results or achieve its goals, it is necessary to use the right strategy. In addition, in order to achieve the goals of the educational process, the challenges must be overcome (Aslan & Aktaş, 2020; Hamuni et al., 2022; Wasito et al., 2022). Through the results of these analyses, it is hoped that in the future the implementation of character education in elementary schools will get good results because the strategies and challenges faced are known, allowing elementary schools to maintain, change, or add the use of strategies with the right strategies and obtain solutions to the challenges faced. In addition, this research is important to conduct in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the strategies and challenges in implementing character education in several elementary schools according to the experiences of practitioners in the field. This is also an answer to the absence of previous research that examines the strategies and challenges in implementing character education in several elementary schools at the same time.

Meanwhile, previous research on strategies for implementing character education in elementary schools was conducted by previous study that conducted at Lawanggantung 01 State Elementary School in Bogor City, West Java (Pertiwi et al., 2019). Furthermore, there are 2 studies on strategies and challenges in implementing character education in elementary schools. Research conducted by other study at SD Negeri Joho 02 Sukoharjo, Central Java (Sari & Puspita, 2019), and (2) research conducted in an elementary school in Jakarta (Aningsih et al., 2022). The difference between these studies and this study lies in the number of elementary schools studied and the place where the research was conducted, namely: this study was conducted in several elementary schools in the city of Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta Special Region. The novelty of this research from previous research, in the form of: this research presents data on the percentage of parents' opinions about the importance of character education. This study aims to analyse the strategies and challenges in the implementation of character education in several elementary schools based on general interpretations of practitioners' experiences in the field.

## 2. METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject holistically by means of descriptions in the form of words and language in a special natural context (Moleong, 2018). Phenomenological studies aim to describe the common meaning of the experience of a number of individuals of a particular phenomenon or to reduce the experience of a number of individuals on a phenomenon to a description of the essence/universal essence in the form of an understanding of the distinctive nature of something (Creswell, 2015). Based on this description, it can be understood that this research is a qualitative study that describes the general meaning of the experiences of a number of

individuals in implementing character education in elementary schools in the form of strategies used and challenges faced.

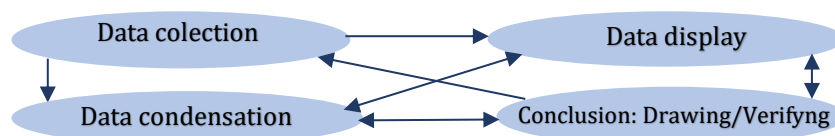
This study uses snowball data sampling techniques, namely sampling that starts from one and gets more and more, where the selection of the next sample depends on what the researcher needs (Moleong, 2018). The research subjects in this study were 5 principals, 27 classroom teachers, and 55 parents in Yogyakarta city, Yogyakarta Special Region Province, Indonesia. The research instrument in culaitative research is the researcher himself (Sugiyono, 2018). With regard to this, the validation of the instrument in this study uses expert validation, namely: the researcher has consulted with experts before carrying out the research. The data collection method in this study used interview techniques. Interviews with principals and teachers were conducted to obtain data related to the strategies and challenges in implementing character education in elementary schools, while interviews with parents were conducted to find out how parents felt about the importance of students' high academic scores in following the education process in elementary schools. The grid of interview questions in this study is show in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Grid of Interview Questions

No	Aspects	Indicators	Grid of Interview Questions
1	Strategy	Strategies: teaching-learning activities, extracurricular, co-curricular and school culture.	Variety of activities used by elementary schools in implementing character education. A more detailed explanation of the variety of activities used by elementary schools in implementing character education.
2	Challenge	Scopes: school, family, and community.	Various challenges in each scope of character education implementation in elementary schools. A more detailed explanation of the various challenges in each scope of character education implementation in elementary schools. Parents' opinions on students' high academic scores. A more detailed explanation of parents' opinions on students' high academic scores.

The data analysis method in this research uses data analysis techniques which include: data display, data condensation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data display is a presentation of data in various forms such as matrices, graphs, charts, and certain patterns that allow conclusions. Data condensation is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organises data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified based on all data obtained from the field. In qualitative research conclusion drawing may not be done until data collection is complete, depending on the dynamics of data in the field, this can happen because in qualitative research data can change at any time as the dynamics of human life.

The steps of data analysis carried out by researchers are: first, researchers collected data by interviewing research subjects. After the data was collected, then the researcher carried out the data condensation stage by sorting the data to then make certain categories of data, such as categories: character education implementation strategies through teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, exemplary, habituation, etc. In addition, the researcher also made a presentation on the data from the parents' interviews regarding the importance of high academic scores in order to make a presentation on the data from the parents' interviews regarding the importance of high academic scores. In addition, the researcher also presented the data from the parents' interviews regarding the importance of high academic scores to facilitate the categorisation of data, such as categories: opinions related to good character and high academic scores are important to have, opinions on high academic scores are the most important things to have, etc. Furthermore, the researcher conducted the data display stage in the form of presenting the data in the form of sentence descriptions, charts, and tables. In the last stage, the researcher drew conclusions. The data analysis chart used in this research is show in Figure 1.



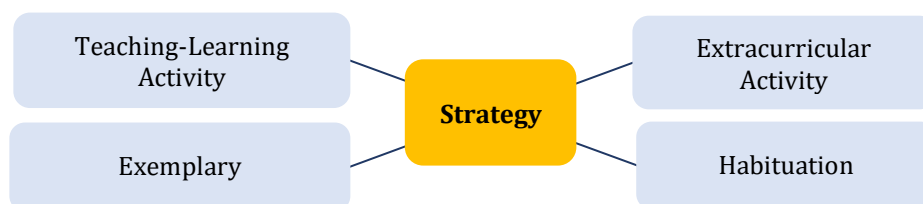
**Figure 1.** Data analysis chart



### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The following is a description of the research results regarding the general meaning of the experiences of a number of individuals in the implementation of character education in elementary schools in the form of strategies used and challenges faced. The findings in this study show that the use of strategies in the implementation of character education in elementary schools is carried out, through: teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, exemplary behaviour, and habituation. The chart of the strategies in the implementation of character education in elementary schools is show in [Figure 2](#).



**Figure 2.** The Strategy of the Implementation of Character Education in Elementary School

The strategy of implementing character education through teaching and learning activities is carried out by inserting noble character values into teaching and learning activities. The insertion of noble character values into teaching and learning activities is carried out by applying or using approaches, models, and learning methods in the implementation of teaching and learning activities, in the form of: scientific approaches, discovery learning models, project-based learning models, and group work that are adjusted to the characteristics of learning materials, student characteristics, and certain noble character values.

Just as in the strategy of implementing character education through teaching and learning activities, the implementation of character education through extracurricular activities is also carried out by inserting noble character values in various extracurricular activities organised by the school. The following are various extracurricular activities organised in elementary schools, such as: extracurricular scouting, extracurricular dance, and extracurricular batik while taking into account the suitability between the characteristics of the material in extracurricular activities, student characteristics, and certain noble character values.

The exemplary strategy is an example of the manifestation of noble character values displayed by principals and teachers with the aim that students can follow the example of the manifestation of noble character values. The findings in this research show that the exemplary strategy displayed by principals and teachers is in the form of: behavioural examples. Behavioural role models include: arriving on time to school, not littering, wearing a complete uniform, wearing polite clothes, keeping clothes neat, speaking politely, and showing an attitude that is not easily angered. Providing exemplary behaviour is done continuously on various occasions that allow exemplary behaviour to be shown.

The strategy in the form of habituation is a variety of daily activities at school designed to get students used to behaving in accordance with certain noble character values. The findings in this research show that the habituation carried out in elementary schools in implementing character education is in the form of: routine activities and incidental activities. The chart of the habituation strategy is show in [Figure 3](#).



**Figure 3.** Habituation Strategy

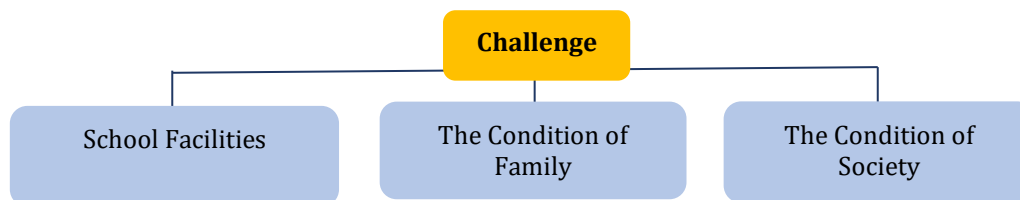
Routine activities are activities that students always do at school, including: participating in the flag ceremony every Monday, before entering the class students line up first, singing the national anthem before teaching-learning activities, praying to start and end teaching-learning activities, praying in congregation (for Muslim students), and implementing the 5S movement *senyum*: smile, *sapa*: greeting, *salam*: greeting, *sopan*: politeness, *santun*: courtesy). Meanwhile, incidental activities are activities carried out by teachers immediately when they find student behaviour that is in accordance with noble character values or student behaviour that is contrary to noble character values. The form of incidental activities carried out by teachers, in the form of: giving rewards and giving punishments. The chart of incidental activities is show in [Figure 4](#).



**Figure 4.** Incidental activity

Giving rewards is an effort given by the school to students who behave or perform well with the aim that students continue to be encouraged to practice noble character values in behaviour. Rewards are given in the form of material and non-material rewards. Rewards in the form of material, namely: giving a sum of money for outstanding students and rewards in the form of non-material, namely: giving praise or applause to students who show behaviour in accordance with certain noble character values. Punishment is an effort given by the school to students who behave badly with the aim that students do not repeat their actions at a later time. The punishment given by the school is in the form of: confiscation of goods, cleaning the class, and additional assignments.

Meanwhile, the challenges in implementing basic education can be grouped into several categories, including: school facilities, family conditions and community conditions. The chart shows the challenges in implementing character education in elementary schools is show in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** The Challenge of Implementation of Character Education in Elementary School

Base on Figure 5 challenges to the implementation of character education in elementary schools in school facilities, namely: (1) there are still many elementary schools that do not have a place of worship; (2) the need to improve school reading facilities, such as: reading books that are more diverse and in accordance with the times, internet devices and networks for students, as well as reading equipment in the form of tables and chairs. Challenges to the implementation of character education in elementary schools in community conditions, namely: the condition of the community around where students live does not support the noble character values that have been instilled in schools, so that it can fade the noble character values that have been instilled in schools.

The challenges of implementing character education in elementary schools in family conditions include: (1) while at school students have been instilled with various noble character values, but when at home the various noble character values are not familiarised by the students' parents; (2) there are still students who lack parental attention when at home because parents are too busy working due to poor family economic conditions; (3) there are still students who do not get enough parental attention at home because their parents are divorced, which in turn makes their parents too busy working; (4) there are still few parents who understand the importance of character education efforts in elementary schools as evidenced by the fact that many parents are more concerned with students' high academic scores. Table 2 shows the percentage of parents' opinions on the importance of students' high academic scores.

**Table 2.** Percentage of parents' opinion on the importance of students' high academic scores

No	Parents' opinion	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Good character and high academic score are important to have.	9	16.37
2	High academic score is the most important thing to have.	30	54.54
3	Other opinions.	16	29.09
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

Through Table 2, it can be seen that there are still few parents who understand the importance of character education, namely 16.37% of 55 parents, while the rest do not understand or realise the importance of character education.

## Discussion

The findings in this study show that the implementation strategy of character education in elementary schools through teaching and learning activities is carried out by applying the scientific approach, discovery learning model, project-based learning model, and group work method. Based on the results of previous research, it shows that: (1) the scientific approach can be used to instil the characters of discipline, responsibility, love of reading, thoroughness, curiosity, creativity, communication/friendliness, hard work, independence, honesty, responsibility, social care and respect for achievement (Hayati et al., 2020; Yuliyanto et al., 2018). The scientific approach is designed to foster character, systematic thinking, and intellectual thinking. In addition, the scientific approach requires teachers and students to be more innovative and creative (Burhaein et al., 2020; Nuraeni et al., 2020); (2) the discovery learning model can be used to instil the characters of curiosity, responsibility, and responsibility (Basariah & Sulaimi, 2021; Oktaviani et al., 2021). In addition, the discovery learning model can improve students' self-confidence, communication skills, learning independence, and academic achievement (Lukitasari et al., 2020; Siregar et al., 2020); (3) a project-based learning model that can be used to instil creative character (Ardhyantama & Widodo, 2020; Khairunisa, 2020; Surya et al., 2018); and (4) group work method, can be used to instil the character of teamwork (Chen et al., 2018; Pramasanti et al., 2020). Working together in group work can stimulate students' interpretation and formation of understanding which promotes mastery of knowledge. Based on this, it can be understood that the implementation strategy of character education in elementary schools through teaching and learning activities can be done by using various approaches, models and methods.

The implementation strategy of character education in elementary schools through extracurricular activities in elementary schools is realised by inserting noble character values in the implementation of various extracurricular activities, such as: scout extracurricular activities, dance extracurricular activities, and batik extracurricular activities. Based on the results of previous research, it shows that: (1) Scout extracurricular activities can be used to instil the characters of discipline, hard work, and responsibility (Asrivi, 2020; Sufriani et al., 2021). In addition, extracurricular scouting can also increase prosocial behaviour; (2) extracurricular dance can be used to instil religious character, independence, confidence, creativity, responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and nationalism (Elita et al., 2021; Nuraini et al., 2020; D. I. Putri, 2019); (3) batik extracurricular activities can be used to instil the characters of patriotism, discipline, creativity, and independence (Amalia & Sunarya, 2020; Arianti et al., 2020; Prastiwi & Hendri, 2020). Based on this, it can be understood that the strategy for implementing character education through extracurricular activities can be carried out in various types of extracurricular activities organised in elementary schools.

The implementation strategy of character education in elementary schools through exemplary behaviour is done by giving good examples from principals and teachers. Exemplary is the behaviour of principals, teachers, and other school community members in providing examples of good actions, for example: throwing garbage in its place, looking neat, speaking politely, and so on (D. Y. Nugraha et al., 2020; Perdana, 2018). Through the example set by the principal and teachers, students can directly imitate what the principal and teachers do because students have considered them as role models and as their parents at school (Masfiah et al., 2021; Munawwaroh, 2019; Singh, 2019). Based on this, it can be understood that good principal and teacher behaviour can make students behave well and vice versa.

The strategy of implementing character education in elementary schools through habituation in the form of routine activities and incidental activities. Habituation is an activity that is carried out repeatedly and has the aim of making someone accustomed to doing something (Ahsanulhaq, 2019; Djafri & Badu, 2019; Kusumawardani et al., 2021; Wahono et al., 2018). In this regard, the school serves as an arena where students practice virtue and are then expected to practice it when outside the school. Meanwhile, routine activities are the daily activities of students at school, such as praying before and after participating in teaching and learning activities, implementing the 5S movement (*senyum*: smile, *sapa*: greeting, *salam*: greeting, *sopan*: politeness, *santun*: courtesy), and can also be in the form of 3S (*senyum*: smile, *sapa*: greeting, and *salim*: handshake) (Ahsanulhaq, 2019; Anwar & Sholeh, 2021; Kusumawardani et al., 2021). This is in accordance with the findings in this study, namely routine activities that students always carry out in their daily lives at school, including: participating in the flag ceremony every Monday, before entering the class students line up first, singing the national anthem before teaching and learning activities, praying to start and end teaching and learning activities, praying in congregation (for Muslim students), and implementing the 5S movement (*senyum*: smile, *sapa*: greeting, *salam*: greeting, *sopan*: politeness, *santun*: courtesy). Based on this, it can be understood that habituation using routine activities is an effort to accustom students to behave in accordance with noble character values through daily activities of students in elementary schools.

Furthermore, incidental activities are activities that are carried out immediately or without a plan when an event occurs (Muhamadi & Hasanah, 2019; Nashihin, 2018). The findings in this study show that habituation in the form of incidental activities carried out by teachers is manifested in giving rewards and punishments. Giving rewards and punishments is one form of effort made by the school in getting used to students behaving well, where rewards are given to students who show good attitudes or have good achievements, this is in order to increase enthusiasm or motivate students to continue to carry out their praiseworthy behaviour, while the punishment given can be in the form of giving certain warnings and consequences to students so that they do not repeat the bad actions that have been done (Kusumawardani et al., 2021; Rizkita & Saputra, 2020; Singh, 2019). Based on this, it can be understood that incidental activities are an effort to accustom students to behave in accordance with noble character values through activities that are carried out immediately or without a plan when an event occurs in the form of giving rewards and punishments.

The findings in this study are exemplary and habituation is part of the strategy of implementing character education through school culture (Marini et al., 2018; Retnasari et al., 2021). In terms of realising the goals of character education, school culture has a major role and shapes the norms of what is expected to be achieved, where school culture can be in the form of: myths, ceremonies, traditions, and events that the school has followed and transferred from the past to the present (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Karada & Öztekin, 2018).

Good character education should be carried out continuously at school, in the family, and in the community (D. Nugraha & Hasanah, 2021; Sanusi et al., 2021; Yuliana et al., 2020). The findings in this study show that the challenges to the implementation of character education in elementary schools include the lack of school facilities, bad family conditions and community conditions that do not support good character values. In addition, challenges in the form of bad family conditions are the challenges that have the most causes compared to other challenge categories. The family environment is an important factor in character education efforts in children, in addition to educational factors in schools and communities. If the pattern of character education in the family is well established, it will be easier for children to receive character education at school. Likewise, when a child has to come into contact with his/her social environment (Hermino & Arifin, 2020; Nur'Aini & Minsih, 2022; Susilo, 2020). In addition, without harmonious cooperation from the three centres of education (family, school, and community), it will be difficult for character education to be implemented optimally (Jeynes, 2019; Paul et al., 2022; Suhartini et al., 2019; Veronika & Febrina, 2022; Yuliana et al., 2020). Based on this, it can be understood that there is a lack of cooperation in the three centres of education, where the fundamental role of the family in implementing character education in elementary schools still requires support from schools and communities.

Research strengths: this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the strategies and challenges in the implementation of character education in several elementary schools based on the common meaning of practitioners' experiences in the field (bottom-up). The comprehensive analyses include: (1) analysis of strategies through teaching and learning activities, strategies through extracurricular activities, strategies through co-curricular activities, and strategies through school culture; (2) analysis of challenges in the school environment, family, and community. By conducting comprehensive research in several elementary schools at once, the transferability of the research will have a wider scope. Transferability is a characteristic of qualitative research, namely: the results of qualitative research can only be transferred or applied elsewhere, when the characteristics of a particular place are not much different from the characteristics of the place where the research was conducted (Lickona, 2016; Sugiyono, 2018). The results of this study are expected to provide input for elementary schools to be able to use character education implementation strategies thoroughly in accordance with government guidelines. In addition, this study is expected to provide input to elementary schools regarding the main challenges faced in implementing character education. Furthermore, this research is expected to be the answer to the absence of qualitative research on the strategies and challenges in implementing character education conducted in several elementary schools at once.

The implications of this research are: (1) the use of co-curricular activities must be carried out immediately to complement the implementation strategies of character education in elementary schools that have been used, in the form of teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, and school culture. In cocurricular activities, schools can instil noble character values through certain applications or projects related to learning materials in the form of student learning activities outside the classroom/in the community, so that students not only gain knowledge but also skills related to certain materials based on problems or characteristics of the environment around the school (Ferdiansyah & Kaltsum, 2023; Indroasyoko et al., 2020; Senok et al., 2022; Soria et al., 2019). Furthermore, through co-curricular activities can also strengthen the moral action aspects of students, namely: in the form of a person's desire to always do good or in other words about a person's desire to always keep emotions under the control of the mind



and then in the form of a person's habit of always doing good even when he is in a bad situation because when carrying out a project can train students to get used to behaving well so that the project that is done also gets good results. In addition, the strategy for implementing character education through co-curricular activities must be carried out in accordance with the guidelines issued by the government (Hakam, 2018; Retnasari et al., 2021; Veronika & Febrina, 2022); and (2) the solution to the challenge of poor family conditions is something that primary schools must find, considering that families have a fundamental role in the implementation of character education carried out in schools (Hermino & Arifin, 2020; Nur'Aini & Minsih, 2022; Susilo, 2020). The limitation of this research lies in the research subject, namely: this research has not involved the community as a research subject. Therefore, the researcher suggests that future research should involve the community as a research subject in research on the implementation of character education in elementary schools.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research reveal that the educational approach employed in primary schools involves strategies for character development through various means such as instructional activities, extracurricular engagements, setting examples, and habitual practices. Primary schools encounter challenges in executing character education due to inadequate school facilities, unfavorable family circumstances, and a lack of community support.

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