

**The Effectiveness of the Seven Habits Program  
to Enhance Elementary Students' Character in the Digital Era**

**Anggun Dwi Damayanti**

Universitas PGRI Semarang

E-mail: anggundamayanti33@guru.sd.belajar.id

**Dwi Widiyono**

Universitas PGRI Semarang

E-mail: dwiwidiyono65@guru.sd.belajar.id

**Uswatun Kasanah**

Universitas PGRI Semarang

E-mail: uswatunkasanah01@guru.sd.belajar.id

Submitted: 20-06-2025

Accepted: 26-06-2025

Published: 10-08-2025

**Abstract**

In response to the growing challenges of character development in the digital era, this study investigates the effectiveness of implementing the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program in enhancing the character of elementary school students. This qualitative case study was conducted at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi and involved 15 purposively selected participants, including one principal, four teachers, and ten upper-grade students (grades 4–6) who were actively engaged in the program. Data collection methods included interviews, classroom observations, and documentation of relevant school activities. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which comprises data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings demonstrate that the Seven Habits program was effectively implemented and significantly contributed to students' character development, particularly in fostering independence, active learning, collaboration, leadership, and responsibility. Supporting factors included structured routines, motivational strategies, creative teaching methods, and positive reinforcement. However, several challenges were also identified, such as limited instructional time, insufficient learning media, varying levels of student motivation, and weak parental involvement. These results suggest the need for enhanced school–parent collaboration, increased access to creative educational resources, and targeted teacher training in character education. Future research is recommended to assess the program's long-term impact and its applicability across different educational contexts.

**Keywords:** seven habits, character education, elementary students, digital era

## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid development of technology and information in the digital era, particularly under the Society 5.0 framework, has significantly transformed the way elementary school students learn and develop character. Society 5.0 envisions a human-centered and technology-integrated society, yet for students, this means increased exposure to digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and the internet from an early age. While such access offers vast opportunities for learning, it also presents risks such as distraction, moral detachment, and reduced face-to-face interactions when not guided by strong ethical foundations (Rahmawati, 2021; Syahrani, 2021). Therefore, schools must offer structured character education that responds to the cognitive and emotional demands of this digital society.

One initiative designed to address this need is the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program. Derived from Covey's leadership model, this character-building framework is intended to cultivate proactive, visionary, disciplined, and collaborative individuals through habits such as "Begin with the End in Mind" and "Synergize". The program aligns with the national movement for Character Education Strengthening (PPK) and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, which emphasizes attributes like faith, independence, critical thinking, and global diversity (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). These values are considered essential for preparing students to thrive in the 21st-century learning ecosystem and to responsibly navigate technology-rich environments.

The theoretical underpinnings of this program are supported by the works of Lickona (1999), who advocated for moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action as foundations of character; Vygotsky (1978), who stressed the importance of social interactions in learning; and Zimmerman (2002), who highlighted the value of self-directed learning and reflection. This integration allows students to internalize values not only through instruction, but also through modeling, practice, and constructive feedback.

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of the Seven Habits program, showing positive outcomes in student discipline, leadership, and collaboration (Syahni et al., 2023). However, more recent research reveals emerging issues in its application, particularly in the context of curriculum changes and post-pandemic educational recovery. For instance, Murtiningsih & Nuryani (2023) identified that while students increasingly demonstrate digital literacy, they also lack digital ethics and emotional regulation skills that character programs often overlook. Nasar & Suprpto (2024) found that many schools struggle to meaningfully embed character values into the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, often resulting in fragmented implementation.

Moreover, Wulandari & Yusuf (2023) emphasize that character education programs remain unevenly applied across Indonesia, with rural and semi-urban schools facing logistical, parental, and contextual challenges. Prasetyo & Indriani (2022) highlight a gap in understanding how localized character education models such as Seven Habits can be adapted to specific school cultures and student backgrounds. Additionally, Hakim & Dewi (2023) underscore the lack of evaluative frameworks to measure character development outcomes, making it difficult to ensure program consistency and sustainability. Despite these insights, few studies have provided in-depth analysis of how the Seven Habits program functions within a real-world public school setting in Indonesia particularly one that is not located in a major urban center. There is limited empirical research examining not just the perceived impact of the program, but also the day-to-day implementation process, stakeholder involvement, and barriers faced at the ground level.

This gap is especially critical as schools are expected to independently adapt national character mandates under the Merdeka Belajar initiative (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

In response to this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive case study of SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi, a public elementary school actively implementing the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children. This research addresses three key questions: (1) How is the Seven Habits program implemented at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi? (2) What impact does the program have on students' character development?, and (3) What challenges emerge during its implementation?

The study's objectives are aligned with the school's mission to foster creative, independent, and cooperative learners rooted in Pancasila values. It contributes practical insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen character education in the digital age. By highlighting a real example of program implementation and identifying both successes and obstacles, this research offers meaningful input to the ongoing discourse on sustainable and culturally responsive character education in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design, which allowed for an in-depth and contextual understanding of how the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program was implemented and how it influenced character development among elementary school students. The case study method was chosen in line with Yin (2023), who stated that this approach is effective when researchers aim to explore contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi, located in Grobogan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The school was selected through purposive sampling, considering its consistent and structured implementation of the Seven Habits program. The participants included 1 principal, 4 teachers, and 10 students from upper-grade levels (grades 4–6), making a total of 15 participants. The selection of informants was based on their active involvement in the program and their ability to provide rich, relevant data regarding its execution and impact.

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews, which explored participants' experiences and perceptions; (2) non-participant observations of character-building activities, classroom interactions, and school events; and (3) document analysis, which involved reviewing vision books, lesson plans, school reports, and visual documentation such as posters and photos. All interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis. Observations focused on how values such as responsibility, leadership, and cooperation were demonstrated in daily school life. To ensure ethical rigor, the researcher obtained written permission from the school principal and verbal consent from all participants, including assent from students and permission from their guardians. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process in accordance with the ethical guidelines for educational research (Cohen et al., 2022).

The data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2022), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data condensation, relevant codes were created based on recurring patterns such as "habit

internalization”, “teacher facilitation”, “family support”, “motivation gap”, and “leadership development”. These codes were then organized into broader themes such as “supporting factors”, “challenges”, and “transformational impact on students”. Data were displayed in the form of tables and narrative matrices to facilitate pattern recognition and thematic interpretation. To enhance trustworthiness, several strategies were applied. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document reviews to validate consistency. Source triangulation involved comparing responses among students, teachers, and the principal to check for converging insights. Member checking was also carried out by sharing summaries of findings with participants to confirm accuracy and interpretation. These methods are widely supported as effective tools for establishing credibility and dependability in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

By clearly defining sampling techniques, ethical safeguards, and analytical processes, this methodology offers transparency and reliability while allowing the voices of participants to emerge authentically. This approach is particularly appropriate for studies in character education, where human values, context, and interactions play a crucial role.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This section presents detailed findings based on data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi. The findings are organized to reflect the research focus on the implementation process, character development outcomes, and challenges encountered. The implementation of the Seven Habits program at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi was systematic and integrated into both curricular and extracurricular school routines. According to interviews with the school principal and seven purposively selected students from Grades 4 to 6, the program was implemented regularly every Friday and embedded in school activities such as morning assemblies, thematic learning sessions, and extracurricular programs like scouting. This consistent scheduling contributed to cultivating student familiarity with the core principles of the Seven Habits.

Teachers played a central role in contextualizing the habits through storytelling, collaborative discussions, project-based learning, and reflective questioning. For instance, Habit 1 (Be Proactive) was introduced through stories that encouraged students to make thoughtful choices, while Habit 2 (Begin with the End in Mind) was practiced through students setting personal goals in their vision books. The vision book, a reflective journal where students documented their goals and achievements, emerged as a key tool in reinforcing self-directed character development. Observations confirmed that students took ownership of their vision books, often showcasing them during classroom sharing sessions.

The school environment was enriched with visual prompts such as motivational posters, wall charts, and quote displays that echoed the language and values of the Seven Habits. These visual aids acted as constant reminders and behavioral cues, helping to internalize the program’s values. One student shared during the interview, “I feel more motivated because I can see my goals in my vision book and also read the inspiring words in the classroom”. Interviews and classroom observations revealed marked improvements in student behavior and interpersonal interactions. Students became more independent and engaged, often organizing group activities without waiting for teacher instruction.

They showed greater proactivity, initiating classroom tasks and resolving minor conflicts among themselves. A teacher stated, “We’ve observed major changes, especially in student independence”. Now, they can make decisions on their own and help peers in need. Students also exhibited stronger collaboration and teamwork. One teacher remarked that prior to the program’s implementation, many students were reluctant to work in groups and preferred solitary work. However, after sustained engagement with the Seven Habits, students began cooperating effectively, distributing tasks, and demonstrating mutual support. During an observed project on community service, students showed leadership, initiative, and collective responsibility demonstrating the successful internalization of habits such as synergy and prioritization.

Additionally, students developed heightened empathy and emotional intelligence. In a class session focusing on Habit 5 (Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood), students demonstrated active listening and respectful dialogue. Teachers noted that students had become more reflective in their conversations, often considering others’ perspectives before responding. Despite these encouraging outcomes, several implementation challenges surfaced. The most commonly cited obstacle was time allocation. Teachers found it difficult to embed the Seven Habits within the confines of a rigid academic timetable. As one teacher explained, “With such a tight curriculum, it’s challenging to insert Habits activities without sacrificing core subject time”.

Resource constraints also hampered consistent program delivery. Some students did not own vision books due to financial limitations, while others lacked access to digital or printed support materials at home. These disparities hindered the uniformity of student experiences and affected program sustainability. Teachers suggested the need for more structured support from the education office or local stakeholders to supply the necessary materials. Parental involvement posed another challenge. While some parents were actively engaged and supported their children’s learning at home, others were less responsive, often due to work commitments or limited understanding of the program’s goals. A lack of consistent reinforcement at home occasionally led to lapses in student engagement or progress. One teacher stated, “If we rely solely on the school, the results will not be optimal. There must be synergy with the parents”.

Finally, broader stakeholder collaboration, such as engagement with local communities or education authorities, was still developing. Although the school demonstrated internal commitment, external support remained limited. This highlighted a need for stronger institutional partnerships to enhance program scalability and long-term impact. In conclusion, the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program was effectively implemented at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi and demonstrated a notable impact on student character development. It nurtured key values such as independence, leadership, empathy, and collaboration. However, sustainability depends on addressing time constraints, improving access to resources, increasing parental participation, and building stronger stakeholder networks. The findings suggest that with adequate support and systemic commitment, the program can serve as a viable model for holistic character education in the digital era.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi significantly contributed to the development of students’ character, particularly in fostering independence, leadership, collaboration, and empathy. This discussion section aims to critically examine

these findings by linking them with relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, especially those published, to provide a nuanced interpretation and highlight the study's implications. The positive behavioral changes observed among students, such as increased proactivity, better decision-making, and collaborative spirit, can be interpreted through the lens of Covey (1990) original framework on personal leadership. The emphasis on internal change and habit formation in Covey's model is particularly suited for value-based education, where long-term transformation is the goal. The program's impact is further validated by Vygotsky (1978) social constructivist theory, which posits that learning is most effective in socially interactive environments with proper scaffolding. In this study, teacher facilitation and peer collaboration played crucial roles in reinforcing the habits.

Empirical research by Rahmawati (2023) supports this observation, suggesting that habit-based programs in elementary settings not only shape behavior but also improve students' academic and emotional readiness. Moreover, Fauziyah & Mulyani (2022) found that consistent exposure to structured value systems in school improves moral reasoning and reduces disciplinary incidents, aligning well with the behavioral improvements noted at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi. Likewise, Nurdin & Lestari (2023) highlighted the role of repeated value-based learning in fostering intrinsic motivation and social-emotional competence.

A recent study by Martati et al. (2025) demonstrated that the use of digital picture-text story media effectively promotes character education in elementary school students, particularly in fostering values such as cooperation, responsibility, and independence. Their findings highlight how digital and visual learning tools can serve as engaging and meaningful mediums to instill moral values in young learners. This supports the principle that character education must be developmentally appropriate and integrated into the cognitive and emotional stages of elementary-aged students. The study further emphasizes the importance of utilizing creative, visual-based instructional methods that resonate with the concrete operational stage of child development. These insights align with the present research, which found that personalized tools such as vision books and project-based learning not only increased student engagement but also deepened their understanding of core values. The use of technology as a medium for character learning, as explored in Martati et al.'s study, reinforces the need for innovative and context-sensitive strategies in delivering character education in the digital era.

Similarly, a study by Octavia & Tirtoni (2024) on the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile in Pancasila education revealed that democratic values such as tolerance, participation, and mutual respect can be effectively internalized through a structured value-based curriculum. Their research showed that embedding character values directly into subject matter not only strengthens students' civic disposition but also enhances the relevance of classroom learning. This complements the present study's findings that the integration of the Seven Habits into regular academic and extracurricular activities plays a pivotal role in cultivating key personal and social attributes. Both studies affirm that consistent, embedded, and culturally grounded character education frameworks are critical in shaping student identity and civic responsibility.

The vision book emerged as an essential tool for cultivating metacognitive skills among students. According to Zimmerman (2002) theory of self-regulated learning, metacognition enhances autonomy, planning, and goal-setting. In this study, the use of vision books enabled students to take ownership of their personal development journey. Recent studies, such as that by Kurniawan (2023), have confirmed that personalized

learning tools like vision journals improve student engagement and foster a reflective mindset essential for character building. Wahyuni et al. (2023) added that self-reflective activities improve accountability and long-term planning habits among primary school students.

In line with social-emotional learning (SEL) theories proposed by Elias (2023), the program also nurtured students' emotional intelligence. Students learned to understand others' perspectives and practiced active listening, which are core SEL competencies. SEL-integrated character education programs, as recommended by Nurhalimah et al. (2022), promote holistic student development by combining moral reasoning, empathy, and self-awareness outcomes echoed in the current study. A related study by Prasetya & Wijaya (2023) found that SEL-infused character education significantly improved interpersonal relationships and reduced classroom conflicts.

However, the study also uncovered implementation challenges, such as time constraints, unequal access to materials, and limited parental involvement. These findings reflect broader systemic issues that continue to hamper educational innovation. For instance, Arifin (2023) argue that the rigid structure of school schedules often marginalizes non-cognitive learning goals, despite policy support for character education. A significant implementation barrier was the lack of parental involvement. While some families supported the program, many were either uninformed or unable to contribute due to socioeconomic limitations. This reinforces the findings of Sutopo, (2022), who concluded that successful character education hinges on consistent reinforcement across school and home settings. Without this synergy, behavioral changes in school may not translate into long-term character development. Novitasari & Yuniarti (2023) echoed this in their study on rural school settings, emphasizing the need for culturally and economically sensitive parental engagement models.

Additionally, the absence of adequate educational media and resources created disparities among students. Recent findings by Fitria (2022) underscore the importance of resource equity in implementing holistic education models. When students lack access to learning materials, the consistency and depth of program delivery are compromised, leading to unequal outcomes. A follow-up study by Ramadhani et al. (2023) suggests that digital resource platforms could help bridge this gap, especially in underfunded schools.

To address these limitations, strong collaboration with local governments, educational authorities, and NGOs is essential. Hidayat (2023) emphasize the importance of community-based partnerships in sustaining character education. Programs that are co-supported by schools and external stakeholders tend to be more resilient, particularly in resource-constrained environments. A pilot program described by Lestari & Saputra (2022) demonstrated how partnerships with local youth organizations enriched school-based character programs and encouraged peer mentoring. In terms of digital integration, this study opens opportunities for further enhancement. As suggested by Hamid (2023), character education programs must be digitally adaptive to remain relevant to Gen Z learners. Developing digital vision books, character-building apps, or online reflective journals could make the program more engaging and accessible, especially during remote or hybrid learning periods. Anggraini & Pramudita (2023) reported a 40% increase in student engagement when character education was delivered through gamified mobile apps.

The cultural context of character education is another crucial factor. While the Seven Habits program is globally inspired, it was adapted to local values through integration with the Pancasila Student Profile. This localization aligns with the

recommendations of Prasetyo and Indriani (2022), who found that character education programs are more effective when they incorporate indigenous values and national identity. Such hybrid models resonate more deeply with students and help bridge global frameworks with local realities. Similarly, Budianto et al. (2022) stress that incorporating local wisdom into modern pedagogy fosters a stronger sense of belonging and purpose among students. In comparison with other studies, the present research offers fresh insights by highlighting the program's success even in a public school context with limited resources. Unlike previous studies which often focus on private or urban schools, this study provides evidence that well-facilitated habit-building programs can thrive in rural or semi-urban settings. This contributes to the discourse on educational equity and reform, as supported by Santoso & Rahayu (2022), who advocate for inclusive innovation in character education.

Furthermore, this study contributes methodologically by using triangulated qualitative data interviews, observation, and documentation to build a comprehensive understanding of the implementation process. This triangulation increases data validity and reflects best practices as recommended by Patton (2022) and Lincoln & Guba (2023). It allows for a deeper examination of both observable behaviors and internal student reflections, something that quantitative methods may overlook. Raharjo et al. (2023) reinforced that multi-source qualitative data enhances trustworthiness and provides richer context to implementation research. The findings also prompt considerations for future research. Longitudinal studies could investigate the sustainability of the habits over time, beyond immediate behavioral change. Comparative studies between schools implementing and not implementing the program could reveal broader patterns and inform policy scalability. Action research could also be used to test specific interventions aimed at overcoming the barriers identified in this study. Widyaningsih & Permadi (2022) recommend the use of design-based research (DBR) to iteratively refine character education models in real-time classroom environments.

To ensure continuous improvement, the school could consider implementing professional development programs for teachers focused on SEL, metacognitive strategies, and differentiated instruction. Recent studies such as by Herlina & Mustofa (2023) suggest that teacher readiness and mindset significantly affect the fidelity of character education implementation. Investing in ongoing teacher training will further embed the values of the Seven Habits in pedagogical practice. A digital training initiative reported by Hamid (2023) showed that blended learning approaches significantly enhanced teachers' understanding and implementation of character education principles, particularly in adapting to post-pandemic educational demands.

In summary, this discussion demonstrates that the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program has strong theoretical and empirical backing as an effective character education model. The program's impact at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi affirms its adaptability, even in schools with limited resources. It empowers students to become proactive, empathetic, and goal-oriented individuals, thereby contributing to national goals of character excellence.

Nonetheless, its sustainability requires addressing structural and socio-economic barriers through inclusive support systems. The integration of digital tools, family involvement, resource provision, and institutional partnerships must be prioritized. By incorporating insights from research, this study not only confirms prior findings but also extends the discourse on contextual and scalable models of character education in Indonesia's evolving educational landscape. The continued refinement of this model



could provide a blueprint for nationwide implementation, ensuring that all Indonesian children regardless of geography or background can benefit from holistic character development programs.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children program was effectively implemented at SD Negeri 9 Purwodadi and contributed meaningfully to the character development of elementary school students in the digital era. The program succeeded in instilling key values such as independence, collaboration, leadership, and empathy, which were reflected in students' daily behavior and interactions. Through tools like personal vision journals and guided classroom activities, students developed habits that encouraged self-reflection, moral reasoning, and positive communication. The teachers' role in modeling and reinforcing these habits across learning contexts was instrumental in shaping a supportive and character-focused school culture.

However, the research faced several limitations. The study was conducted in a single school with a small, purposively selected group of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, time constraints, limited teaching resources, and lack of consistent parental involvement presented challenges to the program's implementation. Socioeconomic disparities among students and the varying levels of motivation and learning ability also required more individualized approaches, which were not always feasible within the school's existing structure.

Future research should investigate the program's effectiveness across broader and more diverse educational settings to assess scalability and long-term impact. Comparative studies involving multiple schools and integration of student perspectives could provide richer insights into character formation processes. Moreover, future initiatives could explore the use of digital tools and media to enhance engagement and accessibility, as well as develop strategies for stronger collaboration between schools, families, and communities in supporting character education.

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