

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN 21ST-CENTURY CHARACTER EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the role of parents in children's character education in the 21st century using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The method involved identification, screening, and selection processes following the PRISMA framework, with data sourced from the Scopus database within the 2022–2026 publication range. A total of 9 articles met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed. The findings indicate that parental roles are multidimensional, encompassing family environment, family structure, socioeconomic conditions, values and attitudes, parenting styles, social influence, and role modeling. Furthermore, parental influence on children's character operates through both direct and indirect mechanisms, including family environment mediation, emotional regulation, value internalization, peer influence, and modeling processes. The study also identifies research gaps, particularly the lack of integrative approaches and limited focus on the 21st-century context. In conclusion, parents play a significant role in shaping children's character, highlighting the need for a holistic, family-based character education approach.

Keywords: Parental Role, Character Education, Children, 21st Century, Systematic Literature Review

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara komprehensif peran orang tua dalam pendidikan karakter anak di abad ke-21 melalui pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Metode yang digunakan melibatkan proses identifikasi, penyaringan, dan seleksi artikel menggunakan alur PRISMA dengan sumber data dari database Scopus pada rentang tahun 2022–2026. Dari hasil seleksi, diperoleh 9 artikel yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi untuk dianalisis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran orang tua bersifat multidimensional, meliputi lingkungan keluarga, struktur keluarga, kondisi sosial ekonomi, nilai dan sikap, pola asuh, pengaruh sosial, serta keteladanan. Selain itu, mekanisme pengaruh orang tua terhadap karakter anak terjadi melalui jalur langsung dan tidak langsung, seperti mediasi lingkungan keluarga, regulasi emosi, internalisasi nilai, pengaruh teman sebaya, dan proses modeling. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi adanya kesenjangan penelitian, terutama pada kurangnya pendekatan integratif dan minimnya kajian dalam konteks abad ke-21. Kesimpulannya, peran orang tua memiliki kontribusi yang signifikan dalam pembentukan karakter anak, sehingga diperlukan pendekatan yang holistik dalam pendidikan karakter berbasis keluarga.

Kata Kunci: Peran Orang Tua, Pendidikan Karakter, Anak, Abad 21, *Systematic Literature Review*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the 21st century is characterized by rapid transformations in social, cultural, and technological domains, which consequently require individuals to possess strong character, adaptability, and integrity in responding to increasingly complex life challenges. In this context, character education emerges as a fundamental component in the development of human resources, where the family particularly parents, plays a strategic role as the primary agent of socialization for children. Education is not merely a process of cognitive development but also a means of shaping attitudes, values, and behaviors that reflect moral maturity and social responsibility.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that parental roles contribute significantly to shaping children's behavior, values, and character across various dimensions of life. Guo et al., (2022) revealed that the family environment, both materially and spiritually, serves as a primary mediator in fostering children's prosocial behavior, where children with incarcerated parents tend to exhibit lower levels of prosocial tendencies. This finding underscores that the quality of the family environment exerts both direct and indirect influences on early character development. Furthermore, Yang & Jiang (2023) found that family structure is closely associated with adolescent deviant behavior and mental health, indicating that non-intact family conditions increase the risk of depression and negative behavioral outcomes. These findings highlight that family stability and the quality of interpersonal relationships within the household are critical determinants in the formation of children's character. In addition, Leal et al., (2024) emphasized that socioeconomic factors, including parental education and income levels, significantly influence children's behavioral patterns that reflect their character development. Thus, it can be inferred that the parental role in character education is inherently complex and multidimensional.

Beyond structural and environmental aspects, empirical evidence also indicates that parental values, attitudes, and parenting styles significantly influence children's character formation. Stertz & Wiese (2024) demonstrated that gender role attitudes within families affect parenting decisions and the distribution of responsibilities, which subsequently shape parent-child interactions. This suggests that parental beliefs serve as the foundation for parenting practices. Moreover, Wang et al., (2025) found that excessive parental control may trigger negative emotional responses in children, leading to maladaptive behaviors such as emotional eating, thereby indicating that parenting styles influence not only external behaviors but also internal emotional regulation. Cecalupo et al., (2026) further revealed that educational values instilled by parents affect children's academic motivation and self-concept through value

internalization processes. This implies that character education extends beyond supervision and control, encompassing meaningful value transmission. Additionally, Qin et al., (2025) highlighted that parents indirectly influence children's development through the selection of social environments, particularly peer groups, while Boson et al., (2026) confirmed that children tend to imitate parental behavior, positioning parents as primary role models in character formation. Accordingly, the parental role operates both directly through interaction and indirectly through environmental mediation and behavioral modeling.

Based on the synthesis of prior studies, it is evident that research on parental roles in children's character education has evolved into a complex, multidimensional, and contextual discourse. Existing studies indicate that parental influence encompasses various dimensions, including family environment, family structure, socioeconomic status, values and attitudes, parenting styles, and the regulation of children's social environments. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which parents influence character development involve both direct interactions and indirect processes such as emotional regulation, value internalization, environmental mediation, and peer influence. This complexity reflects that character education is not a singular process but rather the result of dynamic interactions among multiple factors within family and social contexts. However, despite the extensive body of research, most studies remain fragmented and have not integrated these dimensions into a comprehensive analytical framework. Additionally, many studies are conducted within specific cultural contexts, limiting the generalizability of findings across diverse sociocultural settings. Therefore, a systematic and integrative study is required to synthesize these findings into a cohesive understanding.

Moreover, the 21st-century context introduces new challenges in character education, including the pervasive influence of digital technology, shifts in family communication patterns, and the increasing complexity of social issues. The rapid expansion of digital media, for instance, presents both opportunities and risks, necessitating active parental supervision to ensure balanced child development. Nevertheless, prior studies have not explicitly examined parental roles within these contemporary dynamics. In addition, the predominance of quantitative and cross-sectional research designs limits the understanding of the longitudinal development of children's character. Another notable gap is the lack of holistic approaches that integrate cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dimensions of character development. In reality, children's character is formed through the interaction of these interconnected aspects rather than through isolated factors. Therefore, this study is essential to address these gaps by integrating multiple dimensions of parental roles within a comprehensive analytical framework

that reflects the realities of the 21st century. Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the role of parents in children's character education in the 21st century through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Specifically, this study seeks to (1) identify the forms and dimensions of parental roles in shaping children's character based on prior research findings, (2) explain the mechanisms through which parental roles influence character development both directly and indirectly, and (3) identify existing research gaps in the literature on parental roles in character education. Accordingly, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of parental contributions to children's character formation and to serve as a foundation for future research in the field of family-based character education in the modern era.

METHOD

This study employed a "Systematic Literature Review (SLR)" approach, which was designed in a systematic, transparent, and replicable manner to analyze the role of parents in children's character education in the 21st century. The research design followed the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion in accordance with the PRISMA framework, ensuring methodological rigor and consistency in the selection of relevant literature. The data were obtained through a comprehensive search of the Scopus database using the keywords "parental role influence," "child character education," and "family-based character." The initial search yielded 182 documents, which were subsequently filtered using predefined inclusion criteria, namely: (1) publication years between 2022 and 2026, (2) articles published in reputable journals categorized as Q1, and (3) studies containing abstracts relevant to the research topic. The selection process was conducted in multiple stages by excluding articles that did not meet the criteria, including those without abstracts, those outside the scope of the study, and duplicate records. As a result, 37 articles were retained after the initial screening phase.

Furthermore, the eligibility process was carried out through full-text analysis to assess the substantive relevance of each article. From this stage, 11 articles met the eligibility criteria, and after further exclusion based on depth of relevance and data completeness, a final sample of 9 articles was selected for analysis. These selected studies represent empirical research conducted across diverse geographical contexts, including China, Portugal, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, thereby providing a broad and comparative perspective on the parental role in shaping children's character. The research instrument utilized in this study was a data extraction form, which was systematically developed to identify and classify essential

information from each selected article. The extracted data included: research title, authors and publication year, study location, research objectives, theoretical framework, research methodology, key findings, study limitations, and relevance to the present study. Additionally, this instrument facilitated the identification of key dimensions of parental roles, mechanisms of influence, and existing research gaps within each study.

The data collection procedure consisted of several sequential steps: (1) identification of articles through database searching, (2) screening based on titles and abstracts, (3) selection through full-text review, and (4) data extraction using the predefined instrument. Each article was analyzed rigorously to ensure alignment with the research focus and to minimize potential selection bias. The data analysis method employed in this study was thematic analysis combined with narrative synthesis. The extracted data were categorized into major themes related to the dimensions of parental roles, mechanisms of influence, and identified research gaps. The analysis was conducted iteratively by comparing findings across studies to identify patterns, similarities, and divergences. This approach enabled the study to generate a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of parents in children's character education and provided a robust foundation for addressing the formulated research questions.

RESULTS

Publication Statistics and Research Trends

The results of the literature search indicate a significant increase in the number of publications related to the role of parents in children's character education over time. In the early period prior to 2000, the number of publications was relatively limited and inconsistent. However, beginning in the post-2010 period, there was a gradual increase in the number of studies, reflecting growing academic interest in this field.

The most notable surge occurred between 2020 and 2025, during which publication output increased substantially compared to previous periods. The year 2025 recorded the highest number of publications, with a total of 28 articles, followed by 2024 with 20 articles. Similarly, the years 2023 and 2021 also demonstrated upward trends, with 16 and 13 publications, respectively. This pattern suggests that the topic of parental roles in character education has become increasingly relevant, particularly in response to contemporary educational and social challenges in the 21st century.

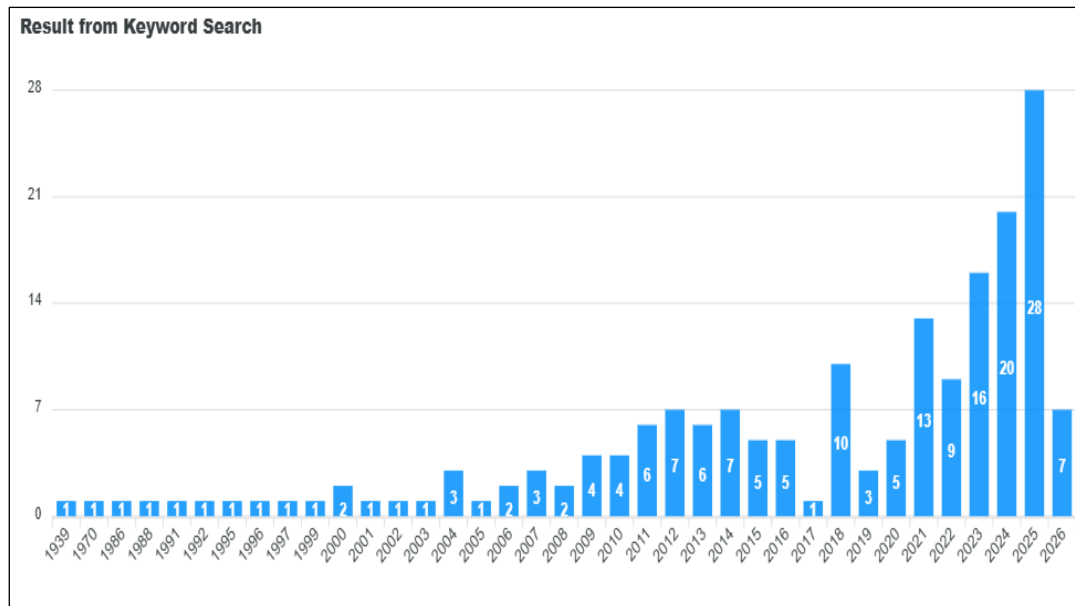


Figure 1. Publication trends on parental roles in children's character education based on keyword search results

Study Identification and Selection Results (PRISMA)

Based on the initial identification process through the Scopus database, a total of 182 articles were retrieved using predefined keywords. The screening stage involved applying inclusion criteria, resulting in the exclusion of 102 articles that fell outside the publication range of 2022–2026. Additionally, 42 articles were excluded due to not being categorized as Q1 journals, and one article was removed due to the absence of an abstract. Following this process, 37 articles were retained for the screening stage. During the full-text retrieval phase, 26 articles were inaccessible, leaving 11 articles eligible for further assessment. Subsequently, two articles were excluded due to insufficient substantive relevance, resulting in a final sample of 9 articles included in the synthesis.

This systematic selection process ensured the inclusion of high-quality and relevant studies, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings. The selected studies originated from diverse geographical contexts and employed varied methodological approaches, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

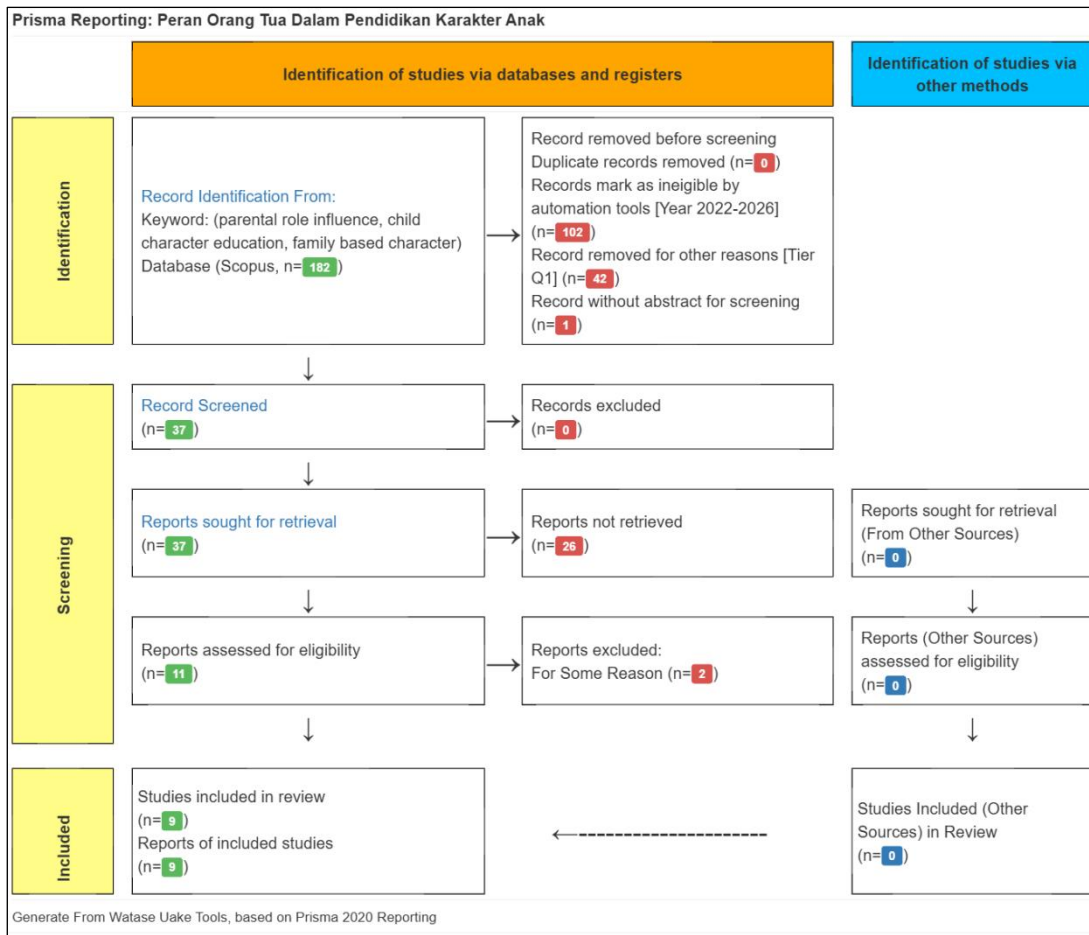


Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process on parental roles in children's character education

General Characteristics of the Analyzed Studies

The data extraction results reveal that the nine selected studies exhibit considerable diversity in terms of geographical context, research methods, and thematic focus. The studies were conducted across several countries, including China, Portugal, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, reflecting a wide range of sociocultural perspectives in examining parental roles. In terms of methodology, the studies utilized various analytical approaches, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), multivariate regression, survey methods, longitudinal cohort designs, and social network analysis. The majority of studies adopted quantitative approaches with cross-sectional designs, although several employed longitudinal methods to examine behavioral changes over time.

The research focus encompassed multiple aspects of children's development, including prosocial behavior, mental health, eating habits, educational values, parental control, and risk behaviors. Each study examined parental roles within different contexts, such as family structure, socioeconomic conditions, and intra-family interactions. These variations indicate

that parental influence on character education is inherently multidimensional and context-dependent. Furthermore, the studies were grounded in diverse theoretical frameworks, including family environment theory, family structure theory, socioeconomic theory, gender role theory, ecological theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, and social learning theory.

Synthesis of Main Findings Across Studies

The synthesis of findings demonstrates that each study provides distinct yet interconnected insights into the role of parents in shaping children's character. Guo et al., (2022) identified the family environment as a mediating factor in the development of children's prosocial behavior, particularly in cases involving parental incarceration. Yang & Jiang (2023) highlighted that family structure significantly influences adolescent deviant behavior and mental health outcomes, with non-intact families associated with higher risks. Leal et al., (2024) found that parental education and socioeconomic status affect children's dietary habits, reflecting broader implications for character-related behaviors such as discipline and self-regulation. Stertz & Wiese (2024) emphasized that gender role attitudes influence parenting decisions and family dynamics. Meanwhile, Wang et al., (2025) demonstrated that excessive parental control is associated with negative emotional responses and maladaptive behaviors, such as emotional eating.

Cecalupo et al., (2026) revealed that parental educational values contribute to children's academic motivation and self-concept through internalization processes. Qin et al., (2025) showed that parents indirectly shape children's achievements through the regulation of peer networks, while Boson et al., (2026) confirmed that children tend to imitate parental behaviors, particularly in the context of risk-related actions. Collectively, these findings indicate that parental influence operates through multiple pathways, both direct and indirect, in shaping children's character development.

Synthesis Table of Research Findings

Table 1. Characteristics and key findings of selected studies on parental roles in children's character education

No	Authors & Year	Location	Research Focus	Method	Main Findings	Limitations
1	Guo et al., 2022	China	Prosocial behavior	SEM	Family environment mediates behavior	Specific case
2	Yang & Jiang, 2023	China	Deviant behavior	Regression	Non-intact family → higher deviation	Not longitudinal

3	Leal et al., 2024	Portugal	Eating habits	Longitudinal	Parental education → healthy habits	Nutrition-focused
4	Stertz & Wiese, 2024	Germany	Gender roles	Longitudinal	Gender attitudes → parenting decisions	Adult-focused
5	Wang et al., 2025	China	Emotional eating	Survey	Control → negative emotions	Student sample
6	Cecalupo et al., 2026	Italy	Academic motivation	SEM	Values → student motivation	Cross-sectional
7	Qin et al., 2025	China	Social networks	Network	Parents influence peer selection	Complex analysis
8	Boson et al., 2026	Sweden	Risk behavior	Survey	Children imitate parents	Response bias
9	-	Various datasets	-	General	-	Family as a dominant factor

Classification of Variables Identified in the Studies

The extracted data reveal several key categories of variables examined across the studies. First, family environment variables include both material and psychological conditions within the household. Second, family structure variables encompass intact and non-intact family configurations. Third, socioeconomic factors include parental education levels and income. Fourth, parental values and attitudes involve educational values and gender role beliefs. Fifth, parenting styles include dimensions such as control, supervision, and involvement. Sixth, psychological factors relate to children's emotional regulation and negative emotional responses. Seventh, social factors include peer influence and social network dynamics. Finally, behavioral outcomes encompass prosocial behavior, eating habits, and risk-related behaviors.

These categories illustrate the multidimensional nature of research on parental roles in character education, emphasizing that children's character development is shaped by the interaction of various internal and external factors within the family and broader social environment.

DISCUSSION

Forms and Dimensions of Parental Roles in Children's Character Formation

The synthesis of the reviewed studies indicates that the role of parents in shaping children's character is inherently multidimensional, encompassing various interrelated aspects. The findings reveal that parental roles extend beyond direct caregiving practices and include the

formation of the family environment, family structure, socioeconomic conditions, parental values and attitudes, parenting styles, and influence on children's social environments.

Guo et al., (2022) demonstrated that the family environment functions as a mediating factor in the development of children's prosocial behavior, emphasizing that the quality of the home environment constitutes a fundamental dimension of parental influence. This finding is further supported by Yang & Jiang (2023), who reported that family structure—particularly non-intact families—is associated with increased deviant behavior and mental health issues among children. These results suggest that structural aspects of the family significantly affect character development. In addition, Leal et al., (2024) highlighted that socioeconomic conditions, such as parental education and income levels, play a crucial role in shaping children's habits, which reflect their character. Furthermore, parental values and attitudes represent a central dimension in character formation. Stertz & Wiese (2024) found that gender role attitudes within the family influence parenting practices and the distribution of responsibilities, ultimately affecting parent-child interactions. Similarly, Cecalupo et al., (2026) emphasized that educational values transmitted by parents contribute to children's motivation and self-concept through value internalization processes. These findings indicate that parental values shape both external behaviors and internal psychological attributes.

In addition, parenting style constitutes another critical dimension. Wang et al., (2025) demonstrated that excessive parental control negatively affects children's emotional regulation, highlighting the importance of balanced parenting practices. Qin et al., (2025) further revealed that parents influence children's social environments through the selection of peer groups, while Boson et al., (2026) confirmed that children tend to imitate parental behavior, underscoring the importance of role modeling. Thus, it can be concluded that the dimensions of parental roles in character formation include family environment, family structure, socioeconomic conditions, parental values and attitudes, parenting styles, social influence, and role modeling. These dimensions interact dynamically, forming an integrated system that shapes children's character development. Therefore, understanding parental roles requires a holistic and integrative perspective.

Mechanisms of Parental Influence on Children's Character Development

The findings indicate that parental influence on children's character operates through complex mechanisms, both direct and indirect. Direct influence is manifested through daily interactions, including supervision, communication, and value transmission. However, the results suggest that a substantial portion of parental influence occurs through indirect

mechanisms involving mediating factors. Guo et al., (2022) identified the family environment as a mediator linking family conditions to children's prosocial behavior, indicating that parental influence is often mediated by environmental factors. Similarly, Yang & Jiang (2023) demonstrated that parental monitoring and school attachment mediate the relationship between family structure and children's behavioral outcomes. These findings highlight the role of intermediary variables in strengthening or weakening parental influence.

Psychological mechanisms also play a significant role. Wang et al., (2025) found that negative emotions and emotional regulation mediate the relationship between parental control and children's behavior, suggesting that parental influence extends to internal psychological processes. Moreover, Cecalupo et al., (2026) identified value internalization as a key mechanism in shaping children's motivation and self-concept, indicating that values must be internalized before influencing behavior. In addition, Qin et al., (2025) showed that parents indirectly influence children's character through the regulation of social environments, particularly peer selection. Children who receive adequate parental support are more likely to engage with positive peer groups, which subsequently influence their character development. Boson et al., (2026) further emphasized modeling as a primary mechanism, whereby children imitate parental behaviors as their primary reference figures. Consequently, the mechanisms of parental influence include environmental mediation, emotional regulation, value internalization, social influence, and behavioral modeling. These mechanisms demonstrate that character formation is a complex process involving interactions among multiple factors, thereby requiring comprehensive strategies in character education.

Research Gaps

The analysis reveals several critical research gaps in the literature on parental roles in character education. One major gap is the lack of integrative studies that combine multiple dimensions of parental roles within a unified conceptual framework. Most existing studies focus on isolated aspects, such as family environment, structure, or parenting style, without examining their interrelationships comprehensively. This indicates that current research remains fragmented and lacks a holistic perspective. Another gap relates to contextual limitations. The majority of studies are conducted within specific cultural settings, which restricts the generalizability of findings across diverse sociocultural contexts. Additionally, there is a lack of research explicitly addressing parental roles within the dynamic context of the 21st century, particularly in relation to digital transformation and evolving family interactions.

Methodologically, most studies employ quantitative and cross-sectional designs, limiting the ability to capture the longitudinal dynamics of character development. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of research adopting holistic approaches that integrate cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dimensions of character. These limitations highlight the need for more comprehensive, context-sensitive, and methodologically diverse research in this field.

Significance and Contribution of the Study

This study provides significant contributions to the field of education, particularly in family-based character education. Theoretically, it offers an integrative framework that synthesizes multiple dimensions of parental roles into a comprehensive model. Methodologically, the use of a systematic literature review enhances the rigor, transparency, and reliability of the analysis. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for parents and educators in designing effective character education strategies. Furthermore, this study expands the understanding of parental roles within the contemporary context of the 21st century, thereby contributing to the advancement of educational research and practice.

Research Implications

The findings imply that character education cannot be separated from the role of parents as the primary environment in children's lives. Therefore, a holistic approach is required, involving the family as the central actor in character formation. Parents must recognize that their role extends beyond supervision to include value transmission, effective communication, and role modeling.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the role of parents in children's character education in the 21st century is inherently multidimensional and involves various interrelated aspects, both directly and indirectly. Based on the synthesis of nine analyzed studies, it is evident that the dimensions of parental roles encompass the family environment, family structure, socioeconomic conditions, parental values and attitudes, parenting styles, social influence, and role modeling. These dimensions collectively form an integrated system that significantly shapes children's character development.

Furthermore, the mechanisms through which parents influence children's character operate through multiple pathways, including family environment mediation, emotional regulation, value internalization, peer influence, and behavioral modeling. These findings suggest that character formation is not solely the result of direct parent-child interaction but is also influenced by broader contextual and environmental factors. In line with previous literature, the family remains the primary foundation for character development, emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in fostering positive behavioral and moral outcomes. In addition, this study identifies several research gaps, particularly the lack of integrative and holistic approaches in examining parental roles, as well as the limited focus on the contemporary challenges of the 21st century. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically by offering a comprehensive framework that integrates multiple dimensions of parental roles in character education. Methodologically, the use of a systematic literature review provides a structured and transparent approach to synthesizing existing research, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of analyzed articles is limited to nine studies, which may affect the breadth of the findings. Second, the contextual scope is restricted, as most studies originate from specific countries. Finally, this study relies solely on literature analysis without incorporating primary empirical data, which may limit the depth of contextual interpretation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed for future research and practice. First, future studies are encouraged to adopt a more integrative approach by combining multiple dimensions of parental roles within a unified conceptual framework. Such an approach would enable a more holistic understanding of how various factors interact in shaping children's character. Second, future research should employ longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic processes of character development over time. This is essential to understand how parental influence evolves across different developmental stages. Third, it is important to expand research contexts across diverse cultural and geographical settings, particularly within the Indonesian context, to enhance the applicability and relevance of findings. Cross-cultural studies would provide deeper insights into how sociocultural factors shape parenting practices and character education. Fourth, future studies should explicitly examine parental roles in addressing 21st-century challenges, including the impact of digital technology, social media, and changing communication patterns within families. As digital

media increasingly influences children's development, parental guidance becomes crucial in ensuring balanced and positive outcomes. Fifth, the adoption of mixed-methods approaches is recommended to integrate the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, future research should aim to develop practical models of family-based character education that can be implemented in both formal and informal educational settings. Such models would serve as actionable frameworks for parents and educators in fostering effective character development among children in the 21st century., Typists, and Suppliers who may have given materials.

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