Strategy Of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Forming Elementary School Students' Noble Character Throught Religious Habituations

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Abstract

This study addresses the critical challenge of moral degradation among elementary school students in the digital era by examining the pivotal role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in fostering noble character (akhlakul karimah). The main objective of this research is to analyze the strategies employed by IRE teachers and evaluate the implementation of religious habituation programs in forming students' moral character. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with IRE teachers and school principals, participant observations of daily school routines, and documentation of religious activity logs. The findings reveal that IRE teachers effectively integrate three core strategies: exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah), consistent enforcement of religious routines (such as dhuha and dhuhur prayers in congregation, daily Quranic recitation, and Friday charity), and continuous moral reflection. These routine habituations significantly improved students' discipline, empathy, respect toward authority, and religious compliance both within and outside the classroom. In conclusion, systematic religious habituation guided by teacher leadership serves as a vital framework for character building in primary education. This research implies that educational institutions should embed structured daily religious activities into their core school culture to sustain long-term moral development.

Keywords: Islamic religious education, teacher strategies, noble character, religious habituation, elementary school

Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the modern era has brought significant structural shifts in primary education (Assingkily & Rangkuti, 2020). While digital transformation broadens learning horizons, it simultaneously triggers critical moral degradation among elementary school students, such as declining discipline, loss of empathy, cyberbullying, and reduced respect toward authority (Fakhrurozi et al., 2021). In this context, primary school students represent a vulnerable age group that requires concrete guidance in internalizing moral and ethical values (Dewi & Handayani, 2021). Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role not merely as an academic subject, but as an integrative foundation for character development (*akhlakul karimah*) (Siregar et al., 2020).

Previous studies have widely highlighted the importance of character building in schools (Hidayat et al., 2020; Rohman & Solihin, 2021). The relationship between digital media engagement and children's character development has also been examined by the effect of TikTok use on the character development of elementary-school students (Nur Hasanah & Kristiyah, 2023). However, many traditional IRE implementations remain trapped in cognitive-oriented teaching, failing to translate theoretical Islamic principles into daily operational behaviors (Maftukhatun Ni'mah & Fatmawati Nur Hasanah, 2023; Makarim et al., 2025). To overcome this gap, religious habituation (*pembiasaan keagamaan*) guided by strong teacher leadership serves as an effective educational approach in bridging abstract religious values and real-world behavior (Wibowo & Suyatno, 2020). Habituation reinforces

values through repetitive action until they turn into subconscious daily habits (Aini & Muna, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on character education, there remains a need to deeply analyze the specific strategies employed by IRE teachers in integrating exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), practical worship habituation, and moral reflection at the elementary school level (Syihabuddin & Rahmawati, 2022). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the strategic interventions of IRE teachers and evaluate how systematic religious habituations shape students' noble character in daily elementary school life. The research addresses how these strategies improve student discipline, empathy, respect, and overall religious compliance.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the real-life context of IRE teachers' strategies and religious habituation programs in an elementary school environment.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The key informants included 3 Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers, the school principal, and 12 elementary school students from upper-grade levels who actively participate in daily religious habituation programs.

Research Procedures

The research was conducted through four systematic phases: (1) preliminary preparation and field observations, (2) data collection via multi-source techniques, (3) data reduction, categorization, and triangulation, and (4) formulation of research findings and pedagogical implications.

Data Collection Technique(s)

Data were gathered using three complementary techniques:

1. **Semi-structured Interviews:** Conducted with IRE teachers and the school principal to investigate teacher strategies, pedagogical goals, and observed behavioral changes.
2. **Participant Observation:** Conducted during daily school routines, specifically monitoring congregational Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers, morning Quranic recitations (*tadarrus*), and Friday charity (*infaq*).
3. **Documentation:** Analysis of school policy documents, religious activity logbooks, student attendance records, and character evaluation rubrics.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which comprises data reduction, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions. Triangulation of sources and methods was rigorously applied to guarantee data trustworthiness and internal validity.

Results

Integration of IRE Teacher Strategies

The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers implement three interrelated strategies to foster students’ noble character through everyday school

interactions. First, exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) is demonstrated by teachers through their daily conduct, particularly in their speech, punctuality, and commitment to worship, allowing students to learn moral values through direct observation and imitation. Second, systematic habituation is established through structured religious routines, including Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers, Qur'an recitation, and Friday infaq, which encourage students to consistently practice religious and moral values. Third, continuous reflection is facilitated through brief religious talks (*kultum*) following worship activities and individual moral counseling, providing opportunities for students to understand the meaning of their actions, reflect on their behavior, and internalize the values being taught. Together, these strategies integrate role modeling, repeated practice, and moral reflection into a continuous process of character formation within the school environment.

Outcome 1: Practical Implementation of Religious Habituation

Religious habituation activities are embedded directly into the daily school schedule. Table 1 summarizes the structured programs and student participation levels observed over a three-month evaluation period.

Table 1 Implementation of Daily and Weekly Religious Habituation Routines

No	Activity Name	Frequency	Target Character Outcome	Participation Rate (%)
1	Congregational Dhuha Prayer	Daily (Morning)	Self-discipline & Spiritual readiness	96.5%
2	Morning Quranic Recitation	Daily (Before class)	Literacy in Al-Quran & Calmness	98.0%
3	Congregational Dhuhur Prayer	Daily (Midday)	Obedience & Togetherness	95.2%
4	Friday Infaq / Charity	Weekly (Friday)	Empathy & Social generosity	92.8%
5	Cleanliness & Courtesy Routine	Daily (Continuous)	Respect, Courtesy (*Sopan Santun*)	97.1%

Outcome 2: Impact on Student Character Development

The routine habituation guided by teacher supervision led to measurable changes in student behavior both inside and outside the classroom. Observed Improvements in Student Behavior Dimension Key Indicator Improvements Discipline Punctual class arrival and orderly prayer attendance. Empathy Active sharing and caring in Friday charity & peer interaction. Respect toward Authority Consistent application of 5S (Salam, Sapa, Senyum, Sopan,Santun) with teachers.

Religious Compliance Independent initiative to perform ablution and prayer.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that systematic teacher strategies combined with structured religious habituations successfully cultivate noble character among elementary school students. This finding aligns with the socio-cultural learning theory and Islamic educational principles where habituation (*ta'did*) and exemplary behavior (*uswah*) serve as primary catalysts for moral internalization (Anwar & Rahmawati, 2021; Supriadi et al., 2022).

Teachers serving as live exemplars (*uswah hasanah*) significantly reduce the gap between religious knowledge and daily practice (Fauzi et al., 2021). When students observe teachers consistently joining Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers, participating in Friday infaq, and speaking politely, they internalize these behaviors as normative school standards (Habibi & Kurniawan, 2020). Furthermore, the routine execution of worship routines instills intrinsic self-discipline and emotional regulation, mitigating negative behavioral risks associated with digital era distractions (Hasanah & Maryani, 2022).

The integration of Friday charity (*infaq*) directly cultivates social empathy and altruism among young learners (Kurniyawan & Zulaikha, 2021). Students not only learn the religious obligation of charity conceptually, but also practice sharing their allowance regularly (Munir & Hidayatullah, 2022). Additionally, the daily implementation of 5S (Salam, Sapa, Senyum, Sopan, Santun) reinforces mutual respect toward teachers, staff, and peers, forming a harmonious Islamic school culture (Prasetiyo et al., 2021).

Limitations of the Study

This study has certain limitations. The research was conducted in a single elementary school setting, which may restrict the direct generalizability of the findings to schools with different demographic or cultural contexts. Furthermore, long-term habituation outcomes at home were evaluated primarily through teacher and parent self-reports rather than direct longitudinal observations in family environments. Future research should consider longitudinal multi-center designs involving parent-teacher collaborative frameworks.

Conclusion

This study concludes that IRE teachers play a key role in forming elementary school students' noble character through three core strategies: exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), structured habituation routines (Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers, Quranic recitation, and Friday charity), and continuous moral reflection. These routine habituations significantly elevate students' discipline, empathy, respect toward authority, and religious compliance.

The pedagogical implication of this study suggests that elementary educational institutions should move beyond cognitive-heavy religious instruction and systematically embed structured worship routines into their primary school culture. Sustainable character building requires continuous collaboration between teachers, school administrators, and parents to ensure consistent moral habituation across both school and home environments.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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