

Strengthening Character Education Through School Culture Based Habituation in Developing Interpersonal Relationships at Elementary School of Alam Al Fatih Palu

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the forms and implementation of Strengthening Character Education through school culture based habituation in developing students interpersonal relationships at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that school culture based habituation integrating values of discipline, empathy, cooperation, and effective communication into daily activities is proven to significantly strengthen students interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, synergy between the school, parents, and the community serves as a supporting factor in creating harmonious social relationships. This study concludes that the comprehensive integration of character in both academic and non academic aspects is essential to create an educational environment conducive to students social development.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Keywords:

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 School Culture,
 Interpersonal
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 School

1. Introduction

In the contemporary context, marked by the extensive influence of globalization, the importance of character education in addressing the challenges faced by children has become increasingly evident. The erosion of local and traditional values, triggered by the influx of foreign influences, has emerged as a primary concern. Various studies have demonstrated that character education plays a vital role in fostering virtuous behaviors and attitudes, which are essential for optimal social functioning (Dwiyanti et al., 2022). Therefore character

education has emerged as a top priority within the national education policy program to address the erosion of values among the younger generation (Muchtar & Suryani, 2019).

The implementation of character education requires the involvement of various stakeholders including the family and the community. Research results indicate that the development of the character of a child is truly dominated by family conditions. Therefore alignment in the improvement of personality education values between the school and the family

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environment is a necessity (Sajidin et al., 2023).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strengthening Character Education

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language *penguatan* refers to the process method or act of strengthening or making something stronger (RI, 2022).

Education and character are two distinct concepts each possessing a unique meaning and significance. However when these two terms are integrated into a unified concept a new and profound meaning emerges. The concept of character education on the other hand focuses specifically on the development of the character of students through the educational process .

Etymologically, the term “education” is derived from the root word “didik” (to educate), which encompasses the methods, acts, and processes of instruction. Furthermore, “education” signifies a systematic procedure aimed at modifying the attitudes and behaviors of both individuals and collective entities. This process serves as an endeavor to foster human development through targeted educational and instructional initiatives. (RI, 2022).

Based on the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 education is interpreted as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and process so that students actively develop their potential to possess religious spiritual strength personality self control noble character intelligence and the skills needed for themselves society the nation and the state. This development encompasses the

internalizing of qualities such as religious fortitude self control social skills personality intelligence and noble character (UU No. 20 Tahun 2003, 2003).

Within the framework of primary education the basic elements in the development of the moral character of students and the cultivation of beneficial habits are functions of character education. Lickona underlines the urgency of three fundamental elements present in character development namely moral knowing moral feeling and moral action (Arif et al., 2023). Through character education students are directed to recognize ethical or moral values as well as to experience and internalize them in real life so that they can act in various situations based on those intended values (Purnomo, 2020).

The objective of character education is to train individuals who possess integrity nobility of character and the ability to contribute positively to society (Mesenu, 2022). The fundamental goal of character education is to foster moral and ethical values to guide students in navigating their real lives fostering responsible tolerant and cooperative behavior (Saputra et al., 2021).

The dimensions of character education have been identified as consisting of various parts that interact with one another to form the personality of the student holistically. These dimensions include kinesthetics (physical development), aesthetics (emotional and artistic development), literacy (intellectual development), and ethics (spiritual and heart development) (Ramdayana et al., 2023).

The enhancement of character education holds significant importance in fostering positive interpersonal

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relationships particularly within the learning environment. The emphasis of behavioral education is not only on the internalizing of moral and ethical values but also encompasses the development of positive interpersonal connection skills. In this regard effective interpersonal communication fosters trust and mutual understanding between individuals thereby serving as a foundation for healthy interpersonal relationships (Nurrachmah, 2024).

2.2 School Culture Based Habituation

The theory of habituation proposed by Thomas Lickona emphasizes the importance of the habituation process in character education where students are taught to recognize love and practice goodness through daily experiences. Lickona identifies three elements present in character education namely moral knowing moral feeling and moral action. The process begins with moral knowing where students acquire knowledge about good ethical and moral values. The second component is moral feeling which refers to the development of positive feelings toward those values prompting students to feel empathy and concern for others. Finally moral action involves applying those values in real actions so that students understand moral concepts and are able to implement them.

In the context of character education habituation functions to form good habits that become an integral part of the identity of the student. Lickona argues that the internalizing of good character is not solely achieved through theoretical teaching but through consistent practice and experience. Thus it is important for educators and

parents to foster a conducive environment for the habituation of positive values especially within the school and family environments. Consequently effective character education requires collaborative efforts between educational institutions families and the community to reinforce the internalizing and application of moral values.

Habituation in the realm of character education is a process of fostering positive and consistent behavior through the execution of repetitive activities which plays an important role. According to the theory of Bandura habituation requires systematic repetition of the desired behavior thereby integrating it into the habit repertoire of an individual (Anis et al., 2023).

The theory of habit proposed by John Dewey in 1922 emphasizes that habits are formed through repeated actions that produce positive results both socially and individually. Dewey argues that a habit is not merely a repeated behavioral pattern but is also the result of integrated experience that is relevant to the social context. In his view good habits can strengthen social interaction and support individual development because actions that are repeated and provide positive results will shape more adaptive mindsets and behaviors (Lind, 2023).

Research shows that habits formed through positive experiences can increase individual engagement in the community and strengthen social relationships which in turn contributes to psychological and social well being (Bridge, 2020).

Habituation which is conceptualized as a character education approach plays an urgent function in molding the personality of the student. This process encompasses the

repetition of commendable behaviors with the aim of encouraging permanent integration into the behavioral repertoire of the student. According to Ayni et al habituation activities exert a great influence on the development of the discipline character in students which is an essential component of character education (Ayni et al., 2022).

School culture based habituation plays an important role in developing interpersonal relationships among students. A positive school culture creates an environment that supports healthy social interaction where students can learn to respect one another collaborate and communicate effectively. Research shows that the habituation of attitudes of tolerance and cooperation within the context of school culture can reduce bullying behavior and increase mutual respect among students (Ni et al., 2024).

2.3 Developing Interpersonal Relationships

The term development according to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language is defined as an effort method process activity or action of developing (RI, 2022). Consequently development is a design of action or a process in an effort to develop something that already exists with the aim of increasing or optimizing its quality.

Interpersonal relationships can be defined as interactions established between individuals within a social context with the aim of building emotional closeness and cooperation. In this context the importance of interpersonal communication cannot be ignored because effective communication plays a vital role in fostering an inclusive

and positive environment both in education and in daily life (Yeni & Susanti, 2023).

Therefore the development of interpersonal skills is essential not only to strengthen the bonds between individuals but also to enhance the ability of a person to adapt and collaborate within diverse social contexts.

There are several aspects of interpersonal relationships namely empathy communication and cooperation.

Empathy is a vital component of successful interpersonal relationships as it is defined by the proficiency in interpreting and feeling the emotions of others. In the educational environment empathy can be cultivated through various activities including role playing which allows children to demonstrate concern for their peers. Empirical evidence shows that children who participate in activities that encourage empathy such as helping someone in difficulty or comforting those who are sad tend to exhibit prosocial behavior (Fitriani et al., 2021).

Communication is a fundamental aspect of interpersonal relationships that functions as a bridge to build and maintain interactions between individuals. In this context effective communication encompasses the skills of listening speaking and understanding messages delivered orally and in writing as well as through signs body language facial expressions and intonation. Research findings indicate that effective interpersonal communication can increase cooperation within a group. Research emphasizing the importance of openness and trust among team members in achieving common goals supports this statement (Safitri & Fitriyana, 2021).

Cooperation serves as a fundamental element of interpersonal relationships, particularly within the context of elementary education. Collaboration between parents, students, and teachers is highly beneficial for establishing a conducive learning environment. In this paradigm, teachers function as facilitators who encourage collaborative group work among students. This approach significantly assists students in mastering academic material while fostering the development of essential social emotional competencies for future interactions. Effective cooperation has been proven to reduce stress and increase student participation in the learning process, ultimately cultivating a more positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere (Falah, 2020).

3. Methodology

The methodological framework used in this thesis is qualitative. According to the principles established by Bogdan and Taylor as cited by Lexy J Moleong qualitative methods can be defined as a writing procedure that produces descriptive information covering written or spoken words from people and observable behaviors as intended (Arikunto, 2008).

This thesis applies a field qualitative research approach specifically descriptive analysis also referred to as descriptive qualitative research. The goal of this thesis strategy is to produce or describe an activity condition or phenomenon occurring in the field regarding the implementation of character education. The researcher will utilize this research approach and design.

The research location is SD Alam Al Fatih situated on Jalan Poros Palu Bangsa Palupi Tatanga District Palu City Central Sulawesi postal code 94222. The selection of

SD Alam Al Fatih as the location for this thesis research is based on the fact that SD Alam Al Fatih is a unique school. This school utilizes nature based education which is a teaching method focusing on achieving good values and developing student character by inviting them to interact with nature. This teaching method encourages students to develop their character based on values which aligns with the philosophy of character education that emphasizes real life experience and practice.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Forms of Character Education Strengthening in Developing Interpersonal Relationships at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu

This research utilizes a qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon of school culture based habituation for strengthening character education at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu focusing on the development of student interpersonal relationships. The results of this research were obtained through in depth interviews with various participants observations of habituation activities conducted at the school and analysis of relevant activity documentation. The research findings will be presented in the form of a thematic narrative that groups data according to the main themes discovered during the research process.

Following the observations interviews and documentation conducted by the author regarding character education strengthening through school culture based habituation in developing interpersonal relationships at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu the research results are as follows:

A nature school is an alternative in the education system focusing on a nature based approach. In a nature school environment the atmosphere is very natural

International Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education
Vol. 7 No. 2 Tahun 2025

with buildings generally in the form of stilt houses known as saung surrounded by various types of plants and even livestock areas replacing the grand buildings commonly found in conventional schools. In this place children are given the freedom to explore experiment and express themselves without being restricted by classroom walls or rules considered to limit their curiosity. Children are allowed to be themselves with opportunities to develop their potential and grow into individuals with strong character good morals and broad insights. Therefore children are taught to recognize and interact with the natural environment from an early age.

Like nature schools throughout Indonesia especially those belonging to the Jaringan Sekolah Alam Nusantara or JSAN the SD Alam Al Fatih educational process develops four curriculum pillars as the main foundation as stated in the interview with the School Principal:

“The educational process at SD Alam Al Fatih similar to other nature schools prioritizes four main pillars as the basis for strengthening character education. The first pillar namely character or akhlak serves as the moral and spiritual foundation for every student. The second pillar focuses on the development of logic and creativity through experimentation which encourages active learning and exploration to sharpen intelligence. The third pillar leadership development aims to foster independence and collaboration through experiences both inside and outside the classroom. The final pillar entrepreneurship development prepares students to understand the real world and build a spirit of innovation. These four pillars comprehensively form the character thinking abilities leadership skills and life readiness of the students.” (Nurzakia, *The Principal of SD Alam Al Fatih Palu*, 2025)

The interview results reveal the implementation of a holistic approach to character development at SD Alam Al Fatih, which aligns with the principles of character education theory proposed by Thomas Lickona. Lickona emphasizes that character development must involve three fundamental dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The moral pillar at this school clearly reflects efforts to establish a solid moral foundation, consistent with Lickona’s assertion regarding the basis for building healthy character. Furthermore, the development of logic and creativity within the second pillar supports the formation of critical and reflective thinking habits, resonating with Dewey’s views on the importance of thinking habits in education.

In the context of interpersonal relationships, particularly concerning empathy, communication, and collaboration, the development of leadership and entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in shaping students social skills. Dewey argues that education should cultivate positive social habits through meaningful social interaction. Experiences that encourage collaboration and independence, both inside and outside the classroom, are essential in this context. These experiences teach students to cooperate, empathize, and communicate effectively—skills that not only support social life but also contribute to building a strong character capable of navigating the real world.

Based on the four main pillars of education, this approach is highly relevant to the Moral Pillar, which emphasizes the importance of empathy and care in interpersonal relationships; the Scientific Logic Pillar, which encourages students to conduct critical analysis and reflection on the impacts of cooperation; the Leadership

Pillar, which develops students' skills in collaborating within a community; and the Entrepreneurship Pillar, which invites students to strengthen teamwork skills through internship experiences and social activities. This approach supports the strengthening of students' social relationships in a structured and sustainable manner.

4.2 Cultivating Interpersonal Relationships through School-Based Character Habituation

Based on a comprehensive qualitative exploration, which includes participant observation and in depth interviews with informants, this study reveals the practical implementation of character education at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu. The structured empirical data provides an overview of how habituation strategies based on school culture serve as highly effective instruments in building and strengthening positive interpersonal relationships within the educational environment. These findings demonstrate an educational paradigm that establishes character as the primary foundation for social interaction within the school.

Furthermore, this section elaborates on the implementation of character education through school culture based habituation in developing interpersonal relationships at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu. Based on previous research findings regarding the forms of strengthening character education in interpersonal development, this discussion is also divided into three parts:

1. **Character Habituation** The importance of implementing character education through habituation rooted in school culture is highly relevant to building interpersonal relationships among students. This is more than just a

series of separate activities; rather, it is an educational ecosystem designed to build continuously evolving social and emotional skills.

2. **Developing Nature School Culture Based on the Achievement of School Vision and Mission** School culture plays a crucial role in creating an environment that supports student character development. This culture is constructed by considering the established vision and mission, and is implemented through various activities, such as routine educational activities involving nature school culture based habituation, as well as religious, social, and extracurricular activities. This is based on previous interviews regarding the forms of character education strengthening in interpersonal relationship development by cultivating school culture while prioritizing the achievement of the school vision and mission.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that strengthening character education through school culture based habituation at SD Alam Al Fatih Palu effectively fosters positive student habits. The integration of discipline, cooperation, empathy, and communication values into both academic and non academic routines comprehensively encompasses moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, aligning with Lickona's theory. This implementation significantly enhances the quality of students' interpersonal relationships through meaningful social interaction, consistent with John Dewey's paradigm of experience. The success of this program is driven by the synergy between teachers, parents, and the

International Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education
Vol. 7 No. 2 Tahun 2025

community in creating a consistent educational ecosystem. Cross sectoral collaboration and open communication are pivotal in reinforcing students' social emotional skills, thereby fostering harmonious relationships within the school environment and the broader social context.

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