

Strategies for Strengthening Students' Religious Character through Habituation, Role Modeling, and School Culture: A Case Study at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya Central Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the strategies for strengthening students' religious character through habituation, role modeling, and school culture at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok. Religious character is one of the fundamental values that should be instilled from the elementary school level as the foundation for developing students' morality, ethics, and behavior in their daily lives. This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis involving the school principal, teachers, and students. The data were analyzed using the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the strategies for strengthening students' religious character at SDN 1 Aikmual are implemented through various religious habituation activities integrated into the school's culture. These activities include regular Imtaq (Faith and Piety) programs, the collective recitation of Surah Yasin every Friday, religious lectures, and the memorization of short chapters (surahs) of the Qur'an. In addition, the school organizes an extracurricular Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, Qur'anic Learning Center) outside regular Islamic Religious Education classes to enhance students' Qur'anic reading skills and understanding of the Qur'an. During the month of Ramadan, the school implements peer-assisted Qur'anic memorization and recitation activities in which students actively listen to and evaluate one another's memorization and recitation. These activities foster discipline, responsibility, and enthusiasm for learning Islamic teachings. The role-modeling strategy is reflected in teachers' consistent demonstration of religious values in their daily behavior, while the school culture is developed by creating an environment that continuously supports the practice and internalization of religious values. The findings further indicate that the integration of habituation, role modeling, and school culture effectively strengthens students' religious character, as reflected in their improved discipline in performing religious practices, enhanced ability to read and memorize the Qur'an, greater politeness and respect toward others, and stronger awareness of applying religious values in their daily lives. Therefore, these integrated strategies represent an effective model for strengthening religious character in elementary school settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate and organized endeavor aimed at nurturing students' potential to become individuals with faith in God, devotion, virtuous character, intellectual capability, and the capacity to make positive contributions to society, the nation, and the state. In reality, education focuses not only on enhancing cognitive skills or gaining

knowledge but also on character development, which forms the essential foundation for students' personal and social growth. A strong character enables students to tackle different life challenges while offering ethical direction in decision-making and responsible behavior. As a result, character education has emerged as a major focus in the Indonesian education system. A fundamental character trait to develop from a young age is religious character. Religious character signifies attitudes and actions that demonstrate a person's adherence to their faith's teachings and their capacity to apply religious principles in daily life. It is expressed not only through the practice of religious ceremonies but also through integrity, self-discipline, accountability, politeness, compassion, and regard for parents, educators, classmates, and the environment. Consequently, religious character serves as a vital component in developing students into ethically sound people.

The significance of enhancing religious character closely corresponds with the goals of Indonesia's national education framework, as outlined in Law Number 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System, which highlights the transformation of students into individuals who have faith and devotion to Almighty God and exhibit virtuous character. This goal suggests that spiritual and ethical growth is regarded as equally significant as cognitive success. Consequently, each educational institution must create enduring programs that promote the growth of students' spiritual character.

In the age of globalization and swift developments in information technology, promoting religious character has grown more intricate. The easy access to information via the internet and social media has produced both beneficial and harmful effects on students' growth. Digital technology provides valuable possibilities for learning and innovation in education. Conversely, students are more often exposed to material that might contradict their religious and moral beliefs. Deteriorating social ethics, waning discipline, decreasing respect for parents and educators, and lowered involvement in religious practices have emerged as major issues that necessitate serious focus from educational institutions and other stakeholders.

Schools, as formal educational establishments, hold a key position in imparting religious values to students. Their duty goes beyond sharing knowledge to fostering character through structured and ongoing educational initiatives. Enhancing religious character can be accomplished by incorporating religious values into lessons, arranging religious events, encouraging constructive behaviors, offering positive role models via teachers and school personnel, and nurturing a school environment that continually promotes the internalization of religious principles. By employing suitable strategies, schools can transform into productive settings for fostering students' character. Earlier research has shown that character development cannot be accomplished solely through educational teaching or ethical guidance.

Character development is more effective when students acquire firsthand experiences through regular practice. Consistent repetition of positive actions slowly converts these behaviors into lasting personal habits. Moreover, educators and school personnel are crucial as role models in shaping the character development of students. Kids instinctively replicate the actions shown by people they look up to and find admirable. As a result, educators are anticipated to continually demonstrate religious principles and moral behavior in and out of the classroom. Moreover, a culture within religious schools strengthens the internalization of spiritual values by fostering an atmosphere where students consistently participate in religious activities.

SDN 1 Aikmual in Praya Central Lombok is an elementary school dedicated to enhancing students' religious character by incorporating various religious programs into their daily school activities. Initial observations suggest that the school consistently

conducts Imtaq (Faith and Piety) activities to promote the spiritual growth of students. Every Friday, students engage in the group recitation of Surah Yasin to develop familiarity with and appreciation for the Qur'an. The school also holds religious lectures that offer students insight into Islamic values and highlight the significance of integrating religious teachings into their everyday lives.

A vital element of the school's approach is the memorization of brief chapters (surahs) from the Qur'an. This initiative seeks to enhance students' ability to memorize while also encouraging a greater appreciation for the Qur'an as a life guide. Additionally, the school provides an extracurricular Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, Qur'anic Learning Center) apart from standard Islamic Religious Education classes. This program offers students greater chances to enhance their Qur'anic reading abilities, enrich their comprehension of Islamic principles, and implement these principles in their daily lives.

In the month of Ramadan, SDN 1 Aikmual conducts a peer-supported program for memorizing and reciting the Qur'an, where students attentively listen to and assess each other's memorization and recitation. In addition to improving students' skills in reading and memorizing the Qur'an, this activity also fosters discipline, accountability, teamwork, and self-assurance. These efforts show that enhancing religious character happens not just through structured classroom teaching but also via regular religious activities and an encouraging school environment. Despite the successful implementation of numerous religious programs, it is still important to investigate in greater depth how these strategies are executed, how habituation, role modeling, and school culture enhance their effectiveness, and how these methods affect the character development of students. This inquiry is vital as the effectiveness of religious character education relies not just on the quantity of programs carried out but also on how well they are executed in influencing students' attitudes and behaviors.

In light of these factors, this research titled Strategies for Enhancing Students' Religious Character through Habituation, Role Modeling, and School Culture at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok was conducted. This study aims to deliver an in-depth insight into the methods utilized by the school to nurture students' religious values, while also aiding in the advancement of character education initiatives in primary schools. Additionally, the results are anticipated to act as an important resource for other institutions in developing and executing effective, sustainable, and contextually appropriate approaches for enhancing students' religious character in today's educational landscape.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative method with a descriptive research framework. A qualitative method was chosen as the study sought to achieve a profound understanding and offer a thorough description of the techniques employed to enhance students' religious character through habituation, role modeling, and school culture at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok. This method allowed the researchers to investigate the implementation process, the types of activities conducted, and the significance found in the school's initiatives to cultivate students' religious character. The study was carried out at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok District, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The research location was deliberately chosen due to the school's ongoing execution of multiple religious programs and activities designed to enhance students' religious character. These initiatives encompass routine Imtaq (Faith and Piety) events, communal recitation of Surah Yasin each Friday, religious talks, memorization of brief Qur'anic chapters, additional Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, Qur'anic Learning Center) sessions, and peer supported Qur'anic memorization and recitation during Ramadan.

The group included the school principal, teachers of Islamic Religious Education, homeroom teachers, and students who actively participated in the execution of the religious character development programs. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with informants chosen for their expertise, experience, and direct participation in executing the school's initiatives for enhancing its religious character. Data were gathered via observation, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of documents. Observations were carried out to directly assess the execution of religious activities that formed the school's approach to enhancing students' religious character. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, educators, and students to gather in-depth details about the strategies used, the goals of each activity, factors that supported or hindered them, and their perceived effects on the religious character of students.

Moreover, document analysis was used to enhance the primary data by reviewing photographs of events, religious program schedules, school records, and other pertinent documents tied to the study's focus. To guarantee the reliability of the results, this research utilized source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation occurred through the comparison of information gathered from the principal, teachers, and students. Methodological triangulation was realized by verifying data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, thus improving the research findings' credibility and validity. Data were examined utilizing the interactive model suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which encompasses three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. Data condensation encompassed choosing, concentrating, streamlining, and structuring the data pertinent to the research aims. The structured data were subsequently displayed as narrative descriptions to enable interpretation and analysis. Ultimately, conclusions were consistently made and validated during the research process to guarantee the reliability of the results related to the approaches for enhancing students' religious character through habituation, role modeling, and school culture at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok. Utilizing this methodological framework, the research aims to deliver a thorough and precise account of the execution of strategies aimed at enhancing students' religious character and their role in fostering religious attitudes and behaviors in the elementary school setting.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

Based on the findings obtained through observations, interviews, and document analysis conducted at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok, three major strategies were identified in strengthening students' religious character: habituation, role modeling, and school culture. These strategies were implemented in an integrated manner, creating a school environment that supports the development of students' religious character.

1. Strengthening Religious Character through Habituation

Habituation became the main method used by the school to cultivate religious character in students. Religious habituation practices were carried out consistently and routinely, allowing religious values to be woven into students' everyday lives. A key habituation activity was the consistent execution of the *Imtaq* (Faith and Piety) program. This initiative included group prayers, spiritual direction, and the sharing of ethical teachings aimed at enhancing students' devotion and reverence. Moreover, each Friday the school held a group recitation of Surah Yasin, engaging all members of the school community. This exercise not only acquainted students with reading the Qur'an but also enhanced their appreciation of it as a guide for everyday living.

The Qur'anic memorization program emphasizing short surahs further strengthened religious habituation. Educators consistently assisted learners in committing chosen passages to memory and frequently evaluated their memorization advancement. This activity sought to improve students' comprehension of Islamic principles while motivating them to adopt and implement these values from a young age. In addition to the standard Islamic Religious Education classes, the school also set up an extracurricular Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, Qur'anic Learning Center). This initiative offered students extra chances to enhance their Qur'anic reading abilities, polish their pronunciation in line with tajwid principles, and boost their memorization of the Qur'an. Throughout the month of Ramadan, the school organized peer-supported Qur'anic memorization and recitation activities where students would listen to and assess each other's recitation. These activities were discovered to enhance responsibility, discipline, and teamwork among students.

2. Strengthening Religious Character through Role Modeling

The results suggest that teachers' role modeling played a vital role in the school's approach to enhancing students' religious character. Interview findings showed that teachers provided religious education during lessons while routinely exhibiting religious values in their everyday actions. Instructors consistently welcomed students with Islamic greetings upon arrival in the classroom, promoted group prayers before and after classes, engaged in courteous communication, and exhibited discipline while fulfilling their professional duties. These actions provided genuine instances that students could watch and imitate. The headmaster and all educators also took part in the school's religious events. Their active participation in the Imtaq program, Friday Yasin recitation, and various religious activities positively impacted students by showcasing clear examples of adults regularly embodying religious values in daily school life.

3. Strengthening Religious Character through School Culture

The establishment of a religious school culture was realized by fostering an atmosphere that consistently nurtured the application of religious principles. Students were consistently urged to exhibit politeness, show respect to teachers and classmates, and integrate Islamic values in their everyday interactions. The religious activities of the school, conducted consistently, slowly became a fundamental aspect of the school's organizational culture. A nurturing and positive school atmosphere motivated students to engage wholeheartedly in religious activities without pressure. This religious culture was evident in students' growing tendency to read the Qur'an, pray before participating in different activities, and show enhanced discipline, responsibility, and respect in their everyday conduct.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this research reveal that the methods for enhancing students' religious character at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok, are carried out via three interconnected strategies: habituation, role modeling, and school culture. These strategies enhance each other and together create an integrated system that promotes the internalization of religious values in students. The results indicate that the development of religious character is not limited to formal education but is also encouraged through diverse school activities that offer students real chances to apply religious values in their everyday lives.

a. Strengthening Religious Character through Habituation

Habituation became the primary approach utilized by SDN 1 Aikmual to enhance the religious character of its students. This method is executed via numerous religious practices carried out frequently and steadily, such as the *Imtaq* (Faith and Piety) program, the weekly group recitation of Surah Yasin, memorizing short surahs from the Qur'an, extracurricular Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, Qur'anic Learning Center), and collaborative sessions for Qur'anic memorization and recitation among peers throughout Ramadan. The execution of the *Imtaq* program offers students chances to enhance their faith and commitment through group prayers, Qur'anic readings, and spiritual direction. These activities act as a crucial platform for nurturing students' spiritual consciousness from a young age, motivating them to cultivate a deeper connection with Allah in their daily lives. Additionally, the consistent practice of *Imtaq* aids in forming religious habits that go beyond the classroom and integrate into students' everyday lives.

The Friday recitation of Surah Yasin each week serves as an additional method of religious practice intended to enhance students' connection to the Qur'an. Group recitation of the Qur'an enhances students' reading skills while fostering their respect for the Qur'an as a life guide. This activity helps students understand that reading the Qur'an is not just a religious duty but a vital practice that should seamlessly integrate into their daily lives. This acclimatization is especially important since a major sign of religious identity is a person's proximity to the doctrines of their faith. The memorization of brief Qur'anic surahs is also a vital part of the school's strategy for enhancing religious character development. This exercise allows students to get acquainted with the Qur'an and commit specific verses to memory from a young age. In addition to enhancing memorization abilities, the program promotes students to comprehend the ethical principles found in the Qur'anic verses and implement these principles in their everyday actions. Additionally, learning short surahs provides students with the necessary knowledge needed for carrying out Islamic prayers.

The results also indicate that the school depends not only on formal Islamic Religious Education lessons but additionally conducts extracurricular TPQ activities. This program offers students greater chances to enhance their Qur'anic reading abilities and expand their comprehension of essential Islamic principles. The presence of TPQ demonstrates the school's dedication to enhancing religious character education via ongoing learning opportunities. As a result, fostering religious character extends beyond classroom teaching and is strengthened by ongoing extracurricular involvement. In the month of Ramadan, the school arranges sessions for Qur'anic memorization and recitation with peer support. These practices hold considerable educational importance as they enhance students' capacity to read and memorize the Qur'an while also promoting discipline, accountability, teamwork, and self-assurance. Students develop the ability to listen carefully, acknowledge their classmates' contributions, and offer meaningful feedback to enhance each other's recitation. Thus, these activities aid in fostering students' religious growth as well as in nurturing positive social traits.

These results align with the theory of habituation, which suggests that character is formed through the continuous practice of positive behaviors over a period. Actions that are first taken in response to external direction slowly turn into habits and ultimately evolve into lasting personal traits. The habituation strategies applied at SDN 1 Aikmual can be seen as an effective method for nurturing students' religious character.

b. Strengthening Religious Character through Role Modeling

Besides habituation, role modeling serves as another crucial method for enhancing students' religious character. The results show that educators and the school principal serve as role models who routinely exhibit religious values in their everyday actions. This role modeling is evident through teachers regularly using Islamic greetings, leading prayers before and after classes, communicating politely, maintaining discipline in their professional duties, and actively engaging in school religious events. Role modeling has a significant impact since elementary school students are in a developmental phase where they mainly learn by observing and mimicking. Actions exhibited by teachers are frequently more easily emulated than principles conveyed only through spoken guidance or ethical counsel. As a result, the personal behavior of teachers is a vital factor in the success of character education.

Teachers' involvement in the *Imtaq* program, Friday Yasin recitation, and various religious activities offers students genuine demonstrations of how Islamic teachings are applied in practice. Through watching teachers read the Qur'an, pray earnestly, and consistently exhibit actions that reflect Islamic values, students gain tangible illustrations of how faith can be integrated into daily living. These results reinforce Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which suggests that people gain knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors by watching others. In the educational setting, educators serve as powerful examples whose actions are watched and replicated by learners. Consequently, teacher role modeling serves as one of the most impactful methods for nurturing students' religious character. Moreover, teachers' model behavior creates a connection between the principles instructed in the classroom and those exhibited in daily life. This consistency is crucial as it allows students to grasp religious values conceptually while also observing their practical implementation. As a result, embracing religious values becomes more significant, genuine, and enduring.

c. Strengthening Religious Character through School Culture

The culture of a school acts as a supportive element that strengthens the efficacy of habituation and role-modeling approaches. The results show that SDN 1 Aikmual has effectively created a religious school culture by regularly executing religious initiatives and involving all members of the school community. The religious culture of the school is evident in students' regular behaviors of praying before and after events, reading the Qur'an, engaging in religious activities, and showing courtesy and respect to both teachers and classmates. This type of environment promotes students to willingly practice religious values instead of being forced.

A robust school culture is essential for character development as it consistently offers students valuable social interactions. When the school atmosphere consistently endorses religious values, students slowly come to view these values as normal, attractive, and worthy of practice in their everyday lives. In this regard, school culture acts as an inherent system for the absorption of religious values. The achievements of the religious culture at SDN 1 Aikmual are also reflected in noticeable advancements in students' behavior, such as improved discipline in religious practices, better skills in reading and memorizing the Qur'an, and

heightened respect for teachers and fellow students. These modifications in behavior illustrate that the school setting profoundly affects the development of students' character. In terms of character education, the culture of a school is among the most significant elements affecting the effectiveness of character development. Schools that effectively foster a religious atmosphere are more capable of imparting religious values than those that depend solely on classroom teaching. Consequently, the culture of religious education at SDN 1 Aikmual serves as a critical element in reinforcing the religious character of students.

In general, the results indicate that the approaches to enhancing students' religious character at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok, have been successfully executed by integrating habituation, role modeling, and the school culture. Habituation fosters religious practices via ongoing and consistent actions, role modeling offers students real instances of religious behavior, and school culture establishes a setting that encourages the internal adoption of religious principles. Collectively, these three approaches foster the growth of students who exhibit robust religious character, self-discipline, accountability, politeness, and the capability to implement Islamic principles in their everyday activities. Consequently, the character development model based on religion used at SDN 1 Aikmual could be an important reference for other elementary schools aiming to enhance character education via integrated and sustainable methods.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the results and discussions of this study regarding strategies to enhance students' religious character through habituation, role modeling, and school culture at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok, it can be concluded that the improvement of students' religious character occurs through three interconnected and supportive strategies: habituation, role modeling, and school culture. The habituation strategy is carried out via various religious activities that occur consistently and regularly, including the *Imtaq* (Faith and Piety) program, the communal recitation of Surah Yasin each Friday, memorizing short Qur'anic surahs, extracurricular Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, Qur'anic Learning Center) outside standard Islamic Religious Education sessions, and peer-supported Qur'anic memorization and recitation events during Ramadan. These tasks give students genuine chances to apply religious values, thus encouraging the formation of lasting religious habits in their everyday lives.

The strategy of role modeling is evident in the daily actions of teachers and the principal, who regularly exhibit religious values by greeting students with Islamic salutations, conducting prayers before and after lessons, communicating politely, enforcing discipline, and engaging in school religious activities. This kind of exemplary behavior is a vital part of character education, as elementary school students mainly learn by watching and mimicking the actions of important adults in their learning environment. The strategy for school culture is implemented by creating a supportive and religious environment where religious values are integrated into the everyday activities of the whole school community. This spiritual culture motivates students to regularly implement religious teachings in their social engagements and educational tasks, thus promoting the assimilation of religious values in a genuine and enduring way.

The execution of these three supportive strategies has shown beneficial results in enhancing students' religious character. The results show enhancements in students' discipline in conducting religious practices, their capacity to read and memorize the Qur'an, their politeness and respect for others, their sense of responsibility, and their consciousness

of integrating religious teachings into daily life. Consequently, the combined application of habituation, role modeling, and school culture at SDN 1 Aikmual, Praya, Central Lombok, can be seen as a successful strategy for nurturing students with firm faith, admirable character, and robust religious values. Additionally, this unified model could act as a useful guide for other elementary schools aiming to enhance religious character education via sustainable and thorough school-centered approaches.

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