

The Formation of Noble Morals Through Religious Activities of Muhammadiyah 2 Elementary School Students at GKB Gresik

Subtitle: A Qualitative Case Study on Islamic Character Education in Elementary School Context

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ABSTRACT

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Moral education is a fundamental aspect of Islamic education aimed at shaping students to be faithful, pious, and behave in accordance with the values of the Qur'an and Hadith. The phenomenon of declining manners and ethics among students toward teachers and the school environment highlights the importance of strengthening character education from an early age through structured habituation. This study aims to describe the role of daily habituation in forming Noble Morals (commendable moral character) among students at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik. This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews with classroom teachers and the character habituation coordinator, and documentation of school activities. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that daily habituation implemented consistently and integrated through religious activities and positive habits, such as greeting at the school gate, morning hadith reading, memorization review (murojaah), congregational dhuha prayer, collective dhikr, daily charity (infaq), Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), the 5S culture, and the Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC) program, contributes to instilling akhlaq mahmudah values in students, particularly discipline, honesty, and responsibility. The role of teachers as role models and the non-corporal punishment approach support the effectiveness of character habituation. The constraint identified was the difference in students' family backgrounds, which affects the continuity of habituation between school and home. Thus, daily habituation plays a strategic role in the formation of students' akhlaq mahmudah and requires ongoing synergy among schools, teachers, and parents.

Keywords

Habituation
Character Education
Akhlaq Mahmudah
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Introduction

Moral education is the core of Islamic education. Good education is not merely about filling minds with knowledge, but about forming noble character that is reflected in attitudes and actions. The ultimate goal of education is to realize individuals who are faithful, pious, and behave in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith[1]. Akhlaq mahmudah (commendable moral character) such as honesty, patience, responsibility, courtesy, and generosity need to be instilled from an early age so that they become an integral part of students' personalities.

In recent years, various social phenomena circulating on social media and public news have shown a tendency toward declining manners, respect, and reverence of students toward teachers and their surrounding environment. Student behavior that lacks appreciation for teachers, inattention during the learning process, and even aggressive actions toward educators illustrate that moral and ethical values are increasingly experiencing degradation. This phenomenon raises concerns about the weakness in character formation of students, particularly in the aspect of morals, which should be the main foundation of education.

From this condition, this study aims to identify and describe the role of character habituation and character education from an early age in shaping students' morals and behavior. Specifically, this research seeks to examine whether character habituation applied consistently from an early age contributes to forming students with good character in daily life. While numerous prior studies have discussed character formation through habituation, most have predominantly focused on the effectiveness of in school activities alone. There is a scarcity of research specifically examining how the Hidden Curriculum (school culture) interacts with Riyadah (spiritual exercises) within an integrative model for elementary school students in the current digital era. Furthermore, previous scholarship has often overlooked the critical aspect

of continuity between school and home environments, which frequently remains a vulnerability in the success of character education. This study aims to bridge this gap by describing the holistic habituation model at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik that synergizes theological (worship) and psychological (behavioral) approaches

The habituation method is one of the effective ways to instill akhlaq mahmudah values[2]. The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, conveyed the stages of forming students' character starting from habituation activities, so that it eventually becomes a habit performed automatically. From the perspective of Islamic education, this method aligns with the concept of ta'dib, which emphasizes role modeling, repetition, and internalization of moral values through real practice in daily life[3].

Schools have a strategic role as formal educational institutions that shape students' character[4]. The Qur'an as the primary source of Islamic teachings emphasizes that education is not only oriented toward developing intellectual aspects but also encompasses comprehensive moral and spiritual development[5]. Character education is not only taught through lesson materials but also through the creation of a conducive school culture, positive habituation, and exemplary behavior from all school members[6].

SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik is one of the schools that places moral education as a priority. Based on preliminary observations, this school has a daily habituation program integrated into the teaching-learning routine. The program includes greeting teachers stationed at the gate, reading hadith every morning, murojaah (memorization review) of surah recitations, congregational dhuha prayer, collective dhikr, tarjim (reading short surahs along with their word-by-word meanings), voluntary charity, tadarus (Qur'anic recitation) after dhuhr and asr prayers, as well as special tadarus of Surah Al-Kahfi every Thursday afternoon.

In addition, the 5S culture habituation (smile, greet, salute, polite, courteous) is also implemented at the school. This aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ narrated by Bukhari no. 3231, which emphasizes the importance of spreading greetings as a way to foster love and brotherhood among fellow Muslims[7]. This pattern aligns with the habituation theory (habit formation) proposed by Thorndike, namely behavior formation through structured and controlled repetition[8]. The 5S culture is believed to foster friendly attitudes, respect for others, and maintain ethics in interactions. According to Wiyani, the habituation of polite and friendly behavior in the school environment plays an important role in shaping students' positive self-image and strengthening harmonious social relationships[9].

The repetitive nature of these activities aligns with Al-Ghazali's concept of Riyadah (disciplined exercise). According to recent studies on Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, character is not formed through theoretical instruction alone but through consistent physical and spiritual practices. By performing these routines daily, the school facilitates the process of transforming outward actions into Malakah, an ingrained internal trait where students perform good deeds spontaneously and without hesitation[10].

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of Islamic education, particularly in the formation of akhlaq mahmudah through daily habituation methods in elementary schools. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for schools, teachers, and parents in designing integrated and sustainable character habituation programs.

After this introduction, the Material and Methods section outlines the qualitative case study approach, including observation, interview, and documentation techniques employed at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik. The Results and Discussions section presents the empirical findings on daily habituation activities, such as greeting practices, morning hadith reading, murojaah, congregational prayers, the 5S culture, and the Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC) program and analyzes their role in instilling discipline, honesty, and responsibility through the lens of Al-Ghazali's Riyadah concept and Thomas Lickona's character development framework. Finally, the Conclusion synthesizes the key findings, emphasizing the strategic importance of synergy among schools, teachers, and parents in sustaining the formation of akhlaq mahmudah, while acknowledging the challenge posed by varying family backgrounds.

Literature Review

A. Contemporary Foundations of Character Education

Recent scholarship demonstrates that effective character education requires integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Brown et al. conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis synthesizing 214 studies involving 307,512 participants, finding that character education programs show significant effectiveness when they incorporate structured interventions with measurable outcomes[11]. Their analysis reveals that programs featuring mentoring components yield particularly strong results, suggesting that relationships play a critical role in moral and emotional development. This meta-analytic evidence establishes that brief, high-impact interventions delivered with fidelity produce more sustainable outcomes than diffuse, curriculum-only approaches.

Berkowitz's PRIMED framework, recognized with the 2023 Outstanding Book Award from AERA's Moral Development and Education SIG, synthesizes decades of research into six evidence-based design principles: Prioritizing character, Relationships, Intrinsic motivation, Modeling, Empowerment, and Developmental pedagogy[12]. This comprehensive model emphasizes that character formation occurs not merely through explicit instruction but through the entire school ecology, including organizational culture, peer interactions, and institutional practices. Recent implementation research in Mexico and Taiwan demonstrates the framework's cross-cultural applicability, particularly its emphasis on leadership training and systemic school redesign rather than isolated programmatic interventions.

B. Islamic Character Education and Habituation

In Indonesian Islamic education contexts, recent research has examined how traditional pedagogical concepts align with contemporary character formation models. Nurizah and Amrullah investigated religious character formation through Islamic habituation in primary education, finding that consistent implementation of religious

practices correlates with enhanced moral behavior when integrated systematically into daily school routines[13]. Their study emphasizes that habituation (pembiasaan) functions most effectively when grounded in both theological understanding and behavioral psychology.

Material and Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The case study in this research focused on the daily habituation program as a means of forming students' akhlaq mahmudah at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik. This case was selected because the daily habituation program at the school is implemented consistently and systematically through various religious activities and positive habits. The research subjects included teachers directly involved in habituation activities as well as students who routinely participate in the program.

Data collection techniques comprised: (1) Observation, to observe the implementation of daily habituation activities, such as greeting at the gate, morning hadith reading, murojaah (memorization review), congregational dhuha prayer, collective dhikr, tarjim, daily infaq (charity), Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), and recitation of Surah Al-Kahfi every Thursday afternoon; (2) Interviews, conducted with classroom teachers to obtain perspectives on the effectiveness of daily habituation in students' moral formation; (3) Documentation, in the form of activity photographs, notes, and habituation schedules as supporting data.

Data analysis in this study was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Miles and Huberman[14]. Data reduction was performed by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation was organized in the form of descriptive narratives to illustrate the process and results. In this study, operational definitions were used to clarify the concepts being investigated so that they could be observed empirically. Character habituation was defined as routine activities implemented systematically in the school environment to instill Islamic character values, such as daily worship activities and students' positive habits. Meanwhile, students' akhlaq mahmudah was defined as positive behavior reflecting Islamic moral values, such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, and courtesy that are evident in students' daily activities at school.

Results and Discussions

Based on observations conducted over 10 days at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik and interviews with the character habituation coordinator for grades I-II, it was found that the formation of students' akhlaq mahmudah is implemented through structured, consistent, and

integrated daily habituation in all school activities from morning until the end of learning activities.

The akhlaq mahmudah values that are the main focus of character development for students at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 include discipline, honesty, and responsibility. These three values are instilled through various forms of habituation performed repeatedly in religious activities as well as students' daily activities at school.

Observation results show that character habituation begins as soon as students enter the school area. Teachers greet students at the gate by applying greeting etiquette in accordance with opposite-gender interaction guidelines, particularly for students in grades IV-VI. This habituation aims to instill courtesy and awareness of maintaining social etiquette from an early age. In addition, students are required to read short hadiths posted at the school gate before entering the school area. Teachers ensure that all students read these hadiths aloud and orderly, making this activity a daily routine that forms positive habits.

After entering the classroom, students perform a series of morning worship habituation, which begins with murojaah (memorization review) of Qur'anic surahs, morning prayers, and congregational dhuha prayer. For grades I-III, the performance of dhuha prayer and dhikr is conducted with recitations pronounced aloud so that students can follow and memorize the recitations properly. Based on observation results, the murojaah activities conducted routinely every morning help improve students' memorization fluency, including for students who were previously not fluent in reading the Qur'an. This is reinforced by interview results with a grade II teacher who stated that collective murojaah habituation makes students more confident and assisted in memorizing because it is done collectively.

In addition to worship habituation, the school also implements character habituation through hadith murojaah, recitation of short surah tarjim, and voluntary daily infaq (charity). The observed daily infaq activities show that students are becoming accustomed to giving regularly and do not feel compelled, thus fostering caring attitudes and social empathy. Meanwhile, the recitation of Qur'anic tarjim accompanied by hand movements, especially in grades I-III, helps students understand the meaning of the recitations and increases active involvement in learning.

Interview results also indicate that the school has a special program for student discipline development, namely the Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC). This program is implemented as a form of corrective guidance that is educational in nature. Students who arrive late are given additional learning time corresponding to the duration of their lateness, filled with religious activities such as reading the Qur'an, memorizing, or submitting

memorization. In addition, students who are disorderly during tadarus, dhikr, or prayer performance are asked to repeat the recitations or repeat their prayers. The guidance approach implemented through the Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC) program aligns with the concept of non-corporal punishment. Non-corporal punishment is understood as a form of providing consequences that are educational without involving physical violence. This approach emphasizes efforts to improve behavior through awareness, responsibility, and students' self-reflection[15]. Based on observations and teacher statements, the implementation of KMC has resulted in increased student discipline, as evidenced by the reduced number of students arriving late and increased orderliness in congregational worship performance.

Furthermore, the pedagogical approach of the Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC) reflects Al-Ghazali's principle of Mujahadah (earnest struggle against one's lower self). In Al-Ghazali's perspective, when a student commits a mistake, they require guidance that encourages self-reflection to purify their heart from negative habits. Rather than using corporal punishment, the school's method of providing religious tasks as consequences serves as a form of spiritual cleansing, helping students regain their moral equilibrium and discipline through conscious effort[16].

Other character habituation implemented includes the honesty canteen and the 5S culture (smile, greet, salute, polite, courteous). Observation results show that the honesty canteen is used as a means to train students' honesty in transactions without direct supervision. Teachers emphasize to students that honesty is practiced not out of fear of humans, but because of the awareness that Allah is All-Knowing. The implementation of the 5S culture shows different results at each grade level. Based on interview results, behavioral changes are not yet significantly visible in grade I students as they are still in the adaptation phase, but in grades II-VI, the habit of greeting teachers when meeting in various school environments, such as in the canteen or corridors, is already evident.

The role of teachers in implementing character habituation is visible through exemplary behavior. Teachers not only provide instructions but are also directly involved in performing dhuha prayer, tilawah, and memorization together with students. As explained by Nurchaili, teachers should truly be *uswah* or role models, not merely deliverers of knowledge information[17]. Based on observation results, this teacher exemplary behavior makes it easier for students to follow the implemented habituation and fosters awareness to carry out activities orderly.

The holistic implementation of character development at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik can be theoretically justified through Thomas Lickona's framework of character components. Asserts that a complete character involves the integration of Moral Knowing,

Moral Feeling, and Moral Action[18]. In this study, the morning hadith readings and tarjim studies serve as the Moral Knowing stage, where students do not merely memorize but comprehend the ethical foundations of their deeds. The voluntary infaq and 5S culture cultivate Moral Feeling by fostering empathy and respect for others. Ultimately, the consistent performance of Dhuha prayer and the disciplinary consequences in the Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC) manifest as Moral Action, where values are transformed into habitual behavior. This synergy ensures that akhlaq mahmudah is not just a conceptual understanding but a deeply ingrained identity within the students, distinguishing this model from educational approaches that rely solely on outward physical compliance.

Overall, observation and interview results show that daily habituation at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik contributes to the development of students' akhlaq mahmudah, particularly discipline in obeying school and worship rules, honesty in words and deeds, and responsibility toward tasks and mistakes committed. However, there are constraints in implementing character habituation, namely differences in students' family backgrounds that cause a lack of synchronization between habituation at home and at school. To address this, the school conducts habituation socialization to parents so that the implementation of character values can proceed harmoniously between the school and family environments.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussions presented, it can be concluded that the daily habituation program at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik plays an important role in the formation of students' akhlaq mahmudah. The habituation implemented in a structured, consistent, and integrated manner throughout all school activities is capable of instilling core moral values, particularly discipline, honesty, and responsibility, from the moment students enter the school environment until the end of learning activities.

The implementation of daily habituation through various religious activities and positive habits such as greeting at the gate, morning hadith reading, murojaah (memorization review), congregational dhuha prayer, collective dhikr, Qur'anic tarjim, daily infaq (charity), Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), and the 5S culture habituation functions not only as a routine but also as a means of internalizing moral values in students' daily lives. The continuous repetition process transforms these positive behaviors into habits performed consciously and responsibly.

The Klinik Muhasabah Center (KMC) program as a form of educational discipline development has also proven effective in improving student discipline and orderliness without using physical punishment. The applied non-corporal punishment approach encourages

students to reflect on their mistakes and improve their behavior independently. In addition, the presence of the honesty canteen and implementation of the 5S culture serve as concrete media for training honesty, courtesy, and mutual respect among school members.

The role of teachers as role models has a significant contribution to the success of the character habituation program. Teacher exemplary behavior in worship, attitude, and interaction with students facilitates the process of instilling moral values and increases students' awareness to carry out habituation orderly and responsibly. Nevertheless, this study also found a constraint in the form of differences in students' family backgrounds that affect the continuity of habituation between school and home environments.

Thus, it can be concluded that daily habituation at SD Muhammadiyah GKB 2 Gresik has strategic significance in forming students' akhlaq mahmudah. The success of this program requires ongoing synergy among schools, teachers, and parents so that the moral values instilled at school can be strengthened and continued in the family environment.

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