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Managing Value-Based Character Education in Faith-Based Schools: A Systematic Literature Review of Organizational Strategies and Evaluation Models

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Abstract

Character education in faith-based schools is often treated as a pedagogical matter, yet its success depends on how schools organize, lead, and evaluate it. This study systematically reviews the organizational strategies and evaluation models used to manage value-based character education in faith-based schools. Following PRISMA 2020, two Scopus queries (journal articles in English, 2015–2026) yielded 102 records, 98 after duplicate removal, and 21 included studies. Ten studies were extracted from full texts and eleven from abstracts only because of access restrictions. Thematic synthesis identified six strategy themes: quality-management cycles, leadership and role modeling, core values and school culture, curriculum integration, stakeholder collaboration, and spiritual formation and human resources in Christian and Catholic contexts. Formal evaluation was rare: the CIPP model appeared in one study and an input–process–output model in another, while character assessment was mostly narrative and weakly linked to improvement. Enablers included leadership, teacher capacity, family and community involvement, and consistent habituation; barriers included limited competence, infrastructure, weak evaluation, and dependence on individuals. Evidence is dominated by Indonesian Islamic schools (14 of 21 studies), while Christian contexts are scarce. The findings suggest that character education should be managed as an organizational process supported by systematic evaluation, for which a CIPP-based lens is proposed.

Keywords: Character Education; Faith-Based Schools; School Management; Program Evaluation; Systematic Literature Review

JEL Classification: Z12; I21; M14;

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Character education aims to cultivate students' moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 1991), and research suggests that it is most effective when it is embedded in the culture and organization of the whole school rather than delivered as a stand-alone program (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Faith-based schools have a particular stake in this agenda because they explicitly pursue value formation grounded in religious tradition, and they are frequently expected to combine moral and spiritual formation with academic competitiveness. Whether a

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school succeeds in doing so depends not only on what is taught in classrooms but also on how the school plans, leads, resources, coordinates, and evaluates its character-building efforts.

Studies of character education have therefore moved gradually from pedagogical questions towards questions of management. Recent work in Islamic schools in Indonesia, for example, has examined how plan–do–check–act (PDCA) cycles and total quality management can embed character in institutional quality systems (Haningsih et al., 2026; Jannana et al., 2025), how strategic management shapes the implementation of national character-education policy in madrasahs (Anwar et al., 2026), and how school leaders model and institutionalize values (Hadisi et al., 2025). Parallel studies in Catholic and Christian schools address the selection and formation of principals (Domfeh-Boateng, 2022; Fincham, 2022) and the design of spiritual-formation programs (Dang et al., 2026; Horan, 2017).

These studies are, however, scattered across contexts, disciplines, and journals, and they rarely speak to one another. School leaders, school foundations and policymakers who must decide how to organize and evaluate character education in faith-based schools do not have a consolidated account of which organizational strategies are used, how their results are evaluated, and which conditions help or hinder implementation.

1.2 Research Gap, Objectives and Contributions

Three gaps motivate this review. First, the organizational and managerial dimension of value-based character education in faith-based schools has not been synthesized systematically. Second, it is unclear how such programs are evaluated: formal evaluation models, such as the context–input–process–product (CIPP) model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017), appear only sporadically in the primary literature, and critical scholars warn that performance measurement can crowd out broader educational purposes (Biesta, 2009). Third, the evidence base is geographically and religiously uneven, with Indonesian Islamic schools dominating and Christian schools under-represented.

The objective of this study is to synthesize the evidence on how value-based character education is managed and evaluated in faith-based schools. Three research questions guide the review:

RQ1. Which organizational and management strategies are used to implement value-based character education in faith-based schools?

RQ2. Which evaluation models and practices are used to assess these programs?

RQ3. Which factors support or hinder implementation?

The review contributes to the management and organizational literature in three ways. It maps the organizational strategies through which faith-based schools manage character education; it clarifies the state of program evaluation and identifies an evaluation gap; and it proposes a CIPP-based analytic lens for integrating the findings, which can guide school managers and future evaluation research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Value-Based Character Education in Faith-Based Schools

In Lickona (1991) framework, character comprises knowing the good, feeling the good, and doing the good, and effective character education therefore addresses cognition, affect, and behavior together. Berkowitz & Bier (2004) argue that such development is more effective

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when it is integrated into the overall culture of the school. In faith-based schools, character education is typically value-based: its content is derived from religious teaching and tradition and is often combined with national civic values. In Indonesia, for example, the Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan lil'alamin profile have been combined in madrasah programs (Anwar et al., 2026), and Islamic schools have articulated core values such as religiosity, hard work and honesty as the basis of school identity (Cahyanto et al., 2025). In Christian and Catholic contexts, the corresponding concern is faith or spiritual formation, pursued through worship, instruction, mentoring and community service (Horan, 2017) and dependent on the formation of school leaders (Domfeh-Boateng, 2022; Fincham, 2022).

Because faith-based schools combine religious and civic or academic aims, they face particular tensions. Integrating rigorous academic standards with spiritual practice is a recurring concern (Ali et al., 2026), and publicly funded faith schools must maintain their religious identity within state frameworks (Domfeh-Boateng, 2022). These tensions make the organization of character education, and not only its content, a matter of strategic choice.

2.2 Managing and Evaluating Character Education

From a management perspective, character education involves the planning, organizing, implementation and evaluation of programs, together with the provision of competent educators and personnel (Naufal & Maksum, 2024). Quality-management frameworks such as total quality management and the PDCA cycle offer a way of embedding these functions in routine institutional practice, and they have been adapted to Islamic schools by adding spiritual and moral accountability to technical quality standards (Haningsih et al., 2026; Jannana et al., 2025).

Program evaluation is the management function through which schools learn whether character education works. The CIPP model evaluates the context (needs, goals, and values), inputs (resources and plans), process (implementation), and product (outcomes) of a program, and it was designed to support both improvement and accountability (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). Evaluating character raises specific difficulties: moral reasoning and internalized values are hard to capture with behavioral indicators alone, and an emphasis on measurable compliance may overlook broader educational purposes (Biesta, 2009; Haningsih et al., 2026). This review uses the CIPP model not as a selection criterion but as an analytic lens in the discussion, in order to relate the strategies that schools adopt to the way their programs are evaluated.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Review Protocol and Reporting

This study is a systematic literature review (SLR) reported according to the PRISMA 2020 guideline (Page et al., 2021). We defined the inclusion criteria, search strings, and extraction fields before screening and recorded them in a working file; we did not register a review protocol. The three research questions stated in Section 1.2 guided the search, extraction and synthesis.

3.1.2 Data Source and Search Strategy

On 16 October 2026, Scopus was the only database searched, using two complementary queries in the advanced search (Table 1). Query 1 combined terms for character, values, or spiritual formation with terms for faith-based schools. Query 2 combined terms for character, values, or

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moral education with terms for school management, policy implementation, leadership, program evaluation, and the CIPP model; its results were screened for faith-based contexts. Both queries searched titles, abstracts, and keywords and were limited to English-language journal articles published between 2015 and 2026; the retrieved records were published between 2016 and 2026.

Table 1. Scopus search queries (searched on 16 October 2026)

Query	Search string	Records
Query 1	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("character education" OR "value-based education" OR "values education" OR "moral education" OR "character building" OR "character formation" OR "spiritual formation") AND ("faith-based school*" OR "Christian school*" OR "religious school*" OR "church-related school*" OR "denominational school*" OR "Catholic school*" OR "Islamic school*" OR "religious-affiliated school*")) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2027 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))	47
Query 2	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("character education" OR "values education" OR "moral education") AND ("school management" OR "educational management" OR "policy implementation" OR "school leadership" OR "program evaluation" OR "CIPP" OR "evaluation model*")) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2027 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))	55
Total	Before duplicate removal	102

Source: Scopus search by the author (2026).

3.2 Eligibility Criteria and Study Selection

Table 2 summarizes the eligibility criteria. After duplicates (n = 4) were removed based on the Scopus record identifier, one reviewer screened the titles and abstracts of 98 unique records. Excluded records were assigned one of five reason codes (E1–E5; see Figure 1). Studies conducted in secular schools were excluded even when they evaluated character-education programs (for instance, using the CIPP model) because the review focuses on faith-based settings; this decision is discussed as a limitation. Two studies of Islamic religious education programs in primary schools (S3 and S6) (study codes S1–S21 are identifiers assigned to the included studies in alphabetical order of the first author's surname; see Table 3) were retained because they directly address the evaluation of religious and character education, although their abstracts do not make clear whether the schools were faith-based. Twenty-one studies were included in the synthesis.

All 21 included studies were identified through the Scopus searches described in Table 1; their Scopus identifiers are listed in Appendix A. The reference list also contains theoretical and methodological sources, such as Lickona (1991), Berkowitz and Bier (2004), Biesta (2009), Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017), Thomas and Harden (2008), and Page et al. (2021), which were not retrieved through the search. To distinguish the two groups, studies included in the review are marked with an asterisk (*) in the reference list.

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Table 2. Eligibility criteria

Aspect	Inclusion	Exclusion
Document type	Peer-reviewed journal article	Proceedings, books, book chapters, editorials
Language	English	Other languages
Period	2015–2026	Before 2015
Context	Faith-based or religious schools at primary or secondary level	Higher education, pre-school, non-formal education
Focus	Character, values, moral or spiritual education with attention to management, policy, leadership, organizational strategy or evaluation	Classroom pedagogy, teacher identity or other topics without management, policy or evaluation focus; non-faith contexts without a relevant focus
Access	Abstract available in Scopus	No abstract available

3.3 Data Extraction, Quality Notes and Synthesis

For each included study, the following information was extracted into a structured spreadsheet: country, religious context, school level, design, participants, organizational or management strategy, evaluation approach, supporting and inhibiting factors, main findings, and critical notes on methodological quality. Full texts were available for ten studies (S1, S2, S5, S8, S9, S11, S12, S14, S18 and S21). The remaining eleven studies (S3, S4, S6, S7, S10, S13, S15, S16, S17, S19 and S20) were not accessible in full text and were extracted from their abstracts only; for these studies, only information stated in the abstract was recorded, and missing fields were coded as not reported.

The data were synthesized thematically, following the logic of thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008): extracted segments on strategies, evaluation and enabling or inhibiting factors were coded, grouped into descriptive themes and then interpreted against the research questions. For the ten full-text studies, critical notes on sampling, analytic procedures, trustworthiness measures and the reporting of limitations were recorded. No formal appraisal instrument was applied, and no study was excluded on quality grounds; the notes are used to qualify the interpretation of the findings.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section reports the results of study selection and the characteristics of the included studies, then presents the synthesis for each research question, and finally discusses the findings through a CIPP lens.

4.1 Study Selection and Characteristics of the Included Studies

The searches identified 102 records (47 from Query 1 and 55 from Query 2). Four records appeared in both queries, leaving 98 unique records for screening. Seventy-seven records were excluded according to five exclusion reason codes (E1–E5): non-faith contexts without a relevant focus (E4, n = 24), topics outside character or values education (E2, n = 15), faith-based studies without a management, policy, leadership, or evaluation focus (E3, n = 14), higher-education or pre-school settings (E1, n = 12), and studies that were not about implementation in schools (E5, n = 12). Twenty-one studies were included (Figure 1). The exclusion codes are: E1 = higher-education or pre-school settings; E2 = topic outside character or values education; E3 = faith-based study without a management, policy, leadership, or evaluation focus; E4 = non-faith context without a relevant focus; and E5 = study not about implementation in schools. Study codes (S1–S21) identify the included studies and are listed

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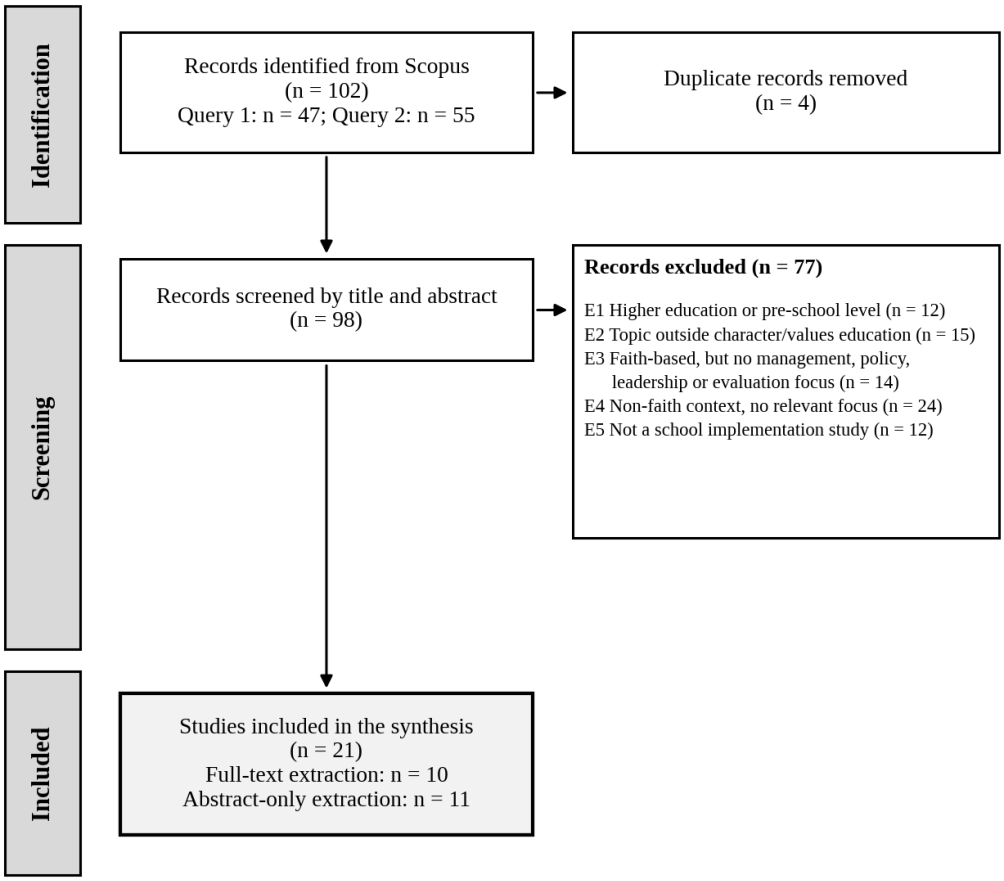
in Table 3 in alphabetical order of the first author's surname.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study selection process



Source: Author's analysis based on Scopus records (16 October 2026).

The included studies were published between 2017 and 2026, and eleven of them between 2024 and 2026 (Table 3). No eligible study from 2015 or 2016 was identified: although the search window began in 2015, none of the retrieved records published in those two years met all inclusion criteria, so the earliest included study dates from 2017. Fifteen studies were conducted in Indonesia; the others were from England, Ghana, Israel, and Northern Ireland (one each), and two abstracts did not report the country. Islamic schools predominated (14 studies), followed by Catholic (2), Christian (2), and other or unspecified religious contexts (3). Thirteen studies used qualitative designs, two were quantitative, three used mixed methods, one was a research-and-development study, one was a program evaluation, and one did not report its design. Most studies concerned secondary education; three were set in primary schools.

Table 3. Characteristics of the included studies

ID	Study	Country	Context	Design	Level	Data
S1	Ali et al. (2026)	Indonesia	Islamic	Multi-case qualitative	Junior high (boarding)	FT
S2	Anwar et al. (2026)	Indonesia	Islamic	Case study (three schools)	Senior high	FT

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ID	Study	Country	Context	Design	Level	Data
S3	Asiyah & Ghofur (2019)	Indonesia	Islamic education in a public school	CIPP evaluation study	Primary	A
S4	Bahri et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Islamic	Quantitative (PLS-SEM)	Junior high	A
S5	Cahyanto et al. (2025)	Indonesia	Islamic	Single-case qualitative	Junior high or primary (reported inconsistently)	FT
S6	Choiriyah et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Islamic education	Research and development	Primary	A
S7	Dang et al. (2026)	Not reported	Christian	Not reported	Secondary	A
S8	Domfeh-Boateng (2022)	Ghana	Catholic	Qualitative (eight schools)	Public schools (levels not specified)	FT
S9	Fadlilah et al. (2026)	Indonesia	Islamic (pesantren)	Single-case qualitative	Pesantren	FT
S10	Fincham (2022)	England	Catholic	Phenomenological	Not reported	A
S11	Hadisi et al. (2025)	Indonesia	Islamic (eco-madrasah)	Multi-case qualitative (seven schools)	Madrasah	FT
S12	Haningsih et al. (2026)	Indonesia	Islamic	Multi-case qualitative (three schools)	Senior high	FT
S13	Horan (2017)	Not reported	Christian	Mixed methods (504 educators)	Secondary	A
S14	Jannana et al. (2025)	Indonesia	Islamic	Single-case qualitative	Senior high	FT
S15	Marini et al. (2018)	Indonesia	Religious school culture (type not specified)	Quantitative (SEM, n = 450)	Primary	A
S16	McGuinness & Taysum (2020)	Northern Ireland	Faith school	Action research	Secondary	A
S17	Mu'alimin et al. (2026)	Indonesia	Islamic	Interpretative phenomenological analysis (n = 40)	Madrasah	A
S18	Naufal & Maksum (2024)	Indonesia	Islamic	Single-case qualitative	Junior high	FT
S19	Paul-Binyamin & Gindi (2017)	Israel	National-religious schools	Mixed-methods evaluation	Not reported	A
S20	Safitri et al. (2025)	Indonesia	Islamic (integrated) vs. public	Explanatory sequential mixed methods (n = 1,024)	Not reported	A

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ID	Study	Country	Context	Design	Level	Data
S21	Warul et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Islamic	Qualitative (five schools)	Senior high	FT

Source: Author's analysis (2026). Data: FT = extracted from full text; A = extracted from abstract only.

Among the ten full-text studies, three reported the most complete trustworthiness procedures, including triangulation, member checking, and audit trails (S11, S12, S14). Four provided adequate but less detailed accounts (S1, S2, S5, S9). Three had clear limitations in reporting or evidence: S18 did not elaborate in its results on several management aspects named in its abstract, S21 did not describe its analytic procedure, and S8 relied on a small sample collected in 2010. These notes are taken into account when the findings are interpreted below.

4.2 RQ1: Organizational and Management Strategies

Six themes describe how faith-based schools organize character education (Table 4).

4.2.1 Quality-management cycles embed character in institutional systems

Six studies treat character education as part of a quality-management cycle. Haningsih et al. (2026) examined three state Islamic senior high schools and found three management models—structural-regulative (strict standard operating procedures and teacher supervision), community-collaborative (pesantren culture, parental involvement and home visits), and innovation-oriented (research clubs, entrepreneurship and digital literacy)—all organized around PDCA. Jannana et al. (2025) described a five-phase cyclical quality-assurance model (needs mapping, participatory planning through deliberation, integrated implementation, continuous evaluation, and adaptive renewal) grounded in theological values. Anwar et al. (2026) traced the strategic management of the Pancasila Student Profile and Rahmatan lil'alamin project in three state madrasahs through the formation of a facilitator team, assessment of institutional readiness, selection of project themes, development of modules, and project reporting. Ali et al. (2026) concluded that sustainable quality in three Islamic boarding junior high schools rested on a Tawhidic total quality management paradigm combining academic excellence, an immersive language environment, and student services. The abstract of Mu'alimin et al. (2026) reports holistic quality management in madrasahs, including character formation, tawhid-based curricula, and transformational leadership, with total-quality frameworks localized through Islamic values. Naufal & Maksum (2024) described a single madrasah in which the curriculum is adjusted to student needs, teachers evaluate character development, and all school elements share responsibility. Across these studies, character is positioned as part of the quality system rather than as an add-on program.

4.2.2 Leadership and role modeling

Leadership, together with quality-management cycles, is among the most frequently reported mechanisms (six studies each). Hadisi et al. (2025) found that principals' direct participation and exemplary behavior were present in all seven eco-madrasahs studied, and that consistent participation generated more voluntary engagement than instruction alone. In Catholic schools, Fincham (2022) reported that head teachers in one English diocese faced challenges of funding and recruitment, Catholic identity and integrity, social-media pressure, weakening parish and family bases, and secularism. Domfeh-Boateng (2022) showed that lay principals' ability to maintain Catholic identity in Ghanaian public schools depended on the quality of their selection and spiritual formation, which lacked systematic procedures, and recommended selection protocols and formation centers. McGuinness & Taysum (2020) used distributed leadership to

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widen participation in a Northern Irish faith secondary school. Leadership also operated through designated coordinators and teams in the madrasah studies (Anwar et al., 2026; Haningsih et al., 2026).

4.2.3 Core values and school culture as strategic instruments

Cahyanto et al. (2025) described a private Islamic school in Malang that was initially little preferred by parents and articulated three core values—religiosity, hard work and honesty—in its vision, motto and jargon, and then applied them to the curriculum, the physical environment and social media; enrollment was reported to exceed targets. Marini et al. (2018) reported, on the basis of a survey of 450 pupils in five primary schools in Jakarta, that religious school culture—worship facilities, religious ceremonies and symbols—predicted pupils' religious character. Fadlilah et al. (2026) showed how a pesantren managed conflict through tiered, collaborative, and value-based procedures (deliberation, justice, and brotherhood) and treated dormitory life as a space of habituation. Hadisi et al. (2025) found that ritual routines were more effective than episodic events in sustaining values over time.

4.2.4 Curriculum and learning integration

Several studies integrate values into curricula and learning plans. Warul et al. (2023) reported five strategies in five state Islamic senior high schools during the COVID-19 pandemic: integration of character into all subjects through character-based lesson plans, distance learning in line with government policy, teacher and parent role modeling, school–parent collaboration, and remote counseling; eighteen national character values were internalized through cooperative learning and self-development activities. Anwar et al. (2026) embedded project themes such as local wisdom and Pancasila democracy in curriculum planning and evaluation instruments. Hadisi et al. (2025) integrated environmental values across subjects. Naufal & Maksum (2024) adapted the national curriculum to local socio-cultural conditions, although some teachers continued to rely on lectures in religious subjects. Jannana et al. (2025) balanced Islamic sciences with general subjects and language programs within a boarding setting.

4.2.5 Stakeholder collaboration

Parents, communities, and students appear as partners in implementation. Warul et al. (2023) reported that madrasahs held meetings with parents at least once per semester to align character formation at school and at home. In one of the schools studied by Haningsih et al. (2026), home visits and collaboration with pesantren leaders extended character formation beyond the school. Anwar et al. (2026) described the involvement of religious leaders, traditional authorities, and social organizations in project activities. Jannana et al. (2025)Click or tap here to enter text. institutionalized student voice through monthly class forums, quarterly surveys, and quarterly evaluation meetings.

4.2.6 Spiritual formation and human resources in Christian and Catholic schools

Evidence from Christian contexts is limited and comes largely from abstracts. Dang et al. (2026) propose a co-creation model in which students are engaged through relationships, dialogue, and delegated authority in spiritual formation. Horan (2017), using a mixed-methods design with 504 educators in Christian secondary schools, reported that the programs most commonly used (such as chapel, Bible classes, and service) differed from the relationship-based programs, such as mentoring, that educators judged most effective; the latter were rarely implemented because professional development was inadequate. Domfeh-Boateng (2022) and Fincham (2022) focus on the formation and challenges of principals in Catholic schools, and

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McGuinness & Taysum (2020) on distributed leadership in a faith school.

Taken together, the strategies indicate that faith-based schools manage character education chiefly as an organizational process: it is embedded in quality cycles, led through role modeling, expressed through core values and culture, integrated into the curriculum, and sustained through partnerships with families and communities.

Table 4. Organizational and management strategies (RQ1)

Theme	Key mechanisms	Studies
Quality-management cycles	PDCA and total quality management; five-phase cyclical quality assurance; strategic management stages; character positioned within the quality system	S1, S2, S12, S14, S17, S18
Leadership and role modeling	Principals' participation and exemplary behavior; selection and formation of principals; distributed leadership; coordinators and facilitator teams	S2, S8, S10, S11, S12, S16
Core values and school culture	Articulation of core values in vision, motto and jargon; religious school culture; dormitory culture and value-based conflict management; ritual routines	S5, S9, S11, S15
Curriculum and learning integration	Character-based lesson plans; project themes in curriculum and evaluation instruments; cross-subject integration; adaptation of the national curriculum	S2, S11, S14, S18, S21
Stakeholder collaboration	Meetings with parents, home visits, community and religious leaders, student voice mechanisms	S2, S12, S14, S21
Spiritual formation and human resources (Christian and Catholic)	Co-creation of spiritual formation; relationship-based programs such as mentoring; selection and formation of lay principals; leadership challenges	S7, S8, S10, S13, S16

Source: Author's analysis (2026). Study codes refer to Table 3.

4.3 RQ2: Evaluation Models and Practices

Formal evaluation was uncommon (Table 5). Only one study applied the CIPP model: Asiyah & Ghofur (2019) evaluated the learning of religious and character education in one state elementary school in Central Java, covering planning, implementation, and evaluation of lessons, with attitudes assessed through observation, tasks, and portfolios; the abstract does not detail each CIPP component, and the school was a public rather than a clearly faith-based institution. Choiriyah et al. (2023) developed an evaluation model for character-based Islamic education programs in primary schools through research and development, using questionnaires, focus-group discussions and a Delphi procedure, and reported that the resulting model, built on input, process and output with four categories in three dimensions, was valid and reliable in confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. Paul-Binyamin & Gindi (2017) reported a six-year evaluation of an educational reform in a network of national-religious schools in Israel and identified a dialectical tension between a cohesive educational agenda and the autonomy of principals, teachers and students.

In most studies, evaluation appeared as one phase of a management cycle rather than as a distinct model. In the case described by Jannana et al. (2025), evaluation data—electronic report cards, stakeholder surveys, review meetings and records of university admission—were used to renew the curriculum. In contrast, Haningsih et al. (2026) found that the "check" phase combined academic indicators with attendance, disciplinary records, and teacher observation,

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but that character assessment remained narrative and subjective, with no standardized instruments for moral reasoning or empathy, and that the "act" phase seldom translated evaluation results into redesign. Anwar et al. (2026) found no structured evaluation and monitoring mechanism and described the resulting lack of feedback as a barrier to improvement, and Naufal & Maksum (2024) mentioned internal evaluation without any named model.

A further group of studies measured student outcomes or educators' perceptions rather than evaluating programs. Marini et al. (2018) tested the effect of religious school culture with structural equation modeling; Safitri et al. (2025) compared four character values among 1,024 students in integrated Islamic and public schools with a sequential mixed-methods design; Bahri et al. (2022) reported that educational management, Islamic norms, and character education were positively related to students' moral development, with institutional support as a moderator; and Horan (2017) collected educators' perceptions of the effectiveness of spiritual-formation programs.

Two studies also questioned how success is defined. Hadisi et al. (2025) criticized environmental-school certification for valuing infrastructure and documented activities and proposed assessing the internalization of values, such as voluntary stewardship, after certification. Jannana et al. (2025) declined to attribute high university-admission rates to quality assurance because student selection, boarding culture, and family support offered alternative explanations. These positions echo the caution that educational effectiveness cannot be reduced to measurable outputs (Biesta, 2009).

Table 5. Evaluation models and practices (RQ2)

Evaluation practice	Main findings	Studies
Formal program evaluation models	CIPP applied in one primary school; an input–process–output model developed and validated; a six-year reform evaluation showing tension between cohesive agenda and autonomy	S3, S6, S19
Evaluation as a phase of quality cycles	Evaluation data used to renew the curriculum in one case; in others the "check" phase relied on narrative and subjective character assessment and the "act" phase rarely led to redesign; internal evaluation without a named model	S12, S14, S18
Absence of structured evaluation	No structured evaluation and monitoring mechanism; lack of feedback as a barrier to improvement	S2
Outcome and perception measures	Surveys and structural models of student character or moral development; educators' perceptions of program effectiveness	S4, S13, S15, S20
Critique of success indicators	Certification criteria focused on infrastructure; caution against causal attribution of outcomes to quality assurance	S11, S14

Source: Author's analysis (2026). Study codes refer to Table 3.

4.4 RQ3: Enabling Factors, Barriers and Tensions

Table 6 summarizes the factors that supported or hindered implementation. Leadership and role modeling were the most consistently reported enablers (Anwar et al., 2026; Hadisi et al., 2025; Haningsih et al., 2026; Naufal & Maksum, 2024). Teacher qualifications and professional development were also important (Naufal & Maksum, 2024; Warul et al., 2023) , as were the

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participation of families, communities and students (Anwar et al., 2026; Jannana et al., 2025; Warul et al., 2023), consistent habituation and curriculum integration (Anwar et al., 2026; Hadisi et al., 2025) and documentation, standard procedures and data (Fadlilah et al., 2026; Jannana et al., 2025).

The reported barriers were limited teacher competence or inappropriate teaching attitudes, such as teachers who were too strict or indifferent (Naufal & Maksum, 2024; Warul et al., 2023); inadequate infrastructure and technology (Anwar et al., 2026; Warul et al., 2023); weak or unstructured evaluation (Anwar et al., 2026; Haningsih et al., 2026); dependence on individual leaders or senior teachers (Haningsih et al., 2026); and inconsistent funding or policy support and the constraints of public-school status (Anwar et al., 2026; Domfeh-Boateng, 2022; Fincham, 2022). Anwar et al. (2026) also noted that teachers' resistance to change appeared to be structural rather than a rejection of the values: teachers struggled with unclear evaluation standards, competing curricular demands, and limited professional learning.

Three tensions cut across the studies. The first is between strict discipline and the internalization of values: disciplinary supervision produced visible compliance, but its effect on moral internalization was unclear (Haningsih et al., 2026), and surveillance technology risked fostering fear-based rather than intrinsic motivation (Jannana et al., 2025). The second is between competitive achievement and character: innovation- and certification-oriented models created pressure for visible outputs and risked performative compliance (Hadisi et al., 2025; Haningsih et al., 2026). The third is between institutionalization and dependence on individuals: programs sustained by committed leaders were vulnerable when supervision or stakeholder cooperation weakened (Haningsih et al., 2026). A related tension between a cohesive educational agenda and the autonomy of teachers and students was identified by Paul-Binyamin & Gindi (2017).

Table 6. Enabling factors, barriers and tensions (RQ3)

Category	Factors reported	Studies
Enabler: leadership	Principals' experience, exemplary behavior and commitment; coordinators and teams	S2, S11, S12, S18
Enabler: teacher capacity	Qualified and professionally competent teachers; training	S12, S18, S21
Enabler: participation	Families, communities and students involved in planning and implementation	S2, S14, S21
Enabler: habituation and integration	Consistent rituals, curriculum integration, projects	S2, S9, S11
Enabler: documentation	Standard procedures, records and data for follow-up	S9, S14
Barrier: teachers	Limited competence in technology or program principles; teachers too strict or indifferent	S2, S18, S21
Barrier: infrastructure	Inadequate facilities, devices and internet connection	S2, S21
Barrier: evaluation	No structured evaluation; subjective character assessment; weak feedback loop	S2, S11, S12
Barrier: dependence on individuals	Sustainability contingent on particular leaders or senior teachers	S12

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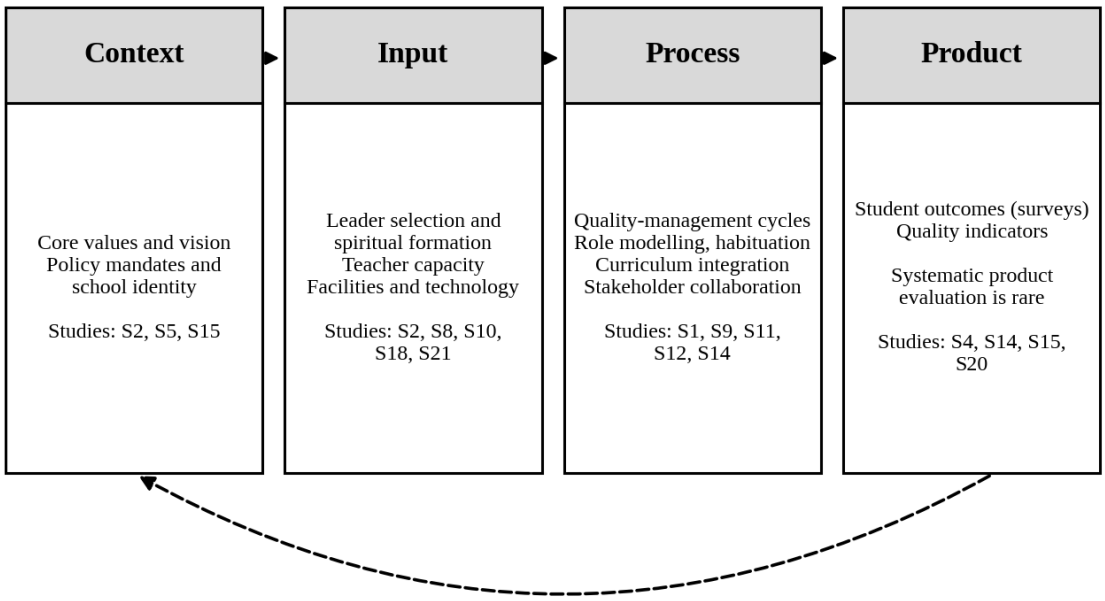
Category	Factors reported	Studies
Barrier: funding and policy	Inconsistent regional support and limited funds; constraints of public-school status; funding and recruitment pressures	S2, S8, S10
Tensions	Discipline vs. internalization; competitive achievement vs. character; institutionalization vs. dependence on individuals; cohesive agenda vs. autonomy	S11, S12, S14, S19

Source: Author's analysis (2026). Study codes refer to Table 3.

4.5 Integrating the Findings through a CIPP Lens

The CIPP model offers a way of integrating the strategies and the evaluation findings (Figure 2). In this mapping, which is the author's interpretive framework and not a model used by the primary studies, context concerns the core values, vision, and policy mandates that give the program its direction (Anwar et al., 2026; Cahyanto et al., 2025; Marini et al., 2018). Inputs include the selection and formation of leaders, teacher capacity, facilities, and technology (Anwar et al., 2026; Domfeh-Boateng, 2022; Fincham, 2022; Naufal & Maksum, 2024; Warul et al., 2023). The process covers quality-management cycles, role modeling, habituation, curriculum integration, and stakeholder collaboration (Ali et al., 2026; Fadlilah et al., 2026; Hadisi et al., 2025; Haningsih et al., 2026; Jannana et al., 2025). Product refers to student outcomes and quality indicators, which were mostly measured through surveys and perceptions (Bahri et al., 2022; Marini et al., 2018; Safitri et al., 2025) and, in one case, used to renew the curriculum (Jannana et al., 2025).

Figure 2. CIPP lens for integrating organizational strategies and evaluation findings



Source: Author's interpretive framework based on the included studies (2026). Study codes refer to Table 3.

The mapping makes the evaluation gap visible. Most of the evidence concerns context, input, and process, whereas systematic product evaluation is rare, and the feedback loop from evaluation to redesign was weak in several cases (Anwar et al., 2026; Haningsih et al., 2026). None of the included studies report applying all four CIPP components in a faith-based school.

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Because CIPP was designed to support improvement as well as accountability (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017), it could address the weaknesses identified in this review: a context evaluation would test whether core values reflect needs and policy mandates; an input evaluation would examine leader selection, teacher capacity, and facilities; a process evaluation would monitor habituation, role modeling, and curriculum integration; and a product evaluation would require instruments able to capture the internalization of values rather than only compliance, in line with the caution of Biesta (2009).

These findings are consistent with the argument that character is best developed through whole-school integration (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004), and they add that integration must be managerial as well as cultural. The practical implications are threefold. School leaders should embed character education in vision statements, curriculum planning and evaluation, invest in teacher capacity, and reduce dependence on individual figures through documented procedures. Evidence from other mission-driven organizations points in the same direction: human resource practices are most effective when recruitment, development and retention are aligned strategically with the organization's mission and values (Wijaya & Senen, 2024). School foundations and church or religious bodies should attend to the selection and formation of principals, which Catholic studies identify as decisive (Domfeh-Boateng, 2022; Fincham, 2022). Policymakers and quality-assurance bodies should provide character-assessment guidance and evaluation tools that go beyond infrastructure and documented activities (Anwar et al., 2026; Hadisi et al., 2025).

4.6 Limitations of the Review

Several limitations should be considered. Only Scopus was searched, and only English-language journal articles were included, so relevant work in other databases, in books, or in other languages may have been missed. One reviewer carried out the screening, which increases the risk of selection bias. Eleven of the 21 included studies could only be extracted from abstracts, which limits the depth and reliability of the data for these studies, and no formal quality-appraisal instrument was applied. Studies of CIPP-based or other evaluations in secular schools were excluded to keep the focus on faith-based settings, although they might inform evaluation practice. Finally, the evidence is dominated by Indonesian Islamic schools, and the few Christian and Catholic studies are small in scale or based on abstracts; findings should be transferred to other contexts cautiously. Records published after 16 October 2026 are not included.

5. Conclusion

This review synthesized 21 studies on how faith-based schools manage and evaluate value-based character education. Regarding RQ1, schools mainly manage character education as an organizational process: it is embedded in quality-management cycles, led through leaders' role modeling, expressed through core values and school culture, integrated into curricula, and supported by collaboration with families and communities; in Christian and Catholic contexts, the emphasis is on spiritual formation and on the formation of leaders. Regarding RQ2, formal evaluation models are rarely used, character assessment is mostly narrative, and evaluation seldom informs redesign. Regarding RQ3, leadership, teacher capacity, family and community involvement, and consistent habituation support implementation, whereas limited competence, infrastructure, weak evaluation, dependence on individuals, and inconsistent policy support hinder it, and three tensions—discipline versus internalization, achievement versus character, and institutionalization versus dependence on individuals—require managerial attention.

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For practice, the findings suggest that school leaders and foundations should treat character education as part of the school's management and quality system and should evaluate it systematically. For research, three agendas follow: applying and testing CIPP-based evaluation in faith-based schools, particularly Christian schools, where the evidence is thinnest; developing and validating instruments that assess the internalization of values; and conducting studies with outcome measurement, comparative designs and, in future reviews, additional databases and independent double screening.

Disclaimer

Declaration of generative AI use: an AI assistant (Claude, Anthropic) was used to support literature screening, data extraction, and the drafting of this manuscript. The author reviewed the content and takes full responsibility for it.

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Appendix A. Scopus records of the included studies

Each included study was retrieved from Scopus (search of 16 October 2026; records verified on 18 October 2026). The table gives the Scopus source title and the Scopus record identifier (EID).

ID	Study	Year	Source title (Scopus)	Scopus EID	DOI
S1	Ali et al.	2026	Kharisma	2-s2.0-105047792624	10.59373/kharisma.v5i2.210
S2	Anwar et al.	2026	Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun	2-s2.0-105029809847	10.26811/peuradeun.v14i1.2381
S3	Asiyah & Ghofur	2019	International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	2-s2.0-85073351441	No DOI assigned

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ID	Study	Year	Source title (Scopus)	Scopus EID	DOI
S4	Bahri et al.	2022	Eurasian Journal of Educational Research	2-s2.0-85150625276	10.14689/ejer.2022.101.007
S5	Cahyanto et al.	2025	Munaddhomah	2-s2.0-105015213442	10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i3.1784
S6	Choiriyah et al.	2023	Educational Administration: Theory and Practice	2-s2.0-85173700174	10.17762/kuey.v29i2.614
S7	Dang et al.	2026	Christian Education Journal	2-s2.0-105052923522	10.1177/07398913261491376
S8	Domfeh-Boateng	2022	Journal of Global Catholicism	2-s2.0-105004031879	10.32436/2475-6423.1099
S9	Fadlilah et al.	2026	Munaddhomah	2-s2.0-105037149723	10.31538/munaddhomah.v7i2.2589
S10	Fincham	2022	International Studies in Catholic Education	2-s2.0-85075239090	10.1080/19422539.2019.1691820
S11	Hadisi et al.	2025	Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam	2-s2.0-105028489430	10.31538/nzh.v8i3.141
S12	Haningsih et al.	2026	Kharisma	2-s2.0-105043784831	10.59373/kharisma.v5i2.138
S13	Horan	2017	Journal of Research on Christian Education	2-s2.0-85017555000	10.1080/10656219.2017.1282901
S14	Jannana et al.	2025	Kharisma	2-s2.0-105033670370	10.59373/kharisma.v4i2.102
S15	Marini et al.	2018	Journal of Social Studies Education Research	2-s2.0-85058532246	10.17499/jsser.11668
S16	McGuinness & Taysum	2020	Italian Journal of Sociology of Education	2-s2.0-85081540832	10.14658/pupj-ijse-2020-1-9
S17	Mu'alimin et al.	2026	International Journal of Educational Management	2-s2.0-105030573760	10.1108/IJEM-05-2025-0387
S18	Naufal & Maksum	2024	Munaddhomah	2-s2.0-85207835319	10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i2.778
S19	Paul-Binyamin & Gindi	2017	British Journal of Religious Education	2-s2.0-84948166891	10.1080/01416200.2015.1025698
S20	Safitri et al.	2025	Journal of Education Culture and Society	2-s2.0-105011989485	10.15503/jecs2025.2.251.271
S21	Warul et al.	2023	Multidisciplinary Reviews	2-s2.0-85174568958	10.31893/multirev.2023037

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