Bibliometric Analysis of Character Education in Senior High School Indonesian Textbooks Based on the Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract	This study aims to understand the publication trend and research contribution related to character education in Indonesian high school textbooks based on the Merdeka Curriculum from 2015 to 2024. Character education is crucial for student development, and textbooks play a central role. Using bibliometric analysis, the study identified 428 publications from Google Scholar and Scopus, including journal articles, proceedings, reviews, and books. Journal articles dominated with 363 publications, followed by 30 proceedings, 32 books, and three reviews. The study focused on the number of publications and the issues underlying the keyword emergence. While 2023 had the highest number of publications (75), 2018 saw the highest citations (890) and h-index (14), indicating significant influence. The highly cited study "Strategy and Implementation of Character Education in Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools" had 135 citations. Keyword analysis using VOSviewer revealed that "Indonesian textbook" was the most popular topic, particularly concerning gender representation and basic education. Despite increased productivity, recent publications need higher impact, achievable through improved research quality, appropriate journal selection, online dissemination, collaboration, and scientific community engagement. The focus on gender representation and basic education should be sharpened for inclusive teaching materials and to instill positive values early in Indonesian education. This study provides valuable insights and direction for future research and practice in character education within the Independent Curriculum framework.
Keywords	Indonesia Textbook; Senior High School; Character Education; Merdeka Curriculum

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has been a major focus in Indonesia's education system over the past few decades (Satria et al., 2023). This is due to the need to form a younger generation that excels academically and has strong morals and ethics. Character education aims to develop values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect (Adhiyatna & Assidik, 2023; Nuria Haristiani et al., 2022). These values are essential in forming individuals who contribute positively to society. By

integrating character education into the curriculum, it is hoped that students can develop into intelligent individuals, have noble morals, and are ready to face future challenges (Japar & Sumantri, 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced as part of an effort to improve and renew the education system in Indonesia, emphasizes flexibility and independence in the teaching and learning process. (Agnia & Halimah, 2023; Viono et al., 2023). One of the key aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum is the integration of character education in every subject, including Indonesian. The curriculum is designed to give teachers more freedom in choosing methods and materials that suit students' needs and potential while ensuring that character values remain an integral part of the educational process. A significant change from the previous curriculum, Curriculum 2013, lies in a more holistic and student-centered approach (Alimuddin, 2023; Irawan & Mukhlis, 2023). The 2013 curriculum emphasizes a competency-based approach with a strong emphasis on knowledge and skills. However, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes character building and 21st-century competence development, such as critical thinking, computational thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. (Anggraini et al., 2022; Maharani et al., 2020; Rasto et al., 2023).

Previous research has explored the importance of character education in various educational contexts. (Albaburrahim & Rahman, 2022; Aulia et al., 2022; Hasan et al., 2023). However, integrating character education in flexible curricula such as the Merdeka Curriculum is still relatively new and requires further attention. Recent studies have shown that the application of character education in flexible curricula can result in significant improvements in student's personal and social development (Fitriyyah, 2019; Mawwadah & Roekhan, 2021; Nur et al., 2023). The significance of this research lies in its potential to shed light on integrating character values in Indonesian language textbooks at the senior high school level. Understanding how these values are incorporated can influence the development of more effective teaching materials, enhance the educational experience, and promote the cultivation of desired character traits among students. This study aims to uncover research trends, leading authors, and institutions active in this field by conducting a bibliometric analysis of existing literature. Moreover, it will identify gaps in the current research, thereby highlighting areas that require further investigation to improve the implementation of character values in educational resources.

In Indonesian lessons, some early research suggests that textbooks are important in shaping students' character values (Fitriyyah, 2019; Novriany et al., 2019). Research by Suhermanto et al. (2018) highlighted how Indonesian textbooks in primary schools are used to develop students' reading and writing skills, finding that textbooks have enough content to encourage basic literacy but still lack providing interactive and contextual exercises. Meanwhile, research by Puspitasari et al. (2023) examined the use of textbooks in literary learning in secondary schools. It showed that textbooks tend to focus on cognitive aspects rather than affective aspects, so they are less effective in instilling appreciation for literary works and the values contained in them. Research (2021) evaluated how Indonesian textbooks promote character values such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation. They found that although textbooks include several stories and activities to teach these values, their implementation in daily learning is still limited. In addition, research by Ananda & Sylvia (2022) discussed the suitability of Indonesian textbook content with the 2013 Curriculum, finding that despite efforts to align textbooks with a curriculum that focuses on character development, many teachers still have difficulty translating textbook materials into effective teaching and learning activities.

However, in-depth and systematic studies on how high school Indonesian textbooks based on the Merdeka Curriculum integrate character education are still very limited. Through bibliometric analysis, this research will fill the gap by providing comprehensive data and in-depth analysis of trends and dynamics of character education research in this context (Irmade et al., 2023; Maharani, 2023; Malik et al., 2023). In our research, we have found several correlations within the discussed data. For instance, there is a notable correlation between the focus of textbooks on cognitive skills and the observed deficiency in character education content. Additionally, our findings suggest a significant gap between

the intended curriculum goals of character education and the practical challenges teachers face in implementing these values effectively in the classroom. These correlations highlight the need for a more balanced approach in textbook content that equally emphasizes cognitive and character-building aspects to foster holistic student development.

This study identifies and analyzes research trends related to character education in Indonesian high school textbooks based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Specifically, it will examine the development and dynamics of character education research in Indonesian textbooks from 2015 to 2024. The study will identify this field's most active and influential authors, institutions, and countries. Additionally, it will analyze the main topics and keywords that frequently appear to understand the focus and direction of the research. Furthermore, the research will evaluate the collaboration network between authors and institutions to understand patterns of cooperation and collective contribution. It will also map the distribution of publications, identify the most influential journals and conferences, and understand the landscape of character education research.

To achieve these objectives, the research will employ a bibliometric method involving data collection from academic databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar, utilizing Publish or Perish software. (Maharani, 2023; Romandoni et al., 2023). Data analysis will be performed using bibliometric software such as VOSviewer and Microsoft Excel. The scope of the study covers journal articles, conference proceedings, and reviews relevant to the topic.

By systematically exploring these areas, this research aims to provide comprehensive insights into character education in Indonesian high school textbooks based on the Merdeka Curriculum. This study will identify existing research gaps and provide recommendations for future research, offering valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to improve the implementation of character education in Indonesia. The ultimate goal is to enhance the understanding and application of character values in Indonesian high school education, aligning it with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives.

2.   METHODS

This study uses qualitative bibliometrics to explore and understand trends and dynamics of research related to character education in Indonesian textbooks for high schools based on the Merdeka Curriculum. This bibliometric research involves collecting, cleaning, analyzing, and interpreting bibliographic data from various academic sources to provide in-depth insight into the research topic. The data was collected from two main databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. The publications include journal articles, books, proceedings, and reviews to collect data. The application used to collect data is Publish or Perish, which allows efficient data extraction from the abovementioned databases. The data was taken based on a combination of the keywords "character education," "Merdeka curriculum," "Indonesian textbook," and "senior high school" from 2015 to 2024. This period was chosen because the Merdeka Curriculum began to be introduced and implemented gradually in 2015, allowing a comprehensive analysis of the development and application of character education in the curriculum for almost a decade.

The analysis procedure in this study involves four stages. (Muhammad & Triansyah, 2023). The first stage is identification, where a combination of the keywords "character education," "Merdeka curriculum," "Indonesian textbook," and "senior high school" is entered into the Publish or Perish application to search for data in the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. This search obtained 200 data from Scopus and 268 from Google Scholar in 2015-2024. The second stage is screening, where the data obtained is filtered to include only accessible journal articles, books, proceedings, and reviews. After this filtering, the remaining 451 records meet the criteria. The third stage is eligibility, which involves further sorting the data by reading the titles of publications to ensure their suitability to the research

topic. The results of this stage are 428 data that correspond to the research topic. The fourth stage is inclusion, where as many as 428 data passed the eligibility stage are analyzed. The analysis includes evaluating each year's publications from 2015-2024, total citations each year, and identifying the most cited publications. In addition, keyword distribution is also analyzed using VOSviewer software to visualize trends and relationships between research topics. Data was taken on June 1, 2024. The data collection flow can be seen in Figure 1 as follows.
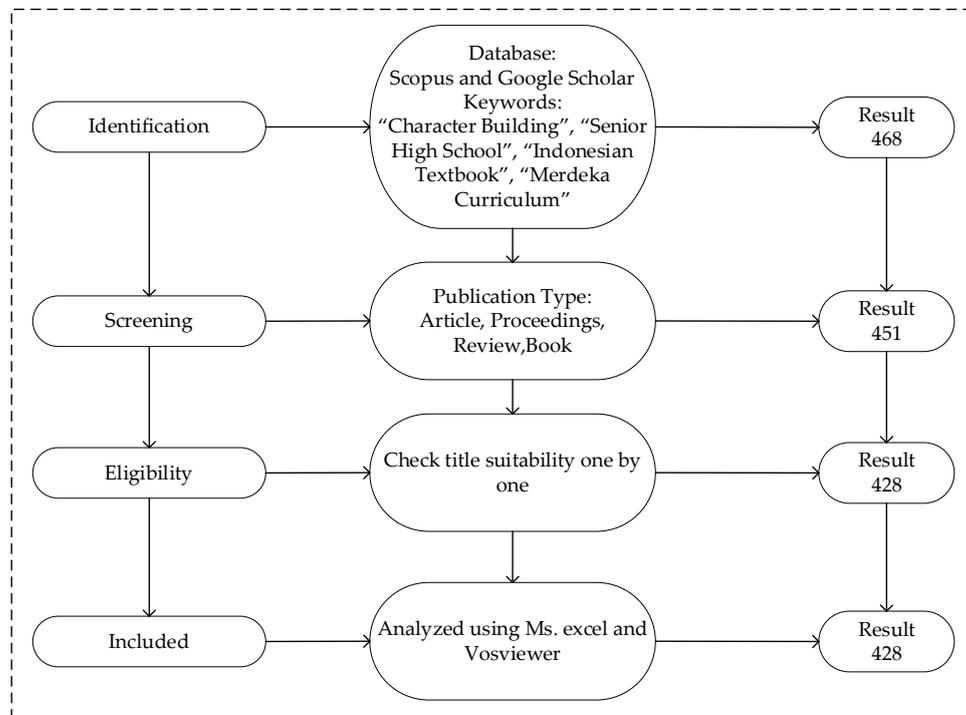

Figure 1. Data Collection Flow

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study identified 428 publications originating from Google Scholar and Scopus databases in the period 2015-2024. The collected publications consist of journal articles, proceedings, reviews, and books focusing on character education in Indonesian textbooks for high schools based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Of the total data, journal articles dominate with 363 publications, followed by 30 proceedings, 32 books, and three reviews. Further analysis will be carried out based on several predetermined criteria to understand the trends and contributions of each type of publication in the context of character education by the Merdeka Curriculum. Journal articles, as the most dominant type of publication, show a trend of increasing academic attention to character education in Indonesian textbooks for high schools. The dominance of this journal article also reflects the high level of dissemination and influence of research in the academic community. The proceedings, which number 30, show that many conferences and seminars also highlight this topic, providing a platform for researchers to share findings and discussions. Meanwhile, the 32 books identified provide a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective, often with extensive literature reviews and in-depth analysis. The three reviews provided a critical evaluation of related works, aiding in assessing the impact and relevance of the research in the context of character education. Further analysis will be carried out based on several criteria to understand the trends and contributions of each type of publication in the context of character education by the Independent Curriculum. First, the publication will be analyzed based on the year of publication to see the temporal trend in this study. Second, the citations of each publication will be analyzed to assess their impact and influence on the academic community. Third, the

distribution of keywords will be analyzed using VOSviewer software to identify the main themes and relationships between research topics. Finally, the h-index analysis will measure the productivity and cumulative impact of the publications collected.

Most Influential and Productive Year

Based on publication productivity data, 2023 is the year with the highest number of publications, reaching 75. 2020 and 2021 also showed high productivity, with 64 and 56 publications, respectively, while the year with the lowest productivity was 2015, with only ten publications. Regarding total citations, 2018 showed the highest number, with 890 citations, followed by 2017 and 2019, with 456 and 495 citations, respectively. The year 2024 has the lowest number of citations, with only eight. The highest average citations per publication was recorded in 2015, with 29 citations per publication, followed by 2017 and 2018, with 23 and 19 citations per publication, respectively. In contrast, 2023 and 2024 have the lowest average citations per publication, at 1 and 0, respectively. Regarding the h-index, 2018 had the highest h-index, which is 14, indicating that this year was the most influential in publication quality. The year 2017 also has a high h-index, which is 13, followed by 2019 and 2020 with h-indices 10 and 12, respectively. The year 2024 has the lowest h-index, which is 2, indicating minimal influence. Therefore, 2023 can be called the most productive year with the highest number of publications, while 2018 is the most influential year with the highest h-index (14) and the highest total citations (890). The data are presented in Table 1. The publication productivity table for 2015-2024 is as follows.

Table 1. Publication productivity 2015-2024

Year	TP	TC	C/P	H
2015	10	293	29	7
2016	11	91	8	5
2017	20	456	23	13
2018	46	890	19	14
2019	52	495	10	10
2020	64	504	8	12
2021	56	411	7	10
2022	54	265	5	6
2023	75	104	1	4
2024	40	8	0	2

TP: Total Publication, TC: Total Citation, C/P: Rata-rata sitasi per tahun, H: h-indeks

2023 has been the most productive year in terms of publications, with 75 publications. On the other hand, 2024 shows less than optimal results, with the lowest total quotes and h-index. Despite high productivity, publications in 2023 have not shown a significant impact, likely due to new or niche topics, suboptimal publication quality, or lack of promotion. Some strategies to increase future publications' impact include improving research quality, choosing the right journals, utilizing online platforms, collaborating, and engaging in the scientific community.

Most Cite Paper

Based on the data obtained, the research "Strategy and Implementation of Character Education in Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools" by Zurqoni, (2018) Has the highest number of citations with 135 citations. This research had a significant impact and became an important reference in the study of character education in high and vocational schools. In the next position, the research "Beyond School Reach: Character Education in Three Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia" by Abdullah et

al., (2019) We collected 133 citations, indicating a substantial contribution to understanding character education in the school context in Yogyakarta.

Research "Character Education Based on Digital Comic Media" by Rina et al., (2020) Has 91 citations. This number of citations shows that using digital comic media for character education attracts considerable attention among academics and practitioners. Research "Textbook Indonesian Junior High School and Senior High School Curriculum 2013 Published by the Ministry of Education and Culture 2014" by (Fadilah, 2016) received 37 citations, and "Development of Indonesian Language Text Books with Multiculturalism and Character Education to Improve Traditional Poetry Writing Skills" by (Winarni, 2021) They received 35 citations. Despite having fewer citations than the others, these two studies still make important contributions in their respective contexts, namely the development of Indonesian textbooks and the integration of multicultural education and character. The data are presented in Table 2. The five most cited articles on Character Education in High School Indonesian Textbooks Based on the Independent Curriculum are the following.

Table 2. Five Most Cited Articles on the topic of Character Education in High School Indonesian Textbooks Based on the Independent Curriculum

Cite	Title	Author	Year
35	Development of Indonesian Language Text Books with Multiculturalism and Character Education to Improve Traditional Poetry Writing Skills	Retno Winarni, St Y Slamet, Ahmad Syawaludin	2021
37	Buku Teks Bahasa Indonesia SMP dan SMA Kurikulum 2013 Terbitan Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan 2014	Rohana Fadilah	2015
91	Character Education Based on Digital Comic Media	Nofha Rina, Jenny Ratna Suminar, Ninis Agustini Damayani, Hanny Hafiar	2020
133	Beyond School Reach: Character Education in Three Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Irwan Abdullah,Bambang Hudayana, Pande Made Kutanegara, Setiadi, Agus Indiyanto	2019
135	Strategy and implementation of character education in senior and vocational high schools.	Zurqoni, Heri Retnawati, Janu Arlinwibowo, Ezi Apino	2018

The number of citations is an important indicator of the influence of scientific work. At the same time, other factors, such as the quality of the methodology, relevance of the findings, and general contribution to the field of study, should also be considered to assess the impact and importance of the research. Research with high citations shows that the work is often referenced and considered relevant by the academic community.

Analysis Co-Authorship

Next is the co-authorship analysis obtained from Vos viewers after extracting 428 data that had been generated. The image is presented in the following figure 2.
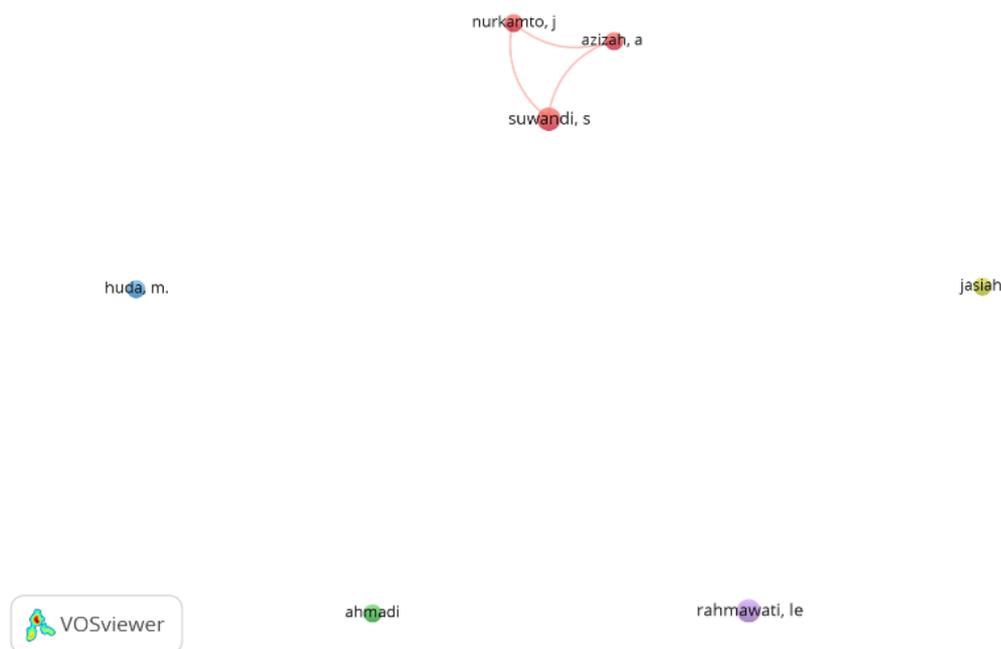
Figure 2. Co-Authorship Network

The co-authorship analysis of the image shows the cooperative relationship between authors on the topic "Character Education in Indonesian High School Textbooks Based on the Independent Curriculum." This visualization uses color to depict clusters or groups of writers who have a close cooperative relationship, where each cluster shows a group of writers who often collaborate. In this visualization, there are several color clusters: red for Nurkamto, J; Azizah, A; and Suwandi, S; blue for Huda, M; green for Ahmadi; purple for Rahmawati, LE; and yellow for Jasiah. Each node in this visualization represents an author, with the author's name displayed near each point. Larger nodes indicate authors with more significant contributions or collaborations within their group. The connecting line (edge) between nodes indicates a cooperative relationship or co-authorship between authors. Thicker or lighter lines signify a higher frequency or intensity of cooperation.

Analysis of the image shows that in the red cluster, the authors Nurkamto, J, Azizah, A, and Suwandi, S have a very close cooperative relationship. They collaborate intensively in research or writing on this topic. Meanwhile, in other clusters, writers such as Huda, M (Blue), Ahmadi (Green), Rahmawati, LE (Purple), and Jasiah (Yellow) work more independently or may have little collaboration compared to writers in the red cluster. The interpretation of this visualization reveals that intensive collaboration occurred in the red cluster, indicating a strong collaboration between Nurkamto, J, Azizah, A., and Suwandi, S. This could mean that they may have a joint research project or often write papers together. For example, research conducted by Nurkamto, J and Azizah, A focuses on the implementation of character education in Indonesian textbooks, where they evaluate how character values are inserted into the Merdeka curriculum (A. Azizah et al., 2018; L. N. Azizah & Mahmudi, 2020). Suwandi S contributed with a critical analysis of the effectiveness of the approach in classroom learning (Suwandi, 2019).

On the other hand, authors in other clusters tend to work more independently or collaborate with other groups of authors not depicted in this visualization. For example, Huda M focuses on the linguistic aspects of textbooks without much collaboration with other authors involved in character education (Huda, 2020; Huda & Purnomo, 2020). Ahmadi may work on research on overall curriculum evaluation, while Rahmawati, LE, and Jasiah may have different but relevant research focuses on character education in a broader context (Jasiah, 2024; I. Rahmawati, 2023). This visualization provides a clear

picture of the pattern of collaboration between authors on the topic of Character Education in the Indonesian Textbook High School Based on the Independent Curriculum. The existence of clusters with various colors shows the diversity in the cooperation and contribution of the author on this topic. Further research can be conducted to understand why some authors are more isolated and how this pattern of collaboration affects the quality and output of their research.

The Newest and Most Popular Keywords

The network keywords image generated from the VOSviewer analysis based on 428 data analyzed in full counting from the title and abstract shows several important points. The keyword "Indonesian textbook" appears to be the center of this network, indicating that this topic is the main focus of research. Other keywords such as "gender representation," "elementary school," "secondary school," "high school student," "education system," and "efl textbook" show a close relationship with the main keyword, reflecting various aspects related to the use of textbooks in character education in Indonesia. The circle's color indicates when the keyword was discussed more in the study, with lighter colors (yellow) indicating newer topics and darker colors (blue) indicating topics that have been discussed longer. Topics in yellow, such as "gender representation" and "elementary school," were more recent topics discussed in the study. This is presented in Figure 2, "The Newest Keywords.
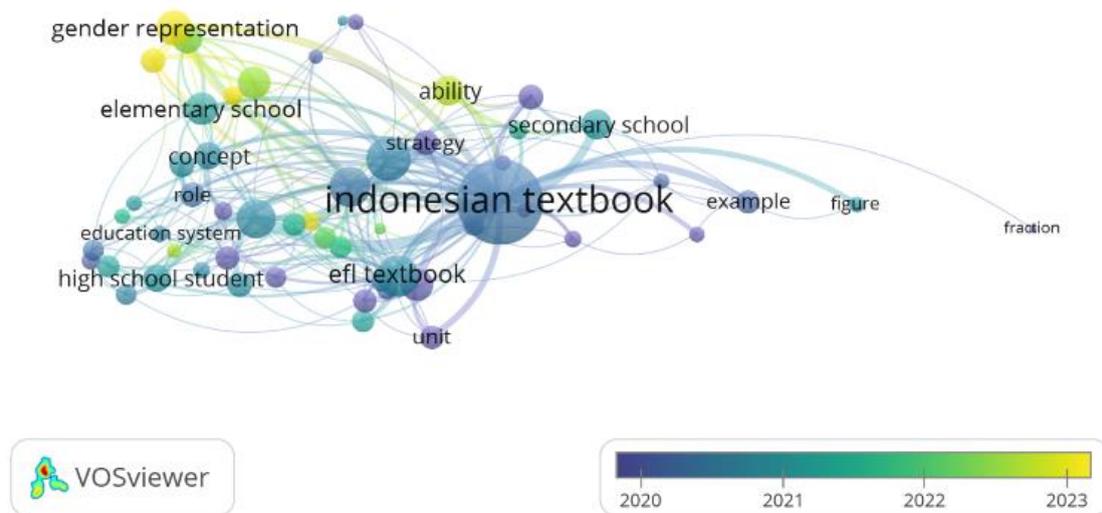

Figure 3. The Newest Keywords

Gender representation in textbooks is an important issue as it can influence students' perceptions of gender roles in society, with recent research highlighting analysis of character, profession, and gender roles in texts and illustrations. (Noermanzah et al., 2023; Roekhan et al., 2024). In addition, attention to primary schools shows how character education is introduced early, exploring the integration of character education in the curriculum, innovative teaching methods, and activities designed to strengthen student character (Aida Azizah et al., 2020; Az-Zahra & Romadhony, 2023). These two topics demonstrate efforts to create teaching materials that are fair, inclusive, and responsive to students' social development, thus contributing to the formation of positive values from an early age in the Indonesian education system.

Furthermore, the network keywords image from VOSviewer shows the relationship between various topics in research related to Character Education in High School Indonesian Textbooks Based

on the Merdeka Curriculum. The size of the circle can identify the most popular keywords, while the circle's color indicates the research cluster. They are presented in Figure 3. Most Popular Keywords are as follows.
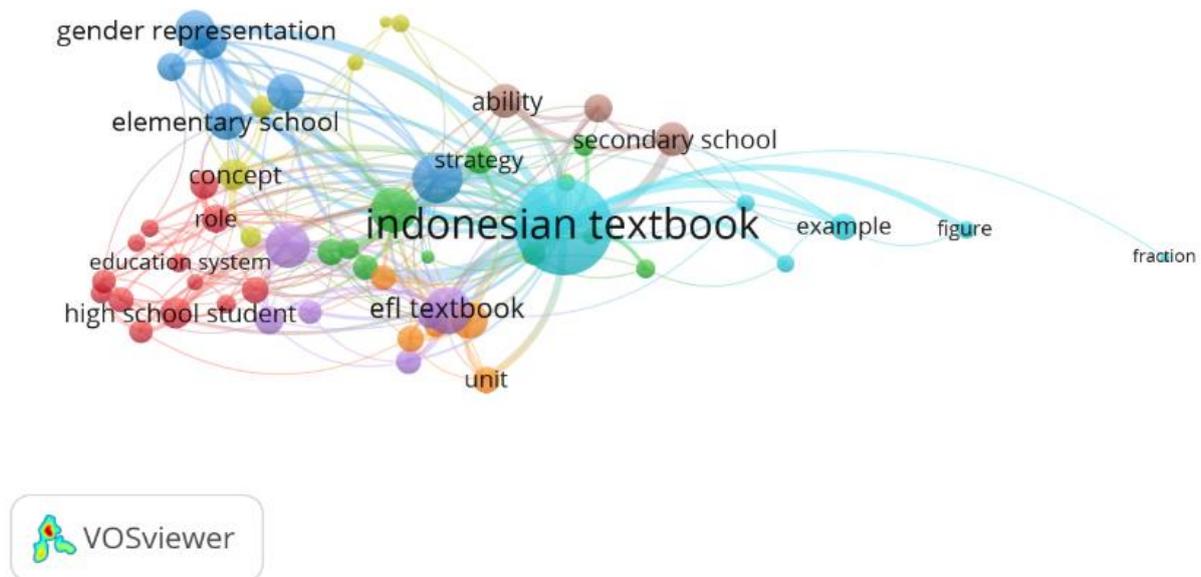

Figure 4. Most Popular Keywords

The network keywords from VOSviewer indicate that "Indonesian textbook" is the most popular keyword, marked by the largest circle in the center of the network, highlighting it as the main topic of the study. The circle's color represents different research clusters: the light blue cluster focuses on strategic aspects in secondary schools, the green cluster on EFL textbooks and their roles in the education system, the dark blue cluster on recent topics such as gender representation and primary education, the red cluster on the education system and secondary school students, and the yellow cluster on student ability. This network visualization shows how various concepts and topics in character education research in senior high school Indonesian textbooks are interconnected, with renewed attention to gender representation and primary education.

The analysis reveals that research on Indonesian textbooks is diverse, with significant attention given to their role in character education. The clusters indicate that while there is a strategic focus on secondary education, there are emerging interests in areas like gender representation and primary education. The most influential topics concern the educational system and its impact on students in cognitive and affective domains. The findings suggest that while Indonesian textbooks play a crucial role in character education, there is a disparity in focus areas. For example, strategic aspects and the education system are well-covered, but there is less emphasis on interactive and contextual exercises, essential for effective character education. The renewed focus on gender representation and primary education highlights a shift towards more inclusive and comprehensive educational content. However, these areas still require more in-depth research to understand their implications fully.

This study contributes to the literature by comprehensively analyzing character education in Indonesian high school textbooks, specifically under the Merdeka Curriculum. The novelty lies in the bibliometric approach, which offers a data-driven overview of research trends, influential contributors,

and collaboration networks. It also highlights the need for a more balanced approach in textbook content that emphasizes cognitive and character-building aspects. The research gap identified includes the limited integration of interactive and contextual exercises in textbooks and the challenges teachers face in implementing character education effectively.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed: enhance textbook content by incorporating more interactive and contextual exercises in Indonesian textbooks to facilitate character education better; focus on practical implementation by providing training and resources for teachers to effectively translate textbook content into classroom activities that promote character values; expand research areas by encouraging further research on emerging topics such as gender representation and their impact on character education; strengthen collaboration by fostering collaboration between authors and institutions to leverage collective expertise and resources in advancing character education research; and inform policymakers about the identified gaps and trends to guide curriculum development and educational strategies that align with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives. By addressing these recommendations, the study aims to improve the implementation of character education in Indonesian high schools, ultimately fostering a more holistic educational experience for students.

4. CONCLUSION

Several important findings can be concluded from an analysis of 428 publications related to character education in Indonesian textbooks for high schools based on the Independent Curriculum. Collected publications consist of journal articles, proceedings, reviews, and books, with journal articles dominating the total number of publications. 2023 is the most productive year, with the most publications reaching 75. However, the impact of this publication is still minimal, as seen from the low average citations per publication and low h-index, likely caused by new topics or suboptimal quality. In contrast, 2018 recorded the highest number of citations and had the highest h-index, indicating that this year's publications had a significant influence. The research with the highest number of citations is "Strategy and Implementation of Character Education in Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools," which is an important reference in character education studies. From the co-authorship analysis, it is evident that there are distinct patterns of collaboration among the researchers. The visualized data indicates that Nurkamto, J, Azizah, A, and Suwandi, S have a very close working relationship, frequently collaborating on research and publications. Meanwhile, other researchers like Huda, M Ahmadi; Rahmawati, LE; and Jasiah tend to work more independently or have fewer collaborative efforts compared to the cluster of Nurkamto, J, Azizah, A, and Suwandi, S. This pattern of collaboration reflects the diversity in research approaches and highlights the importance of fostering more collaborative efforts to enhance the quality and impact of research in this field. Enhanced collaboration can lead to more comprehensive and influential studies, thereby increasing the overall citations and h-index of publications in character education. Keyword analysis shows that the topic of "Indonesian textbook" is the main focus of the study, with recent issues such as gender representation and basic education of particular concern. To increase the impact of future publications, it is necessary to consider improving the quality of research, selecting the right journal, utilizing online platforms, collaborating, and involvement in the scientific community. Focusing on gender representation and basic education is also important to create inclusive and equitable teaching materials and support the formation of positive values from an early age in the Indonesian education system. With this strategy, it is hoped that research in the field of character education can make a more significant and sustainable contribution.

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