Implementation of Character Education in Elementary Schools in Indonesia and Malaysia

Aan Komariah[1], Zuraidah Abdullah[2], Dedy Achmad Kurniady[3], Cucun Sunaengsih[4]

[1]Educational Administration Department, Postgraduate School, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia
[2]Educational Management Department, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
[4]Primary School Teacher Education Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia
aan_komariah@upi.edu.

Abstract: This research aims to describe the implementation of character education in elementary schools. The research method used survey by distributing questionnaires by Google form which then were analyzed descriptively and quantitatively. These questionnaires were distributed to principals and teachers in elementary schools in Indonesia and Malaysia. Results of the research show that the implementation of character education consisting of initial assessment of character education implementation, vision, socialization of strengthening character education implementation, mission and formulation of strengthening character education, policy design of strengthening character education, program design of strengthening character education, implementation of strengthening character education, evaluation of strengthening character education program implementation which has been implemented by different values in Indonesia and Malaysia. By this research, it is expected that there will be an illustration on the implementation of strengthening character education which can be used as a reference so there will be superior schools and ones encouraging the presence of characterized students.
Keywords: character comparison, character education, elementary schools

1. Introduction

Indonesia and Malaysia are two countries putting character as the importance goal in education process. Character education is defined as an instrument to prevent any negative behaviors by conscious efforts to embed and develop good values in order to humanize humans, improve character and train student intellectual, create desired characters in order to advance the nation, economic competitiveness and improve social mobility as well as as a lifetime education which is seen as a process leading to a perfect human (Ash-Shidiqqi, 2018; Bates, 2019; Pattaro, 2016). Character education aims to improve quality of school education process and outputs directing to formation of attitude character, both comprehensively and interactively so it can create suitable outputs and competences to improve education quality. (Haryanto& Akhirin, 2018). Also, character education can create students with more resistance to have more ability to adapt with their environment and as a part of their social-politic environment (Bates, 2019; Sanderse, 2019). By the character education, it is expected to be able to create educated society and ones having noble character and ones having awareness to life in a harmonize, tolerant in university, and democratic nationality perspective manner as well as ones having ability to be responsible citizens. Peterson (2020). Thus, character education is seen as one of the necessary priorities to obtain political supports from policy makers. By the policy in character education, it shows strategic position of character education as the main indicators of education success. This is confirmed by research results stating that by having good character, students can improve and perform character values and noble values, and then apply them in their daily life and can tak responsibility of a good citizen right and responsibility awareness so they can contribute to the national progress (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). However in its implementation, it is not necessarily implemented based on the expectation. Research results also show that the implementation of character education in Indonesian education system for the last two decades basically has led to positive impacts for the development of student character, but in its implementation, it is still necessary to be improve (Zurqoni, Retnawati, Arlinwibowo, Apino, 2018). The implementation of character education in Indonesia has not clear structure. It is the focus of the government not only in micro level but also in macro level. In the micro level of school level, there is still lack of understanding on the essence, goals and model of character education implementation which is seen as one of the arising problems in the implementation of character education (Purwanto, Komariah, Kurniady, & Sunaengsih, 2019). Also, there are differences on the current implementation model at each school so there are still not optimal focus, involvement and commitment given by school members in implementing this program. Ultimately, it leads to uncivilized and isolated strengthening character education implementation. In the mezzo level or in regional level (province/Regency) all parties still have no self-confidence and shared commitment in this implementation of character education (Komariah, Kurniady, Sunaengsih, Purwanto, & Nurlatifah, 2020). In addition, there is no strict sanctions given to any schools which do not implement the character education and there is less optimal role

of supervisors in evaluating character education implementation which leads to inability of the character education to be well-cultivated. In the macro level or national level, character education policy is not followed by implementation model as the guidance for schools in Indonesia. The absence of character education implementation standard model gives impacts to various school understanding and parties related to the implementation of character education policy. Character education in the macro level is the main background which must be facilitated together between Regional Government and Ministry of National Education through the policies. By the existence of the policies, there will be mode conducive synchronization process between psycho-pedagogic character education at class and in the environment of educational unit. The policies are seen as the base or pillar of character education implementation. Character development in the macro context covers overall contexts of character planning and development implementation involving all stakeholders of national education. Support of government policy (*political will*) aims to create conducive situation for character learning and education process in each educational unit and to support educational success in macro level (Suhardi, Komariah, Kurniady, 2020).

People having strong character both individually and socially are people having good character, morals and morals. Given this urgent character, educational institutions have the responsibility to instill it through learning process by strengthening character education which in the present context, it is very relevant to overcoming moral crises (Syamsuyurnita & Hasdinar, 2017). Policies in education show the efforts taken by government in order to encourage the formation of national character. The concept of character education refers to a communitarian moral attitude characterized by Indonesian personality which is taken the spirit and the values of Pancasila and norms based on the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Thus, the government issued Regulation of the President (Perpres) on Strengthening Character Education. The Perpres is registered as Regulation of the President (Perpres) Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education. Based on article 1 of Regulation of the President Regulation (Perpres) No 87 of 2017, it is stated that Strengthening Character Education is an educational movement under the responsibility of educational units in order to strengthen students' character by harmonization of feeling, thinking, and sports through involvement and cooperation of education units, families and communities as parts of the National Mental Revolution Movement.

The objectives of Strengthening Character Education based on the Regulation of the President (Perpres) No. 87 of 2017 are: (a) to develop and equip students as Indonesian golden generation in 2045 with the spirit of Pancasila and good character education to face dynamics of future change; (b) to develop a national education platform that places character education as the main soul in the delivery of education for students by supports given by public involvement through formal, non-formal, and informal education channels by still considering Indonesian cultural diversity; and (c) to revitalize and strengthen potential and competence of educators, educational staff, students, community, and family environment in implementing Strengthening Character Education (Suhardi, et al, 2020). The Ministry of Education and Culture has identified 18 character values that are required to be instilled by students from Religion, Pancasila, Culture, and National Education Goals, including religious, honest, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity , spirit of nationality, love the country, appreciating achievements, communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, environmental concern, social concern, and responsibility (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). There are four values as the priority of national character known as 4R, namely: (1) resilience, (2) respect, (3) responsibility (4) Recognition (Bates, 2019).

In this 21st century, there are many challenges along with time changes and increasingly rapid flow of globalization (Bialik, Bogan, Fade, & Horvathova, 2016; Sanderse, 2019). Therefore, it is greatly necessary for quality of superior human resources having high level of competitiveness and character by a nation in order to keep up with the time changes so that it can support the existence of a nation in the international arena but without losing the national identity. Urgency of strengthening character education is development of human resources as the foundations for national development by necessary 21st century skills to be owned by students, including: character quality, basic literacy, and 4C competence (critical thinker, collaborator, creator, communicator) in order to realize the competitive advantage of the 2045 golden generation and reduce the tendency of morality, ethics, and character degradation conditions (Khotimah, 2019).

A great nation has strong character accompanied by high competence, which grows and develops from education and the environment that implements good values such as resilience, respect, responsibility, and recognition in all aspects of national and state life (Bates, 2019).

Character education must be implemented starting from the elementary school level. Students at the elementary school level will be easier to form personalities which will give impacts on their character so that at this time,

character education must be emphasized. In addition, Strengthening Character Education offers character education as the core of education in elementary schools (Muttaqin, Raharjo, & Masturi, 2018). Character education can play a very important role in strengthening students' character (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Character education is all of which taken by teachers to influence on students' character so that they can be achievers and behave well (Jeynes, 2019). Teachers serve as part of an effective factor and can develop students' character to be full of passion, lovely and discipline individual (Krisjansson, 2015). However, in the implementation of strengthening character education, it is inseparable of principal roles as school leaders having responsibility to regulate policies about strengthening character education and giving direction for teachers as well as preparing plans with teachers and all staff in schools related to the strengthening character education. Character development will not reach its success without correct management (Temiz, 2016). Therefore, success of character education programs is influenced by planning, implementation and evaluation in term of strengthening character education activities or programs (Zurqoni, Retnawati, Arlinwibowo, Apino,2018).

The on-going character education in school currently is implemented in the curriculum by various issues such as self-development program, integration to all subjects and school culture (Suhardi, et al, 2019). The strengthening character education focuses on program structure, curriculum structure and activity structure (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). The strengthening character education activities or program should be started by learning social phenomena in the community and school community which is seen as the initial assessment on the character education. An initial study taken in Elementary Schools in Purwakarta Regency shows that elementary schools in Purwakarta Regency are education institutions which have implemented character education program, it can be seen from habituation of instilling character education values (Purwanto, et al., 2019).

From the explanation, it can be seen that the character education is an important urgency to be implemented at schools both in Indonesia and Malaysia in order to place character as the very essential goals in the education process to lead to a national progress. Thus, the researchers are interested at taking survey to the dimensions of the character education implementation consisting of initial assessment of the character education implementation, socialization of the implementation of strengthening character education, vision, mission and formulation of strengthening character education, policy design of strengthening character education, program design of strengthening character education, implementation of strengthening character education, and evaluation of the implementation of strengthening character education program in Indonesia and Malaysia so that it can determine the comparison of the implementation of character education in Indonesia and Malaysia.

2. Research methodelogy

The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative method with a survey. By this method, it is expected that the researchers will be able to get an overview of the implementation of character education in elementary schools in Indonesia and Malaysia. For the Indonesian region, the research was carried out at Elementary Schools in Purwakarta, West Java Regency, Indonesia, while for the Malaysian region, it was conducted at Elementary Schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In the data collection, the researchers used a questionnaire instrument distributed via Google form with research respondents, namely 155 elementary school principals and 756 teachers. The data obtained were then analyzed using frequency analysis and diagrams so that it could draw the mean for each indicator in each dimension of the implementation of character education.

3. Results and discussion

The implementation of character education from 7 dimensions includes initial assessment of the implementation of character education, socialization of strengthening character education implementation, vision, mission and formulation of strengthening character education, policy design of strengthening character education, program design of strengthening character education, implementation of strengthening character education, and evaluation of implementation. This strengthening character education program will describe the comparison in Indonesia and Malaysia in the following diagram.
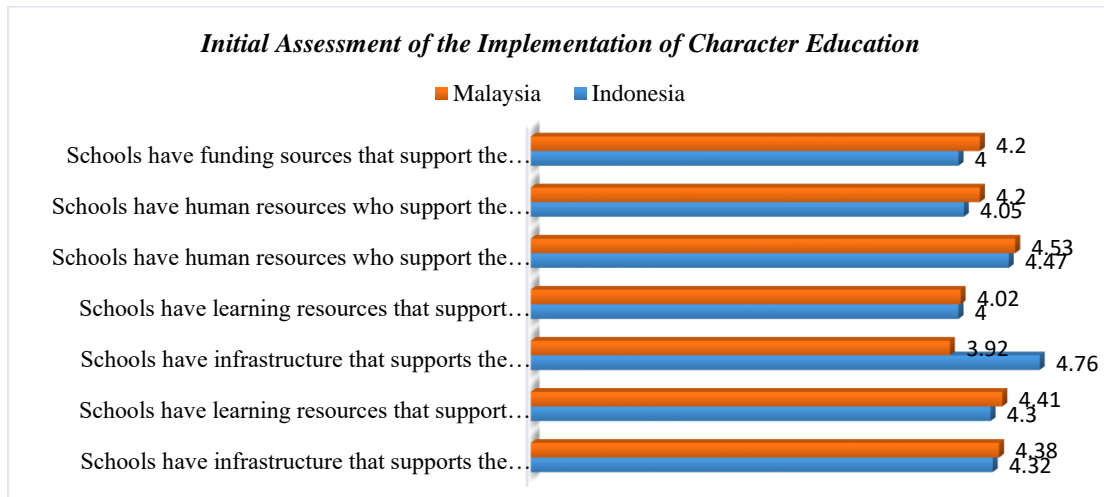   a.   From the principal aspect

Figure 1. Comparison of Initial Assessment of Character Education Implementation in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall initial assessment of the character education implementation in terms of principals between both countries shows a very good mean score approaching 5 and the Malaysian group has a higher tendency to assess the character education implementation than Indonesia. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools have learning resources that support the implementation of character education outside the school", while the highest ranking is found for the indicator of "schools have human resources that support the implementation of character education at schools".

Figure 2. Comparison of Socialization of Character Education Strengthening Implementation in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall socialization of the strengthening character education implementation for the Malaysian group tends to have a higher score than Indonesia in terms of principals. The lowest rank is on the indicator of "the formulation of priority values for the strengthening character education in schools involving interested parties", while the highest ranking is on the indicator of "schools determine local values according to the local socio-cultural background".
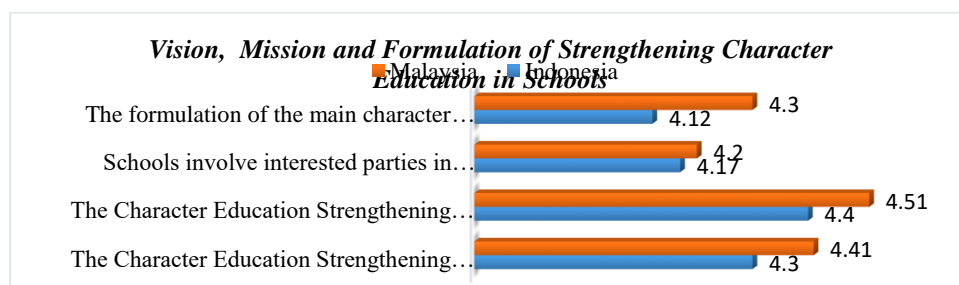

Figure 3. Comparison of Vision, Mission and Formulation of Strengthening Character Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall vision, mission, and formulation of character education for the Malaysian group tends to have higher scores than Indonesia in terms of principals. The lowest rank is found for the indicator "Schools involve interested parties in formulating the school's vision and mission in strengthening character

education", while the highest ranking is for the indicator of "Strengthening integrated character education programs in the formulation of school curriculum".
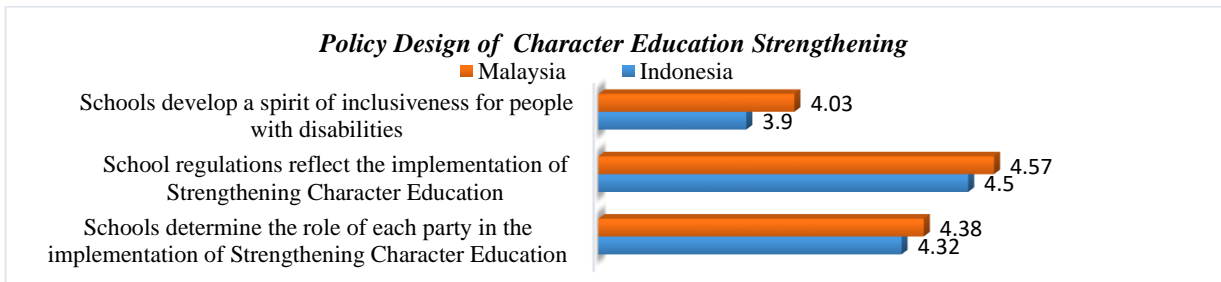

Figure 4. Comparison of Policy Design of Strengthening Character Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall policy design of strengthening character education for the Malaysian group tends to have a higher score than Indonesia in terms of principals. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools develop a spirit of inclusiveness for people with disabilities", while the highest ranking is for the indicator of "school regulations reflect the implementation of Strengthening Character Education".
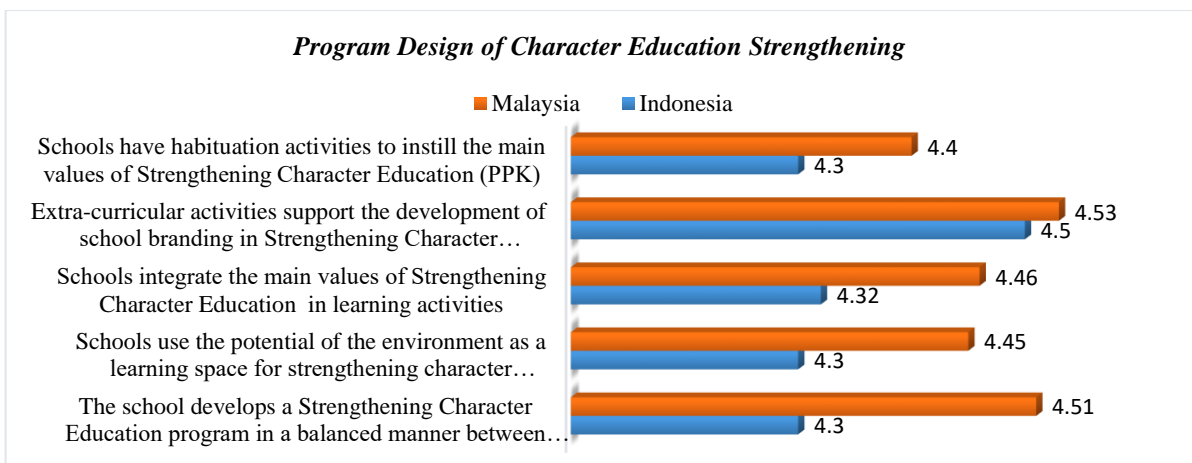

Figure 5. Comparison of Program Design of Character Education Strengthening in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall program design of character education strengthening for the Malaysian group tends to have a higher score than Indonesia in terms of principals. The lowest rank is for the indicator of "schools have habituation activities to instill the main values of strengthening character education", while the highest ranking is for the indicator of "extra-curricular activities support the development of school branding in strengthening character education".
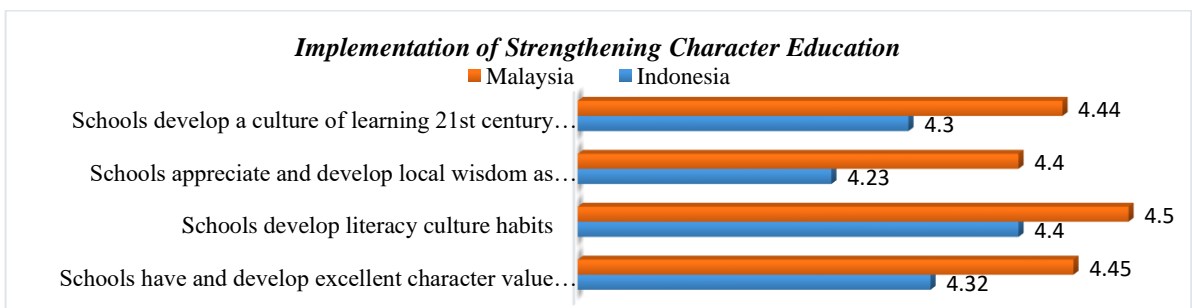

Figure 6. Comparison of Implementation of Strengthening Character Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall the implementation of strengthening the character education of the Malaysian group tends to have a higher score in terms of the principal. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools appreciate and develop local wisdom as school culture", while the highest rank is found for the indicator of "schools develop literacy culture".
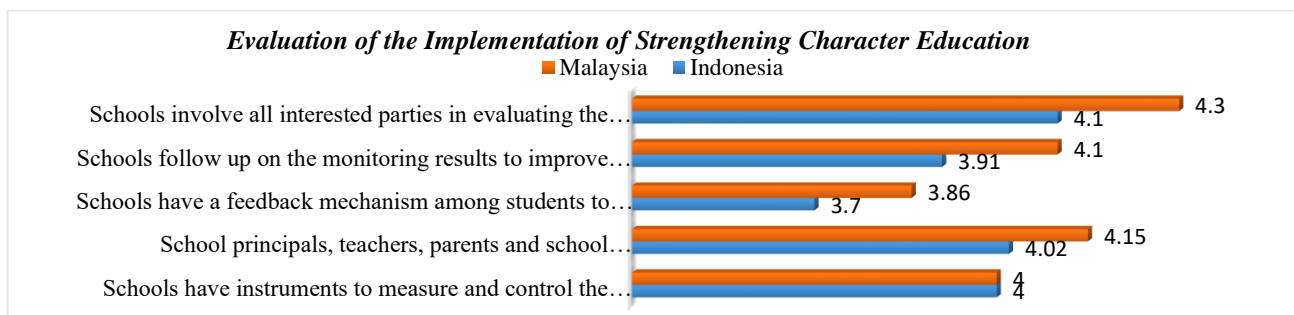
Figure 7. Comparison of Evaluation of the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall the implementation of strengthening the character education of the Malaysian group tends to have a higher score in terms of the principal. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools have the mechanism of feedback between students to improve individual behavior and school culture", while the highest rank is found for the indicators of "schools involve all stakeholders in evaluating the implementation of strengthening character education".

Then comparison of the implementation of character education in Indonesia and Malaysia from the aspect of principals will be presented in the following diagram based on the mean value of each dimension of the implementation of character educations.
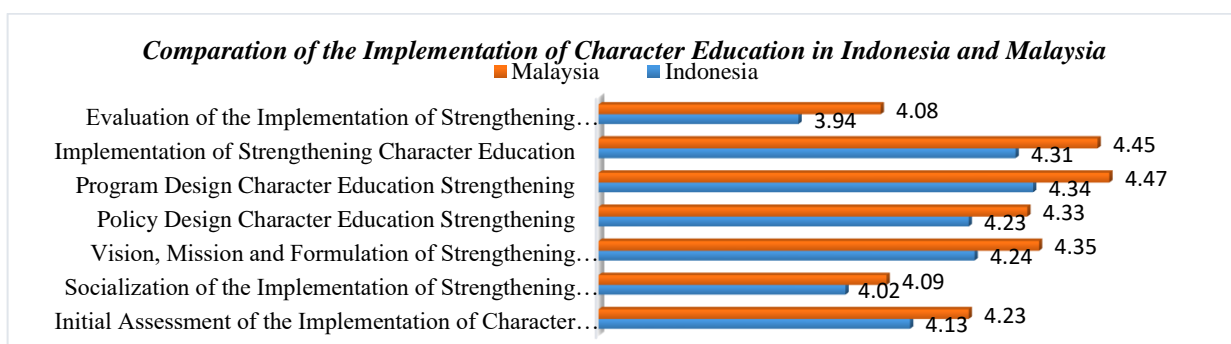

Figure 8 Comparison of the Implementation of Character Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the picture above, the overall implementation of character education for the Malaysian group tends to be higher than that of Indonesia in terms of principals. The lowest rank for both the Indonesian and Malaysian groups was found in the dimensions of the evaluation of the implementation of strengthening character education, while the highest rank for both Indonesian and Malaysian groups was found in the dimensions of the program design for strengthening character education.

Based on the research findings, almost all principals answered for the scale of 4; meaning that the implementation of character education in general tends to be well-implemented from the aspect of the principals. However, there are still a number of indicators having low scores so this implementation of character education is still necessary for improvement to be maximally implemented. This research found out that the dimension had the lowest rank in the implementation of character education in both countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, is evaluation of the implementation of character education dimension. The evaluation as a final step of a series of a program implementation serves an important role to measure the extent of the success of this strengthening character education program implementation (Novianti, 2017; Wuryani, Roemintoyo, & Yamtinah, 2018). Also, the evaluation of character education implementation can determine any challenges faced in the implementation of character education both from extern and intern factors (Komariah et al., 2020). Such challenges show any difficulties faced in the implementation of strengthening character education. These give great impacts on the achievement of character education goals (Youker, Zielinski, Hunter, & Bayer, 2016). Thus, to have good evaluation implementation, principals and teachers must prepare systematic and structured evaluation tools to measure the achievement of character education goal program. (Karaagac, 2017).

Also, different to any previous studies, this research found out that in the dimension of policy program of strengthening character education show that the lowest rank is for the indicator of "schools develop inclusivity spirit". It is caused by an expectation that education will lead to independence, spirit of inclusivity and tolerance.

Thus, one of the policies of strengthening character education programs to improve the spirit of inclusivity and tolerance is formulation of independence character as an optimization of humanity (Sudirman, 2019).

Then, this research also found out that the highest rank is in the dimension of program design of strengthening character education. Therefore, it is an obligation that this strengthening character education movement in all program implementation must be integrated into program structure, curriculum structure and activity (Kemdikbud, 2018).
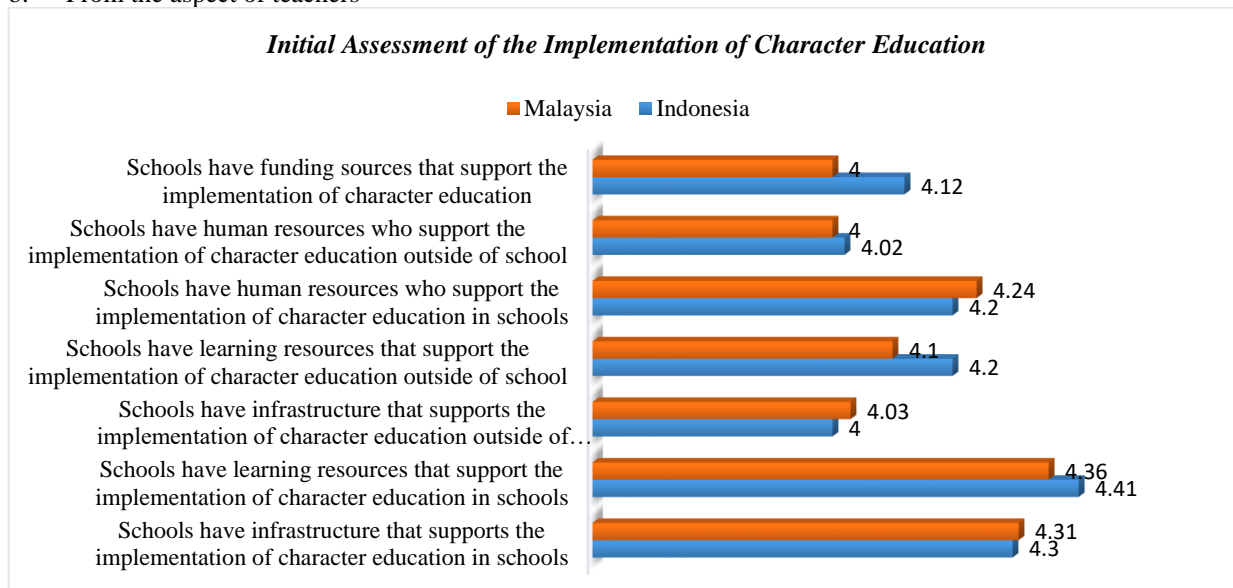
b.   From the aspect of teachers

Figure 9. Initial Assessment of the Implementation of Character Education In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall initial assessment of the implementation of character education in terms of teachers between both countries shows a very good mean score approaching 5 and the Malaysian group tends to have relatively the same comparative score. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools have human resources that support the implementation of character education outside of school", while the highest ranking is found for the indicator of "schools have learning resources that support the implementation of character education in schools".
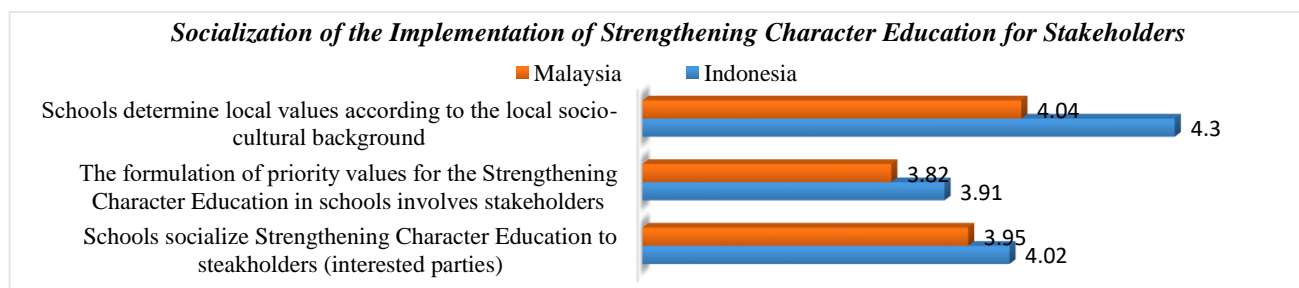

Figure 10. Comparison of the Socialization of the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education for Stakeholders In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall socialization of the implementation of strengthening character education for the Indonesian group tends to have a higher score than Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "the formulation of priority values for the strengthening of character education in schools involving stakeholders", while the highest ranking is for the indicator of "schools determine local values according to local socio-cultural backgrounds".
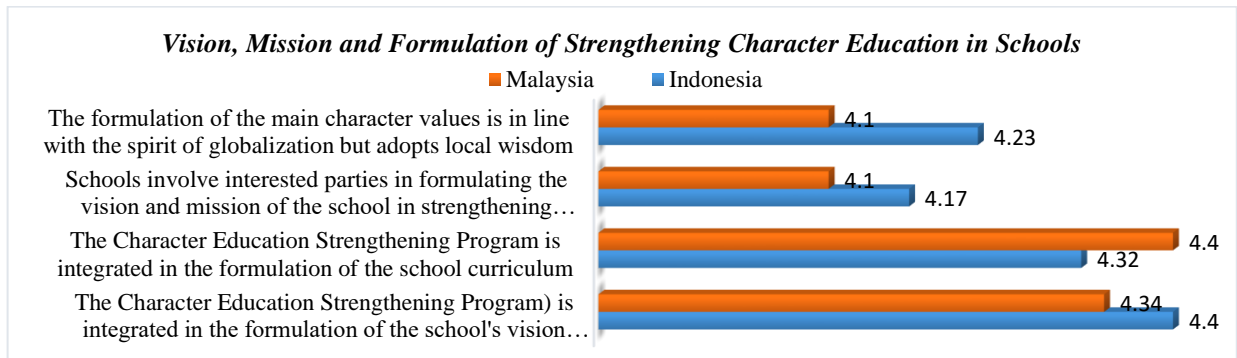
Figure 11. Comparison of Vision, Mission and Formulation of Strengthening Character Education in Schools In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall vision, mission, and formulation of strengthening character education for the Indonesian group tends to have a higher score than Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "Schools involve interested parties in formulating the school's vision and mission in strengthening character education", while the highest ranking is for the indicator of "Strengthening program for integrated character education in the formulation of school vision and mission".
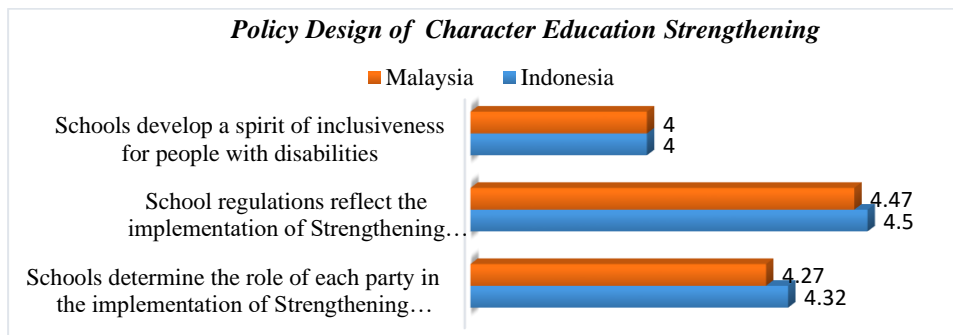

Figure 12. Comparison of Policy Design of Character Education Strengthening In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall policy design of strengthening character education for the Indonesian group tends to have a higher score than Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools develop a spirit of inclusiveness for people with disabilities", while the highest ranking is found for the indicator of "school regulations reflect the implementation of strengthening character education".
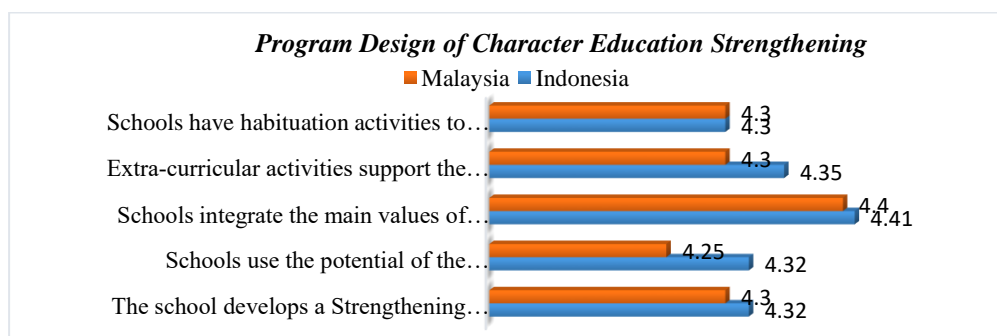

Figure 13. Comparison of Program Design of Character Education Strengthening In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall program design of strengthening character education for the Indonesian group tends to have a higher score than Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools have habituation activities to instill the main values of strengthening character education", while the highest ranking is for the indicator of "schools integrate the main values of strengthening character education in learning activities".
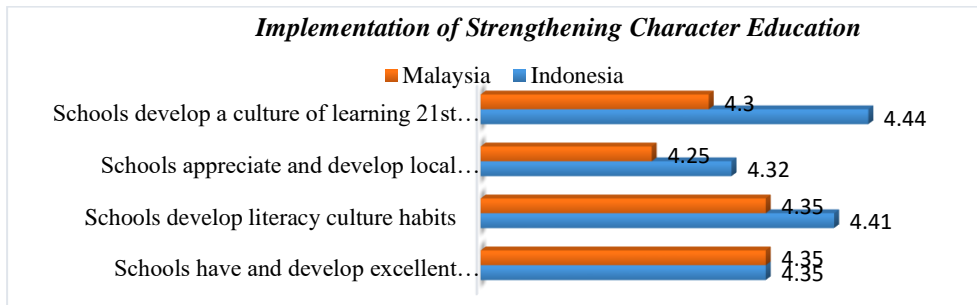
Figure 14. Comparison of Implementation of Strengthening Character Education In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall implementation of strengthening character education of the Indonesian group tends to have a higher score than Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools appreciate and develop local wisdom as school culture", while the highest ranking is found for the indicator of "schools develop literacy culture".
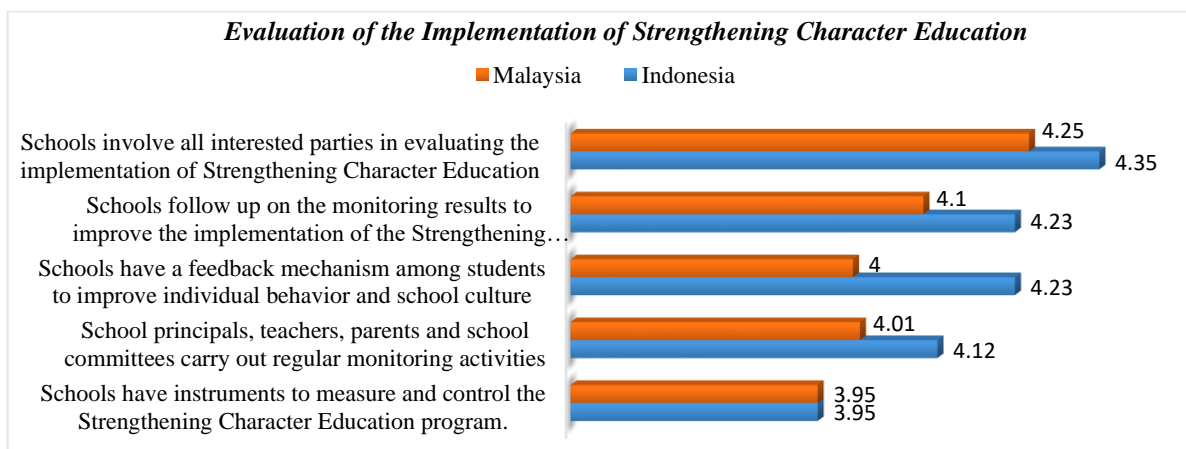

Figure 15. Comparison of Evaluation of the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education In Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the diagram above, overall evaluation of the implementation of strengthening character education in the Indonesian group tends to have a higher score than Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank is found for the indicator of "schools have instruments to measure and control the strengthening character education program", while the highest ranking is found on the indicator of "schools involve all interested parties in evaluating the implementation of strengthening character education".

Then, the comparison of the implementation of character education between Indonesia and Malaysia in terms of teachers will be presented in the following diagram based on the mean value of each dimension in the implementation of character education.
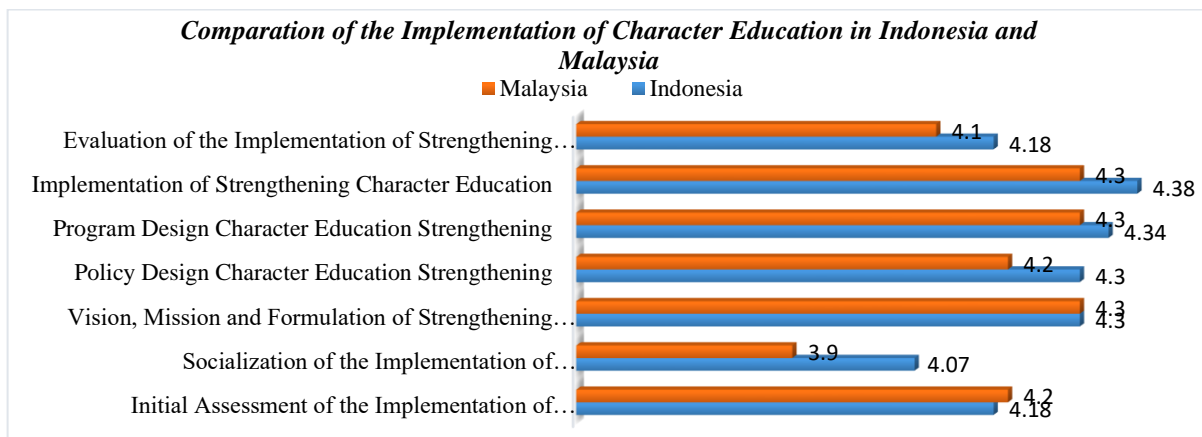

Figure 16. Comparation of the Implementation of Character Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Based on the figure above, overall implementation of character education for the Indonesian group tends to be higher than that of Malaysia in terms of teachers. The lowest rank for both Indonesian and Malaysian groups was found in the dimension of the socialization of the implementation of strengthening character education, while the highest rank for both the Indonesian and Malaysian groups was in the dimensions of implementation of strengthening character education.

Based on results of this study, almost all principals answered on a scale of 4, which means that the implementation of character education in general tends to be well-implemented in terms of teachers. However, there are still some indicators that have low scores so that it is still necessary to improve the implementation of this character education so that it is can be implemented more optimally. This study found that the dimension with the lowest rank in the implementation of character education in both Indonesia and Malaysia is the dimension of the socialization of the implementation of strengthening character education.

Socialization serves a very important role, especially for principals in giving socialization of the strengthening character education to teachers and all interested parties in succession the strengthening character education movement in schools (Komariah, et al., 2020). Socialization will facilitate the implementation of strengthening character education because all parties have understood their respective roles to support the implementation of strengthening character education. Therefore, to increase the dimension of the socialization of the implementation of character education, it is necessarily required good principals (Purwanto et al., 2019).

Then, the results of the study also show that the highest rank is in the dimension of the implementation of strengthening character education. This study found that literacy culture in the dimension of the implementation of character education has the highest average value. As previous research has proven, literacy culture can have positive impacts on strengthening character education (Rizzo & Bajovic, 2016; Zaenab, Chamisijatin, & Wahyuni, 2020). Strengthening character education, especially in elementary schools, can be done by taking simple things namely habituation in schools, one of which is developing a literacy culture (Ergen, 2019). Through literacy, students are given understanding to be able to develop rational thinking skills from reading results and strengthen characters that can be drawn from the meaning of a reading which is then implemented in everyday life (Turan & Ulutas, 2016; Wardhani, S, Rachmadtullah, & Siregar , 2018).

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education in Indonesia and Malaysia in general for the indicators of each dimension show good mean score. Comparison of the implementation of character education from the aspect of principals and teachers has different tendency results. From the aspect of principals, the implementation of character education in elementary schools in Malaysia tends to be higher than in Indonesia. Meanwhile, from the teacher perspective, the implementation of character education in elementary schools in Indonesia tends to be higher than in Malaysia. The indicator with the lowest score in terms of principals in both Indonesia and Malaysia is the indicator of the evaluation of the implementation of strengthening character education. Meanwhile, in terms of teachers, both in Indonesia and Malaysia, there is an indicator of socialization of the implementation of strengthening character education.

By the overview of the implementation of character education, it is expected that it will be able to provide an overview of the implementation of the strengthening character education program so that there will be efforts in order to improve the implementation of character education on any indicators with low scores. So, all indicators in each dimension of the implementation of character education can be well-implemented which will give impacts on the successful achievement of the goals of strengthening character education.

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