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Implementing the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children through School Culture: A Case Study in Balikpapan

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children through school culture at an elementary school in Balikpapan. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. The participants consisted of one school principal and two classroom teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in the program. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation and analyzed through data reduction, coding, categorization, thematic development, and interpretation. Data credibility was established through source and method triangulation. The findings indicate that the Seven Habits were integrated into school culture through daily routines, religious activities, *Rabu Ceria*, teacher role modeling, project-based learning, social interaction, and school-parent communication. Participants perceived these practices as supporting students' discipline, responsibility, religiosity, independence, creativity, and social awareness. School culture provided a contextual framework for reinforcing the habits through consistent and repeated practices, while teacher role modeling translated program values into students' everyday experiences. Collaboration between schools and parents further supported the continuity of habituation between school and home. However, digital technology was identified as a contextual challenge in maintaining students' habits. The study highlights that the implementation of the Seven Habits is sustained through the integration of habituation, role modeling, learning activities, and school-parent collaboration, providing a contextual foundation for students' character development.

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Introduction

Character education has become one of the primary focuses in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Through the Joint Circular Letter of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2025 concerning the Strengthening of Character Education through Habituation in Educational Institutions, the government emphasized the development of students' positive habits through the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children. The program promotes seven daily habits, namely waking up early, worshiping, exercising, maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet, enjoying learning, engaging with the community, and going to bed early. These habits are directed toward the development of discipline, responsibility, healthy lifestyles, learning motivation, and social awareness (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). However, the implementation of character-building habituation may face challenges, including student discipline, digital influences, parental supervision, and the consistency of school practices in supporting character development (Lisnasari & Solin, 2025).

Character education is a planned process of developing positive values through learning, habituation, and everyday experience. Lickona (2019) explains that character education involves knowing, feeling, and doing the good. Thus, character education extends beyond cognitive understanding to students' attitudes and behaviors. In elementary education, school culture provides an important environment for character formation through habituation, role modeling, discipline, and positive social interaction (Udin et al., 2021). A positive school culture is also associated with the development of students' attitudes and behaviors (Rosad, 2019). Therefore, character values need to be integrated into students' daily experiences rather than delivered solely through classroom instruction.

Habituation provides opportunities for students to experience and practice character values repeatedly in their daily lives. Character education can be embedded in school culture through routine activities, teacher role modeling, and positive social interactions (Susilo & Ramadan, 2021). This perspective is supported by Nurasiah et al. (2022), who found that integrating cultural values into elementary school learning supported the development of students' tolerance and responsibility. Similarly, Sarkadi et al. (2022) showed that reflective, collaborative, and communicative learning processes can facilitate the integration of character values into educational activities. These findings indicate that character formation is closely related to the consistency of school practices and the involvement of educational actors.

The Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children reflects this habituation-oriented approach by integrating religious practice, healthy living, learning, discipline, and social engagement into students' daily routines. Such practices are relevant to the development of discipline, responsibility, and social awareness (Sinulingga, 2025). Consistent habituation programs have also been associated with students' discipline, learning concentration, healthy lifestyles, and social awareness (Mukarromah, 2025). In addition, school culture provides a context for sustaining these practices through routine activities that foster discipline, responsibility, courtesy, and social awareness (Amelia & Ramadan, 2021). A positive, inclusive, and collaborative school culture also supports character

development (Suwarni, 2022), while school culture has an important role in sustaining character education initiatives (Istiqomah et al., 2022).

The integration of character values into school culture can also be strengthened through cultural and contextual approaches. Bujuri et al. (2023) found that the integration of local cultural values into environmental-based character education provided a context for character formation in elementary schools. Similarly, Sakti et al. (2024) demonstrated that the integration of local wisdom into learning could support character development, while collaboration among teachers, parents, and school leaders strengthened community engagement in the educational process. These findings indicate that character education is not only a matter of individual student behavior but is also shaped by the cultural environment and interactions among educational actors.

From an Islamic education perspective, habituation and exemplary behavior are closely related to the formation of *akhlaq* and *adab*. Character education in Islam emphasizes the integration of knowledge, moral conduct, worship, and social responsibility. Prayitno et al. (2022) identified prophetic educational values related to humanization, liberation, and transcendence, including generosity, honesty, tolerance, politeness, education, health, mutual assistance, hard work, worship, gratitude, and humility. These values provide a relevant perspective for interpreting the Seven Habits because several of its components involve worship, healthy living, learning, discipline, social interaction, and responsibility. Thus, the Seven Habits can be examined not only as a national character education program but also through an Islamic educational perspective that emphasizes *akhlaq*, *adab*, exemplary conduct, and the habituation of good practices.

Previous studies have examined character education through school culture, religious habituation, cultural values, and particular learning models. Kurniawan (2021), for example, found that school culture contributes to strengthening students' religious character through collective prayers, moral messages, and congregational worship. Other studies have highlighted the contribution of habituation and school culture to discipline, responsibility, and social awareness (Amelia & Ramadan, 2021; Istiqomah et al., 2022). However, research specifically examining the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children through school culture at the elementary school level remains limited, particularly because the program was newly introduced nationally in 2025. Existing studies have also tended to focus on particular character values, cultural practices, or learning models rather than examining the seven habits as an integrated habituation system. Furthermore, their connection with Islamic educational concepts such as *akhlaq*, *adab*, worship, exemplary conduct, and social responsibility has received limited attention.

An elementary school in Balikpapan City has developed a school culture oriented toward student character formation through various habituation programs involving religious activities, discipline, healthy lifestyles, learning culture, social awareness, and teacher role modeling. These practices provide an empirical context for examining how the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children are translated into everyday school practices and related to students' graduate profiles. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children through school culture at an elementary school in Balikpapan City.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children through school culture at an elementary school in Balikpapan City. The case study design was selected because it enables an in-depth examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly distinguishable (Yin, as cited in Poltak, 2024). Similarly, case studies provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular case through intensive and in-depth data exploration (Rahardjo & Gudnanto, 2022).

The study was conducted at an elementary school in Balikpapan City, East Kalimantan. Participants consisted of one school principal and two classroom teachers, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in and understanding of the implementation of the Seven Habits and school habituation programs (Sulistyo, 2023).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain in-depth information regarding program planning, implementation, habituation practices, teacher role modeling, supporting and inhibiting factors, and participants' perceptions of students' character development, while allowing the researcher to develop follow-up questions according to the research context (Fadli, 2024). Documentation included school program records, activity reports, photographs, and other relevant documents.

Data were analyzed through data reduction, coding, categorization, thematic development, and interpretation. The analysis focused on patterns related to the Seven Habits, school culture, habituation practices, teacher role modeling, and students' graduate profiles. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information from the principal and teachers and method triangulation by comparing interview findings with relevant documentation. Throughout the research process, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Results

Informants' Perspectives on the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Program

The study involved three participants: one school principal and two classroom teachers who were directly involved in implementing the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children at an elementary school in Balikpapan City. The principal provided information concerning school-level implementation, supporting factors, challenges, and sustainability, while the two classroom teachers provided information concerning students' daily habituation practices and teacher role modeling. The findings were organized into five themes: (1) teachers' understanding of the program, (2) implementation through school culture, (3) teacher role modeling, (4) perceived changes in student behavior and graduate profiles, and (5) supporting factors, challenges, and sustainability efforts.

Teachers' Understanding of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Program

The interview findings showed that the teachers understood the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children as a character education initiative designed to cultivate positive daily behaviors and support the development of a disciplined, healthy, and morally responsible generation. One informant stated:

"My understanding of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children is that they are intended to strengthen character education and support the development of the Golden Generation. The program focuses on cultivating seven positive daily habits, namely waking up early, worshiping, exercising, eating healthy and nutritious food, enjoying learning, engaging with the community, and going to bed early."

The statement indicates that the teachers viewed the program as a structured habituation process rather than merely a collection of routine activities. The seven habits were understood as daily practices encompassing religious, physical, academic, personal, and social dimensions. This understanding provided a basis for integrating the program into students' everyday experiences at school.

Program Implementation through School Culture

The Seven Habits were implemented through daily routines and school activities. Teachers provided reminders and guidance, particularly to students in the lower grades. One informant explained:

"At school, since I am a first-grade homeroom teacher, we always remind the children to wake up early so that they can perform their prayers earlier."

The school also incorporated the habits into *Rabu Ceria* (Cheerful Wednesday), which consisted of physical exercise, a morning assembly, and communal meals:

"Every Wednesday we have an activity called Rabu Ceria. We exercise together, attend the morning assembly, and then have meals together."

These practices indicate that the Seven Habits were embedded in the school's existing routines and collective activities. The implementation involved repeated opportunities for students to practice discipline, worship, healthy living, learning, and social interaction. Thus, school culture provided a practical context for translating the program's principles into students' daily activities.

School Culture and Teacher Role Modeling

The findings further identified teacher role modeling as an important element of the habituation process. Teachers described their role as extending beyond instruction to demonstrating the behaviors expected from students. One informant stated:

"As facilitators, we must provide real examples in our daily lives. For instance, speaking politely, disposing of trash properly, and reminding students to perform their prayers on time."

The statement demonstrates that habituation was supported through both verbal guidance and teachers' daily conduct. Behaviors such as politeness, cleanliness, discipline,

and religious practice were introduced through direct examples in the school environment. Teacher modeling therefore complemented routine activities by providing students with observable examples of the values promoted through the Seven Habits.

From an Islamic education perspective, these practices are relevant to the formation of *akhlaq* and *adab*, particularly through the practice of religious observance and exemplary conduct. However, this relationship is further interpreted in the Discussion section rather than treated as a direct causal finding.

Perceived Changes in Student Behavior and Graduate Profiles

Participants reported perceived changes in students' behavior, particularly in discipline and responsibility. One informant stated:

"There have been improvements, especially in discipline and responsibility. Students are more punctual, orderly, submit assignments on time, and are willing to admit their mistakes."

The participants perceived that the implementation of the program was associated with several aspects of students' graduate profiles, particularly religiosity, independence, and creativity. One informant explained:

"It develops creativity. Students produce many works through project-based learning while also cultivating moral values, faith, and independence."

The participants reported perceived changes in punctuality, orderly behavior, responsibility for assignments, willingness to acknowledge mistakes, independence, and creativity. Project-based learning was also described as an activity through which students could develop creative work while incorporating moral and religious values. These findings suggest that the Seven Habits were perceived by participants as being connected with several dimensions of students' character and graduate profiles.

Supporting Factors, Challenges, and Sustainability Efforts

The implementation of the Seven Habits was supported by collaboration between the school and parents, particularly through communication concerning students' daily habits. The school principal emphasized the importance of cooperation between teachers and parents in monitoring and reinforcing students' habits. The principal stated:

"The main supporting factors come from the school environment and parents. Good communication and cooperation between teachers and parents help monitor students' habits."

From the principal's perspective, school-parent communication provided an important form of support for maintaining students' habituation both at school and at home. Such collaboration enabled teachers and parents to exchange information and provide consistent guidance regarding students' daily routines.

The principal also identified digital technology as one of the challenges in maintaining students' habits. The increasing accessibility of digital content at home was perceived as requiring continuous guidance from teachers and other adults. The principal explained:

“One challenge is the influence of technology. Children today can access everything instantly, so they require continuous guidance and habituation from teachers.”

This statement indicates that digital technology was viewed as a contextual challenge that could affect the consistency of students’ daily routines. Therefore, continued guidance and habituation were considered necessary to help students maintain the behaviors promoted through the Seven Habits.

In terms of sustainability, the principal described the school’s involvement in professional collaboration through teacher communities and working groups. These activities provided opportunities for teachers to exchange experiences and share practices related to the implementation of the program. The principal stated:

“We collaborate with teacher communities and share best practices through teacher working groups in Balikpapan.”

The findings from the principal’s perspective indicate that the sustainability of the Seven Habits was supported by three interconnected factors: school–parent collaboration, continuous guidance in responding to digital challenges, and professional collaboration among teachers. These factors provided contextual support for maintaining the implementation of the program within the school culture.

Discussion

The findings show that the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children were implemented through school culture by integrating habituation into daily routines, collective activities, teacher role modeling, learning activities, social interaction, and communication with parents. Rather than functioning as a separate program, the Seven Habits were incorporated into existing school practices, allowing students to encounter and practice the targeted values repeatedly. This finding is consistent with the understanding of school culture as a system of values, norms, and habits collectively practiced by members of the school community (Nizary & Hamami, 2020). In the context of this study, school culture provided the environment in which the Seven Habits were translated from program principles into observable daily practices. Table 1 summarizes the forms of implementation identified in the study.

Table 1. Implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children through School Culture at an Elementary School in Balikpapan City

No.	Program/School Culture	Form of Implementation	Character Values Practiced
1	Daily habituation: waking up early, worship, and punctual school attendance	Teachers routinely remind students and reinforce habits through school-home communication	Discipline, responsibility, religiosity
2	<i>Rabu Ceria</i> (Cheerful Wednesday)	Group exercise, morning assembly, and communal meals	Healthy lifestyle, togetherness, discipline
3	Teacher role modeling	Teachers demonstrate courtesy, worship practices, and environmental cleanliness	Integrity, courtesy, responsibility
4	Active learning habituation	Love of learning, structured assignments, and project-based learning	Creativity, independence, love of learning

5	Social activities	interaction	Community engagement, Social awareness, cooperation and peer support
6	School-parent communication		Intensive communication and Character consistency, collaboration home-based support

The table indicates that the implementation was multidimensional. Daily habituation provided continuity, *Rabu Ceria* created collective experiences, teacher role modeling provided concrete examples, learning activities connected habits with academic experiences, and school-parent communication extended habituation beyond the school environment. This pattern supports previous findings that character education through school culture can be developed through routine activities, role modeling, conditioning, and programmed activities. It also corresponds with Nurasiah et al. (2022), who found that the integration of cultural values into elementary school learning can provide a context for developing character values such as tolerance and responsibility. Similarly, Sarkadi et al. (2022) showed that character values can be integrated into educational activities through reflective, collaborative, and communicative learning processes.

School Culture as a Mechanism of Habituation

A central finding of this study is that school culture provided a context for connecting the Seven Habits with students' everyday experiences. Habits such as waking up early, worshipping, exercising, eating healthily, learning, engaging with the community, and sleeping early were not presented only as conceptual messages but were connected with concrete activities and reminders. This finding reinforces Lickona's (2019) view that character education involves the integration of knowing, feeling, and doing the good. Repeated practice provides opportunities for character values to move beyond cognitive understanding and become part of students' behavioral experiences.

The findings also support Huda et al. (2021), who conceptualize school culture as a system of values and norms embedded in interactions among members of the school community. In the present study, the values promoted through the Seven Habits were reflected in daily routines, collective activities, learning practices, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, the contribution of school culture lies not simply in the existence of particular programs but in the consistency with which values are encountered and practiced across different school activities.

This finding is also supported by Bujuri et al. (2023), who demonstrated that character education in elementary schools can be strengthened when character values are embedded within the cultural and environmental context of the school. Sakti et al. (2024) similarly emphasized the importance of contextualizing character education through local wisdom and educational experiences. Although the present study does not specifically examine local wisdom, these studies strengthen the interpretation that character formation becomes more meaningful when values are connected with students' real educational environment.

The findings therefore extend previous studies by showing how the relatively new Seven Habits program can be incorporated into an existing school culture rather than implemented as an isolated character program. This is particularly relevant because the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children was nationally promoted in 2025 as a habituation-based character strengthening movement. The policy itself emphasizes the

integration of the habits into school and family life, supporting the interpretation that the program is intended to develop a shared culture rather than merely a short-term school activity (Kemendikdasmen, 2025).

Teacher Role Modeling and Character Internalization

The second important theme concerns the role of teachers as models of the behaviors promoted through the Seven Habits. The teachers in this study described the importance of demonstrating politeness, cleanliness, worship, and discipline in their daily conduct. This indicates that habituation occurred through both direct instruction and observation.

The role of teachers is particularly important in elementary education because students encounter teachers repeatedly in their everyday school experiences. Ridho (2019) emphasizes the role of school principals as educators, managers, supervisors, and motivators in developing school culture, while the present findings show that classroom teachers translate these broader cultural expectations into daily interactions with students. Teacher role modeling therefore connects institutional expectations with students' immediate experiences.

This finding is consistent with the character education literature emphasizing that students develop values not only through explicit instruction but also through observation, interaction, and repeated social experience. It is also consistent with the findings of Sarkadi et al. (2022), which highlight the importance of interactive and communicative educational processes in integrating character education into learning. The finding suggests that the sustainability of the Seven Habits is influenced not only by the availability of program guidelines but also by the consistency between what teachers communicate and what they demonstrate.

From the perspective of Islamic education, teacher role modeling has a particularly important meaning because character formation is closely related to *akhlaq*, *adab*, and exemplary conduct (*uswah*). The habits of worship, politeness, responsibility, cleanliness, and social engagement identified in this study can be interpreted as practices that connect character education with moral and religious formation. Prayitno et al. (2022) identified prophetic educational values such as honesty, tolerance, politeness, health, mutual assistance, hard work, worship, gratitude, and humility. Several of these values correspond with the practices identified in the present study. Therefore, the Seven Habits can be interpreted not only as a national character education initiative but also as a context in which moral and religious values can be practiced through everyday educational activities.

Seven Habits and Students' Graduate Profiles

The participants perceived improvements in students' discipline, responsibility, punctuality, independence, creativity, and religiosity. These findings suggest that participants perceived connections between the Seven Habits and several dimensions of students' character and graduate profiles through repeated practice and learning experiences.

The connection between habituation and character development is important because the Seven Habits combine personal discipline, religious practice, healthy living, learning orientation, and social engagement. Rather than emphasizing a single character

value, the program creates opportunities for several values to be practiced simultaneously. This finding is consistent with the broader character education perspective that character development requires integration across cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social dimensions (Lickona, 2019).

The role of project-based learning is also noteworthy. Participants described project-based activities as opportunities for students to produce work while developing creativity, independence, and moral values. This finding is in line with Ardiansyah and Saqjuddin (2025), who discuss the integration of the Seven Habits with Project-Based Learning as a context for developing discipline, responsibility, and creativity. In the present study, project-based learning therefore functioned as a complementary learning context through which the values promoted by the Seven Habits could be expressed in students' activities.

However, the findings should be interpreted as participants' perceptions of changes in student behavior, rather than as quantitative evidence of program effectiveness. Because the study employed a qualitative case study design and did not measure students' character before and after the program, the findings do not establish a causal relationship between the Seven Habits and changes in graduate profiles. Instead, they demonstrate how teachers and the school principal perceived the relationship between habituation practices and students' developing character.

School–Parent Collaboration and Continuity of Habituation

Another significant theme is the role of school–parent communication in maintaining the continuity of students' habits. The principal reported that communication with parents helped monitor and reinforce students' practices at home. This finding indicates that character habituation cannot be fully separated from the family environment because several of the Seven Habits, such as waking up early, healthy eating, and going to bed early, extend beyond school hours.

This finding is consistent with Nur et al. (2025) and Syahni et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of synergy between teachers and parents in supporting children's habits. The findings also correspond with research showing that parental support and home routines are important components of character development. Thus, school culture becomes more sustainable when its values are reinforced within the family environment.

The importance of this relationship is particularly relevant to the Seven Habits because the program explicitly connects school-based habituation with children's daily lives outside school. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education also emphasizes collaboration with parents, communities, and other educational stakeholders in embedding the seven habits into children's everyday lives (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). Therefore, the school–parent relationship in this study can be understood as a mechanism for maintaining consistency between the two main environments in which students develop their daily habits.

At the same time, the study identified digital technology as a challenge to maintaining habituation at home. The principal viewed children's extensive access to technology as a challenge requiring continuous guidance. This finding is consistent with Syahni et al. (2025), who identified excessive gadget use as one of the challenges

associated with implementing the Seven Habits. The issue is therefore not simply the presence of technology but the need for adults to provide appropriate guidance and establish consistent routines around its use.

Sustainability and the Research Gap

The principal's account of the school's involvement in teacher communities and working groups indicates that sustainability extends beyond individual teachers. Professional collaboration allows teachers to exchange experiences and develop common understandings of character education. This finding complements Ridho's (2019) emphasis on school leadership and the role of educational actors in developing school culture.

The findings also address an important research gap. Previous studies have examined character education through school culture, cultural values, religious habituation, and specific learning models (Bujuri et al., 2023; Nurasiah et al., 2022; Sakti et al., 2024; Sarkadi et al., 2022). However, the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children was only nationally introduced as a character-strengthening movement in 2025. Consequently, empirical studies examining how the seven habits are translated into an integrated school culture at the elementary level remain limited. This study contributes to that emerging area by showing that the seven habits can be interpreted through interconnected practices involving daily routines, teacher modeling, learning activities, social interaction, and school-parent communication.

The study also adds an Islamic education perspective that has received limited attention in discussions of the Seven Habits. The findings related to worship, moral conduct, responsibility, politeness, cleanliness, and social engagement demonstrate points of intersection between the national character education agenda and Islamic educational concepts of *akhlaq*, *adab*, and exemplary conduct. Prayitno et al. (2022) provide a relevant conceptual basis for this interpretation through the integration of prophetic values, including worship, health, politeness, mutual assistance, and humility. Accordingly, the contribution of this study is not to redefine the Seven Habits as an Islamic education program, but to demonstrate how its implementation can be understood through values that are also relevant to Islamic education.

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of the Seven Habits at the studied school was characterized by integration, repetition, modeling, and collaboration. School culture provided the context for repeated practice; teachers provided direct examples; learning activities provided opportunities for application; and parents supported continuity beyond school. The combination of these elements provides a more comprehensive explanation of how the Seven Habits were implemented than viewing the program as a collection of individual activities.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children were implemented at the studied elementary school through an integrated school culture consisting of daily habituation, routine activities such as *Rabu Ceria*, teacher role modeling, active and project-based learning, social interaction, and school-parent communication. These practices provided repeated opportunities for students to encounter and practice

values related to religiosity, discipline, responsibility, healthy living, learning, independence, creativity, and social awareness.

The findings indicate that school culture functioned as an important context for translating the Seven Habits from program principles into students' everyday experiences. Teacher role modeling strengthened the habituation process by providing concrete examples of the behaviors expected from students, while communication with parents supported continuity between school and home. From an Islamic education perspective, practices related to worship, politeness, responsibility, cleanliness, and exemplary conduct are compatible with the formation of akhlaq and adab.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of a statistically measured or causal effect of the Seven Habits on students' graduate profiles. The reported changes in discipline, responsibility, religiosity, independence, and creativity represent participants' perceptions within a qualitative case study. The influence of digital technology also remains a challenge, particularly in maintaining consistency between school-based and home-based habituation.

Future research should involve students and parents as direct participants to obtain more comprehensive perspectives on the implementation of the Seven Habits. Quantitative or mixed-method studies may also examine changes in specific character indicators using measurable instruments, while comparative studies across schools with different characteristics could provide broader evidence concerning how school culture, family collaboration, and contextual factors shape the implementation of the Seven Habits.

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