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The Utilization of Education Report Cards as a Basis for Data-Driven Planning in Strengthening Student Character

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Abstract

This research is driven by the necessity of enhancing character education in schools, which continues to encounter implementation challenges, along with the inadequate utilization of the education report card as a data-driven tool for planning character initiatives. This study aims to examine the use of the education report card in assessing and designing programs for character development, the strategies adopted by schools, and the obstacles faced in public senior high schools in Pemalang Regency. This study utilized a qualitative method featuring a multisite case study design that included three public senior high schools and involved 15 participants, comprising principals, teachers, students, and representatives from the school committee. Data were gathered via interviews, observations, and documentation, and thematically analyzed using NVivo software. The results indicate that the education report card serves as a foundation for assessing students' character conditions and devising programs via school work plans and annual work plans. This is executed through cooperative curricular learning, religious and environmental practices, enhancement of literacy and numeracy, teacher role modeling, and counseling services. Nonetheless, execution remains hindered by insufficient teacher data literacy, poor coordination, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems.

Keywords

Character Education, Data-Driven Planning, Education Report Card, Senior High School.

1. Introduction

Character education constitutes a fundamental dimension in developing human resources with integrity, ethics, and responsibility, as the formation of students' character is not solely oriented toward cognitive achievement but also encompasses the development of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action integrated into daily life (Pike et al., 2020). Within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the National Standards, Curriculum, and Educational Assessment Agency (2022), through the Decree of the Head of the National Standards, Curriculum, and Educational Assessment Agency Number 009/H/KR/2022, emphasizes character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile, which consists of six key dimensions: faith and devotion to God Almighty with noble character, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, cooperation, and global diversity. These dimensions are designed to shape students into lifelong learners who are competent, adaptive, and aligned with Pancasila values. Furthermore, these dimensions represent the strategic direction of national education in developing students who are not only academically competent but also possess adaptive character values relevant to contemporary social and global challenges (Handayani et al., 2017; Elpin et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the implementation of character education in schools continues to face various challenges. The rapid development of technology and digital media has significantly influenced adolescent behavior, including the increasing incidence of bullying, declining academic integrity, and weakening social empathy within school environments (Herliana & Bahri, 2024). These conditions indicate that character strengthening has not been optimally implemented and that a gap remains between educational policy and practical implementation at the school level. Schools are required to establish more systematic, measurable, and sustainable strategies for character development to address increasingly complex social changes (Indahri, 2021; Hikmasari et al., 2021).

As part of efforts to improve data-based educational quality, the Indonesian government, through the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 19 of 2022, introduced the education report card as an instrument for evaluating school quality. The education report card provides comprehensive information regarding educational achievement indicators, including student character dimensions. This instrument is expected to support schools in implementing data-driven decision-making within evaluation and program planning processes related to character strengthening. Therefore, the education report card functions not only as an evaluative tool but also as a strategic foundation for designing school policies and programs that are more targeted and evidence-based (Setiawan, 2021; Triyatmini, 2021).

The phenomenon of utilizing the education report card for character strengthening can be observed in public senior high schools in Pematang Rejang Regency. Education report card results from 2024 to 2025 demonstrate varying levels of achievement in character indicators. Among 11 public senior high schools, six schools experienced improvements in character achievement, while five schools showed declining outcomes. These variations indicate that character-strengthening strategies have not been implemented evenly and that the utilization of education report card data as the basis for evaluation and school program planning remains suboptimal. In practice, education report card data are frequently used merely as administrative reports rather than as operational foundations for designing systematic and sustainable character-strengthening strategies (Winarti et al., 2024).

Previous studies have primarily focused on the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile and character education strategies in general (Carlyna et al., 2022; Herfiyanti et al., 2024). However, studies specifically examining the utilization of the

education report card as a basis for evaluating and planning character-strengthening programs at the school level remain limited (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). This limitation reveals a research gap regarding the use of educational data as a foundation for decision-making in student character development. Therefore, this study offers novelty by analyzing the utilization of the education report card as an operational basis for formulating character-strengthening strategies in schools. The study specifically examines how character indicators are translated into concrete programs through curricular learning, school habituation, teacher role modeling, and counseling guidance services.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the utilization of the education report card in evaluating and planning character-strengthening programs in public senior high schools in Pematang Regency, identify school strategies in optimizing education report card data, and examine the challenges encountered during its implementation. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of data-driven decision-making concepts in character education and practically to provide schools with strategic insights for designing more effective and sustainable character-strengthening programs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strengthening Student Character in Schools

Character education is a structured process aimed at instilling moral values and virtues in students so that these values are reflected in their ways of thinking, attitudes, and behaviors in everyday life. Character education does not merely emphasize understanding the distinction between right and wrong but also involves the development of emotional awareness and the ability to apply moral values in real-life situations. Lickona (2013) explains that character education consists of three essential components, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which should be developed in a balanced and integrated manner so that students are able to understand, internalize, and consistently practice moral values in their daily lives. In the Indonesian educational context, character strengthening is implemented through the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, which encompasses the dimensions of religiosity, independence, cooperation, critical thinking, creativity, and global diversity awareness (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Therefore, character education should not be viewed merely as a complementary program, but rather as an integral component of the educational process that is continuously embedded through learning activities, habituation, and exemplary practices within the school environment.

Students' character formation is influenced by interactions between individuals and their educational environment, including school culture, social relationships, and institutional policies. Schools function not only as places for academic development but also as ecosystems that cultivate positive values and behaviors among students. Supportive school environments encourage character development through discipline, mutual respect, collaboration, and active participation in school activities. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) and Munagandla et al. (2024) state that students' social, emotional, and character growth develops through holistic learning experiences and positive relationships within educational settings. Therefore, successful character education depends on the integration of school policies, pedagogical practices, school culture, and the involvement of the entire school community.

2.2. Education Report Card as a Data-Based Evaluation

The Education Report Card (*Rapor Pendidikan*) is an evaluation instrument developed based on the National Assessment to provide comprehensive information regarding the quality of educational institutions, including aspects of learning,

school environment, and students' character development. The presence of the education report card provides schools with more objective and measurable data, enabling them to understand educational conditions more comprehensively. The information presented in the report card assists schools in identifying both achievements and areas requiring improvement, thereby allowing educational programs to be planned in a more systematic and needs-based manner. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology explains that the education report card is designed as an evaluation and reflection tool to support continuous educational quality improvement (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). In the context of character education strengthening, the indicators contained in the Education Report Card can be used to assess students' character development through structured measurement results. Therefore, the education report card functions not only as a record of educational evaluation outcomes but also as a strategic source of data that schools can utilize in determining policies, setting program priorities, and improving the quality of educational services more effectively (Subekti et al., 2024; Wahyuni, 2024).

From the perspective of educational management, the use of the education report card reflects the implementation of data-driven decision-making, where policies and programs are formulated based on empirical evidence and measurable evaluation results. This approach enables schools to make more objective and rational decisions aligned with actual educational conditions. Education report card data also function as a reflective tool for continuous school improvement. Through these data, schools can identify gaps in students' character achievement, determine development priorities, and evaluate the effectiveness of character education programs. Mandinach and Gummer (2016) emphasize that data literacy is essential for supporting effective decision making and systematic educational quality improvement.

2.3. Strategies for Strengthening Character Education

Character education strengthening strategies refer to structured and purposeful efforts aimed at fostering students' moral values in an effective, contextual, and sustainable manner. These strategies prioritize the incorporation of character values into intracurricular and cocurricular activities so that character development becomes integrated into students' everyday learning experiences (Carlyna et al., 2022). In this process, teachers serve as facilitators who relate academic materials to real-life contexts, enabling students to understand and practice values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation in their daily lives. Furthermore, character strengthening is supported through the whole school approach, which encourages the active involvement of principals, teachers, educational staff, students, and parents in establishing a positive and value-oriented school culture (Kemendikbudristek, 2023).

Beyond school culture-based initiatives, character education can also be enhanced through experiential learning and social-emotional learning approaches. Experiential learning highlights the importance of direct experience, reflection, and value application in authentic situations, allowing students to internalize moral values through practical engagement (Kong, 2021). This approach may involve community service, collaborative projects, and social activities that cultivate empathy and social responsibility. Meanwhile, social emotional learning emphasizes the development of self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision making (Sulistiyowati et al., 2023). By implementing integrated and experience-oriented strategies, schools can establish learning environments that promote holistic character development. Such strategies encourage the consistent cultivation of moral values through instructional practices, habituation, exemplary behavior, and social interaction, thereby supporting students

in developing independence, adaptability, and social responsibility within both educational and community settings (Husnah et al., 2023).

3. Methods

This research applied a qualitative approach using a multisite case study design to investigate the optimization of education report card utilization in supporting students' character development. The multisite approach was chosen to obtain a broader and deeper understanding of how educational data are utilized within schools that possess diverse contexts and characteristics. The study was carried out at three public senior high schools in Pemalang Regency, namely SMA Negeri 1 Petarukan, SMA Negeri 1 Bantarbolang, and SMA Negeri 1 Ulujami. These research sites were purposively selected based on differences in character achievement indicators reported in the education report card during the 2024–2025 period. The primary focus of the study was to explore school strategies in using education report card data to design and implement sustainable character-strengthening programs for students.

The study involved 15 informants consisting of principals, vice principals, guidance and counseling teachers, students, and representatives of parents or school committees. Participants were selected through purposive sampling by considering their active involvement in the planning and implementation of data-based character education programs. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observations of classroom learning and character habituation activities, and documentation reviews of school records and education report cards. Interviews were intended to obtain comprehensive information regarding school strategies, whereas observations were conducted to examine the implementation of character education practices directly within the school setting. Documentation was utilized as supplementary evidence to support and validate the research findings systematically and objectively.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach supported by NVivo software to facilitate data organization and interpretation. The analytical process included data reduction, coding, categorization, and the identification of key themes representing the practices of education report card utilization in strengthening students' character development. The findings from each research location were compared to identify both similarities and differences in the strategies implemented across schools. To ensure data trustworthiness, the study applied source and method triangulation as well as member checking with the participants. Furthermore, ethical considerations were carefully maintained by protecting participants' confidentiality and ensuring that all participation was voluntary.

4. Results

4.1. Thematic Analysis of Education Report Card Data Utilization

The discussion of this study is based on the results of thematic analysis visualized through tree maps and logical flow diagrams, illustrating the hierarchical and causal relationships among the findings. The coding tree structure demonstrates that the utilization of education report card data serves as the primary foundation for school decision-making processes, which are subsequently implemented through various character-strengthening strategies and influenced by several implementation challenges.

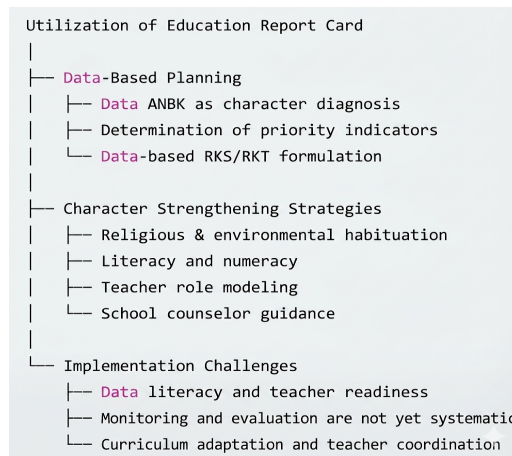


Figure 1. Tree Map of Education Report Data Utilization

Figure 1 illustrates a tree map describing the use of education report card data in supporting students' character development programs. The figure reveals that the utilization of the education report card is organized into three primary themes: data-based planning, character strengthening strategies, and implementation challenges. In the *data-based planning* category, National Computer-Based Assessment (*Asesmen Nasional Berbasis Komputer/ANBK*) data are employed to identify students' character conditions, establish priority indicators, and develop data-oriented School Work Plans (*Rencana Kerja Sekolah/RKS*) and Annual Work Plans (*Rencana Kerja Tahunan/RKT*). These findings suggest that education report card data serve as a critical basis for evidence-based decision-making, allowing schools to formulate educational programs that are more focused and responsive to school needs (Schifter et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2017).

Within the character-strengthening strategies theme, schools implement several initiatives, such as religious and environmental habituation activities, literacy and numeracy enhancement, teacher role modeling, and guidance and counseling services. These practices indicate that character education is integrated into school culture, instructional activities, and ongoing student support (Wohlstetter et al., 2008). Furthermore, the implementation challenges theme identifies several barriers to the effective utilization of education report card data, including insufficient data literacy and teacher preparedness, the lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation, and difficulties in curriculum adjustment and teacher coordination. The tree map highlights the interconnected relationship between data-driven planning, the implementation of character-strengthening initiatives, and the challenges that affect the effectiveness of education report card utilization in schools.

4.2. Education Report Card Data for Character Strengthening

The interview findings revealed that all schools utilized education report card data as the primary basis for identifying students' character conditions prior to designing character-strengthening programs. Principals and vice principals explained that character indicators with low achievement levels were prioritized in the preparation of school work plans and annual work plans. Guidance and counseling teachers also stated that national computer-based assessment data were used to identify behavioral tendencies among students that required further attention. These findings indicate that schools have begun to use educational data as an initial diagnostic foundation for determining program needs in a more targeted and measurable manner (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). The tree map results further demonstrate that the theme of data-based planning occupied the central position and was directly connected to various character-strengthening strategies, suggesting that data utilization serves as the primary foundation in the school program planning process (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016).

The observation and documentation findings showed that schools integrated character indicators into classroom learning activities, school habituation programs, and collaborative initiatives. Teachers incorporated character values into instructional activities, while schools implemented routine programs such as literacy activities, religious habituation, and environmental awareness initiatives. Student informants explained that these activities were conducted consistently and involved the participation of the entire school community. These findings suggest that character strengthening was implemented not only through formal instructional processes but also through school culture and students' daily activities (Carlyna et al., 2022). In the tree map results, these practices were represented within the character strengthening strategies theme, which included religious habituation, literacy and numeracy reinforcement, teacher role modeling, and guidance and counseling services as forms of data-based character strengthening implementation.

In addition, the interview findings indicated that schools continued to encounter several challenges in utilizing education report card data, particularly related to teachers' data literacy, program monitoring, and the absence of standardized evaluation mechanisms. Several teachers stated that data utilization remained limited to the initial identification stage and had not been fully integrated into continuous program evaluation practices. Documentation findings also revealed that monitoring and evaluation procedures lacked consistent recording systems across schools. These findings indicate that the implementation of data utilization remains in the early stages of development and has not yet been fully integrated into a continuous improvement cycle (Herfiyanti et al., 2024). Within the tree map, these conditions were reflected in the implementation challenges theme, which included limitations in data literacy, teacher coordination, and the monitoring and evaluation processes that had not yet been optimally implemented.

4.3. Character-Strengthening Strategies as Follow-Up Actions

The interview results indicated that schools developed a variety of character-strengthening strategies based on indicators identified in the education report card. Principals and teachers explained that character values were incorporated into collaborative curricular learning through classroom discussions, group assignments, and reflective learning activities. Schools also implemented religious habituation and environmental awareness programs as part of their regular school routines. These findings suggest that the education report card functioned not only as an assessment tool but also as a reference for designing character education strategies integrated into everyday instructional practices. In the tree map analysis, this condition appeared within the character strengthening strategies theme, illustrating the connection between educational data utilization and the contextual implementation of character education programs within schools (Carlyna et al., 2022; Kemendikbudristek, 2023).

The observation findings demonstrated that religious and environmental habituation strategies were consistently implemented through collective prayers, discipline-oriented school practices, community service activities, and social care initiatives. Student participants explained that these activities had become routine practices that encouraged the development of positive behaviors within the school environment. These findings indicate that schools viewed character not merely as an abstract concept but as behavior cultivated through continuous habituation processes. Moreover, the tree map findings revealed that literacy and numeracy initiatives also contributed significantly to strengthening students' critical thinking abilities and academic responsibility. Teachers integrated literacy practices and numeracy exercises into daily classroom instruction as part of efforts to foster independent learning and critical reasoning through routine educational activities (Pike et al., 2020; Salman, 2022).

The interview data further revealed that teacher role modeling and the involvement of guidance and counseling teachers were essential components in the process of students' character development. Teachers acted as role models by demonstrating discipline, responsibility, and respectful behavior within the school environment. At the same time, guidance and counseling teachers employed persuasive and restorative approaches to support students experiencing social and emotional challenges. These findings imply that character strengthening is influenced not only by formal school programs but also by the quality of interpersonal relationships and interactions between educators and students (Sulistyo et al., 2024). Within the tree map analysis, this condition was reflected in the prominence of teacher role-modeling and guidance counseling nodes, which were strongly associated with school culture-based character education strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

4.4. Implementation Challenges as Inhibiting Factors

The interview results indicate that schools are still facing various challenges in implementing character strengthening based on the education report card. Teachers acknowledge that their ability to understand and utilize educational data is not yet evenly distributed, particularly in relation to the use of digital tools and the development of collaborative learning practices. Several informants also stated that coordination among subject teachers has not been optimal in integrating character values into the learning process. These findings suggest that data-driven educational transformation still requires continuous strengthening of human resource capacity (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016; Kemendikbudristek, 2023).

The results of observations and documentation also reveal that monitoring and evaluation of the character-strengthening program have not been fully conducted in a systematic manner. Although schools have carried out periodic evaluations, the mechanisms for recording and following up on programs still vary across schools. In addition, the tree map results indicate that data-based monitoring has not been consistently integrated with the evaluation process of character programs. Some teachers also noted that the curriculum transition from P5 to a collaborative curriculum requires a considerable adaptation period. This indicates that the implementation of character strengthening is strongly influenced by schools' readiness to continuously adjust policies and instructional practices (Herfiyanti et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the interview results show that minor student disciplinary violations are still observed despite the routine implementation of character-strengthening programs. The guidance and counseling teachers explained that behavioral change among students requires a sustained process of habituation and consistent mentoring. The tree map results further reflect this condition within the theme of implementation challenges, which includes data literacy, teacher coordination, and program evaluation. These findings emphasize that character strengthening is a complex process that requires an adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable approach within the school environment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Sulistyowati et al., 2023).

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the utilization of education report card data as a foundation for school decision-making has gradually been implemented in planning character-strengthening programs, particularly through the formulation of School Work Plans (*Rencana Kerja Sekolah/RKS*) and Annual Work Plans (*Rencana Kerja Tahunan/RKT*) based on National Assessment (*Asesmen Nasional Berbasis Komputer/ANBK*) data. This condition reflects a gradual transition toward evidence-based decision-making practices within school management. Schools have

started to identify priority character indicators and design educational programs that are more targeted and responsive to students' needs and school conditions. These findings demonstrate that educational data are not merely utilized for administrative purposes but also function as strategic instruments in determining school policies and program priorities. This finding is consistent with Mandinach and Gummer (2016), who emphasized that teacher data literacy constitutes an essential prerequisite for integrating educational data into school decision-making processes. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology also highlighted the importance of educational data utilization in improving learning quality and supporting students' character development (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). Therefore, the utilization of education report card data may enhance schools' capacity to develop more systematic, measurable, and sustainable character education programs.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that character-strengthening strategies in schools are implemented not only through formal instructional activities but also through habituation programs, teacher role modeling, and supporting activities such as literacy, numeracy, and counseling services. These findings indicate that character education has been integrated into school culture and students' daily learning experiences. Schools consistently implement religious activities, literacy programs, environmental awareness initiatives, and guidance services as part of the students' character development process. Teachers also play a significant role in reinforcing character values through exemplary behavior and classroom interactions. This finding supports Carlyna et al. (2022), who argued that character education becomes more effective when it is internalized through school culture and consistent learning practices. In addition, Pike et al. (2020) and Salman (2022) emphasized that the integration of literacy and numeracy activities can strengthen students' critical thinking abilities while simultaneously fostering responsibility and positive learning behavior. These findings suggest that character strengthening requires collaborative and continuous implementation involving all elements of the school community in both academic and non-academic activities.

The study also reveals that the implementation of character strengthening still faces several challenges, particularly related to teachers' data literacy, inter-teacher coordination, and the lack of optimal monitoring and evaluation systems. These conditions indicate that data-driven educational transformation has not been fully realized and remains in a developmental stage. This is consistent with Herfiyanti et al. (2024), who found that the implementation of data-based education policies is often constrained by human resource readiness and underdeveloped evaluation systems. Moreover, Kemendikbudristek (2023) stresses that strengthening teacher capacity is a key factor in the successful implementation of data-driven policies.

In addition, the study finds that changes in student behavior require a long-term process through consistent habituation and guidance. This demonstrates that character education cannot be achieved instantly but requires a continuous process involving the entire school ecosystem. These findings are consistent with Sulistyowati et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of collaborative approaches in character education, and Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who argue that student behavioral change is strongly influenced by the quality of pedagogical interactions and a supportive school environment.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the education report card plays a strategic role as a basis for decision-making in strengthening student character across three public senior high schools in Pematang Regency. The findings indicate that education report card data are used for diagnosing students' character conditions, planning programs through school work plans and annual work plans, and monitoring

character achievement. These data are subsequently implemented into various strategies, including collaborative curricular learning, religious and environmental habituation, literacy and numeracy strengthening, teacher role modeling, and counseling services. This process reflects a shift toward evidence-based decision-making in school management. However, the effectiveness of implementation is still influenced by limited teacher data literacy, suboptimal monitoring and evaluation systems, and weak cross-subject coordination. The implication of this study highlights the importance of strengthening teacher capacity, developing collaborative school leadership, and establishing a sustainable character evaluation system to optimize the use of educational data in supporting student character development.

This study has limitations in terms of its scope, as it only involved three schools, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other senior high school contexts in Pematang Regency. In addition, the qualitative approach used does not quantitatively measure the extent of character change among students. Future research is recommended to expand the geographical and educational scope and to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. Further studies may also explore more structured data-driven intervention models and examine their long-term effectiveness in shaping student character development.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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