

**CROSS-PARADIGM SYNTHESIS: BIBLIOMETRIC MAPPING CONCEPT
INTEGRATION SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) AND VALUE-BASED
CHARACTER EDUCATION IN GLOBAL SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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ABSTRAK

Perhatian terhadap pengembangan peserta didik secara holistik mendorong meningkatnya kajian mengenai hubungan antara *Social Emotional Learning* (SEL) dan *Value-Based Character Education* (VBCE). Meskipun memiliki orientasi yang serupa dalam mengembangkan aspek emosional, sosial, dan moral peserta didik, kedua pendekatan tersebut masih lebih sering dikaji secara terpisah sehingga keterkaitan konseptualnya belum tergambarkan secara komprehensif. Penelitian ini bertujuan memetakan perkembangan penelitian, tema dominan, dan hubungan konseptual antara SEL dan VBCE dalam konteks pendidikan menengah atas melalui pendekatan bibliometrik. Data diperoleh dari publikasi terindeks Scopus periode 2021–2026 yang diseleksi menggunakan prosedur PRISMA hingga menghasilkan 10 artikel inti, serta didukung oleh 15 artikel ilmiah pendukung. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan VOSviewer dan Biblioshiny untuk mengidentifikasi tren publikasi, keterhubungan kata kunci, dan struktur tema penelitian. Hasil analisis menunjukkan peningkatan perhatian akademik terhadap integrasi SEL dan pendidikan karakter, terutama pada periode 2024–2025. *Social Emotional Learning* dan *Character Education* menjadi tema yang paling dominan serta terhubung erat dengan kecerdasan emosional, pendidikan moral, pendidikan berbasis nilai, dan keterlibatan peserta didik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi sosial-emosional dan pembentukan karakter semakin dipandang sebagai dua dimensi yang saling melengkapi dalam mendukung pendidikan holistik. Pemetaan yang dihasilkan menegaskan adanya konvergensi konseptual antara SEL dan VBCE serta relevansinya bagi penguatan pendidikan menengah yang lebih berorientasi pada perkembangan emosional, sosial, dan moral peserta didik.

Kata Kunci: *Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Pendidikan Karakter, Pendidikan Menengah Atas*

ABSTRACT

Growing attention to holistic student development has stimulated increasing scholarly interest in the relationship between Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Value-Based Character Education (VBCE). Although both approaches share a common focus on fostering students' emotional, social, and moral growth, they have frequently been examined as separate educational constructs, leaving their conceptual interconnections insufficiently explored. This study aimed to map research developments, dominant themes, and conceptual relationships between SEL and VBCE within the context of secondary education through a bibliometric approach. Data were drawn from Scopus-indexed publications published between 2021 and 2026 and selected using the PRISMA procedure, resulting in 10 core articles. In addition, 15 supporting scientific publications were included to enrich the interpretation of the findings. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer and Biblioshiny to identify publication

trends, keyword relationships, and thematic structures within the field. The findings revealed growing academic interest in the integration of SEL and character education, particularly during the 2024–2025 period. Social Emotional Learning and Character Education emerged as the most dominant themes and were closely associated with emotional intelligence, moral education, value-based education, and student engagement. These findings suggest that socio-emotional competencies and character development are increasingly viewed as complementary dimensions that support holistic education. The resulting bibliometric mapping highlights the conceptual convergence between SEL and VBCE and underscores their relevance for strengthening secondary education through the balanced development of students' emotional, social, and moral capacities.

Keywords: *Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Character Education, Senior Secondary Education*

PENDAHULUAN

The increasing complexity of contemporary society has prompted educational systems worldwide to reconsider traditional assumptions regarding the meaning of educational success. Schools are now expected not only to cultivate academic proficiency but also to develop learners who possess emotional maturity, ethical awareness, social responsibility, and adaptive capacities. This shift reflects growing concerns about the inability of purely cognitive-oriented education to address emerging social and behavioral challenges among adolescents. According to Sumiyati et al. (2025), holistic education provides an integrated framework capable of nurturing intellectual, moral, and social growth simultaneously, thereby supporting the development of well-rounded individuals who can respond effectively to changing societal demands.

Within senior secondary education, the urgency of this issue has become increasingly visible through various indicators of student behavioral and psychosocial difficulties. The expansion of digital communication, intensive social media engagement, and rapid cultural change have altered patterns of adolescent interaction and identity formation. As a consequence, schools are encountering challenges associated with declining empathy, weakened interpersonal relationships, emotional instability, and increased exposure to negative social influences. Ermawita et al. (2023) highlighted that juvenile misconduct remains a recurring concern in secondary education, while Gowasa (2025) emphasized that many adolescents continue to demonstrate limited social competence and interpersonal resilience despite formal educational interventions.

Ideally, educational institutions should function as environments that support balanced cognitive, emotional, and moral development. However, educational practice frequently remains dominated by achievement-based indicators, standardized assessment outcomes, and academic competitiveness. Such conditions often leave insufficient space for systematic efforts to cultivate emotional intelligence, empathy, and ethical behavior. The contrast between the intended goals of character-oriented education and the realities experienced in many learning environments illustrates a significant educational gap that requires more comprehensive and integrative solutions.

One approach that has gained considerable attention in addressing these challenges is Social Emotional Learning (SEL). This framework emphasizes the development of self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision-making as essential competencies for lifelong success. Research conducted by Banu (2025) demonstrated that educational environments implementing SEL tend to foster more positive

school climates and contribute to students' psychological well-being. Likewise, Majidah and Ahmadi (2024) argued that the incorporation of social-emotional learning principles into contemporary curriculum reform represents an important effort to create learning experiences that are more responsive to students' developmental needs and personal growth.

Alongside SEL, Value-Based Character Education (VBCE) continues to occupy a central position in discussions concerning educational quality and student formation. VBCE focuses on cultivating enduring values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, tolerance, and social concern through purposeful educational experiences. Rather than merely encouraging compliance with rules, this approach seeks to promote the internalization of values that guide behavior across diverse social contexts. Wisiyanti (2024) observed that value-oriented character development remains highly relevant in responding to the influence of globalization on young people's attitudes and conduct, while Saksana (2025) found that strengthening character education alongside emotional intelligence contributes positively to educational quality in the digital era.

Although SEL and VBCE emerged from different intellectual traditions, their objectives reveal substantial conceptual convergence. SEL primarily developed within psychological and socio-emotional competence frameworks, whereas VBCE evolved from ethical, philosophical, and moral educational traditions. In practice, however, emotional competence without ethical direction may fail to support responsible citizenship, while character education lacking socio-emotional reinforcement may encounter difficulties during implementation. Nazir (2025) explained that educational programs integrating character education and SEL demonstrate stronger potential for supporting comprehensive student development because they simultaneously address behavioral, emotional, and moral dimensions of learning.

Despite growing scholarly interest in both fields, the existing body of literature remains fragmented. Many studies have concentrated exclusively on SEL or character education without systematically examining how these perspectives intersect and complement one another. As a result, a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and conceptual relationships between SEL and VBCE remains underdeveloped. Alis and Kustati (2025) showed that bibliometric methods are capable of revealing thematic trends and knowledge structures within educational research domains; however, investigations specifically mapping the integration of SEL and value-based character education in global secondary education contexts remain limited. This condition indicates a clear research gap requiring further scholarly attention.

Bibliometric analysis offers a systematic means of exploring how knowledge within a research field develops over time through publication patterns, thematic relationships, collaboration networks, and intellectual structures. Donthu et al. (2021) described bibliometrics as an effective approach for identifying the conceptual foundations and developmental trajectories of scientific domains, while Tengku Muda et al. (2025) demonstrated its usefulness in mapping value-based educational scholarship internationally. Building upon these perspectives, the present study introduces a novel contribution by constructing a bibliometric map of the conceptual integration between Social Emotional Learning and Value-Based Character Education in global senior secondary education during the 2021–2026 period. Beyond documenting publication growth, this research examines thematic connections, intellectual patterns, and cross-paradigm relationships to generate a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional competencies and moral values are increasingly positioned as complementary foundations of holistic education.

METODE PENELITIAN

This study employed a bibliometric research design to examine the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Value-Based Character Education (VBCE) within the context of global senior secondary education. The primary dataset consisted of scientific articles indexed in the Scopus database and published between 2021 and 2026. Data collection was conducted in May 2026 using the Scopus advanced search feature with the following query: TITLE-ABS-KEY (("social emotional learning" OR "social-emotional learning" OR SEL) AND ("character education" OR "value-based education" OR "moral education") AND ("secondary education" OR "senior secondary" OR "high school")). The inclusion criteria comprised journal articles published between 2021 and 2026, written in English, classified within the Social Sciences or Arts and Humanities subject areas, and available in full-text open-access format. Conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials, non-English publications, and inaccessible records were excluded from the study. In addition to the primary dataset, 15 supporting scholarly references were consulted to strengthen the interpretation of the findings and provide broader contextual insights related to SEL and value-based character education.


The selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion stages. An initial search retrieved 34 records, which were subsequently screened according to the predetermined criteria, resulting in 10 articles that were retained as the primary units of analysis. Bibliographic information from the selected publications was organized and analyzed to identify annual publication trends, dominant research themes, and keyword relationships related to SEL and VBCE. Descriptive bibliometric techniques were employed to examine publication growth and keyword frequencies, while network visualization was used to illustrate conceptual connections among the dominant themes identified in the dataset. The complete article selection procedure is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. PRISMA-Based Article Selection Procedure

PRISMA Stage	Selection Criteria and Procedure	Records Remaining	Records Excluded
Identification	Records retrieved from the Scopus database using keywords related to Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Value-Based Character Education (VBCE), and secondary education	34	–
Screening	Limitation to journal articles published between 2021 and 2026	33	1
Screening	Filtering based on relevance to Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities subject areas	17	16
Eligibility	Assessment of document type, language, full-text accessibility, and relevance to the research topic	10	7
Included	Final articles included in the bibliometric analysis	10	–

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Hasil

The bibliometric analysis identified ten Scopus-indexed journal articles that met all inclusion criteria and formed the primary dataset for this study. These publications represent the core body of literature examining the relationship between Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Value-Based Character Education (VBCE), moral development, emotional competence, and holistic educational practices within secondary education settings. The selected studies were published between 2021 and 2026 and reflect the growing academic interest in integrating emotional and character development within contemporary educational frameworks. To provide an overview of the analyzed publications, the characteristics of the selected articles are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Scopus-Indexed Articles Included in the Bibliometric Analysis

No	Author(s)	Year	Main Focus
1	Mahmud	2021	SEL in secondary education
2	Turan & Alemdar	2022	Social, emotional, and moral development
3	Gillani & Eynon	2023	Social factors in education
4	Llorent et al.	2024	Social and emotional competencies in secondary education
5	Jiang et al.	2024	SEL competencies, motivation, and academic achievement
6	Yuan et al.	2025	SECD and student outcomes
7	Yu et al.	2025	Bibliometric analysis of character and citizenship education
8	Elias et al.	2025	SECD and mental health integration
9	Merle et al.	2026	CharacterStrong curriculum implementation
10	Favero et al.	2026	Ethics and emotion in AI education

As presented in Table 2, the analyzed publications cover a broad range of topics associated with social-emotional development, character formation, ethical learning, student well-being, and educational innovation. The distribution of publication years demonstrates that scholarly attention toward SEL and character-related research has intensified during the most recent years of the observation period. Several studies focused on the development of emotional competencies and student outcomes, whereas others examined curriculum implementation, educational ethics, and holistic learning environments. This diversity of themes suggests that research on SEL and VBCE has evolved into a multidisciplinary field that connects psychological, social, and educational perspectives. To examine the development of scholarly output over time, the annual publication distribution was analyzed. The results of this analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

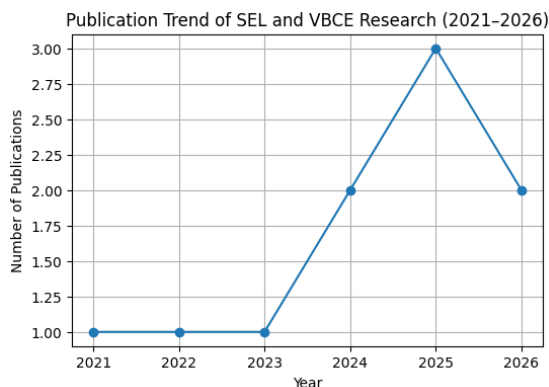


Figure 1. Publication Trend of SEL and VBCE Research (2021–2026)

Figure 1 shows a gradual increase in the number of publications related to SEL and VBCE throughout the study period. Research productivity remained relatively limited during the early years but increased considerably after 2023, reaching its highest level in 2025. The observed growth indicates a rising academic interest in educational approaches that combine emotional competencies with character and value development. The trend also reflects the increasing recognition of holistic education as an important response to the social, emotional, and ethical challenges faced by adolescents in contemporary educational settings. To identify the dominant topics discussed within the selected publications, a keyword frequency analysis was conducted using bibliometric mapping techniques. The most frequently occurring keywords and their corresponding thematic orientations are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Dominant Keywords and Research Themes

Keyword	Frequency	Main Research Focus
Social Emotional Learning	9	Emotional competence and self-regulation
Character Education	8	Moral and ethical development
Secondary Education	6	Adolescent educational context
Emotional Intelligence	5	Emotional awareness and empathy
Holistic Education	4	Integrated student development
Moral Education	4	Ethical and value formation
Student Engagement	3	Active participation in learning
Value-Based Education	3	Internalization of educational values

The results displayed in Table 3 indicate that Social Emotional Learning and Character Education were the most frequently identified themes within the analyzed literature. Their high occurrence frequency demonstrates that both concepts occupy central positions within current educational research concerning adolescent development. Other recurring themes, including emotional intelligence, holistic education, and moral education, reveal a strong emphasis on integrated approaches that support multiple dimensions of student growth. The presence of these interconnected topics suggests that contemporary educational scholarship increasingly

favors comprehensive developmental frameworks rather than isolated instructional perspectives. To further explore conceptual relationships among the dominant research themes, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed using VOSviewer. The network visualization generated from the selected dataset is presented in Figure 2.

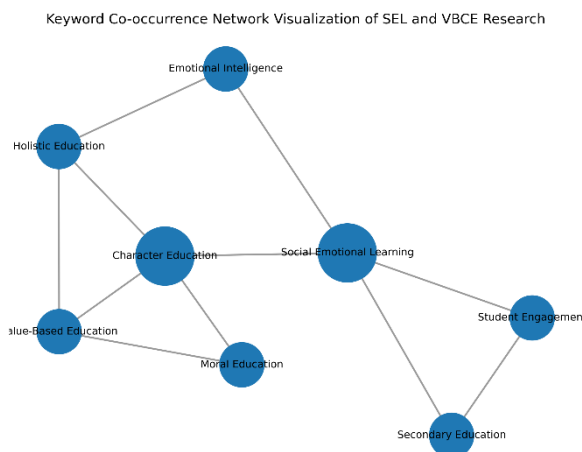


Figure 2. Keyword Co-occurrence Network Visualization of SEL and Character Education Research

Figure 2 illustrates the structural connections among the major concepts identified in the bibliometric dataset. Several keywords occupy central positions within the network, particularly those associated with emotional intelligence, social competence, character education, empathy, and moral development. The visualization also reveals the presence of interconnected thematic clusters, indicating that emotional learning and character education are frequently examined within the same research contexts. These relationships demonstrate a strong conceptual linkage between socio-emotional competencies and value-oriented educational practices, highlighting the growing integration of SEL and VBCE within contemporary secondary education research.

Pembahasan

The increasing publication trend identified in this study indicates that the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Value-Based Character Education (VBCE) has become an increasingly important focus within contemporary educational research. The growth of publications during the 2021–2026 period suggests a broader recognition that educational success should not be assessed solely through academic achievement but also through students' emotional, social, and ethical development. This trend reflects a shift toward holistic educational perspectives that seek to balance cognitive competence with personal and moral growth. Similar observations were reported by Mahmud (2021), Llorent et al. (2024), and Yuan et al. (2025), who found that social-emotional competencies contribute significantly to students' adjustment, well-being, and learning outcomes within secondary education contexts.

The prominence of Social Emotional Learning and Character Education as the most frequently occurring themes demonstrates the growing conceptual convergence between emotional development and moral formation. Rather than functioning as independent educational domains, contemporary studies increasingly portray both approaches as mutually reinforcing dimensions of student development. Emotional competencies such as self-

awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making provide practical mechanisms through which ethical values can be translated into everyday behavior. This interpretation is supported by Turan and Alemdar (2022), Jiang et al. (2024), and Elias et al. (2025), who emphasized the close relationship between social-emotional competencies, positive behavior, and student well-being. Consequently, the dominance of these themes reflects an emerging consensus that holistic education requires the simultaneous cultivation of emotional intelligence and character development.

The keyword network visualization further demonstrates that emotional intelligence, moral education, value-based education, and student engagement are interconnected within a broader framework of holistic learning. These conceptual relationships suggest that emotional and moral dimensions are increasingly understood as complementary elements that collectively influence students' development. Merle et al. (2026) found that character education initiatives achieve stronger outcomes when accompanied by structured social-emotional learning experiences, while Favero et al. (2026) highlighted the growing importance of integrating emotional awareness and ethical reasoning within educational environments shaped by technological advancement. The present findings therefore indicate that contemporary educational research is moving toward a more integrated paradigm in which emotional competence supports the internalization of moral values and responsible social behavior.

Another important insight emerging from this study concerns the role of SEL as an operational framework for strengthening value-based educational practices. Traditional character education has often been criticized for emphasizing normative principles without sufficiently addressing the emotional and interpersonal processes underlying students' behavior. In contrast, SEL provides concrete competencies that enable students to understand, practice, and internalize educational values in authentic social situations. This interpretation aligns with the findings of Ekahidayatullah et al. (2025) and Pradana et al. (2024), who reported that integrating social-emotional learning strategies into classroom activities enhances engagement, participation, and value formation. Accordingly, the relationship identified between SEL and VBCE may be interpreted not only as conceptual compatibility but also as a practical educational synergy capable of strengthening learning effectiveness.

The findings also suggest that integrated approaches combining emotional and character development have become increasingly relevant for addressing contemporary adolescent challenges. The recurrence of themes related to empathy, emotional intelligence, moral education, and student engagement indicates growing concern regarding students' ability to navigate complex social environments. This interpretation is consistent with Gillani and Eynon (2023), who emphasized the importance of social factors and interpersonal interactions in shaping educational experiences and student development. Similar arguments were advanced by Pare and Sihotang (2023) and Tarso et al. (2025), who highlighted the importance of holistic education and character reinforcement in preparing students to become responsible, socially aware, and ethically grounded citizens. Therefore, the integration of SEL and VBCE may be viewed as a strategic educational response to the increasingly complex demands of twenty-first-century society.

The novelty of this study lies in its synthesis of bibliometric evidence demonstrating the growing conceptual convergence between social-emotional learning and value-based character education within secondary education research. Previous studies have generally examined SEL, character education, emotional intelligence, or moral development as separate topics, whereas the present analysis reveals increasing interconnections among these domains. The bibliometric mapping shows that emotional competence, ethical values, student engagement, and holistic

development are evolving into a unified area of educational inquiry. This finding extends the observations of Yu et al. (2025) and Hamdi et al. (2025), who noted the increasing integration of character-related and social-emotional themes across contemporary educational literature. By highlighting these relationships, the present study contributes a broader conceptual understanding of how emotional and moral dimensions can be integrated within modern educational systems.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis was based on ten Scopus-indexed articles published between 2021 and 2026, which may not fully represent the wider body of global literature concerning SEL and character education. Furthermore, the study focused on publication trends, keyword frequencies, and conceptual relationships rather than evaluating the effectiveness of integrated SEL–VBCE interventions in educational practice. Future research is therefore encouraged to incorporate larger datasets, multiple bibliographic databases, and longitudinal educational studies to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation and impact of integrated social-emotional and character education models across diverse educational settings.

KESIMPULAN

This study provides a bibliometric perspective on the evolving relationship between Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Value-Based Character Education (VBCE) within global secondary education research during the 2021–2026 period. The mapping of publication trends, dominant themes, and conceptual relationships demonstrates that both approaches are increasingly positioned within a shared educational framework aimed at fostering holistic student development. The findings indicate that emotional competence and value formation are no longer treated as separate educational priorities but are increasingly understood as complementary dimensions that contribute to students' personal, social, and ethical growth. In this regard, the study successfully addresses its objective of identifying the intellectual landscape and thematic convergence between SEL and VBCE, while highlighting the growing relevance of integrated educational approaches in responding to contemporary adolescent developmental challenges.

The main contribution of this study lies in its synthesis of the conceptual connections between SEL and VBCE through a bibliometric lens, revealing an emerging body of scholarship that bridges emotional development with character formation. This integrative perspective suggests that educational practices seeking to cultivate responsible, resilient, and socially aware learners should combine socio-emotional competencies with value-oriented learning experiences in a coherent manner. The findings offer useful insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing learning environments that balance academic achievement with emotional and moral development. Future studies are encouraged to broaden the scope of bibliometric analysis by incorporating additional international databases and larger datasets, as well as conducting empirical investigations that examine the effectiveness of integrated SEL–VBCE models across diverse educational and cultural contexts.

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