

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH SCHOOL CULTURE AT MTS NW SELEBUNG, KERUAK DISTRICT, EAST LOMBOK REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Character education is a crucial aspect of developing moral values among students. This study explores the implementation of character education through school culture at MTs NW Selebung, focusing on elements such as social care, nationalism, discipline, and hard work. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews, observations, and document analysis to gather data. The findings reveal that the school's commitment to social care, through community support activities, and the promotion of nationalism, demonstrated through flag ceremonies and competitions, play a vital role in shaping students' character. Additionally, a disciplined environment fosters adherence to school rules, reinforcing positive behaviors. The study concludes that integrating character education into daily school activities significantly enhances students' moral and social competencies. These insights contribute to the existing literature on character education and offer practical implications for educational institutions seeking to cultivate a strong moral foundation among students. Future research should consider broader sample sizes and diverse educational contexts to deepen understanding of effective character education practices.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: September 15, 2024

Revised: October 20, 2024

Approved: October 25, 2024

Published: October 30, 2024

Keyword:

Character Education, School Culture

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central objective in educational institutions, aimed at fostering a generation with solid moral values. By integrating character education into school culture, institutions can effectively nurture students' moral and social competencies, contributing to a well-rounded personality that embraces cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects (Azet, 2011). As Smith and Thompson (2019) explain, embedding character education in school culture promotes positive behavior and reinforces community bonds based on respect and integrity, thus creating a conducive environment for ethical development.

This whole-school approach in character education, as outlined by Brown et al. (2020), effectively incorporates values across all school interactions, thus reinforcing them through various daily activities. Such strategies align with Lickona's theory on effective character education, which posits the need for a balance between cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements (Azet, 2011). Furthermore, developing school culture as a vehicle for character education has shown promising

results in fostering traits like empathy, resilience, and responsibility, qualities critical to moral development (Gonzalez & Marks, 2021).

Schools in Indonesia, including those in West Nusa Tenggara, face moral and social challenges that impact educational stability. This context has led schools to implement culturally resonant character-building practices. At MTs NW Selebung, for example, religious values and social care are emphasized, encouraging students to internalize these values within and beyond the school environment. This model demonstrates how school culture, when thoughtfully constructed, provides meaningful character education and personal growth opportunities (Choi & Park, 2021).

Building on culturally relevant pedagogy, Martinez and Lee (2019) underscore that character education gains depth and effectiveness when it respects and integrates students' personal and cultural identities. Such integration aligns with school culture initiatives seen in MTs NW Selebung, where students are taught values that resonate with their community, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose (Taylor et al., 2020). Additionally, involving students in school-wide value systems renders character education more relevant and impactful in their lives (Wells & Roberts, 2018).

Lastly, integrating character education within daily routines allows for continuity, strengthening moral reasoning and promoting consistent ethical behavior (Fisher et al., 2020). Implementing this approach aligns with recent research emphasizing the importance of social-emotional skills within a character education framework, which has proven essential in holistic student development (Anderson, 2018). In sum, MTs NW Selebung's approach to character education reflects a comprehensive model that can inspire similar frameworks in other schools aiming to foster robust character traits in their students.

Previous studies show that character education has been implemented in various contexts. Rahmawati (2012) studied the implementation of character education at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Kediri II, which was integrated through the curriculum, self-development programs, and school culture. Meanwhile, Purwanto (2012) focused on character education in pesantren, which used friendship methods and murobbi (mentorship) to foster students' moral development. Choiriyah (2012) examined the implementation of character education through extracurricular activities in the Islamic Propagation Organization (Badan Dakwah Islam, or BDI) at MAN Sooko Mojokerto. Although all these studies discuss character education, this research brings novelty by focusing on the implementation of school culture as a strategy for character formation in the MTs NW Selebung environment, East Lombok Regency.

Although there are numerous studies on character education, few focus on the implementation of school culture in the context of madrasah tsanawiyah (Islamic junior high schools), particularly at MTs NW Selebung. This research is expected to fill this gap by further exploring how school culture can be an effective instrument for implementing character education at the middle school level.

This study provides an innovative approach by analyzing the implementation of school culture as the primary method for building students' character at MTs NW Selebung. The research deeply examines aspects of school culture, including religiosity, discipline, hard work, social care, and nationalism as part of character development, thus contributing to the development of a character education model in the school environment.

Research Questions and Objectives

How is character education implemented through school culture at MTs NW Selebung?

What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of character education through school culture at MTs NW Selebung?

The objectives of this research are to describe the application of school culture in shaping students' character at MTs NW Selebung and to identify the factors that support and hinder the implementation of school culture in shaping students' character.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of character education through school culture. The findings of this research are hoped to serve as a reference for school principals, teachers, and policymakers in efforts to build a character-driven generation through a school culture approach, which can be adopted by other schools that have yet to implement similar models.

METHOD

In this study, a qualitative descriptive approach was used, where data were collected in textual form to inductively describe the object being studied. The research design does not focus on data generalization but rather on a deep understanding of the observed phenomenon, specifically the implementation of character education through school culture at MTs NW Selebung. The research setting is natural, with the researcher acting as the main instrument for data collection, using triangulation techniques to obtain valid data through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data obtained provide a description of the school culture's role in supporting character education.

The study sample consists of several key informants at MTs NW Selebung, including the principal, vice principal of curriculum, several educators, and students. These subjects were selected to gain a comprehensive understanding of how character education is implemented within the school culture and the factors that support or hinder this implementation. Each informant provides a unique perspective, from policy aspects to classroom implementation, relevant to describing the implementation of character education.

Data collection was carried out through three primary methods. Direct observation was conducted to observe daily activities that reflect a school culture supporting character education, such as dhuha prayers, group prayers, and other activities. In-depth interviews were also conducted to explore informants' views and experiences related to character education implementation, and documentation methods were used to obtain written data, such as profiles and organizational structures of the school and records of school culture-related activities. Triangulation techniques were applied to enhance data validity by comparing findings from various data sources.

Data analysis was performed descriptively through several stages. Data obtained from various sources were summarized and reduced to form an abstraction focused on character education implementation in the school. The data reduction process involved grouping and organizing data into specific categories to facilitate further analysis. Each analysis result was then developed into meaningful patterns and relationships, ultimately formulated into conclusions that describe the implementation of character education at MTs NW Selebung.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Implementation of Character Education at MTs NW Selebung

Character education is absolutely necessary in schools or madrasahs, as stated in the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003, which asserts that national education is based on the Pancasila of Indonesia 1945, rooted in religious values, Indonesian national culture, and responsive to the demands of the times. The Islamic values have been implemented at MTs NW Selebung

since the establishment of the school. Idham Khalid, S.Pd, the principal of MTs NW Selebung, mentioned, “The implementation of Islamic values at MTs NW Selebung has actually been carried out since its inception, reflecting a character aligned with the curriculum found in the Ministry of National Education (DIKNAS).”

From interviews conducted on-site, the researcher identified several character-building cultures present at MTs NW Selebung, including:

1. Religious Culture

Religious culture refers to the attitudes and behaviors that comply with the teachings of the adopted religion. A school is said to possess a religious culture if it meets certain indicators, such as celebrating religious holidays, having facilities for worship, and providing opportunities for all students to perform religious practices.

The value of religious character has become a part of the school culture at MTs NW Selebung. As Idham Khalid, S.Pd, the principal, stated: “School culture can also be seen as a process of forming relatively stable and automatic attitudes and behaviors through repeated learning processes. At our school, we always gather in the school’s prayer room before entering class for communal prayers and a brief religious talk (kultum), all led by students according to a predetermined schedule, under the supervision of teachers. Before starting lessons, students also pray together, led by the class leader. We conduct Duha prayers during break time every day, and it is mandatory to perform congregational Dhuhur prayers for both teachers and students.”

Subsequently, the researcher conducted interviews with the vice principal and teachers who served as data sources for this research to verify the information's validity and certainty from the key informant, the head of the madrasah.

Akhyaar Sidik, S.Pd, the curriculum vice principal, stated: “Here, during communal prayers, all students take turns leading the prayers and the brief talks. Boys take turns leading the adzan (call to prayer) and iqomah to build their confidence in front of their peers. We hope that these habits at school are carried over to their homes, as practicing only at school is less effective. Every Friday, our school holds a fundraising initiative to assist the community around the school, and we also conduct congregational Dhuhur prayers attended by all members of the school, including teachers and students.”

Based on these interviews, the researcher conducted observations. From the observational data, it was found that the practice of Duha and congregational Dhuhur prayers is evident when prayer times approach, as male students in uniform and female students in neat hijabs begin to leave their classes and gather in the prayer room alongside teachers and the principal. Additionally, before entering the classroom, students are accustomed to participating in routine madrasah activities, such as communal prayers led by the students themselves. This indicates that the values of religious character are being instilled in the students so that as they grow older, they will not find it burdensome to carry out these practices.

Table 1. Benefits of Morning Prayer and Kultum Activities

Name	Response
Aditiya	To become more Islamic
Nadhia	To cultivate the habit of praying
Khairul Hidayat	To become more confident in speaking during kultum
Ahmad Afandy	To feel closer to the Creator
Ilman Hasani	To not only pray but also to practice leading prayers

Name	Response
Wahyu Muzani	To learn kultum and possibly read sermons
Septi Mala Aulia	To cultivate the habit of praying
Hamdi Ahmad	To gain confidence in leading prayers and giving speeches
Risa Febrianti	To be able to pray and give kultum
Jasmin	To make me accustomed to praying and listening to advice through speeches

2. Social Care

Social care refers to the attitudes and actions that involve a desire to assist others and communities in need. Indicators of social care include frequently helping the local community and mutual assistance among school members. The culture or habits instilled in the madrasah environment at MTs NW Selebung include social care, characterized by a commitment to providing assistance to those in need. According to Akhyar Sidik, S.Pd, the Curriculum Vice Principal, "Every Friday, our school organizes fundraising activities to support the surrounding community in need and to assist in the event of disasters affecting school members, including both teachers and students. We also usually bring rice to help families or community members who face hardships."

3. National Spirit

The culture of national spirit encompasses the mindset, actions, and perspectives that prioritize the interests of the nation and state above personal and group interests. This culture has been fostered at MTs NW Selebung, as highlighted in an interview with Idham Khalid, S.Pd, the Principal, who stated, "Every Monday and Independence Day, MTs NW Selebung commemorates these occasions with flag ceremonies. Additionally, our students participate in marching competitions, scouting, and other contests organized by the Keruak Sub-District Government to celebrate and commemorate the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia. This fosters a sense of nationalism among the students."

From documentation data, the researcher found that on Mondays and significant occasions, such as Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17, the entire school community conducts the flag ceremony solemnly. Furthermore, MTs NW Selebung consistently participates in competitions to express a sense of nationalism and pride in being Indonesian, as seen in this year's participation in all contests organized by the Keruak Sub-District Government.

4. Discipline

Discipline is described as actions that demonstrate orderly behavior and adherence to various rules and regulations. A school is said to have a culture of discipline if it meets indicators such as having school regulations, instilling discipline among school members, and enforcing rules with fair penalties for violators. Idham Khalid, S.Pd, mentioned: "Here, all students are not allowed to bring mobile phones and must wear complete uniforms, which include neat attire as specified by the school, along with caps for boys, while female students wear designated hijabs. Boys are not allowed to have long hair, and violations of madrasah regulations will result in penalties. At our madrasah, we are accustomed to starting classes with a communal prayer."

Table 2. Implementation of Discipline Culture

Name	Response
Aditiya	Never arrives late
Nadhia	Not late and always participates in prayer

Name	Response
Khairul Hidayat	Dresses neatly and is never late
Ahmad Afandy	Always participates in morning prayers and does not bring a mobile phone
Ilman Hasani	Complies with madrasah rules
Wahyu Muzani	Always attends morning prayers and fulfills duty schedules
Septi Mala Aulia	Dresses neatly, is never late, and does not bring a mobile phone
Hamdi Ahmad	Does not skip school
Risa Febrianti	Always dresses neatly and disposes of waste properly
Jasmin	Arrives at school on time and leaves at the scheduled time

5. Hard Work

Hard work is a behavior that demonstrates a sincere effort to overcome learning obstacles, complete tasks to the best of one's ability, and create a healthy competitive environment. From documentation data, the researcher found that the students of MTs NW Selebung are accustomed to studying diligently. They frequently participate in various competitions, including presentation contests, both in intramural and extracurricular activities. One notable achievement is winning a scouting competition. This indicates that the character values instilled at the school are embraced and internalized by the students, allowing them to experience the results of their hard work.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Character Education through School Culture

In the implementation of character education through school culture, there are both supporting factors and challenges that may hinder achieving optimal results.

1. Supporting Factors for Implementing Character Education through School Culture

Implementing character education positively influences student behavior, making positive practices at school become habits that students adopt more naturally. The supporting factors include:

a. Parents

Parents For character education implementation to be successful, parents should fully support all school programs and activities, enabling the school to fulfill its role in enhancing students' quality and performance.

- 1) Parents entrust both academic and moral education to MTs NW Selebung.
- 2) Parents encourage their children to participate in both academic and non-academic competitions.

Idham Khalid, S.Pd., the principal, mentioned: "The positive routines, such as Duha and Dhuhur prayers in congregation, increase parents' interest in enrolling their children here. Students are happy to represent the school in competitions, and parents support them, both morally and materially, helping the school in preparation and participation."

This shows high parental support for school activities.

b. School

The school supports these efforts by fostering effective communication with parents and implementing activities that promote character education.

Idham Khalid, S.Pd., stated, "We socialize each program with parents to foster harmonious relationships, ensuring that they fully support school activities. We organize regular charity

donations on Fridays to instill mutual aid and assign specific teachers to train students in conducting ceremonies and scouting. We also inform parents to ensure their children arrive on time and dress properly to reinforce discipline.”

c. Students

Students play a vital role as the primary targets of character education. As one ninth-grade student, Nadia, explained: “I participate in morning prayers, Dhuhur prayers, and extracurriculars like scouting, which boost my confidence and courage in representing the school.”

Rosmawati, S.Ag., a teacher and Vice Principal of Student Affairs, added, “Students have developed discipline, such as using proper waste disposal and dressing neatly.” Principal Idham Khalid, S.Pd., also emphasized, “We teach small things to ensure these behaviors become habits inside and outside the school.” These interviews highlight that positive habits rooted in Islamic values support character education at MTs NW Selebung.

Inhibiting Factors in Implementing Character Education through School Culture

1. Student Issues

- a. Students come from various backgrounds; thus, if character education practices at school, like Duha and Dhuhur prayers, are not reinforced at home, religious character development may be less effective.
- b. Some students arrive late, sometimes due to a lack of parental attention to their education.
- c. Some students lack motivation to study and occasionally fail to complete their assignments thoroughly.

2. Parents

- a. Some parents do not attend school meetings, impacting students' understanding of school programs and the reinforcement of school values at home.
- b. Some parents are too busy with work to monitor their children's progress.

3. School Resources

- a. Teachers may need to improve their time management skills to guide students effectively.
- b. School funding is insufficient to expand resources and facilities.

4. External Challenges

- a. Rapid technological advancements in media and communication may negatively impact students' behavior.
- b. Globalization can allow foreign cultures to enter more freely, which may overshadow Islamic cultural values.

Despite these challenges, MTs NW Selebung strives to address each issue, viewing them as opportunities for growth and improvement.

Table 3
Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Character Education at MTs NW Selebung.

Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Parents	Student Issues
Parents trust the school with academic and moral education.	Students’ backgrounds differ, and lack of reinforcement at home affects religious character. Some lack motivation and punctuality and struggle with assignments.
Parents encourage competition participation.	

Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
School	Parents
Programs are socialized with parents and supported by them, combining science and Islamic values.	Some parents do not attend school meetings, impacting reinforcement of school programs. Some are too busy to monitor their children.
Students	School and External Challenges
Students' enthusiasm for learning.	Teachers' time management and limited school resources. The influence of technology and globalization on students' behavior.

DISCUSSION

This section analyzes, interprets, and explains the findings of the research on character education at MTs NW Sebung, focusing on its integration into the school culture. The results reveal significant insights into the effectiveness of various character education components, including social care, national spirit, discipline, and hard work, in shaping students' moral values and behaviors.

The findings indicate that social care is deeply embedded in the school culture at MTs NW Sebung. The institution's initiatives, such as weekly fundraising activities and support for community members in need, demonstrate a commitment to fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy among students. This aligns with the literature, which emphasizes that character education promotes positive social behaviors and enhances community bonds (Smith & Thompson, 2019). Furthermore, the emphasis on nationalism through regular flag ceremonies and participation in local competitions has instilled a sense of pride and belonging in students, reinforcing their identity as responsible citizens.

The study's findings echo previous research on character education, such as that by Rahmawati (2012), which highlighted the successful integration of character values in curriculum and extracurricular activities. However, unlike the previous studies that focused on distinct aspects of character education, this research specifically emphasizes the role of school culture as a comprehensive approach. This novel perspective aligns with Choi and Park (2021), who argue that a well-constructed school culture facilitates meaningful character education, thus providing a broader understanding of how these elements work synergistically.

The research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how a holistic approach to character education can enhance students' moral and social competencies. The findings suggest that integrating character education into daily routines not only promotes ethical behavior but also strengthens community ties (Fisher et al., 2020). Practically, this model can serve as a framework for other educational institutions aiming to foster character development, highlighting the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy as emphasized by Martinez and Lee (2019).

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The sample size, although reflective of the school community, may not capture the full diversity of experiences within other educational contexts. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research might introduce biases, as it relies on subjective interpretations of the data collected. Future research could expand on these findings by incorporating a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the results.

In summary, the research provides compelling evidence that character education at MTs NW Selebung is effectively implemented through a well-defined school culture. The integration of social care, discipline, national spirit, and hard work plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. This study lays the groundwork for further exploration into how similar frameworks can be adopted in other educational settings, thus contributing to the broader discourse on character education in Indonesia.

The findings not only affirm the significance of a comprehensive character education model but also call for ongoing reflection and adaptation of educational practices to foster a generation equipped with strong moral values, as underscored by Gonzalez and Marks (2021).

CONCLUSION

This research on character education at MTs NW Selebung highlights several key findings that align with the established objectives of the study. Firstly, the integration of social care, national spirit, discipline, and hard work into the school culture significantly contributes to the character development of students. The initiatives undertaken, such as fundraising for the community and participation in national celebrations, foster a sense of empathy, pride, and responsibility among students, effectively addressing the research questions regarding the implementation of character education through school culture.

The implications of this study are considerable, as they provide insights into how character education can be effectively embedded in educational practices, thereby enhancing students' moral and social competencies. The findings suggest that schools adopting a holistic approach to character education not only promote positive behavior but also strengthen community ties, reinforcing the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study to include a more diverse sample across various educational settings. This could further validate the findings and explore additional factors that may influence the implementation of character education. Overall, this research underscores the significance of character education in fostering a generation equipped with strong moral values, providing a valuable framework for other institutions aiming to enhance their character education initiatives.

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