

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEARNING FROM A PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Character development at the elementary school level has become an increasingly urgent issue due to growing moral challenges arising from social change and the expansion of digital technology. Empirical findings indicate that character education practices in elementary schools remain largely normative and have not yet fully facilitated deep value internalization among students. Accordingly, this study specifically aims to analyze how the philosophy of science through ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions can provide a conceptual foundation for strengthening character development in elementary school learning. The study employed a Systematic Literature Review using PRISMA guidelines by critically examining 22 relevant scholarly articles published between 2021 and 2025. The results demonstrate that the integration of the philosophy of science in elementary learning shifts character education from rule-based instruction toward reflective, meaningful, and contextual learning processes, enabling students to understand, interpret, and apply values consciously in real-life situations. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analytical framework, which positions the philosophy of science not merely as a theoretical lens but as a pedagogical foundation for character education at the elementary level. In conclusion, the philosophy of science perspective can function as a comprehensive and coherent framework for enhancing character development in elementary school students.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education at the elementary school level plays a strategic role in shaping students' personality, moral attitudes, and patterns of thinking from an early age (Ramadhani et al., 2025). Education itself is recognized as a central sector in the development of the Indonesian nation (Juliya & Herlambang, 2021). Elementary school represents the initial stage of formal education that strongly influences the formation of habits, values, and attitudes that tend to persist into later phases of development (Handoko et al., 2024). Numerous studies indicate that contemporary elementary school students face increasingly complex moral challenges due to the influence of social environments, digital media, and information flows that do not always align with educational values (Masri-Zada et al., 2025; Pratomo & Herlambang, 2021; Fauziah et al., 2024; Yuniarti et al., 2021).

Although character education has been incorporated into national education policies and embedded within the curriculum, its implementation in elementary schools continues to face various constraints (Jhon et al., 2021; Safitri et al., 2022). In practice, character education is often delivered through rules, slogans, or routine habits without being accompanied by processes that encourage deep understanding (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). As a result, students tend to recognize which values are considered good or bad, yet they do not fully grasp the reasons, meanings, and purposes underlying these values, leading to a gap between moral knowledge and students' actual behavior in everyday school life (Caesaria et al., 2024).

These empirical issues indicate that character education requires a more conceptual and reflective approach so that values are not merely normative but are genuinely internalized by students (Ramli et al., 2025). One perspective considered relevant to addressing this problem is the philosophy of science approach (Sari & Munir, 2024). The philosophy of science offers a comprehensive framework of thinking through ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions to understand the nature of values, the ways individuals acquire and interpret values, and the purposes of applying values in everyday life (Hayati & Dalimunthe, 2024).

However, existing studies on character education at the elementary school level have predominantly emphasized practical strategies, policy implementation, or value outcomes, while limited attention has been given to the integrative philosophical foundations that systematically connect ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives within classroom learning. This indicates a clear research gap concerning the lack of comprehensive philosophical analysis that explains why, how, and for what purpose character values are developed in elementary education.

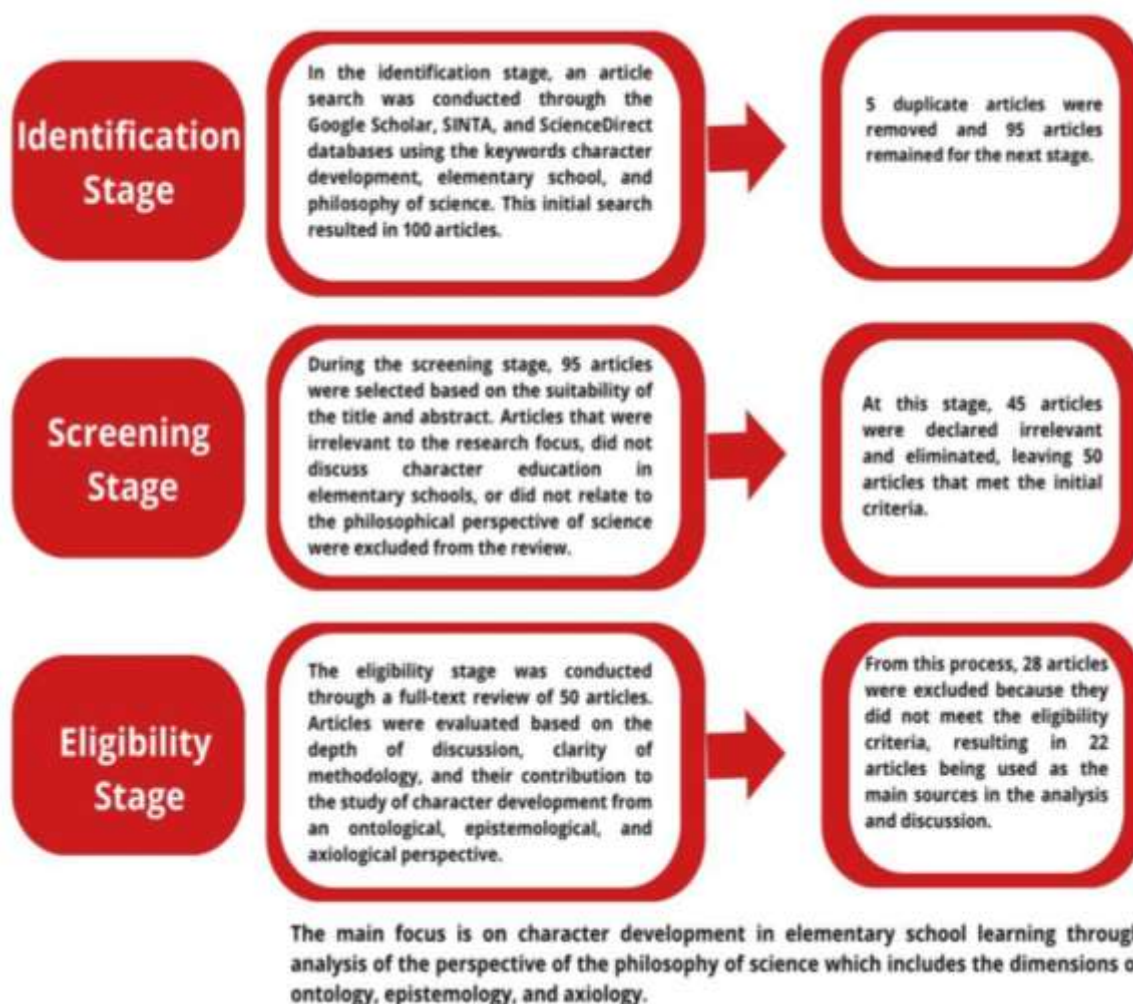
Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative synthesis of character education through the philosophy of science framework, positioning the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions not as abstract concepts but as a coherent foundation for strengthening character development in elementary school learning. Based on this background, this study aims to examine how character development in elementary schools can be understood through the integrated ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of the philosophy of science, and how this integration contributes to the strengthening of students' character formation. This study is expected to provide a conceptual foundation for developing character education that is more systematic, rational, and meaningful.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method guided by the PRISMA framework to examine literature related to character development in elementary school learning from a philosophy of science perspective (Yudistira, 2025). The literature identification process was conducted through several academic databases,

namely Google Scholar, SINTA, and ScienceDirect, using the keywords “character development,” “elementary school,” and “philosophy of science.” The selected articles met specific inclusion criteria, including publication between 2021 and 2025, a focus on character education at the elementary school level, and relevance to the philosophy of science perspective. Articles that were duplicated, not peer reviewed, or misaligned with the research focus were excluded from the review. Following the screening stages based on abstracts and full-text examination, data were extracted on authorship, year of publication, research methods, focus of character development, learning strategies, and forms of integration of the dimensions of the philosophy of science in instructional practices.

Figure 1. PRISMA SLR Stages (Yudistira, 2025)



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings of the Systematic Literature Review of 22 scholarly articles related to character development in elementary school learning from a philosophy of science perspective. The results are

organized to provide an overview of research trends, thematic patterns, and the relevance of each study to the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of character education.

Table 1 summarizes the reviewed articles by presenting the author(s), year of publication, research title, core findings or themes, and their relevance to character development in elementary education. The reviewed studies collectively indicate that character education is increasingly understood not merely as behavioral regulation, but as a process of value internalization supported by reflective learning, dialogue, and contextual practice. Several studies explicitly emphasize the importance of philosophical foundations particularly ontology, epistemology, and axiology in strengthening the conceptual basis of character education.

Table 1. Article Review

No.	Author(s) and Year	Title	Findings / Themes	Relevance
1.	Ikhtiarini & Yusuf (2025)	Ontological, Epistemological, and Axiological Dimensions in the Philosophy of Education	Character is understood as an inherent value that is manifested in observable behavior through the foundation of the philosophy of science.	Serves as a conceptual foundation for ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects of character education in elementary schools.
2.	Sengul (2024)	Epistemological Beliefs and Classroom Practices	Teachers' epistemological beliefs influence the practice of value-oriented dialogue and reflection.	Reinforces the importance of epistemology in shaping students' understanding of values.
3.	Retnowati et al. (2025)	Application of Axiological Values in Character-Based Education Management	Character values become meaningful when they are applied in a practical and ethical manner	Supporting the Axiological Dimension in Elementary School Character Education Practices
4.	Nabil & Nugraha (2024)	Integration of Philosophy of Science and Character Education Curriculum	The integration of the philosophy of science has an impact on the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains	Empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the philosophy of science approach in elementary schools
5.	Cahya et al. (2025)	The Integration of the Philosophy of Science in the Merdeka Curriculum	The implementation faces challenges related to teachers, time constraints, and learning resources	Explaining the empirical barriers to the implementation of character education
6.	Junaharesdi (2025)	A Systematic Literature Review of Educational Philosophy in Character Formation	Character is not merely behavior, but a process of value internalization.	Reinforcing the ontological foundation of character education.
7.	Sarkadi et al. (2022)	Integrating Character Education into RECE Learning Model	Character education must be integrated into the learning process.	This is relevant to positioning character as an essential process.
8.	Hamzah et al. (2025)	Implementation of Character Values in Project Activities	Character values are effective when developed through concrete and contextual activities.	Supporting an experience-based ontology of character.

No.	Author(s) and Year	Title	Findings / Themes	Relevance
9.	Yani (2024)	Philosophy of Science as Epistemological Foundation	Epistemology serves as the foundation for the formation of value understanding.	The theoretical foundation of how students construct knowledge about values.
10.	Rombout et al. (2024)	Philosophy Classroom Dialogue Intervention	Philosophical dialogue enhances value-based critical thinking.	Supporting dialogical and reflective approaches in elementary education.
11.	Tiara et al. (2025)	An axiological analysis in character formation.	Values become meaningful through reflection and real-life application.	Strengthening the role of axiology in the internalization of values.
12.	Rahman et al. (2024)	The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Character Formation.	Teachers serve as role models and moral guides.	This is relevant to the role of teachers as facilitators of values.
13.	Hartono et al. (2024)	The Implementation of Axiology in Elementary Schools.	Axiology encourages consistency between values and actions.	Addressing the gap between the understanding and the practice of character.
14.	Ulum & Warliah (2024)	The Role of Educational Philosophy in the Digital Era.	Educational philosophy strengthens value reflection in the digital era.	Expanding character studies grounded in the philosophy of science.
15.	Mongdong et al. (2023)	Creative Dialogue in Elementary Learning	Creative dialogue enhances understanding and moral awareness.	Supporting a dialogical epistemology in learning.
16.	Oskar et al. (2025)	Teachers as Facilitators of Character Education.	Teachers guide students' moral awareness in a gradual manner.	This is relevant to the practical implications of the research
17.	Azizah et al. (2024)	Character Education through Positive School Culture	School culture strengthens the consistency of character values.	Supporting the axiological and systemic aspects of character education.
18.	Qomarrullah & Suratni (2024)	The Philosophy of the Merdeka Curriculum.	The Merdeka Curriculum opens space for value integration.	Providing a policy context for the implementation of the philosophy of science.
19.	Rahmadani et al. (2021)	Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Character Education.	The three philosophical dimensions are interrelated in character education.	Serving as the primary conceptual reference for the study.
20.	Brutu et al. (2023)	The Integration of Educational Philosophy Values within the Merdeka Curriculum.	Philosophical integration bridges theory and practice.	Supporting the conceptual synthesis of the study.
21.	Purwaningsih (2024)	Role of Metacognition in Character Education	Metacognition strengthens students' moral awareness.	This is relevant to reflection and the internalization of values.
22.	Setiawan & Wiyani (2024)	Epistemology of Values in Character Education	Values are understood through students' experiences and reflection.	This is highly relevant to an epistemological approach in elementary education.

Below is a classification table that groups 22 scholarly articles based on their main themes, core discussions, relevant studies, and their alignment with the research title. Through this table, readers can identify the primary focus and substance of each study, while also understanding how each article contributes to the examination of character development in elementary school learning from the perspective of the philosophy of science. The table presentation further helps to reveal thematic patterns, interconnections among themes, and the conceptual contributions of each theme to the overall research topic.

Table 2. Article Review Classification

No.	Main Theme	Core Focus	Relevant Articles	Relevance to the Research Title
1.	The Ontological Dimension of Character Development in Elementary Education	Character is understood as the essence of moral values inherent in students and manifested through authentic and continuous learning experiences.	Ikhtiarini & Yusuf (2025); Junaharesdi (2025); Sarkadi et al. (2022); Hamzah et al. (2025); Rahmadani et al. (2021)	Explaining the essence of character development from the perspective of the philosophy of science.
2.	The Epistemological Dimension of Character Education in Elementary Schools	The understanding of character values is constructed through dialogue, reflection, reasoning, and the connection of values with students' learning experiences.	Sengul (2024); Yani (2024); Rombout et al. (2024); Mongdong et al. (2023); Setiawan & Wiyani (2024); Purwaningsih (2024)	Demonstrating how the understanding of character values is formed in the learning process.
3.	The Axiological Dimension of Character Education in Elementary Schools	Character values have practical purposes and are realized through ethical behavior, social responsibility, and school culture.	Retnowati et al. (2025); Tiara et al. (2025); Hartono et al. (2024); Rahman et al. (2024); Oskar et al. (2025); Azizah et al. (2024); Cahya et al. (2025); Nabil & Nugraha (2024); Brutu et al. (2023); Ulum & Warliah (2024); Qomarrullah & Suratni (2024)	Affirming the goals and application of character values in line with the focus of the research title.

Discussion

Based on the review of 22 scholarly articles, character development in elementary schools is understood as a gradual process of forming moral values through concrete and contextual learning experiences. The findings indicate that effective character education does not merely emphasize behavioral habituation, but also involves students' thinking processes, reflection, and the meaningful understanding of values. The literature further shows that the perspective of the philosophy of science makes a significant contribution to strengthening character education.

The ontological dimension positions character as a value inherent in students and manifested through observable behavior (Ikhtiarini & Yusuf, 2025). The epistemological dimension emphasizes that the understanding of values is constructed through processes of dialogue, reasoning, and reflection (Sengul, 2024). Meanwhile, the axiological dimension affirms that character values have practical purposes in shaping students' ethical behavior in everyday life (Retnowati et al., 2025). In addition, research findings indicate that the integration of the philosophy of science into learning has a positive impact on students' character development across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Nabil & Nugraha, 2024). However, the implementation of character education based on the philosophy of science still faces challenges, including limited teacher understanding, constraints on instructional time, and the unequal availability of learning resources (Cahya et al., 2025).

The discussion in this study is developed comprehensively to synthesize all findings from the literature review and to connect them deeply with the research questions and the urgency of the study. The main focus of the discussion is directed at how the perspective of the philosophy of science through the dimensions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology provides a strong conceptual foundation for character development in elementary school learning, while also addressing the empirical problems encountered in educational practice.

Character Development in Elementary Education from an Ontological Perspective

Character development in elementary education from an ontological perspective, the findings of this review indicate that character in elementary school students cannot be understood merely as expected behavior that emerges due to rules or punishment (Junaharesdi, 2025). This finding reinforces the view that character education should be positioned as an essential part of the learning process, rather than as an additional program or incidental activity (Sarkadi et al., 2022). In the context of elementary education, character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy are concrete and contextual, as students more easily understand values when they are embedded in real activities, such as group work, educational games, or simple problem-solving tasks closely related to their daily lives (Hamzah et al., 2025). Therefore, it can be concluded that, ontologically, character should be understood as a reality that is constructed and internalized through authentic and continuous learning experiences, rather than as a purely normative concept conveyed verbally, since value-based lecturing has been shown to be less effective in shaping students' long-term behavior.

Character Education from an Epistemological Perspective: Understanding and Constructing Values

An epistemological perspective, from an epistemological standpoint, the discussion indicates that the integration of the philosophy of science transforms how students understand character values (Yani, 2024). Values are no longer received as single truths transmitted by teachers, but are constructed through processes of thinking, dialogue, and reflection. Learning that facilitates open-ended questions, ethical discussions, and simple reasoning helps students develop a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying particular values (Rombout et al., 2024). These findings are relevant to empirical issues in elementary schools, where students often know what is considered "allowed" or "not allowed," yet do not fully understand why such rules are important. Through an epistemological approach, students are encouraged to connect values with their own experiences, enabling the internalization process to occur consciously (Setiawan & Wiyani, 2024). Thus, it can be concluded that from an epistemological perspective, character education is not dogmatic, but dialogical and reflective, in accordance with the cognitive developmental stage of elementary school students.

The Axiological Dimension: Meaning and Purpose of Character Value Implementation

The axiological dimension: meaning and purpose of the application of character values, the axiological dimension plays an important role in ensuring that character values have practical meaning for students. Character

values become relevant when students experience the direct benefits of their application, whether in social relationships, learning processes, or everyday life (Tiara et al., 2025). Activities such as reflection, self-evaluation, and the application of values in real contexts help students understand that character is not merely a school requirement, but a necessity for living together in society (Rahman et al., 2024). The review findings indicate that axiologically grounded learning encourages students to act consistently and responsibly; for example, the value of honesty is not only understood as a prohibition against lying, but as the foundation of trust in group work (Hartono et al., 2024). Thus, it can be concluded that the axiological dimension strengthens the continuity between value understanding and real-life practice, which has long been a weak point in character education in elementary schools.

The integration of the philosophy of science as a conceptual synthesis, the synthesis of the research findings shows that the main strength of character education grounded in the philosophy of science lies in the simultaneous integration of its three dimensions. Ontology provides an understanding of the nature of values, epistemology explains how students construct value understanding, and axiology affirms the purpose of applying values in everyday life. This integration bridges the gap between the theory of character education and classroom learning practices.

The novelty of this study lies in formulating the philosophy of science as a comprehensive pedagogical framework for character education in elementary schools. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on specific strategies or methods, this study emphasizes that the effectiveness of character education is strongly determined by the clarity of its underlying philosophical foundation. This framework offers a conceptual contribution by demonstrating that character development should be designed in a conscious, systematic, and reflective manner.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical and practical implications, the discussion enriches the field of character education by introducing the philosophy of science as a conceptual foundation that integrates the understanding of values, the processes of value formation, and the purposes of value application in elementary school learning (Ulum & Warliah, 2024). This approach expands the study of character education, which has traditionally focused on technical and implementation aspects, by adding reflective and rational dimensions as a basis for educational reasoning (Fitri, 2022). Thus, character education is not merely understood as an effort to shape behavior in accordance with norms, but as a conscious, planned, and meaningful process of value education for students' development.

Practically, the implications of this study indicate that elementary school teachers need to develop learning strategies that provide greater space for dialogue, reflection, and meaningful learning experiences (Mongdong et al., 2023). Teachers are no longer positioned merely as transmitters of values, but as facilitators who guide students to understand the moral reasoning behind actions and their consequences. Such learning enables students to gradually build moral awareness in accordance with their cognitive and social developmental levels (Oskar et al., 2025). In addition, schools need to create a learning culture that consistently applies character values, so that what students learn in the classroom is aligned with the practices they experience in everyday school life (Azizah et al., 2024).

This discussion also emphasizes that the success of character education grounded in the philosophy of science cannot be separated from systemic support, including school policies, teacher readiness, and the availability of learning resources. The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for contextual value integration; however, without adequate philosophical understanding, such flexibility may not be utilized optimally (Qomarrullah & Suratni, 2024). Therefore, strengthening teacher competence through professional development that emphasizes ontological, epistemological, and axiological understanding becomes an urgent need to ensure that character education is implemented consistently and sustainably (Rahmadani et al., 2021).

The discussion demonstrates that character education in elementary schools requires a deeper and more comprehensive approach than mere behavioral habituation. The integration of the philosophy of science perspective provides a conceptual framework capable of addressing empirical challenges in character education by positioning

values as an integral part of the learning process (Brutu et al., 2023). With a clear philosophical foundation, character education is expected not only to produce students who comply with rules, but also individuals who possess moral awareness, reflective thinking skills, and social responsibility in their everyday lives (Purwaningsih, 2024).

Overall, the integrative synthesis of this study demonstrates that character development in elementary school learning cannot be effectively achieved through partial or fragmented approaches. The ontological dimension establishes character as an inherent and lived value, the epistemological dimension explains how students consciously construct moral understanding through dialogue and reflection, and the axiological dimension ensures that values are purposefully applied in ethical behavior and social responsibility. When these three dimensions are integrated simultaneously, character education moves beyond normative instruction toward a coherent, meaningful, and sustainable educational process. This integrative synthesis confirms that the philosophy of science provides a comprehensive framework capable of addressing both conceptual and empirical challenges in elementary school character education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the Systematic Literature Review of 22 scholarly articles, this study concludes that character development in elementary school learning requires a deeper and more systematic approach than mere behavioral habituation. The philosophy of science provides a comprehensive conceptual framework by integrating ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions into character education. Ontologically, character is positioned as a moral value that is formed through concrete and contextual learning experiences. Epistemologically, students' understanding of values develops through dialogue, reasoning, and reflective processes. Axiologically, character values become meaningful when they are consistently enacted in ethical behavior and social responsibility in everyday life.

Beyond these conceptual findings, the results imply that the effectiveness of character education in elementary schools depends on the clarity of its philosophical foundation in learning design, the role of teachers as facilitators of value reflection, and the consistency of the school environment in modeling character values. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of character education by offering an integrative philosophical framework that connects the nature of values, the processes of value construction, and the purposes of value application in a coherent manner. Practically, the findings suggest that elementary school learning should be designed to provide space for dialogue, reflection, and meaningful experiences that support students' moral awareness and reflective thinking in a sustainable way.

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