

## CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR MENTAL RESILIENCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING IN THE AI ERA

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the relationship between character education and children's mental resilience in the era of artificial intelligence, focusing on protective factors and developing an integrative conceptual model. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach with the PRISMA protocol, 144 articles from Scopus-indexed journals published between 2020 and 2025 were screened, and 15 relevant studies met the inclusion criteria. The study results indicate that character education plays a strategic role in strengthening children's resilience through the values of self-regulation, empathy, responsibility, solidarity, and the search for meaning in life. Identified protective factors include positive parent-child bonds, peer support, family resilience, and community involvement, while risk factors include device dependence, family conflict, poverty, and parental stress. The proposed conceptual model emphasizes a holistic, differentiated, and multilevel approach with simultaneous involvement of schools, families, and communities. The findings of the majority of studies confirm that character education not only shapes morality but also functions as an ecosystem strategy to strengthen children's mental resilience in facing digital and social challenges in the era of artificial intelligence. This study recommends the development of a multidimensional resilience theoretical framework, its integration into the curriculum

**Keywords:** *Character education, Mental resilience, Artificial intelligence*

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, the world has advanced its understanding of digital technology, especially AI, which has changed the way people live, learn, interact. This also means new challenges for children surrounded by digital and technology (Apps et al., 2024; Lim, 2023; Yang, 2022). According to (Peng et al., 2025), excessive device use and exposure to unfiltered online content have been shown to correlate with increased anxiety and reduced resilience. On the other hand, self-efficacy and adaptability of children are more enhanced by positive mentoring and supportive social settings (Lee & Hancock, 2023) This explains why character education needs to be woven into policies that foster mental resilience for the younger generations, especially in the age of disruption with AI, to ensure that they are not just intellectually capable, but emotionally and socially equipped.

The existing scholarship has suggested that resilience is the outcome of the integration of individual, family, and societal factors. Self-regulation, positive relationships with children, and having peers in the inner circle seem to be protective factors for resilience in self-regulating children even in at-risk populations, including children born preterm (Lin et al., 2025). These factors, in conjunction with character education, foster the development of self-discipline, empathy, and respect for others. Löchner et al., (2024) also brought up

this strategy, which involves shifting character education away from an ethical emphasis and toward resilience education, a psychosocial approach that trains kids in how to handle stress and hardship in the healthiest manner. In other words, stress becomes prominent, particularly in the absence of familial stress. It is, however, evidently a mental health risk for children, contingent upon parents possessing psychological resilience and adequate social support and resources.

Other socioeconomic and structural conditions define a child's capacity to be resilient. Evidence from the low-income context shows that child labor combined with poverty and ineffective social protection systems amplifies anxiety, depression, and stunted growth (Lin et al., 2025). In those instances, character education can act as a compensatory mechanism by teaching enduring optimism and social cohesion. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and similar crises have illustrated well the gaps in the well-being of children, particularly those from the low-income strata who have experienced shrinking mental health and quality of life (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2022). These realities support the need for character education that is ecosystemic in nature, integrating schools, families, and communities while also addressing the socio-cultural and global contexts in which these issues arise.

Character education provides developmental advantages even outside of

crisis situations. Character education enhances deliberate awareness, sensitivity, and moral courage, so fortifying character resilience as a complex phenomena arising from the quest for meaning, characterized by researchers as a dynamic process (Liebenberg, 2020). A lot of research demonstrates that those who are resilient are more mentally healthy (Duan et al., 2020). Some methods, on the other hand, still rely on narrow definitions of success that just look at academic achievement and don't take into account children's overall needs and well-being (Brown & Dixon, 2020). Modern frameworks see resilience as something that stakeholders need to develop in a regulated way at many levels and in many areas, such as the individual, family, school, and society.

Even with its abundance, few studies have methodically analyzed how character education reinforces resilience within the scope of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) era, wherein new digital restraints are layered atop existing challenges. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by performing a systematic literature review (SLR) along PRISMA guidelines. From a total of 144 Scopus-indexed articles, 15 were classified as pertinent to the subject under review. This review examines the evidence character education and resilience, protective and risk factors, and risk processes to develop an integrative conceptual model. This model is ecosystemic in nature and provides multilevel conceptualization of character education and ecosystemic protective factors to character education.

Consequently, this study has outlined 3 central research aims: (RQ1) What are the connections between character education and children's mental resilience in regard to the challenges of digital technology and Artificial Intelligence? (RQ2) What protective factors enable resilience, and how can they be formulated in terms of principles of character education? (RQ3) What are the existing conceptual frameworks in the literature on character education and resilience, and what evidence is there of their effectiveness? This study aims to make a theoretical contribution by enhancing the resilience of children framework and a practical contribution by proposing character education approaches relevant, contextually relevant and responsive to the demands of the AI era.

## METHODS

This research used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method about Character Education children and their mental

resilience in the age of artificial intelligence. This method is focusing on an artificial intelligence's character education children and mental resilience. It is an artificial intelligence's character education children and mental resilience. The method is chosen as it offers a transparent SLR in its approach and identifies, selects, reviews, and analyzes previous research in a structured and synthesized manner. The SLR is restricted to a detailed search of the literature and has specific criteria for inclusion and exclusion so that the final research does not remain exclusively descriptive but rather attempts to portray a narrative reflecting research trends, patterns, and gaps (García-Peñalvo, 2022; Matos et al., 2023; Paul & Criado, 2020). The SLR procedures follow the PRISMA 2020 algorithm, which is a set of instructions containing four steps: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Each step is meticulous so that no detail is left out for the purpose of ensuring due diligence.

The focus of this study was not an individual, but rather scientific documents obtained from the Scopus database which were chosen for their wide coverage and high reliability for international publications. The apostle was conducted with the use of specific formulated keywords, Character Education Children, Artificial Intelligence Era Mental Health, Children Mental Health, and Resilience. The first search results were 144 articles that contained the keywords, however, from the first identification process 50 articles were automatically flagged as ineligible for the 2020-2025 timeline, and 48 articles were excluded because they were classified in the Q1 tier journal category that was not relevant for this study. Also, two other articles were excluded because they do not have an abstract, hence they could not be continued with the screening process. Thus, the total number of documents that were available after going through the screening process were 44 documents.

This systematic literature review employs a selection process designed by PRISMA including both inclusion and exclusion criteria. Criteria for inclusion are: (1) publications from the years 2020 through 2025, (2) publications that pertain to character education, children's mental resilience, and the role of artificial intelligence, and (3) publications to be analyzed for which a full-text version is available or at least a comprehensive abstract. The exclusion criteria are: (1) publications that pertain to the technological side only, and do not relate character education or resilience, (2)

theoretical publications that do not contain any relevant primary data to the research focus, and (3) publications pertaining to children, and research that deals only with adults or students are excluded. This instrument

enables systematic filtering so that only articles that are significant with respect to the research focus are retained for further analysis.

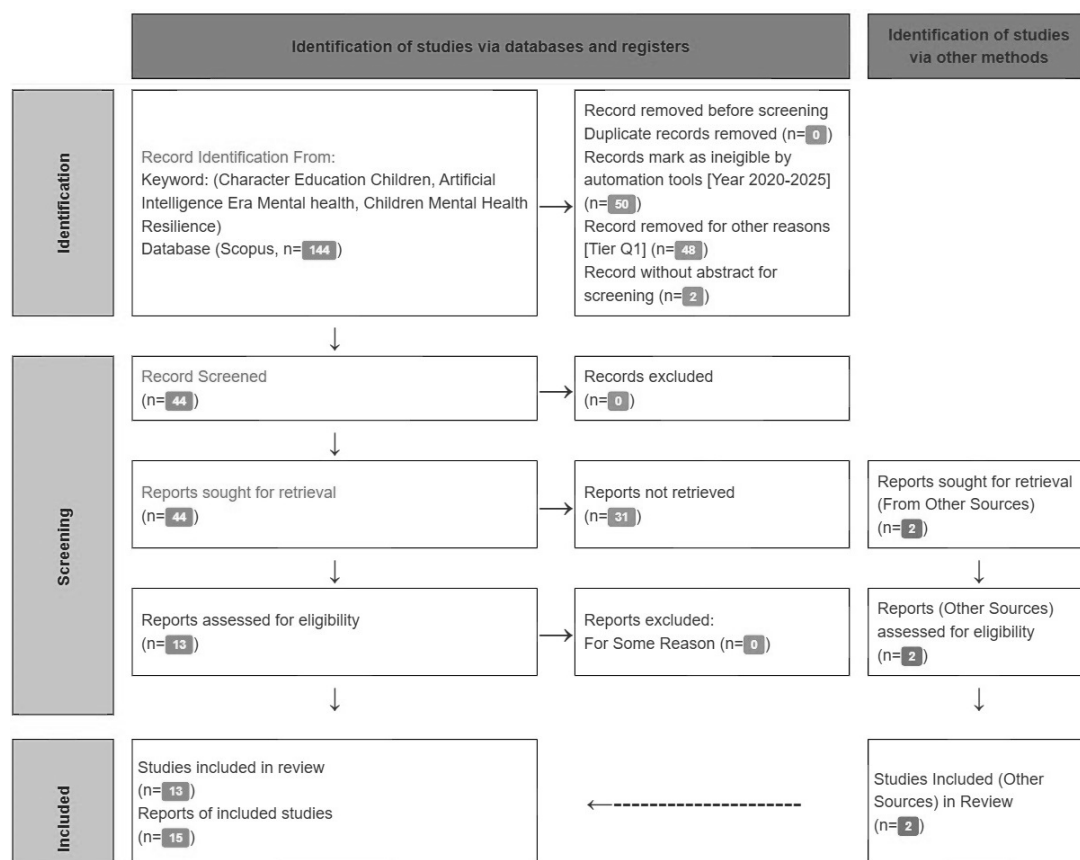


Figure 1. Student responses based on their (a) region of origin and (b) mastery of regional languages

The process of collecting data has been accomplished in several steps. The first step is the searching of the available information using the Scopus database in association with the predetermined keywords. Then, the screening step of the process is aimed at the elimination of duplicate articles, articles which do not possess any abstracts, and articles which do not fulfill the eligibility criteria. As a result of this process, 44 articles of potential relevance to the topic at hand were retained. The third step, the eligibility step, involves a deep reading of the abstracts of the articles and assessing their relevance to the research focus, of which 13 were deemed appropriate. The fourth step, the inclusion step, involves the inclusion of two other articles which were obtained from outside the database which brought the total number of articles reviewed in this analysis to 15. Each of the articles which were deemed appropriate were subsequently coded and analyzed in order to extract commonalities, protective factors, and

conceptual frameworks of character education interwoven with child resilience.

The primary method of analysis for this study incorporated thematic analysis with a focus on narrative synthesis (Hiebl, 2023). Each of the articles which passed the Inclusion stage were read thoroughly and analyzed to determine the contextualized character education, mental resilience, protective factors, and their relevance to the artificial intelligence era. The data were then aligned and categorized as per the established Research Questions (RQ): RQ1 the bond between character education and mental resilience, RQ2 protective factors, and RQ3 an integrated conceptual model. This method guarantees that the results of the analysis are not just reiterative summaries of every individual study, but rather an analysis that constructs a more profound synthetic understanding of the studies. Thematic analysis reveals the general features patterns, identifies differing findings among the works,

and exposes gaps needing more thorough investigation.

The entire research methodology was crafted so that it could be systematically conducted by other researchers using the same steps. This included the creation of keywords and databases, inclusion and exclusion determination, PRISMA sifting, and thematic analysis particular to the Research Question. This method intends to create a complete synthesis of the character education and children's resilience in the age of artificial intelligence. Additionally, this method guarantees that every step can be substantiated, confirming the levels of construct validity and reliability, which is essential. This methodical framework is critical for providing scholarly work that is more than merely explaining a concept, as it seeks to fill in the missing links in the debate and add to the global conversation on character education as well as children's resilience.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The relationship between smartphone proclivity and psychological anxiety, and subsequently smartphone dependency and lower resilience reported by Postgraduate students, was studied and described in part by (Peng et al., 2025) Individuals mentoring the students, however, were able to strengthen the students meek self-efficacy and resilience to stress, contouring them to fit better within a social circle. This case study served to reaffirm the three-way mental resilience interaction of technology, social ties, and personal support. These case studies and others noted, including the study conducted by Twilhaar & Wolke, (2025). support the understanding and limb theory of mental resilience and self-regulation, preterm self-regulation, self-child positive interaction, organized and constructive family climate, nurtured siblings, and supportive mates. It was noted, however, that the bullying was a primary downside imputer toward the children's mental resilience. It was these studies that developed the understanding that family and peers play a vital role in children's mental health. Furthermore, the research by Yuan et al., (2025) about smartphone dependency in adolescents shows that smartphone dependency Megalops was a psychosocial protective risk factor of a smartphone It was emphasized, however, that the greater the family conflict, parent-child conflict, spouse-war conflict, the worse the overall psychological condition becomes, and therefore the family remains the central factor of the individual's resilience challenge. In

addition to this, Lin et al., (2025) drives the point home with the notion that children without the proper nurturing and involved excessive child labor are more predisposed to developmental blocks, anxiety and depression. "Identifiable causes, like poverty and insufficient social safeguards, worsen these conditions, demonstrating the need for macro factors for resilience. Löchner et al., (2024) study shows that the stress of parenthood has direct effects on the mental well-being of children aged 0-3 years, while the ability of parents, feelings of affection, and the presence of a healthy partner are protective factors."

As mentioned in the research conducted by Uddin & Hasan, (2023), the extensive use of digital media leads to deterioration of mental health, especially in anxiety and depression, in children and adolescents. On the contrary, family resilience has been shown to reduce this risk. Hence the negative relationship between the use of digital media and mental health, in this case, family support acts as a moderator. Children's sleep quality was not shown to be a significant mediator, so family relationships are more dominant in sustaining mental resilience in children. In a more recent research conducted by Ghanouni & Eves, (2023), it was found that the social participation of children with *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD) is associated with the parental resilience of the children. It was found that family income level had direct positive correlation with parental resilience, and parental stress level was found to have a negative association with parental resilience. Furthermore, research conducted by Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2022), demonstrated the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents in Germany. Quality of life, with the proliferation of mental health issues, decreased from 15.3% to 40.2% and increased from 9.9% to 17.8% respectively. Children belonging to families that are socioeconomically disadvantaged and have little space are more susceptible to the decline of quality of life. The papers by Zellma et al., (2022) has identified a decline in student interest in religious education in Poland. In response a transgressive approach has been suggested. Psychotransgressionism in education is a type of pedagogy that encourages children to go beyond established frontiers and construct novel value systems.

As documented in the analysis conducted by Browne et al., (2021), unlike other children, refugee children are much more susceptible to socioeconomic

disadvantage and traumatic events, which makes the potential impact on their mental health much deeper. On the other hand, the refugee children, due to their circumstances, are able to develop a remarkable unique form of resilience, which needs enhancement in the form of family, community, and state support. To bolster the mental resilience of children, a multi-tiered trauma-informed support methodology is essential. The work of Cui & Hong, (2021) noted the detrimental impact on family interactivity which was accentuated during the pandemic and economic constriction. On the other hand, family self-control, self-respect and courtesy offered some offsetting support for children against the worst outcomes. Liebenberg (2020) examined the notion of resilience and emphasized that it is not a trait, function of resources or relationships, but rather a dynamic process inherent in individuals. The central purpose of this investigation was to

examine the process of meaning-making. In contrast, Brown & Dixon (2020) conceptualized resilience in the educational context as a concept steeped in the idea of "getting through" to some predetermined end. This view is in stark distinction to students requiring much more mental health practitioner attention, the need for safe and zen-like psychosocial zones and directed psychosocial education. Duan et al. (2020) identified an association between resilience and mental health, as well as peer relationships. They also have uncovered negative correlates, showing that resilience is negatively associated with loneliness, anxiety and depression. Taken together, this literature indicates that different levels of resilience have an important impact on the development of children's overall psychological well-being.

Tabel. 1 Synthesis of Research Findings

Penulis & Tahun	Populasi/Konteks	Temuan Utama
Peng et al., (2025)	Postgraduate Students	Phone dependence anxiety resilience; mentoring self-efficacy
Twilhaar & Wolke, (2025)	Prematurely Born Children	Self-regulation, family cohesion, home climate, peer relations resiliensi; bullying resilience
Yuan et al., (2025)	Chinese Adolescents	Resilience phone addiction & mental problems; family conflict risk
Lin et al., (2025)	Children in LMICs (Low- and Middle-Income Countries)	Poor parenting & child labor mental health problems; poverty & weak protection exacerbate risks.
Löchner et al., (2024)	Children aged 0–3 years	Parental stress mental health problems; competence & emotional attachment risk
Uddin & Hasan, (2023)	U.S. Children	Excessive digital media depression; family resilience risk
Ghanouni & Eves, (2023)	Children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)	Parental resilience child social participation; income resilience; stress resilience
Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2022)	German Children	Pandemic quality of life (15,3% → 40,2%); mental health problems (9,9% → 17,8%)
Zellma et al., (2022)	Polish Schools	Religious education declining; transgressive approach proposed.
Browne et al., (2021)	Refugee Children	Trauma & limited resources mental risk; multilevel support strengthens resilience.
Cui & Hong, (2021)	Chinese University Students	Income loss anxiety; self-control & respect for family impact.
Liebenberg, (2020)	Theoretical	Resilience is dynamic; meaning-making is key.
Brown & Dixon, (2020)	UK Students	Resilience narrowed to academics; students demand a holistic approach.
Duan et al. (2019)	Poor Children & Adolescents	Resilience mental well-being; anxiety & depression; profile variations observed.

Context Implications: pandemic, socio-economic crisis, digital disruption.

Key trend diagram 1. Risk Factors: technology dependency, family conflict, poverty, poor parenting, parental stress, trauma. 2. Protective Factors: self-regulation, family ties, mentoring, family resilience, meaning in life, multilevel support. 3. Global

This synthesis describes the findings and shows the strong link among character education, resilience, and the context in which we live the AI era. The data collected shows a



particular trend that is quite coherent: the child's resilience depends on the interplay of individual, family, social, and structural level factors.

### **RQ1: The Correlation of Mental Resilience Character Education with Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technology Driven Challenges**

This research has proved that character education is directly related to children's mental resilience to the modern-day challenges posed by digital technology and artificial intelligence. Peng et al., (2025) noted that smartphone dependence and high anxiety significantly reduce students' resilience, whereas positive mentoring relationships increase self-efficacy and resilience. If these findings were to be extrapolated to children, character education could be regarded as a form of values mentoring – equipping children with responsible technology use, appropriate communication, and the capacity to empathically endure technology's adverse effects. This supports the notion that character education is not merely a didactic teaching of morality, but rather a protective value filter that shields children from the psychological harm posed by digital exposure.

Moreover, the work of Twilhaar & Wolke, (2025) indicates the self-regulation, the quality of parent-child relationships, and peer relationships and support strengthen the resilience of prematurely born children. Such findings underscore the importance of self-regulation character education, since discipline and responsibility are fundamental values of character education. In the epoch of artificial intelligence, self-regulation is critical for the emotional, temporal, and technological self-management. Lacking self-regulation, children are at risk of electronic device addiction and the digital social pressure, which in turn undermines their mental resilience. Hence, character education and mental resilience are becoming clearer, especially the values of self-control, emotional self-regulation, and social bonds with family and friends.

The findings from the research of Yuan et al., (2025) involving parent and child conflict, further supports this argument. It is evident from the literature on the issue of conflict within a family system, underscores the impact on an adolescent's psychological health and an increase in the risk of being addicted to cell phones. Character education which teaches the importance of communication, respect, and cooperation, helps to mitigate the occurrence of such conflicts. These findings underline the fact that character education is contextual and needs to

involve the concerted efforts of children, families, schools, and the community. Families that do not model the principles of healthy communicative practices and respect tend to create an environment that erodes the growing protective factors of a child. On the other hand, families that embody the character values are able to provide a supportive atmosphere for the mental resilience of children in the age of digital technology.

Field research from Lin et al., (2025) offers a broader angle of macro analysis. According to this research, children who are victims of neglectful training and are engaged in child labor face a higher chance of suffering from anxiety, depression, and developmental lags. This situation becomes worse due to contextual factors like socio-economic status and absent public welfare policies. Within this framework, character education can be viewed as an undue restrictive measure in which the values of hard work, cooperation, and optimism are promoted so that children are able to cope with the structural impediments. On the contrary, character education cannot be an isolated remedy from the problem, as the structural aspects still maintain a considerable influence. This warrants that the relationship between character education and mental resilience is complex, because the values which are cultivated in homes and educational institutions need to be supported with necessary structural provisions.

According Löchner et al., (2024), exposed that emotional bonding and parental skills function as protective factors, while parental stress independently influences the mental well-being of our youngsters. This finding strengthens the point that the character education of a child will be rendered useless if the school is the only institution involved. A child will not be able to internalize mental fortitude character traits if there are no consistent values taught at home and school. Thus, the interplay between character education and mental resilience of children in the age of artificial intelligence ought to be perceived as a relationship of many actors, including children, families, school, and the broader community.

### **RQ2: Integrating the factors of resilience in children with the values of character education.**

Research findings show that the protective factors that support the development of resilience in children are self-regulation, bonding with parents, healthy family climate, peer support, and family resilience. Uddin & Hasan, (2023) argue that the excessive use of digital media increases

the likelihood of anxiety and depression in children, but family resilience can counterbalance that risk significantly. In the context of character education, the values of cohesion, functional family communication, and family responsibility are crucial for the development and strengthening of family resilience. The character education integration with these protective factors suggests that with value learning, the protective factors are supportive of the child development in also strengthening the family system, which is the primary basis for family resilience.

In the study by Ghanouni & Eves, (2023) on children with *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD), it was found that social participation by children was enhanced with the resilience displayed by the parents. This suggests that the protective factors do not only emerge from the child but may also be derived from the family system. The character education in this case will be aligned with these factors by promoting empathy, tolerance, and cooperation amongst children. With these attributes, children will be more responsive to their social environment enhancing their psychosocial protective factors. The findings of this study support the perspective that character education has an integrative value: it develops children's abilities while nurturing social bonds which are protective of their mental wellbeing.

Another investigation incorporated the socioeconomic component as an significant consideration in enhancing children's mental resilience. research carried out by Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2022) found that during the pandemic, children belonging to families with lower socioeconomic status and restricted space were more vulnerable to mental health declines. Optimizable protective factors in this regard include community support and deepening the sense of purpose. Character education can use values of optimism, gratitude, and social responsibility to help children strengthen their coping strategies in the context of socioeconomic adversities. These revelations imply that that character education could provide the foundation for the internalization of values reinforced by external community support, thereby gifting children with dual political resilience as a response to environmental stressors.

The approach on psychotransgressionism courageously argued by Zellma et al., (2022) show how the willingness to leap over some barriers can also developmentally be protective, even in the most unpredictable scenarios. Traits of character, such as, creativity, innovation and

courage can indeed be combined with such protective factors, enabling children to not only persist, but also flourish in circumstances of deep uncertainty. The work of Browne et al., (2021) on children in refugee contexts also illustrates the value of multilevel protective factors, including from family systems to macro-level approaches. Through character education children can be equipped with the transformative power of care and solidarity to aid them in shifting the narrative from traumatic events to new and useful strengths.

The work of Liebenberg, (2020) further deepens the notion of protective factors by underscoring the existential search for meaning as a central mechanism of resilience. Character education can further enhance this mechanism by fostering self-reflective and integrity-based life with purpose narratives. Children who are able to ascribe meaning to their existence are comparatively more equipped to face social and technological challenges. Therefore, the protective factors explored in the literature become a useful and practical foundation to build and integrate character education to enhance the resilience of children as comprehensive and multi-dimensional.

### **RQ3: Artificial Intelligence Era Models for Teaching Character Resilience**

Research synthesis indicates that a model of character education integrated with child resilience must be holistic, differentiated, multilevel, and oriented toward the search for meaning in life. Research by Brown & Dixon, (2020) criticized the approach to resilience in most schools as too single-minded and academically tough with a narrative of "pushing through." They called for an approach that fosters a safe space in schools, attends to children's voices, and involves mental health services. These are some of the issues that a model of character education integrated with resilience needs to address: Ensuring that resilience goes beyond the academic context to include emotional, social, and affective aspects.

As documented in (Duan et al., 2020), children's mental resilience is compartmentalized into various degrees of mental health, well-being, and resilience, where high resilience is associated with positive mental health and well-being and low resilience is associated with negative mental health and well-being. This implies the necessity of the differentiated approach in developing character education models, where every child's resilience profile is the basis for individualized interventions. Low resilient children, for example, require greater values

support, while high resilient children require greater values stimulation for their social capabilities to be developed. With the differentiated approach, character education can be implemented in a more individualized and corrective framework.

In their research, Cui & Hong, (2021) pointed out the self-control and family respect factors of resilience as buffers for children facing family economic challenges. A character education model can integrate the values of family respect and self-discipline as fundamental pillars. As noted by Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2022), character education should have a pluralistic perspective, incorporating families, schools, and the community. This approach is based on the idea that investments in child character development hinge on more than just the content of the curriculum. Collaboration among all stakeholders in the child's development is equally important.

Liebenberg, (2020) notes that the quest for meaning in life is central to resilience. Any character education model that is merged with resilience needs to emphasize self-reflection and a meaning-centered approach. This offers an existential basis that protects children from being easily influenced by technological arena capture or social coercive pressure. Overall, the integrated resilience character education model from the literature is purposeful and flexible in relation to the child's social environment.

## CONCLUSION

This research verifies the thesis steeped in the Introduction, revisiting character education, and why the framing of mental health and psychological resilience, especially in the new AI era, is of utmost importance, is confirmed in the Results and Discussion. The study also makes a practical contribution to educational policy by showing how the mental cultivation of key resilience qualities self-control and empathy serve as a "psychological filter." This reframes resilience for the first time as a multi-dimensional, socially cultivated construct. It articulates the self-regulation and social solidarity which must be woven into the curriculum and illuminates the critical need for a self-sustaining ecosystem of schools, parents, and the wider community. The integration of pedagogy, psychology and technology in this manner is vital for developing innovative, robust policy solutions to the real-world challenges children face in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

The future implications of this study are important for the advance of research in the

area. Future work should develop in the direction of more cross-cultural and longitudinal studies in order to strengthen the evidence on the effectiveness of some character education models, particularly those that use AI tools such as learning chatbots. Moreover, the social justice imperative requires that future work examine more closely the character education available to more vulnerable groups, such as the poor or children in war-torn countries, to determine what character education can do to promote equity and more responsible educational governance. This research focuses on the principal challenges of the AI era, which makes the case for character education particularly relevant and it seeks to develop the on the for agile, strong, and ethical society that such education would endeavor to promote.

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