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NAVIGATING THE CHARACTER FOUNDATIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE POST-DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

The post-digital era is characterized by the integration of digital technology into everyday life, creating increasingly complex moral, social, and psychological challenges for elementary school students. Meanwhile, character education continues to promote a wide range of character values without clearly identifying the most fundamental priorities. This study aims to identify the most relevant character foundations for elementary school students in responding to the challenges of the post-digital era and to explain their implications for educational practice. The research employs a conceptual literature review with a philosophical perspective by analyzing journal articles, academic books, policy documents, and relevant literature on character education, elementary education, and the post-digital era. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and philosophical interpretation. The findings indicate that integrity, empathy, and resilience constitute the three primary character foundations that should be prioritized. These values are considered essential for addressing various post-digital challenges, including digital ethics issues, declining social skills, cyberbullying, gadget addiction, and identity crises. The study contributes a conceptual framework that positions integrity, empathy, and resilience as the core foundations of character education in elementary schools and connects them to practical implementation through an integrated curriculum, digital experiential learning, and the concept of the sovereign school.

Keywords: *Character Education, Elementary School/Islamic Elementary School, Integrity, Empathy, Resilience, Corruption*

Abstrak

Era post-digital ditandai oleh menyatunya teknologi digital dengan kehidupan sehari-hari sehingga menghadirkan tantangan moral, sosial, dan psikologis yang semakin kompleks bagi peserta didik sekolah dasar. Sementara itu, pendidikan karakter masih cenderung mengembangkan banyak nilai karakter tanpa mengidentifikasi fondasi yang paling prioritas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi fondasi karakter yang paling relevan bagi peserta didik sekolah dasar dalam menghadapi tantangan era post-digital serta menjelaskan implikasi implementasinya di lingkungan sekolah. Metodologi penelitian menggunakan pendekatan conceptual literature review dengan perspektif filosofis melalui analisis terhadap artikel jurnal, buku akademik, dokumen kebijakan, dan literatur terkait pendidikan karakter, pendidikan dasar, serta era post-digital. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik dan interpretasi filosofis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integritas, empati, dan resiliensi

merupakan tiga fondasi karakter utama yang perlu diprioritaskan. Ketiganya dinilai mampu merespons berbagai tantangan era post-digital, seperti persoalan etika digital, menurunnya keterampilan sosial, cyberbullying, kecanduan gawai, dan krisis identitas. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada perumusan kerangka konseptual yang menempatkan integritas, empati, dan resiliensi sebagai fondasi utama pendidikan karakter sekolah dasar serta menghubungkannya dengan implementasi melalui kurikulum integratif, pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman digital, dan konsep sekolah berdaulat.
***Kata kunci**: Pendidikan Karakter, SD/MI, Integritas, Empati, Resiliensi, Korupsi*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a solid foundation for instilling the right character foundations that align with the identity of humans and the nation. Elementary school, in this regard, is one of the most vital levels for the development of these character foundations, given their early age, when they are still beginning the learning process by increasing knowledge input, habits, and imitation from those around them (Alwiyah & Annur, 2017; Annur, 2016). The changing times and the complexities of the problems they face are increasingly numerous and complex. Various studies have revealed that the impact of the internet exposes them to physical, psychological, and social challenges (Geng & Liu, 2025; Hidayatullah et al., 2024). Game addiction and the emergence of the strawberry generation are unavoidable. The internet itself never shuts down, meaning that whatever happens in the world, with its various complexities, is continuously broadcast live.

This phenomenon is what is known as the post-digital era, where technology transitions into a basic necessity and invisible infrastructure that operates in the background (Cramer, 2014). This era is characterized by a shift in technology that has become fully integrated with everyday life, so that every emerging innovation is no longer a privilege (Ess, 2020). Jandrić & Knox, (2022) explains its three main characteristics: 1) the disappearance of the dichotomy between the virtual and the real world, 2) increasing reliance on data, algorithms, and artificial intelligence in decision-making, 3) the convergence between humans, technology, and the material environment. Meanwhile, Hari, (2023) also highlights the emergence of critical attention to surveillance capitalism and its ecological impacts as one of its signs.

The current digital native landscape conveys a message to the world of education that all elements must continuously identify, analyze, and develop comprehensive plans to address these challenges. Research reveals that character education receives insufficient support from the government and parents, from planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of

programs (Ratri & Atmojo, 2024). This situation is further exacerbated by teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of character education (Faiz et al., 2021; Urfa et al., 2024). Challenges in education continue to grow and become increasingly complex.

Previous research indicates that character education in elementary schools encompasses a broad spectrum of values, such as religiosity, discipline, cooperation, and citizenship (Nucci & Narvaez, 2014). Studies on the post-digital era also focus more on changes in human relations with technology, the integration of physical and digital spaces, and their implications for education and learning (Jandrić & Knox, 2022). This indicates a lack of research specifically identifying the most relevant character foundations for development at the elementary school level in this era. Therefore, this study focuses on various character foundations deemed capable of addressing the moral, social, and psychological development needs of students in the post-digital era.

The changing social and technological landscape demands that schools also develop character that can guide students in navigating the complexities of contemporary life. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the most relevant character foundations for implementation at the elementary school level in the post-digital era, with a focus on integrity, empathy, and resilience. This paper also explores and elaborates on how educational institutions, particularly those at the elementary level, must urgently provide a solid character foundation for their students so that they can continue to manage the next generation in a stable and sustainable manner. Without an accurate character foundation, the world will lose its balance (Saiful Islam et al., 2022; Wahyuningsih et al., 2026). This is like the disappearance of scientists and religious scholars among humanity who need their knowledge so that the process of life can stay on track.

METHODS

This research uses a conceptual literature review approach with a philosophical perspective. This approach was chosen because the research seeks to identify, analyze, and formulate a relevant and comprehensive character foundation for elementary education in the post-digital era. Through this approach, various concepts, theories, and ideas developed in the literature are critically examined to develop a conceptual framework regarding the character needed by students in contemporary education.

The research data sources consist of academic literature consisting of reputable national and international journal articles, academic books, book chapters, educational policy documents, and reports from educational institutions that discuss character education, moral

development, elementary education, and the challenges of the post-digital era. Literature was obtained through searches of Google Scholar, Elsevier, and various other relevant academic sources. The inclusion criteria used included:

1. Literature discussing character education or the moral development of students
2. Literature examining the challenges of education in the post-digital era
3. Literature relevant to the field of elementary education
4. Literature with academic credibility

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and philosophical interpretation techniques. In the initial stage, all literature was thoroughly read to identify key concepts, character values, and recurring educational challenges across various sources. These concepts were then categorized into meaningfully related themes. The categorization results were then synthesized to identify the most relevant character foundations for elementary school students facing the challenges of the post-digital era. In the final stage, the findings were interpreted through the perspective of educational philosophy to formulate a conceptual framework that places integrity, empathy, and resilience as the primary foundations of character education in elementary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Characteristics of Elementary School Levels in the Digital Era

Besides playgroup and kindergarten, elementary school (MI) is a continuation of the previous levels. Elementary school students, generally between the ages of 6 and 12, are in a crucial transition phase from early childhood to adolescence. Cognitively, they are in the concrete operational stage. This means that children at this age begin to think logically and in an organized manner, but their thinking still relies heavily on physical objects and concrete experiences that they can see or touch directly. They begin to understand the concepts of cause and effect, classification, and conservation, although they often struggle when confronted with completely abstract logic or complex hypotheses.

Socially and emotionally, elementary school students exhibit a keen sense of curiosity and a strong desire to explore their surroundings. They begin to shift from a self-centered nature to a greater understanding of others' perspectives, making interaction with peers crucial to their identity development. Physical activity is also a key need, as their motor coordination is rapidly developing, making them more active and unable to sit still for long periods. Despite significant

changes, elementary school-aged children still exhibit active personalities and require greater freedom of movement.

Below, we illustrate the general differences between the traditional and digital eras in elementary school children, from cognitive development to attention span.

Table 1. General Differences Between the Traditional Era and the Digital Era

Aspects	Traditional Era (Pre-Digital)	Digital Age (Generation Alpha)
Cognitive	Linear, focused on text and verbal instructions.	Multitasking, visuals, and instant information seeking.
Psychosocial	Dominant physical interaction, local friendship circles.	Hybrid interactions (physical and virtual), exposure to global issues.
Physical	High gross motor activity (field games).	Risks of a sedentary lifestyle and sleep disturbances.
Personality	Identity formation through direct observation.	Identity formation through digital profiles (early personal branding).
Attention Span	Relatively longer and more in-depth.	Shorter lifespans due to rapid stimulation.

The Crucial Problems for Elementary School Children

This era of continuous change has made problems increasingly complex. This is compounded by the presence of the internet, digitalization, and Artificial Intelligence/AI, which permeate every aspect of human life. This also contributes to increasingly rapid and heterogeneous change. Consequently, even elementary school-aged children are directly impacted. Below are some of the problems directly experienced by elementary school children.

Table 2. Crucial Problems Facing Children

No	Problems	Brief Explanation
1	Decreased Attention Span (Mark et al., 2015)	Familiarity with short-form content (Reels/TikTok) makes it difficult for children to focus on linear lessons.
2	Exposure to Age-Inappropriate Content (Donevan et al., 2022)	Easy access to violence, pornography, or offensive language that they cannot yet digest morally.
3	Cyberbullying (Li et al., 2020)	Bullying on social media or chat groups can lead to early depression and anxiety.
4	Gadget Addiction (Gaming/Social-Media) (Sampalo et al., 2023)	Disruptions to the brain's dopamine system can make it difficult for children to control their impulses.
5	Degraded Social Skills (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013)	Difficulty reading facial expressions and body language due to frequent interactions through screens.
6	Physical Health Problems (Rausch & Haidt, 2023)	Risk of obesity due to lack of movement and impaired vision.
7	Sleep Disorders (Matricciani et al., 2012)	Exposure can trigger fatigue and emotional instability at school.
8	Identity Crisis & False Validation (Curran & Hill, 2019)	Children measure their self-worth based on the number of “likes” or compliments from strangers online.
9	Loss of Privacy	Children's ignorance about sharing personal data or locations can be exploited by criminals.

10	FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)	Social anxiety if they don't keep up with the latest trends, triggering consumer behavior and dissatisfaction.

The ten crucial problems above provide a clear picture of the impact of digital natives. The fundamental foundations that should be instilled in children are being eroded and radically degraded by the presence of gadgets. Beyond the issues mentioned above, another very serious issue facing the Indonesian nation is the deep-rooted corruption within society. Data shows that corruption cases are increasing year after year, and the Corruption Perception Index even indicates that corruption is becoming more widespread and the public is increasingly distrustful of policymakers.

Mandatory Character Foundations

Among the various character values developed in education, such as religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love of country, appreciation for achievement, communication, love of peace, a love of reading, environmental awareness, social awareness, or responsibility, not all values can be instilled simultaneously with the same level of intensity. Therefore, it is necessary to identify fundamental character traits that serve as the foundation for the development of other character traits. Based on an analysis of Thomas Lickona's (2009) theory of character education and Jonathan Haidt's (2025) analysis of the challenges facing Indonesia in the post-digital era, this study found that three basic character traits need to be prioritized from elementary school: integrity, empathy, and resilience. These three are the main findings of this study.

The selection of these three character traits was based on two considerations. First, they represent the main dimensions of character education proposed by Lickona (2009): moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Integrity forms the foundation for consistent moral action through honesty and responsibility. Empathy enables students to understand and feel the conditions of others, thus fostering social awareness. Resilience, on the other hand, fosters the ability to maintain moral values when facing pressure, challenges, or failure. Secondly, these three character traits directly address contemporary challenges emerging in the post-digital era, as seen in Table 2. Therefore, integrity, empathy, and resilience can be viewed as the most strategic character foundations to be developed in elementary school students. This also aligns with Jonathan Haidt's (2025) recommendation regarding "what schools can do now" to address social challenges.

Integrity (Honesty and Responsibility)

What if we look at the persistent and recurring phenomenon of rampant corruption? This problem continues to escalate, taking various forms, from bribery to other forms of violence. Studies have shown that honesty is closely linked to education in elementary school, as well as at home. Integrity instilled through honesty and responsibility is the most crucial character foundation for elementary school children because it forms ethical mindsets from an early age. Honesty helps children build self-confidence and a positive reputation with teachers and peers, ultimately creating a safe and supportive learning environment. When a child practices honesty, whether in admitting mistakes or taking tests, they are developing the moral courage to face reality without undue fear, thus maintaining their mental health and personal integrity into adulthood.

Furthermore, a sense of responsibility teaches children to understand the consequences of their actions and obligations. By completing schoolwork on time or keeping the classroom clean, children learn that their contributions have a real impact on themselves and those around them. This character trait is crucial for developing independence and a strong work ethic, so they don't grow up to be dependent or easily run away from problems. Integrity in childhood is a long-term investment to produce a future generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has reliable moral qualities.

Empathy

Today's world is increasingly polarized. Children with high empathy tend to be more adept at collaboration, resolving conflicts nonviolently, and have better mental health. Empathy is the social “glue” that enables mutual cooperation. Psychologist Daniel Goleman (2025), in his theory of Emotional Intelligence, states that empathy is a key component of life success that goes beyond IQ. Furthermore, a study from Harvard (Making Caring Common Project) emphasized that prioritizing caring (empathy) over personal achievement actually improves children's academic achievement because they feel more connected to their school community. Empathy also creates a school and community life free from bullying (Indarto et al., 2025).

Resilience

In education, resilience is seen as a student's ability to recover from academic failure and view challenges as learning opportunities. Teachers play a crucial role in creating an emotionally safe classroom environment, where mistakes are not seen as shameful but as part of the journey and experimentation process. By fostering a growth mindset, elementary school students are taught to persevere when facing difficult material, such as mathematics or basic literacy. This

characteristic helps children resist giving up easily and maintain internal motivation to achieve learning goals even when the road is challenging.

From a psychological perspective, resilience is a mental defense mechanism that enables children to manage stress and negative emotions healthily. During elementary school, children begin to develop executive functions in the brain that support self-regulation. Resilience allows them to process disappointment or anxiety adaptively. Psychology emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, a child's belief that they have control over their actions, as a pillar of resilience. Resilient children have more stable mental health because they are able to balance their emotions and maintain a positive self-perception amidst developmental pressures.

Socially, resilience does not develop in a vacuum, but rather through interactions with the surrounding environment. For elementary school students, strong relationships with caring adults (parents, teachers) and peers are a key protective factor. Resilient character is reflected in a child's ability to seek help when needed and develop empathy for others. A supportive social environment provides a sense of security that allows children to take social risks and learn from peer conflict. Thus, social resilience shapes children into individuals capable of collaborating, communicating effectively, and contributing positively to their school community.

Philosophical Framework of Character: Integrity (Honesty and Responsibility), Empathy, and Resilience

The interconnectedness of integrity, empathy, and resilience can be understood as a mutually reinforcing character formation. Integrity, encompassing honesty and responsibility, demonstrates an individual's moral orientation, which forms the basis for ethical decision-making (Lickona, 2009; Naftali Kalengkongan et al., 2026). Empathy extends this orientation to the interpersonal realm by enabling individuals to understand and respond adaptively to the emotional states of others (Santrock & Lansford, 2025). Resilience serves as a psychological mechanism for maintaining the consistency of these values when faced with stress (Frankl, 2018). Individuals with high integrity have the potential to become rigid without the support of empathy, or without resilience, these values are highly vulnerable to collapse in crisis situations (Boegershausen et al., 2015; Hannah et al., 2020). Therefore, the integration of the three shows that the foundation of a complete character is also determined by the ability to maintain and apply it in diverse social situations.

Several studies have shown that individuals with high integrity have confidence in making decisions and are responsible for them (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007). Other findings indicate that empathy plays a significant role in improving the quality of social relationships and reducing aggressive behavior (Camara et al., 2025; Sánchez et al., 2025). Furthermore, resilience has been shown to be a protective factor, enabling individuals to function adaptively under stress (Mustika Putri & Aulia, 2021). The relationship between these three variables is also supported by studies showing that individuals with high levels of empathy tend to have more constructive coping mechanisms, ultimately strengthening their resilience (Panagou & Macbeth, 2024). Therefore, the findings of this study strengthen various previous studies by experts, while also opening up space for understanding the complex interactions between moral and psychological aspects in building the character foundations of elementary school students.

Theoretically, integrity can be examined through deontological ethics, which emphasizes moral obligation and virtue ethics, where honesty is a character trait formed through habit (Faiz et al., 2021). Meanwhile, empathy, according to Goleman (2025), aligns with the ethics of care approach, which prioritizes relationships and caring as the basis of morality. In the psychological realm, empathy is also understood as a cognitive and affective output that allows individuals to understand the perspectives of others (Hoffman, 2000). Furthermore, resilience can also be explained as absolute resilience through an existential lens that emphasizes the search for meaning in suffering, as well as coping theory that highlights adaptation to stress (Frankl, 2017; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When read integratively, these concepts demonstrate that humans are not only rational beings, but also moral and relational beings who continuously adapt to reality. Integrity provides normative direction, empathy provides social sensitivity, and resilience provides adaptive capacity. Therefore, the findings in this study also strengthen the view that human character is formed through the interaction between self-values, relationships, and life experiences.

These findings have theoretical implications for broadening the understanding of character as a fundamental construct involving moral, emotional, and adaptive dimensions. This approach transcends previous views that tended to separate these dimensions in separate studies. Practically, these results can serve as a basic guideline for developing character education programs that emphasize moral values, empathy, and psychological resilience. While this framework offers a seemingly comprehensive understanding, it still has limitations that need to be considered. The dynamics between empathy and resilience can be ambivalent, where high levels of empathy can actually increase vulnerability to emotional stress.

The findings of this study go beyond identifying three core character traits and also have practical consequences for character education in elementary schools. If integrity, empathy, and resilience are positioned as the foundations of primary character, then the educational process cannot simply focus on the transfer of moral knowledge. Integrity requires space to practice honest and responsible decision-making, empathy requires social interaction experiences that enable students to understand others' perspectives, while resilience requires opportunities to constructively face challenges, failures, and the recovery process. Therefore, the implementation of character education must be designed in the form of learning experiences that provide opportunities for the simultaneous development of these three character traits. Based on these considerations, this study proposes two implementation approaches that are relevant in this era: an integrative curriculum-based approach and digital experience-based learning.

Implementation Approaches in the Digital Era

The digital transformation, marked by the integration of technology into everyday life, also demands a reorientation in the implementation of character education at the elementary school level. According to J. Haidt (2025), generations born in the digital era have different cognitive and behavioral characteristics than previous generations, particularly in how they access, process, and interpret information. This condition is further reinforced by several findings showing that early exposure to digital technology influences the development of children's identity, morality, and emotions (Krisnaningsih et al., 2024; Nagata et al., 2022; Sukarno, 2025). Therefore, character education must be adaptive and contextual, meaning it can integrate the digital dimension as a space for new value formation.

The first, relevant approach is a curriculum-based integrative approach. Character values are internalized throughout the learning process, including through the use of digital technology (Yaumi, 2018). In principle, effective character education is not taught as a separate subject but is continuously integrated into all school activities (Azizah et al., 2025; Prihatmojo & Badawi, 2020; Rosita, 2018). This integration can be achieved through technology-based learning oriented toward cognitive achievement and the formation of attitudes and values, such as honesty and responsibility (Mulyadi et al., 2022). Media literacy integrated into the curriculum is also known to increase students' ethical awareness in consuming and producing information (Nurjannah, 2022). Furthermore, the use of digital platforms in learning also opens up opportunities for teachers to develop reflective strategies that encourage students to evaluate

their actions in the digital space (Asmara et al., 2025; Sari & Munir, 2024). Thus, an integrative approach not only expands the learning space but also strengthens the internalization of values through authentic learning experiences relevant to students' real lives.

The next approach is digital experiential learning, which emphasizes students' active involvement in situations that simulate social realities in the digital world. Implementation of digital experiential learning begins with the learning experience design stage, which is based on the concrete principle in David Kolb's theory (2015), namely providing real-life experiences as a starting point for learning. Figure 1 below shows Kolb's four stages of experiential learning:

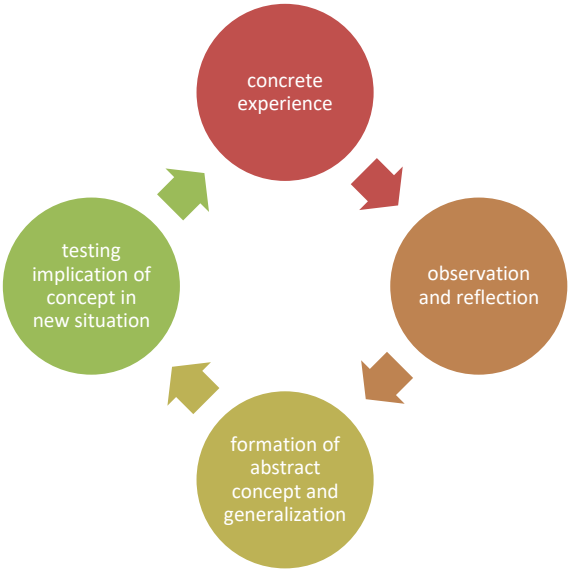

Figure 1. Experiential Learning Model (Source: Kolb, 2015)

Figure 1 above describes the four stages of experiential learning, starting with concrete experience, observation and reflection, abstract concept formation, and testing in new situations. In the initial stage, the teacher designs a learning scenario that represents a social situation relevant to the students' lives. Next, students are guided to actively engage in the experience, either through observation, guided participation, or independent exploration in a controlled digital space. This engagement is important because interactions in digital spaces have direct implications for the formation of social identity and how individuals interpret their relationships with others (Danah Boyd, 2014). Therefore, this initial stage serves as a stimulus, constructing meaningful, authentic experiences, and serving as a foundation for subsequent stages of reflection.

The subsequent stages focus on the processes of reflection, conceptualization, and application as part of the learning cycle. After students engage in the digital experience, the

teacher facilitates critical reflection through guided discussions or online forums that allow students to express their understanding and emotional responses to the experience. This process is crucial because reflection allows students to connect concrete experiences with character values such as empathy, social responsibility, and even honesty about their own feelings. Next, teachers help students conceptualize these experiences by linking them to a more complex framework of values and norms, enabling them to draw more universal meanings. The final stage is application, realized through project assignments or real-world practices, such as digital campaigns or conflict resolution simulations in digital spaces (Kolb, 2015). This gradual approach ensures that digital experiences develop into a deep process of internalization of values. Ultimately, students are able to transfer this learning to real-life situations and their daily digital interactions.

These two approaches were chosen because they directly relate to the three core character traits identified in this study. The curriculum-based integrative approach provides space for the development of integrity through the instilling of academic honesty, responsible learning, and ethical digital literacy. At the same time, collaborative and reflective learning activities foster empathy through the ability to understand the perspectives and needs of others. Meanwhile, digital experiential learning provides opportunities for students to face challenges, solve problems, receive feedback, and learn from failure constructively, thus strengthening resilience. Therefore, the proposed implementation can serve as a direct operationalization of the research findings regarding the importance of integrity, empathy, and resilience as the foundation of elementary school students' character.

The Sovereign Elementary Schools

In the context of this research, the concept of sovereign schools becomes increasingly relevant because the post-digital era presents not only technological challenges but also moral, social, and psychological challenges directly related to integrity, empathy, and resilience. Disinformation, instant culture, social polarization, cyberbullying, and the increasing psychological vulnerability of children demonstrate that technology is not neutral in character formation. Therefore, schools cannot simply adopt technology as a learning tool; they also need to have the capacity to determine the values that should underlie its use. From this perspective, a sovereign school is an institution capable of placing integrity, empathy, and resilience as the primary compass in every pedagogical decision related to the use of digital technology.

The concept of sovereign schools in the context of character education in the post-digital era refers to the ability of educational institutions to autonomously design, manage, and

reflect on their educational practices based on their values. This idea aligns with the perspectives of School Autonomy and School-Based Management, which emphasize the importance of school independence in pedagogical decision-making (Tatang Muttaqin, 2016). Within this framework, sovereignty is defined as the adaptive capacity to filter global influences to align with the formulated goals of character education. Research by Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) shows that schools with strong professional autonomy tend to be more effective in developing a culture of sustainable and meaningful learning. Within the context of this research's findings (which indicate the urgency of integrating values into digital practices), the concept of sovereign schools becomes relevant because schools may unknowingly adopt technology without controlling its use based on the values of integrity, empathy, and resilience. Therefore, school sovereignty is a prerequisite for creating an educational ecosystem that is not swayed by technological determinism. Furthermore, the concept of sovereign schools is expected to position technology as a tool within a more universal framework of values.

The practical implementation of sovereign schools requires strengthening reflective and collaborative capacity at the institutional level, particularly in responding critically and purposefully to the challenges of the digital era. The initial stage can begin with developing a shared vision that affirms the position of character values as the foundation of every school policy, including the use of digital technology. Furthermore, schools need to build a professional culture that enables teachers to act as reflective agents. As Kolb (2015) notes, teaching practices are not only technical but also rely on a continuous process of reflection on experiences and situations. Research by Livingstone & Third (2017) emphasizes that approaches to children's use of digital technology need to balance protection and empowerment, where children are not only protected from risks but also encouraged to develop the capacity to seize opportunities and manage risks independently.

Therefore, a sovereign school not only establishes rules but also creates space for dialogue, critical digital literacy, and parental and community involvement as part of the educational ecosystem. Through these mechanisms, integrity can be developed through a culture of honesty and digital responsibility, empathy is strengthened through interactions that value diverse perspectives, and resilience is built through the ability to adaptively face risks, pressures, and failures in the digital environment. Therefore, the concept of a sovereign school serves not only as a model for educational governance but also as a strategic instrument for operationalizing the main findings of this study. In the post-digital era, the success of character education is no longer determined solely by the amount of technology a school uses, but also

by the school's ability to direct that technology to strengthen students' integrity, empathy, and resilience.

CONCLUSION

Elementary school itself is a fairly long space-six levels compared to the levels before and after it. Therefore, elementary schools occupy a crucial position in providing a strong and appropriate foundation for character for all students. As described and analyzed above, this study concludes that there are three main character foundations that can serve as a foundation for elementary school students: integrity, empathy, and resilience. Integrity refers to how educational institutions teach honesty and responsibility in their lives, always interacting with others, both small and large. Empathy means educational institutions teach patterns of empathy for others. Resilience means that educational institutions strive to teach patterns of how to continue to adapt and grow in various existing fields.

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