

## Managing Character Education in Early Childhood: A Multisite Case Study of Planning, Leadership, and Supervision Practices

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### ABSTRACT

Character education in early childhood requires a comprehensive managerial framework that extends beyond classroom practices. However, many institutions face challenges in implementing systematic and integrated management approaches. This study examines and compares the management of character education in two early childhood institutions, focusing on how planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision shape program effectiveness. A qualitative multi-site case study was conducted at PAUD Az Zikro and PAUD Al-Maghfiroh. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, complemented by cross-case comparison to identify patterns and differences between institutions. Both institutions are grounded in religious-based character values but differ substantially in managerial practices. PAUD Az Zikro employs a simple organizational structure, administratively oriented supervision, and non-standardized implementation. In contrast, PAUD Al-Maghfiroh adopts data-driven planning, distributed leadership, structured learning strategies, measurable indicators, and instrument-based supervision. These differences influence the coherence, accountability, and sustainability of character education programs. The findings underscore the critical role of integrated management in ensuring effective character education. A systematic alignment of planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision enhances program consistency and institutional resilience. The study contributes theoretically by extending character education discourse from a value-internalization perspective to a management-based model, where managerial components function as interrelated systems mediating character development. Effective character education is thus contingent upon participatory planning, collaborative organizational structures, authentic assessment, and reflective supervision. Future research should explore broader multisite contexts, longitudinal designs, and the use of digital or AI-assisted tools to strengthen supervision and assessment practices.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Character education in early childhood education (ECE) is a strategic foundation for shaping the quality of future generations, as this period represents a critical phase in the formation of moral, social, and emotional dispositions. Early childhood is often referred to as the “golden age” because children are highly receptive to stimulation that influences personality development and value internalization (Santrock, 2022). Empirical studies indicate that character education delivered through role modeling, habituation, and meaningful social interaction contributes significantly to the development of self-control, responsibility, and prosocial behavior in young children (Sanderse, 2013).

Nevertheless, global research on early childhood character education has largely emphasized an instructional focus, centering on teaching strategies and classroom-based learning models implemented by educators. While such approaches are important, they tend to overlook the broader managerial context in which character education is planned, organized, implemented, and evaluated. As a result, existing studies provide limited explanations for variations in the sustainability and consistency of character education outcomes across institutions. What remains insufficiently explored in the literature is how educational management at the institutional level shapes the effectiveness of character education in early childhood settings.

From a managerial perspective, character education is an institutional responsibility that extends beyond individual teachers. It involves systematic processes of planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision aimed at achieving educational goals in a coherent and sustainable manner (Li & Karanxha, 2024). In early childhood education institutions, effective management includes curriculum alignment with character values, the development of a supportive school culture, continuous professional development for teachers, and structured collaboration with parents. Research suggests that institutions with well-managed character programs are more successful in creating consistent value-based learning environments for children (Subasman, 2023).

This study is theoretically grounded in the framework of distributed leadership, which conceptualizes educational management as a shared and collaborative process among principals, teachers, and other stakeholders. Distributed leadership emphasizes collective responsibility, coordination, and shared decision-making, making it particularly relevant to early childhood education contexts where daily interactions among educators and parents strongly influence children’s character formation (Hummel, Cohen, Gessulat, & Anders, 2022). Within this framework, character education management is understood not as an individual leadership function but as an institutional practice embedded in organizational culture and routines.

Az Zikro and Al Maghfiroh Early Childhood Education Centers in Pematang Siantar City represent value-based institutions that integrate religious principles and local wisdom into character education. The socio-cultural environment surrounding these institutions supports character development not only through formal learning activities but also through daily social interactions within the school and family contexts (Mei-Ju, Chen-Hsin, & Pin-Chen, 2014; Fitri & Sugiyo Pranoto, 2023). However, preliminary observations indicate persistent challenges, including variations in teacher competence, differences in institutional management approaches, limited parental involvement, and the absence of consistent evaluation mechanisms for character development (Alinsunurin, 2020).

Despite growing interest in character education, several empirical gaps remain. First, most previous studies prioritize instructional strategies rather than examining comprehensive character education management across planning, implementation, and evaluation stages (Hadi, Kholis, Remanita, & Harta, 2025). Second, research tends to focus on single institutions, limiting comparative insights into how different organizational and leadership practices influence character education outcomes (Guevara, 2022). Third, multisite studies on character education management in early childhood education particularly in culturally and religiously distinctive regions such as Pematang Siantar are still scarce in the global literature.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze character education management at Az Zikro and Al Maghfiroh Early Childhood Education Centers through four core managerial functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision. By adopting a multisite approach within the same regional context, this research seeks to reveal similarities and differences in managerial practices and leadership dynamics influencing character education. Theoretically, the study contributes to the enrichment of character education management literature through the application of distributed leadership in early childhood contexts. Practically, the findings are expected to inform school leaders, educators, and policymakers in strengthening institutional management strategies that support effective and sustainable character education in early childhood education.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative multi-site case study design to examine and compare the management of character education in two early childhood education institutions with distinct managerial and cultural orientations, namely PAUD Az Zikro and PAUD Al Maghfiroh in Pematang Siantar City. The multi-site design enabled within-site and cross-site analyses to identify shared managerial patterns and context-specific practices in the planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision of character education (Yin, 2018).

The research sites were selected purposively based on their institutional commitment to religious-based character education and their sustained implementation of character-oriented programs. Participants consisted of 2 principals, 8 classroom teachers (four from each institution), 2 administrative staff members, and 6 parents, resulting in a total of 18 participants representing key stakeholders involved in character education management. Fieldwork was conducted over a period of four months, allowing sufficient time for prolonged engagement, observation of routine practices, and in-depth data collection across both sites.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews focused on managerial processes related to character education, including institutional planning, coordination of roles, implementation strategies, supervision mechanisms, and evaluation practices. Participant observations were carried out during classroom learning, school routines, and informal interactions to capture how character values were enacted in daily practices. Document analysis involved institutional work plans, curriculum documents, supervision reports, and character assessment records, supporting data triangulation across sources (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Ethical considerations were addressed rigorously throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring their voluntary participation and understanding of the study's objectives. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms for institutions and participants and by securely storing all research data. In addition, the study received formal institutional approval from the management of both early childhood education centers before fieldwork commenced.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Milles & Huberman, 2014). Each site was analyzed independently through within-case analysis before conducting a systematic cross-case comparison to identify convergent and divergent managerial practices. Analytical rigor was ensured through method and source triangulation, member checking, and the maintenance of an audit trail documenting analytical decisions and coding processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009).

To further enhance trustworthiness, the study employed systematic coding procedures and reflexive analysis to minimize researcher bias and strengthen interpretive transparency. These methodological strategies ensured credibility, dependability, and confirmability of findings, enabling a robust examination of how leadership distribution, organizational culture, educator competence, and parental involvement influence character education management across early childhood education institutions.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study explain how character education management is implemented in two early childhood education institutions, namely PAUD Az Zikro and PAUD Al-Maghfiroh, through four main components of education management. The findings describe the dynamics of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising character education, revealing similarities, differences, and unique characteristics at each site. The presentation of these results provides a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of institutional management in shaping the character of early childhood.

#### 3.1. Character Education Planning

The results of the study show that both institutions have systematically developed character education plans; however, the depth and orientation of these plans differ across sites. PAUD Az Zikro utilizes annual and semester planning documents that outline program objectives, character value indicators, and school culture strengthening activities. In contrast, PAUD Al Maghfiroh employs more structured planning documents that are complemented by character development assessment rubrics for each learning theme.

*“Our character education planning mainly follows government regulations and is discussed together with teachers at the beginning of the semester. The focus is on ensuring that religious and discipline values are consistently included in learning activities.” (Principal, PAUD Az Zikro)*

*“We always start planning by reviewing last semester’s character assessment results and discussing them with teachers and parents. This helps us decide which character values need more attention.” (Principal, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)*

Regarding the focus of character values, both institutions place religious values at the core of character education. However, PAUD Al Maghfiroh integrates additional values such as responsibility and independence more explicitly and systematically into its curriculum. “Religious values are the foundation, but we also emphasize independence and responsibility through daily routines, so children are trained to take initiative and complete simple tasks on their own.” (Teacher, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Parental involvement also differs between the two sites. While both institutions involve parents, PAUD Az Zikro limits parental participation mainly to program socialization, whereas PAUD Al Maghfiroh actively engages parents from the planning stage.

*“We are invited to school meetings to discuss character programs and give input. It makes us feel more responsible for continuing these values at home.” (Parent, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)*

The data analysis shows that both PAUD Az Zikro and PAUD Al Maghfiroh have implemented formal planning for character education; however, the depth and orientation of their planning differ significantly. PAUD Az Zikro develops its character program primarily based on government regulations and internal teacher discussions, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh adopts a more data-driven approach that incorporates evaluation results, parental input, and committee deliberations. The two institutions share a focus on religious values as the foundation of early character formation, though PAUD Al Maghfiroh integrates additional values such as responsibility and independence more systematically into its curriculum. The cross-site proposition derived from this finding suggests that the more data-based and participatory the planning process, the more relevant and targeted the character education program becomes.

**Table 1.** Character Education Planning (Cross-Site Findings)

Aspect	Cross-Site Findings and Interpretive Meaning	Cross-Case Analytical Insight
Program Development	Both institutions have written character education plans. PAUD Az Zikro relies on regulatory guidelines and internal teacher discussions, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh incorporates evaluation data and stakeholder deliberation.	Data-driven and participatory planning enhances program specificity and relevance.
Focus of Values	Religious values form the core of character education in both sites. PAUD Al Maghfiroh expands the value scope by integrating responsibility and independence.	Broader value integration supports more diverse character learning experiences.
Parental Involvement	Parents are involved in both institutions, but with varying intensity.	Early and active parental involvement strengthens program acceptance and continuity.

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### 3.2. Organizing Character Education

Both institutions have established organizational arrangements to support character education; however, the level of structural complexity and role distribution differs between sites. PAUD Az Zikro applies a relatively simple organizational structure in which the principal assumes a dominant role as the main coordinator of character education programs, while teachers are primarily responsible for classroom implementation and administrative staff provide technical support.

*“The coordination of character education activities is still centered on the principal. Teachers usually follow the directions that have been agreed upon in meetings.”* (Teacher, PAUD Az Zikro)

In contrast, PAUD Al Maghfiroh has developed a more formal and detailed organizational structure through the establishment of a Character Development Team consisting of the principal, senior teachers, and parent coordinators. This team is responsible for program coordination, monitoring implementation, strengthening school culture, and maintaining communication with parents.

*“We formed a special team so that character education does not depend on one person only. Each member has clear responsibilities, including coordination with parents.”* (Principal, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Role distribution also differs significantly across the two sites. At PAUD Al Maghfiroh, responsibilities related to character education are distributed among team members, allowing collaborative decision-making and shared accountability. A senior teacher explained:

*“Through the character team, we discuss problems together and decide follow-up actions. It makes implementation more consistent.”* (Senior Teacher, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Meeting mechanisms further reflect organizational differences. PAUD Az Zikro conducts coordination meetings on an incidental basis, whereas PAUD Al Maghfiroh holds weekly structured meetings supported by written minutes.

*“Our meetings are scheduled every week. The results are documented, so we know what needs to be followed up.”* (Administrative Staff, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

**Table 2.** Organizing Character Education

Aspect	Cross-Site Findings and Interpretive Meaning	Cross-Case Analytical Insight
Organizational Structure	Both institutions have formal organizational structures. PAUD Az Zikro applies a simple structure centered on the principal, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh operates with a detailed structure supported by a character education team.	More structured and team-based organization strengthens coordination.
Role Distribution	Roles in PAUD Az Zikro are largely centralized, whereas PAUD Al Maghfiroh distributes responsibilities among team members.	Distributed roles enhance collaborative implementation quality.
Meeting Mechanisms	Coordination meetings in PAUD Az Zikro are incidental, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh conducts regular and documented meetings.	Regular coordination improves program effectiveness and follow-up.

Both institutions have formal organizational structures to support character education, yet the complexity of these structures differs. PAUD Az Zikro maintains a simple structure where the principal holds a central coordinating role, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh operates with a more detailed organizational system that includes a dedicated character education team. Collaboration is more prominent in PAUD Al Maghfiroh, with responsibilities distributed among teachers, assistants, and committee members. Meanwhile, PAUD Az Zikro relies heavily on the principal’s leadership. The cross-site proposition suggests that a well-defined organizational structure with distributed leadership enhances coordination and strengthens the sustainability of character education programs.

### 3.3. Implementing Character Education

The implementation of character education in both institutions follows three main patterns: routine habituation, integration into thematic learning, and teacher role modeling. However, differences emerge in the level of structure, innovation, and measurement applied across sites. PAUD Az Zikro emphasizes religious-based routines such as collective prayers, religious lectures, and memorization activities, which are carried out consistently but without standardized performance indicators.

*“Our character activities are carried out every day through prayer routines and religious practices. We believe consistency is the key, even though we do not use specific measurement tools.”* (Teacher, PAUD Az Zikro)

In contrast, PAUD Al Maghfiroh implements character education through more varied and structured activities, including project-based learning, role-playing, storytelling, and guided moral discussions. These activities are supported by clear indicators that allow teachers to monitor children’s character development.

*“We use indicators to see children’s progress in responsibility and independence. It helps us evaluate whether the activities are effective or need improvement.”* (Teacher, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Curriculum integration also differs across institutions. PAUD Az Zikro integrates character values into learning activities in an uneven manner, depending on teacher initiative. Meanwhile,

PAUD Al Maghfiroh systematically embeds character education into lesson plans and thematic projects.

*“Every theme already includes character values, so teachers are guided on what to emphasize during learning.”* (Senior Teacher, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Teacher role modeling is emphasized in both institutions. However, PAUD Al Maghfiroh applies monitoring instruments to ensure consistency in teacher behavior, while PAUD Az Zikro relies more on moral awareness and informal supervision.

*“We remind teachers that their behavior is an example for children, and we evaluate it using observation sheets.”* (Principal, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

**Table 3.** Implementing Character Education (Cross-Site Findings)

Aspect	Cross-Site Findings and Interpretive Meaning	Cross-Case Analytical Insight
Habituation	Both institutions apply daily habituation practices. PAUD Az Zikro conducts habituation informally, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh uses measurable indicators to track progress.	Measurable habituation enables clearer monitoring of character development.
Curriculum Integration	Character values are integrated into learning in both sites, but PAUD Al Maghfiroh applies more systematic and project-based integration.	Systematic integration promotes consistency in character learning.
Teacher Role Modeling	Teachers act as role models in both institutions; however, PAUD Al Maghfiroh monitors teacher behavior using formal instruments.	Monitored role modeling reduces inconsistency and strengthens value internalization.

Both institutions emphasize habituation, role modeling, and integration of character values into daily learning activities. However, their implementation systems differ in terms of structure and measurement. PAUD Az Zikro practices habituation informally without standardized indicators, whereas PAUD Al Maghfiroh applies measurable indicators that allow teachers to monitor children’s progress more systematically. Integration of character values into the curriculum is broader and more consistent in PAUD Al Maghfiroh, supported by daily routines documented in the lesson plans. On the other hand, PAUD Az Zikro highlights moral exemplification by teachers as a primary approach. The proposition formulated from this comparison states that structured and measurable implementation leads to clearer monitoring, consistency, and stronger internalization of character values in children’s daily behavior.

### 3.4. Supervising Character Education

Supervision practices in both institutions aim to monitor the implementation and outcomes of character education; however, the level of structure and feedback mechanisms differs across sites. At PAUD Az Zikro, supervision is predominantly administrative in nature, focusing on the completeness of lesson plans, class journals, and periodic reports. Supervision is conducted monthly by the principal, but it is not yet supported by structured supervision instruments or systematic feedback mechanisms for improving instructional practices.

*“Supervision usually focuses on checking lesson plans and class journals. Feedback is given verbally and is still general.”* (Teacher, PAUD Az Zikro)

In contrast, PAUD Al Maghfiroh applies a more systematic and reflective supervision model. Supervision activities include classroom observations, coaching and mentoring sessions for teachers, analysis of character assessment rubrics, and biweekly evaluation meetings. Children’s character development is also documented through portfolios, anecdotal records, and individual journals, allowing more comprehensive monitoring of behavioral progress.

*“After classroom observations, teachers receive written feedback and recommendations, so follow-up actions are clearer.”* (Principal, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Reporting mechanisms further illustrate the differences between the two institutions. PAUD Az Zikro relies mainly on teachers’ daily notes and simple periodic reports, whereas PAUD Al Maghfiroh produces character report cards and structured evaluation documents that track children’s character development over time.

*“We use character report cards and portfolios to monitor each child’s development from one period to the next.”* (Administrative Staff, PAUD Al Maghfiroh)

Feedback practices also vary across sites. While both institutions provide feedback as part of the supervision process, PAUD Al Maghfiroh delivers written and documented feedback accompanied by clear recommendations and follow-up actions. In contrast, PAUD Az Zikro provides feedback primarily in verbal form without systematic documentation.

**Table 4.** Supervising Character Education

Aspect	Cross-Site Findings and Interpretive Meaning	Cross-Case Analytical Insight
Type of Supervision	Both principals are involved in supervising character education. PAUD Az Zikro applies informal administrative supervision, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh uses structured supervision supported by instruments.	Structured supervision enhances instructional quality and consistency.
Reporting	Both institutions document character development. PAUD Al Maghfiroh provides more detailed documentation through character report cards and portfolios.	Detailed documentation enables clearer tracking of children’s character progress.
Feedback	Feedback is provided in both sites; however, PAUD Al Maghfiroh uses written feedback with clear recommendations and follow-up actions.	Written feedback strengthens follow-up and continuous improvement.

Supervision practices in the two institutions share similarities in that both principals are actively involved in monitoring character development. Nonetheless, the level of formality varies. PAUD Az Zikro conducts informal and non-standardized supervision, while PAUD Al Maghfiroh carries out systematic supervision supported by instruments, scheduled observations, and written feedback. PAUD Al Maghfiroh also uses character report cards and periodic documentation, allowing more comprehensive evaluation of children’s behavioral progress. Thus, the resulting proposition is that systematic and instrument-based supervision provides clearer feedback loops and more effective follow-up for improving character education practices.

### Discussion

The findings show that although both institutions have systematically developed character education plans, there are striking differences in the depth, orientation, and approach of their development. PAUD Az Zikro relies more on government regulations and internal teacher deliberations, while PAUD Al-Maghfiroh uses a data-based approach that involves child evaluation results, parent input, and the school committee. These results are in line with the theory of data-based decision making in educational management, which emphasizes the importance of using authentic data to design relevant interventions (Ikemoto, 2007) (Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015). In addition, the integration of religious values in both institutions reinforces studies showing that cultural contexts and spiritual values can shape the orientation of character planning in early childhood education (Gunawan, 2017; Rizqi, Guefarra, Mas’ud, & Moh. Roqib, 2025). The differences in the use of character assessment indicators are also consistent with previous research findings that measurable assessment

instruments strengthen the consistency of value implementation in the classroom (Jones, Zaslow, Darling-Churchill, & Halle, 2016; Shoshani, 2019). Beyond confirming existing theories, these findings extend data-based decision-making models by demonstrating that data use in character education is not limited to academic outcomes but can also meaningfully guide moral and value-based planning in early childhood settings.

Furthermore, the involvement of parents and the school committee in Al-Maghfiroh's planning reinforces empirical evidence that participatory planning models can improve value coherence between families and schools, thereby deepening the internalization of children's character (Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009; Otero-Mayer, González-Benito, Gutiérrez-de-Rozas, & Expósito-Casas, 2025). In contrast to Az Zikro, which still prioritizes normative planning, Al-Maghfiroh demonstrates a collaborative approach that supports continuous improvement through routine evaluation, structured feedback, and ongoing curriculum review, a practice that has been proven to increase the effectiveness of character development programs in various international studies (Jones et al., 2017; Blewitt et al., 2021). Thus, these multisite findings reinforce that the quality of planning management, which includes document depth, databases, collaboration, and systematic assessment, has a significant influence on the success of character value internalization in early childhood.

The difference in organizational structure between Az Zikro Early Childhood Education Center and Al-Maghfiroh Early Childhood Education Center shows that the form of organization greatly determines the direction and effectiveness of character education implementation. Az Zikro Early Childhood Education Center has a simple structure centered on the role of the principal, while Al-Maghfiroh Early Childhood Education Center displays a more complex organizational model through the formation of a Character Development Team that involves senior teachers and parent coordinators. The centralized leadership pattern at Az Zikro is in line with the single-leader model in school management, but this model often limits innovation because the burden of coordination is centered on one leader (Hallinger, 2011; Bush, 2019). In contrast, the collaborative structure at Al-Maghfiroh is in line with the theory of distributed leadership, where responsibilities are shared collectively, thereby increasing the effectiveness of decision-making and strengthening school culture (Harris, 2013).

Importantly, these findings not only support distributed leadership theory but also challenge assumptions that such leadership models are difficult to implement in small or early childhood institutions.

This condition supports research findings that special teams in character education can strengthen program consistency through better coordination, structured monitoring, and more intensive communication mechanisms with stakeholders (Arthur, 2017). In addition, parental involvement in the Al-Maghfiroh organizational structure strengthens family-school relationships, which have been shown to have a significant impact on children's moral and social development (Jaramillo-López, Mendive, & Castro, 2025). While Az Zikro relies on the role of the principal as the driving force, this pattern tends to result in institutional dependence, thereby potentially reducing the sustainability of the program in the long term. These findings extend leadership theory by illustrating how distributed leadership functions effectively within religious-based early childhood education, where moral authority and collaboration coexist.

The multisite findings show that although both institutions adopted the same implementation pattern routine habituation, integration of values in thematic learning, and teacher role modeling there were fundamental differences in the level of innovation, systematicity, and accountability of implementation. PAUD Az Zikro emphasizes religious-based habits such as communal prayer, short lectures, and memorization, practices that are in line with the values inculcation approach in character education (Lovat, Toomey, & Clement, 2010). However, this approach becomes less than optimal when it is not supported by measurable behavioral indicators as required by the explicit instruction of character model (Nucci, Narvaez, & Krettenauer, 2014). This finding challenges

traditional assumptions in religious-based education that moral habituation alone is sufficient without systematic measurement.

In contrast, Al-Maghfiroh Early Childhood Education Center displays a more systematic implementation through the use of character development indicators, value-based projects, role-playing, and moral discussion sessions strategies that are consistent with research recommendations that active and reflective learning can strengthen children's understanding of values and build their social-emotional capacity (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017; Tirri, 2011). The consistent integration of character through lesson plans and daily documentation at Al-Maghfiroh is also in line with the embedded character curriculum approach (Denham & Bassett, 2019).

In addition, the variety of implementation strategies at Al-Maghfiroh reinforces the evidence that dialogic, project-based, and child-centered character education is more effective than approaches that emphasize only role modeling or formal routine activities (Battistich, 2008; Leming, 2001). These findings extend SEL and moral development research by demonstrating the managerial conditions under which such approaches can be sustained in early childhood institutions.

The findings show significant differences in character education supervision practices between the two institutions. PAUD Az Zikro implements administrative supervision with a focus on the completeness of learning tools, such as lesson plans, class journals, and periodic reports. This supervision pattern is in line with traditional administrative supervision (Starrat, 2007; Zepeda, 2017). In contrast, Al-Maghfiroh PAUD implements reflective supervision through classroom observation, coaching and mentoring, character rubric analysis, and biweekly evaluation meetings, consistent with contemporary instructional supervision research (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Hamre et al., 2012). While these findings strongly support reflective and data-based supervision models, their applicability may be context-dependent. Both institutions operate within a religious based early childhood education environment, which emphasizes moral authority, shared values, and close parent-school relationships.

Thus, these multisite findings confirm that reflective, structured, and data-based supervision not only improves teacher competence but also strengthens the overall success of character education. However, caution is required in generalizing these results to secular or culturally different early childhood contexts, where value frameworks, parental expectations, and institutional governance may differ.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This multisite study underscores that the effectiveness of character education in early childhood education is fundamentally shaped by the quality of its management system rather than by instructional practices alone. The findings highlight that character formation becomes more sustainable when it is governed through coherent planning, collaborative organizational structures, systematic implementation, and reflective supervision. These managerial dimensions function as an integrated system that ensures character values are not merely taught, but consistently internalized within children's daily experiences.

A key transferable principle emerging from this study is the importance of data-informed and participatory management in character education. Management practices that utilize assessment data, stakeholder feedback, and continuous evaluation mechanisms enable institutions to align character goals with children's developmental needs. This approach extends existing theories of educational management by demonstrating that data-based decision making and distributed leadership are not only relevant to academic outcomes but are also critical for strengthening moral and character development in early childhood contexts. Another significant contribution lies in emphasizing distributed leadership and accountability as central mechanisms for sustaining character education programs. Organizational structures that distribute responsibility across leadership teams, teachers, and families foster program continuity, reduce institutional dependency on single actors, and strengthen collective ownership of values. These findings extend character education literature by

positioning leadership and supervision as moral governance tools rather than administrative functions.

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