Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education: A Bibliometric Analysis in the Era of the Independent Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Background of the study: The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which has been widely implemented in Indonesia since 2021, emphasizes flexibility, student-centered learning, and contextualized teaching. In early childhood education (ECD), the role of parents is crucial in supporting holistic development and the successful implementation of this curriculum. However, research focusing specifically on the extent and nature of parental involvement in ECD within the framework of the Independent Curriculum remains limited and fragmented.

Aims and scope of paper: This paper aims to review and analyze existing studies on parental involvement in early childhood education in the context of the Independent Curriculum era. The focus is on how collaboration between parents, teachers, and schools contributes to enhancing children's learning experiences and developmental outcomes. By conducting a bibliometric analysis, this review also seeks to map the current state of research and identify gaps for future studies.

Methods: This study uses a systematic review method with a bibliometric approach. Secondary data were collected from two major academic databases: Google Scholar and Scopus. The publication timeframe analyzed spans from 2020 to 2024 to capture recent developments related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Articles were selected based on their relevance to parental involvement and early childhood education.

Results: The analysis identified 11 relevant journal articles that highlight the significant role of parents in supporting early childhood education during the Independent Curriculum era. These studies consistently emphasize the importance of active parental collaboration with teachers and schools. Such collaboration has been shown to improve children's engagement, emotional well-being, and academic readiness, thereby reinforcing the goals of the curriculum.

Contribution: This review contributes to the growing body of literature by offering a synthesized overview of how parental involvement is addressed in the context of Indonesia's Independent Curriculum. It provides insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers on the importance of fostering strong partnerships between families and educational institutions. Moreover, the findings serve as a foundation for future research that can explore effective strategies and intervention models to strengthen parental engagement in early education.

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INTRODUCTION

The Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) is an educational initiative designed to meet Indonesia's educational needs through a more flexible, relevant, and student-centered approach (Said & Aqodiah, 2024). Its implementation is driven by efforts to improve the quality of education so that it becomes more adaptive to the challenges of the times and the developmental needs of children. One of the primary strengths of the Independent Curriculum is its flexibility (Anam et al., 2024). Students are given the opportunity to learn in ways that suit their individual needs, which helps to reduce educational disparities (Marpaung, 2024). This flexibility allows children to develop optimally, both academically and non-academically, and provides room to adapt learning materials to situational contexts, including crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Ainissyifa et al., 2024). With its flexible and personalized approach, the curriculum ensures equal opportunities for all students to grow according to their abilities and potential (Risnawati et al., 2023). he Independent Curriculum is significant because it introduces a more modern and adaptable educational framework that aligns learning with student needs, encourages teacher creativity, emphasizes character building, and integrates technology (Nursalim et al., 2024). This aligns with the broader goal of developing a generation capable of facing global challenges with adaptability, innovation, and strong leadership (Nursalim et al., 2024).

Research on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is still relatively new, as the curriculum was only introduced in the early 2020s. However, several studies have examined specific aspects of its application, particularly in the ECE context. For instance, project-based learning—an approach emphasized in the Independent Curriculum—has been studied for its effectiveness in enhancing children's active participation and creativity (Bustari & Putri, 2024). Other research highlights the importance of parental involvement in supporting children's learning at home, demonstrating how this collaborative role facilitates the implementation of the curriculum in ECE settings (Antika et al.). Educators are also shown to adapt to the flexible, child-centered structure of the curriculum. Studies examine the use of diverse media and learning resources to support more contextual learning methods (Zafirah et al., 2023). Collectively, these studies indicate that the application of the Independent Curriculum in ECE has the potential to improve educational quality through more relevant, creative, and child-centered learning. However, the success of its implementation depends heavily on strong collaboration between educators and parents, along with institutional and governmental support in terms of training and resource provision.

Parents play a crucial role in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in ECE, serving as integral partners in supporting learning processes that focus on each child's unique needs and potential (Armini, 2024). Parents act as co-educators, participating in the planning and execution of learning activities that align with the child's interests and abilities. This collaboration ensures consistency between school and home learning experiences (Rudiyanto et al., 2024). Beyond academics, the curriculum prioritizes social-emotional development, where parents help children develop skills such as empathy, communication, and emotional regulation by engaging them in positive interactions and modeling appropriate behavior. Parents also provide valuable feedback to educators regarding their children's development at home, helping teachers refine their learning strategies for greater effectiveness. Observations made by parents about how children respond to learning activities at home can serve as essential input for curriculum evaluation and adaptation (Purnama et al., 2023). Through these roles, parents contribute not only to academic support but also to creating a nurturing environment for emotional and social growth in alignment with the goals of the Independent Curriculum (Fauziyyah & Lestariningrum, 2024). This approach makes education more holistic and relevant, equipping children with essential life skills for long-term success.

This review on parental involvement in ECE during the era of the Independent Curriculum aims to explore and understand the roles and contributions of parents in supporting the curriculum's implementation. The goal is to demonstrate how collaboration between parents, teachers, and schools can enhance children's learning experiences and maximize their potential

(Achmad, 2024). The novelty of this review lies in its integrative approach to the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes the active role of parents as educational partners. In this context, parental roles extend beyond academic support to include direct engagement in learning activities through flexible, child-centered approaches (Mulyasa & Aksara, 2021). The review offers practical insights for educators and policymakers on the importance of optimizing parental involvement to achieve the curriculum's goals. Furthermore, it helps identify challenges and actionable solutions to strengthen collaboration between parents and schools, ultimately contributing to the holistic development of children in early education.

METHODS

Research Design
This paper employs a literature review approach based on secondary data obtained from reputable online databases and academic domains, specifically Google Scholar and Scopus. The focus of the review is to explore the extent of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) during the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia from 2020 to 2024.

Data Collection
Data were gathered using specific keyword combinations including "Kurikulum Merdeka", "Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD)", and "keterlibatan orang tua" (parental involvement). These keywords were used to filter relevant literature such as peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, and recent research reports. In Scopus, the search query applied was: TITLE-ABS-KEY (kurikulum AND merdeka) with publication years limited from 2020 to 2024.

Bibliometric Mapping
To visualize and analyze the bibliometric patterns, the bibliographic data obtained from Scopus were processed using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.16, Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Leiden University, The Netherlands). The tool was utilized to construct bibliometric maps that highlight co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and citation patterns. Author-provided metadata such as abstracts, keywords, and publication details were extracted for deeper insight. A thesaurus file and a CSV file containing the dataset were imported into VOSviewer to analyze international co-authorship patterns. The bibliometric analysis provided an overview of research trends and collaboration across regions, authors, and institutions.

Analysis Framework
The collected data were categorized and analyzed thematically, focusing on three main aspects: a)the significance and principles of the Independent Curriculum; b)implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Early Childhood Education settings; and c)the role and impact of parental involvement in supporting curriculum execution at the ECE level.

RESULT

The publication trend of the Independent Curriculum in the Scopus database is illustrated in Figure 1. Research on the Independent Curriculum has shown a steady increase from 2021 to 2024. There was no significant growth in publications between 2021 and 2022, as not all schools had implemented the curriculum during that period. However, from 2022 to 2023, there was an increase of approximately 2%, followed by a further rise of about 3% from 2023 to 2024. By 2024, a significant number of studies had emerged, reflecting the widespread adoption of the Independent Curriculum across various schools. In the 2022/2023 academic year, more than 140,000 educational institutions opted to implement the Independent Curriculum. It is important to note that this curriculum is not a replacement for the 2013 Curriculum, but rather an extension and enhancement of it, incorporating several changes. The Independent Curriculum serves as an

optional pathway for educational institutions to support learning recovery throughout the period of 2022 to 2024 (Damayanti et al., 2023).
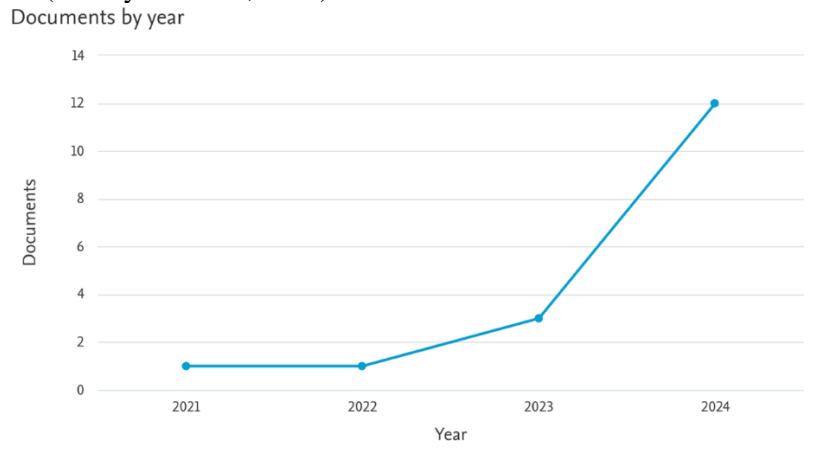
Figure 1. Publication Trends on the Independent Curriculum in Scopus Data (2021–2024)

The top five countries conducting research on the Independent Curriculum in Scopus from 2021 to 2024 are presented in Figure 2. Indonesia leads with 18 publications, followed by the Czech Republic, Madagascar, the Philippines, and the United States, each with one publication. Indonesia's dominant contribution is attributed to the national significance of the curriculum, which is considered a progressive step in education through its more open, student-centered, and holistic approach to student development. As a result, both academics and education practitioners in Indonesia are keen to explore how the implementation of this curriculum influences learning outcomes and children's readiness in the modern era.

Curriculum change is essential and must be adapted to the demands and developments of the times. It not only responds to current conditions but also anticipates the evolving needs of its target users (Jannah et al., 2022). Therefore, fostering an engaging and dynamic learning environment remains a priority in keeping pace with the changes of the times (Sibuea et al., 2023).
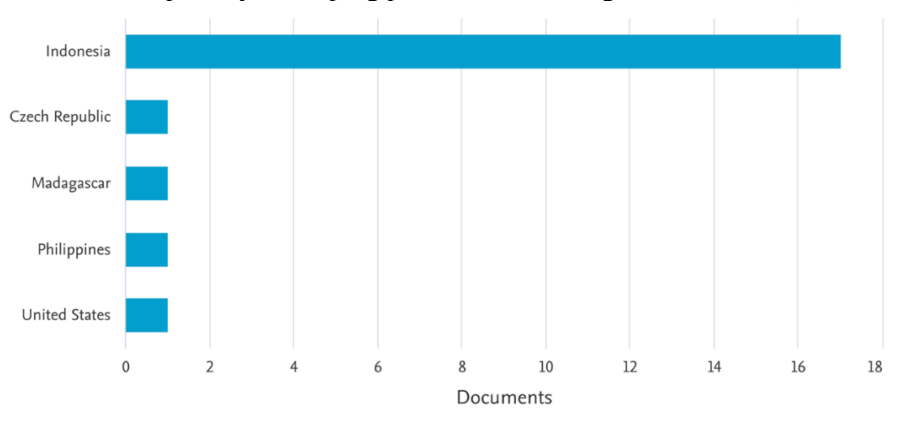
Figure 2. Top 5 Countries Conducting Research on the Independent Curriculum in Scopus Data (2021–2024)

Figure 3 presents a compilation of author keywords with the highest frequency of occurrence. The term *"Kurikulum Merdeka"* (Independent Curriculum), positioned at the center of the bibliometric map, indicates its significance as a central theme and its connection to various thematic clusters, reflecting its broad impact across educational studies. The flexibility of the curriculum and its emphasis on student-centered learning have likely driven research exploring

its implications across diverse contexts—ranging from literacy education to English language and religious instruction.

Student-centered learning facilitates an individualized approach to teaching. Studies have shown that this method is effective in enhancing active student participation and supporting the development of critical thinking skills (Mat & Jamaludin, 2024).
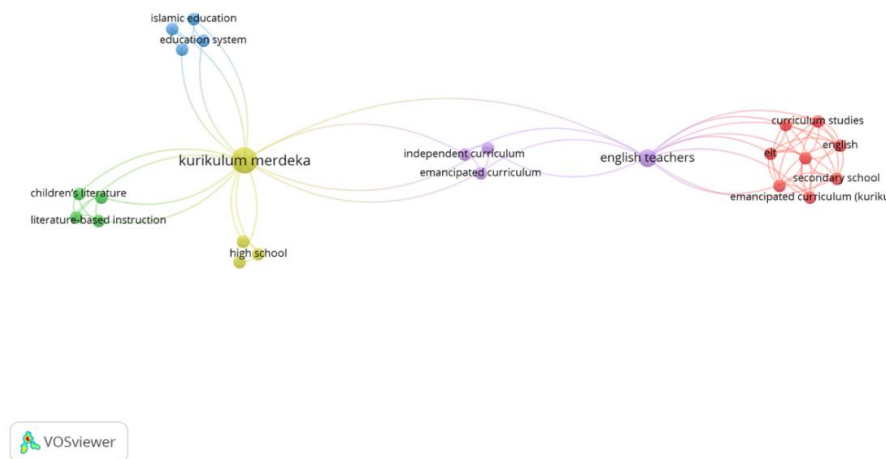

Figure 3. Bibliometric Map of Co-Occurrence by Authors' Keywords

The bibliometric map of co-occurrence by authors' keywords is shown in Figure 3. Based on the data visualization from the network map generated with VOSviewer, it is evident that Indonesia serves as the central hub in the network connecting several countries, including the Philippines, the United States, Madagascar, and the Czech Republic. Indonesia appears to play a central role, indicating that the country may be a focal point or central node in the research or data collected, whether in the context of collaboration, international studies, or its influence on other countries.

Indonesia's central role in education, particularly with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, is emphasized. This curriculum focuses on more inclusive, student-centered learning. It is designed to provide flexibility for educators and promote collaboration across various sectors. Studies show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes through a more adaptive and innovative approach (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024).
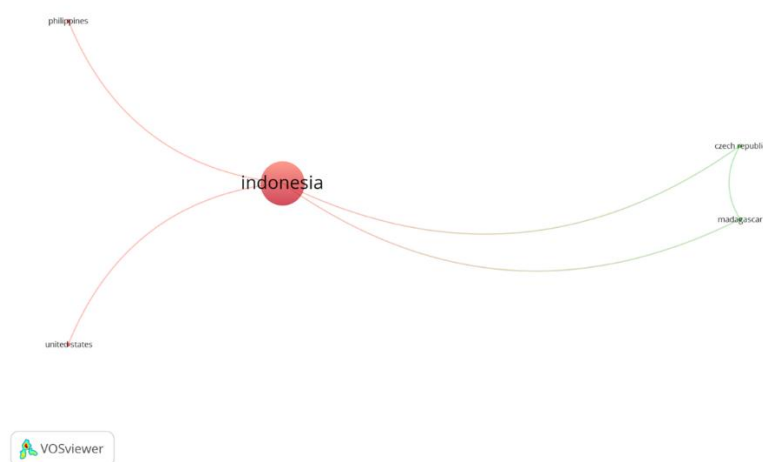

Figure 4. Bibliometric Map of Researchers by Country

Figure 5 presents the results of bibliometric data extraction related to research on parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) during the era of the Independent Curriculum. A total of 704 documents related to the keyword "Independent Curriculum" were found. From this general search, 113 documents focused on the combination of the keywords "Independent Curriculum" and "ECE." Further filtering narrowed this down to 11 documents specifically discussing parental involvement in ECE during the Independent Curriculum era. This indicates that research focused on parental involvement in ECE within the context of the Independent Curriculum remains relatively limited. Out of the hundreds of documents, only a small fraction are relevant to this specific topic. This suggests a need for further development in research exploring the role of parents in early childhood education, particularly within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes learning freedom and more participatory teaching methods. Research shows that the Independent Curriculum promotes a more flexible and collaborative approach to education. This figure illustrates that the topic of parental involvement still requires further attention and deeper exploration to align with the implementation of the curriculum (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024).
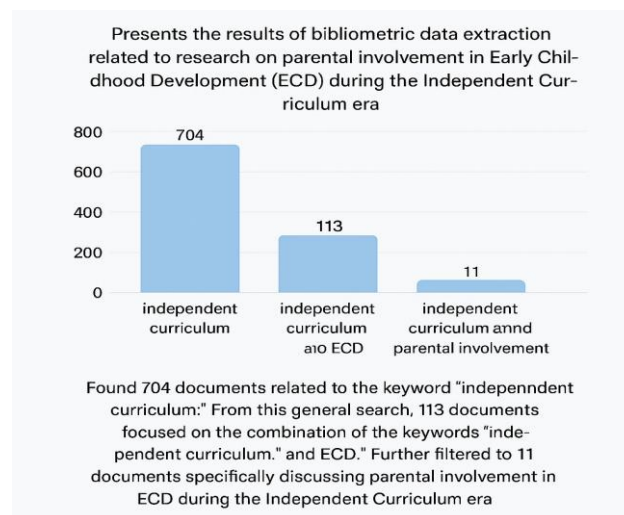

Figure 5. Extracting Bibliometric Data from Research Articles on Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the Era of the Merdeka Curriculum

The results of several studies on parental involvement in PAUD during the Merdeka curriculum era are shown in Table 1. Emphasis is placed on character education through the implementation of the Pancasila learner profile in the context of the Merdeka curriculum. This principle emphasizes active student participation, exploration, and real-life experiences in learning. Research indicates that student-centered learning and character education can support the achievement of national education goals. Character education helps students not only to develop academically but also emotionally and socially, shaping more holistic individuals. This outcome is in line with studies on the implementation of technology in education, which show that the use of digital learning media helps teachers create relevant and engaging materials. The integration of technology enables a more dynamic, relevant learning process, focused on active student engagement, in line with the goals of character education and progressivism in learning (Muzaini et al., 2024).

Table 1. Effectiveness of Parental Involvement in ECE in the Era of the Merdeka Curriculum

Research Location	Sampling	Method	Results	References
		The research method used is a literature review. (Maryanto et al., 2023)	This research is expected to provide a theoretical and practical foundation for the development of relevant and effective learning methods in the context of early childhood Islamic education. (Sakila et al., 2023)	(Sakila et al., 2023)
		The method used in this paper is based on a literature approach and content analysis.	Several significant challenges in transforming the education system, including paradigm shifts towards more autonomous learning approaches, adaptation to advances in educational technology, and increased community participation in education. (Natalia et al., 2023)	(Natalia et al., 2023)
		This study is a systematic literature review adopting the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Page & Moher, 2017).	The views and implementation of progressivism in education emphasize the importance of active learning, direct experiences, and character development. These three principles guide student-centered learning. This allows students to develop deeper understanding and appreciate their uniqueness. In the Merdeka curriculum, the progressive principle is clearly reflected in the emphasis on active student participation, exploration, and real-life experiences. (Laksana et al., 2023)	(Laksana et al., 2023)
		The research method used is Systematic Literature Review (SLR).	The policy of character education through the Pancasila learner profile in the context of the Merdeka curriculum also supports the achievement of national	(Mahfud, 2023)

			education goals. (Mahfud, 2023)	
		This study uses a comprehensive literature review research method to evaluate the influence and utilization of technology in the Merdeka Curriculum teaching process.	Research shows that the implementation of technology in education, such as through e-learning platforms and digital learning media, can help teachers create materials that are more engaging and relevant to the curriculum. (Antika et al.)	(Antika et al.)
		The method used in this research is Systematic Literature Review (SLR).	Educational policies in Indonesia have undergone significant development, impacting learning. (Daud, 2024)	(Daud, 2024)
SD Negeri Beji	Fifth-grade students	This is a type of library study research.	Public speaking skills are very low because students are not used to practicing public speaking, which causes a lack of confidence in speaking in front of others. Therefore, teachers, parents, and the environment should collaborate to improve students' speaking abilities. (Tyas et al., 2023)	(Tyas et al., 2023)
Muhammadiyah Lajoa, Soppeng District	Junior high school students	This research uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.	The implementation of the Pancasila profile project consists of several stages, including planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. (Ayubi et al., 2024)	(Ayubi et al., 2024)
SMP Negeri 4 Malang and SMP Laboratory UM	Class VIII C, SMP Laboratory UM	The research method used in this article is qualitative research with a comparative descriptive approach.	Both schools adopted different approaches in planning integrated CRT learning. However, they share common efforts to create an inclusive learning environment and empower all students. (Adiningsih et al., 2024)	(Adiningsih et al., 2024)
		This research uses a literature study with a narrative review model. The study uses a qualitative method with secondary data obtained from relevant journals. The	1) Integration of literary learning in the curriculum. 2) Intensive Reading Program included in the GLS program. 3) Use of Technology in literature learning. 4) Interactive	(Sari et al., 2024)

	researcher uses a descriptive-analytical method, collecting, identifying, reviewing, and analyzing various data found, and drawing conclusions.	Teaching Methods. 5) Teacher Training and Professional Development. 6) Improving School Libraries. (Sari et al., 2024)	
	The method used is a systematic literature review by identifying, assessing, and synthesizing relevant research based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines.	Character education in physical education can enhance values such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and respect among students. Additionally, various learning strategies and methods, such as traditional games, group activities, and habit-based learning, have proven effective in integrating character education. (Baharuddin et al., 2024)	(Baharuddin et al., 2024)

DISCUSSION

A key challenge in current educational research is the lack of comprehensive integration between various learning approaches within the broader education system. Several studies focus on specific aspects, such as the application of technology or character development in physical education, but often fail to combine these approaches holistically (Sakila et al., 2023). This creates a gap in understanding how different learning methods can complement one another and be applied within a broader context, such as in early childhood Islamic education under the Merdeka curriculum framework.

One significant issue that often arises is the limited exploration of more innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and collaborative learning. These methods hold great potential for enhancing student engagement, but they have not been fully explored in existing research (Natalia et al., 2023). Most studies continue to focus on conventional methods that do not actively engage students, hindering the development of critical thinking and collaborative skills that are essential in an increasingly complex world.

Furthermore, research that addresses the use of technology in learning or character education policies often lacks robust empirical data to support claims about their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes. For example, while many studies mention the potential of technology to enhance educational quality, the adaptation of the latest technology and its long-term relevance have not been deeply explored (Adiningsih et al., 2024). Therefore, further research is needed to focus on how technologies such as interactive platforms and artificial intelligence (AI)-based applications can be effectively utilized to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Additionally, specific skills like public speaking also require more attention in research. While some studies mention the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in developing these skills, there is a lack of detailed approaches on how to measure and improve these skills effectively (Tyas et al., 2023). Thus, it is important to design more in-depth studies on methods and concrete practices that can be used to develop skills like public speaking, involving multiple stakeholders in the process.

Finally, while many studies have discussed the implementation of the Pancasila profile project in the curriculum, few have examined its long-term impact on character development. Further research in this area could provide valuable insights into how Pancasila values and character can be instilled in students, and how this contributes to the formation of holistic individuals. Overall, while research in this field is abundant, there are still significant gaps that need to be addressed through more comprehensive and empirical approaches.

Implications
This research has several important implications for the future of educational practices, particularly in the context of the Merdeka curriculum. First, the need for a more integrated approach to teaching—combining innovative methods such as project-based and collaborative learning—suggests a shift towards more student-centered, experiential learning models. This shift could improve the overall engagement and learning outcomes of students. Additionally, the exploration of advanced technologies, such as AI and interactive platforms, could provide educators with new tools to enhance the learning experience and bridge the digital divide in education. Finally, focusing on the holistic development of students, including skills like public speaking, could lead to more well-rounded individuals who are better prepared for the challenges of the modern world.

Research Contribution
The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the gaps in current educational research, particularly the lack of comprehensive integration between different learning methodologies. By addressing these gaps, this research offers a foundation for future studies on how innovative teaching methods and technologies can be applied in the Merdeka curriculum. Additionally, the focus on the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community adds a valuable perspective to the conversation on skill development, especially in relation to public speaking and other essential life skills.

Limitations
While the study provides useful insights, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. First, much of the existing research lacks empirical data on the effectiveness of new teaching methods and technologies, which makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. Additionally, the scope of the research is primarily focused on specific contexts, such as early childhood Islamic education, and may not be fully applicable to other educational settings. Finally, there is a need for further exploration of long-term effects, particularly in relation to character development and the Pancasila profile project, which has not been adequately studied.

Suggestions
Future research should aim to provide more empirical evidence on the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods and the integration of technology in the classroom. This could involve longitudinal studies that measure the impact of these approaches on student outcomes. Furthermore, more research is needed to explore specific skills development, such as public speaking, with detailed methodologies and assessment tools. Lastly, studies on the long-term impact of the Pancasila profile project in shaping student character and values should be prioritized to understand its full potential in fostering holistic education under the Merdeka curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The publication of the Merdeka Curriculum in Scopus data saw the most significant increase in 2024, as the curriculum was simultaneously implemented across various schools that year. The top five countries researching the Merdeka Curriculum from 2021 to 2024 in Scopus data are led by Indonesia with 18 publications, followed by the Czech Republic, Madagascar, the Philippines,

and the United States, each with one publication. The term "Merdeka Curriculum," located at the center of the bibliometric map, indicates that it has become a key focus, connecting to several thematic clusters, highlighting its broad impact across educational studies.

Based on the data visualization from the network map generated with VOSviewer, it is evident that Indonesia is the central hub in the network linking several countries, including the Philippines, the United States, Madagascar, and the Czech Republic. The bibliometric data extraction related to research on parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) under the Merdeka Curriculum era identified 704 documents associated with the keyword "Merdeka Curriculum." Among the search results, 113 documents focused on the combination of the keywords "Merdeka Curriculum" and "PAUD." Further filtering revealed 11 documents that specifically discuss parental involvement in PAUD during the Merdeka Curriculum era.

This review highlights the significant role of parents in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in PAUD, working collaboratively with teachers and schools. Such collaboration enhances children's learning experiences and potential. Several parameters discussed include teaching methods, challenges in educational transformation, progressivism, character education, technology, educational policies, public speaking skills, the Pancasila profile project, inclusion, literature learning, and physical education. Parental support has been shown to significantly impact student engagement and learning outcomes, although further research is needed to fully understand its broader influence..

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

LRN and NH conceived the idea and conducted data collection. F and DK contributed to the literature review. RDH and DPY contributed to the data analysis. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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