Journal of Basic Education and Thematic Learning

e-ISSN: 2987-7083
Volume 1, Issue. 1, 2024, pp. 23-33
https://jurnal.isimupacitan.ac.id/index.php/jurasic.

Parental Involvement and Character Formation among Islamic Elementary School Students

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Submitted: 06-04-2026 Revised : 26-10-2026 Accepted: 02-11-2026

ABSTRACT. This study examines how parents participate in character formation at SDIT Al Azhar Tulungagung. A qualitative case study drew on interviews, observations, and document analysis involving the principal, teachers, parents, and students. Analysis proceeded through data condensation, thematic display, and interpretation across sources. Three themes were identified: home-based character education, school–parent collaboration, and character-related behaviors associated with parental involvement. Parents described modeling conduct, explaining expectations, and supervising religious and everyday routines. Teachers and parents reported that communication helped coordinate guidance across home and school. Observations documented punctuality, task completion, respectful interaction, peer assistance, and participation in religious activities. Together, these accounts suggest that repeated practice and coordinated guidance provide opportunities for developing discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, and religiosity. However, the case-study design does not establish causal effects or demonstrate that these behaviors constitute stable dispositions. The study contributes a contextual account of how family practices and school arrangements intersect in Islamic elementary education. It recommends reciprocal communication, accessible parenting support, and attention to children's understanding of the values underlying expected conduct.

Keywords: *Parental Involvement; Character Formation; Islamic Elementary School.*

https://doi.org/10.52640/jurasic.266
How to Cite Afifah et al. (2024). Parental Involvement and Character Formation among Islamic Elementary School Students. *Journal of Basic Education and Thematic Learning,* Volume 1(1), 23-33.

INTRODUCTION

Character education in elementary schools concerns the development of dispositions that guide conduct in everyday relationships, including honesty, responsibility, respect, and concern for others. Its educational value depends on how students interpret and enact these commitments, rather than simply recalling rules. A comprehensive meta-analysis identifies benefits of character education while also showing variation across programs and outcomes (Brown et al., 2023). In Indonesia, research with elementary physical education teachers locates character formation within family, school, and social life, but also identifies difficulties translating curriculum expectations into practice (Muhtar &Dallyono, 2020). These findings make coordination between educational settings a substantive issue: students need opportunities to encounter, discuss, and practice values in relationships that extend beyond classroom instruction.

Parental involvement comprises distinguishable practices, including support at home, participation in school activities, communication with teachers, and discussion of educational expectations. A meta-analysis links involvement with several dimensions of children's adjustment, but such associations should not be treated as evidence that every form of involvement is equally

beneficial (Barger et al., 2019). Syntheses focused on achievement similarly show that the meaning and contribution of involvement depend on its form and educational context (Kim, 2020, 2022). Accordingly, this study treats involvement as a set of situated practices rather than a single measure of parental commitment. Supervision, dialogue, modeling, and school participation are examined for the different opportunities they provide for character learning.

The study uses a relational perspective in which children's experiences at home and school are connected through adult communication and shared practices. Meta-analytic evidence on family–school interventions identifies both relationship processes and practical supports as relevant to social and emotional outcomes (Sheridan et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020). This perspective directs attention to what parents and teachers do together, how they respond to behavioral difficulties, and whether children encounter understandable expectations. In Islamic elementary education, the same questions apply to religious routines and moral responsibilities. Religious participation provides a context for discussing honesty, care, and accountability; whether those commitments extend to situations outside adult supervision remains an empirical question.

Indonesian evidence provides an important basis for examining these processes locally. Research among parents of Muhammadiyah elementary pupils links positive parenting and agreeableness with engagement in character education and examines religiosity as a mediator (Diana et al., 2021). This study concerns parental engagement and should not be read as direct proof of children's lasting moral development. Ethnographic research with marginalized families in Yogyakarta further shows that value transmission occurs within material constraints and can involve predominantly instructive interactions (Septiarti et al., 2022). These findings suggest that parental involvement needs to be understood in relation to family resources, communication practices, and religious meanings, rather than inferred from school attendance alone.

Islamic schools connect character education with religious instruction, institutional routines, and everyday expectations. Research in an Islamic boarding school illustrates how particular interpretations of Islamic teachings shape the content and enactment of character education (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). A separate boarding-school study emphasizes participatory planning and the integration of teaching, care, and student development (Sukendar et al., 2019). These secondary-school settings differ from an elementary day school, so their arrangements cannot be transferred directly. They nevertheless highlight a relevant question for SDIT settings: how are institutionally articulated values interpreted and reinforced within families whose practices and circumstances may differ from those of the school?

SDIT Al Azhar Tulungagung provides a bounded setting for investigating that question. Its character education activities emphasize discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, and religious practice. The present inquiry examines how parents describe their responsibilities, how educators organize collaboration, and how related behaviors appear in school activities. The focus is on the relationship between reported practices and observed conduct within this setting. It does not assume that participation in religious routines establishes moral maturity or that parents who attend more school events necessarily provide stronger guidance at home.

The study addresses a specific explanatory task: to describe how home practices and school–parent interaction are connected to character-related behavior in one Islamic elementary school. International intervention research supports the relevance of family participation, including for young children's social and emotional outcomes (Cosso et al., 2022), but does not establish how those processes operate in this institution. Rather than claiming that parental involvement or Islamic character education has been neglected altogether, this study contributes contextual detail about their intersection. It asks what parents do at home, how parents and teachers coordinate their efforts, and what behavioral patterns participants and observations associate with these practices.

METHOD

A qualitative case study was conducted at SDIT Al Azhar Tulungagung to examine parental involvement within its everyday institutional and family context. The school constituted the bounded case; the inquiry focused on home-based guidance, school–parent interaction, and students' character-related behavior. Case-study methodology is appropriate for examining a phenomenon together with its contextual conditions (Rashid et al., 2019). The purpose was to develop an interpretive account of practices and experiences, rather than estimate an intervention effect or represent all Islamic elementary schools. The institution's integration of academic learning and Islamic character education made it relevant to the research questions.

Participants included the principal, classroom teachers, parents, and selected students involved in the school's character education activities. Purposive selection sought information-rich perspectives relevant to the research questions, consistent with the principle that sampling decisions should follow a study's aims (Campbell et al., 2020). Semi-structured interviews explored home guidance, communication, and responses to behavioral concerns. Participant observations addressed school activities, parent–teacher interaction, and visible conduct. School policies, program documents, communication records, and student development reports provided additional contextual evidence. Comparing these sources supported interpretation of how reported expectations related to practices; agreement among sources was treated as corroboration, not as proof of causation.

Analysis proceeded iteratively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded and organized into categories relating to parental practices, collaboration, and character-related behavior. Narrative descriptions and thematic matrices supported comparison across participant groups. Explicit specification of the coding and interpretation procedures is important because qualitative approaches differ in their assumptions and analytical requirements (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Credibility procedures included source and method triangulation, member checking of preliminary interpretations, and prolonged engagement in the setting. Informed consent, confidentiality, and protection of participant identities were observed. These procedures address aspects of qualitative trustworthiness, while the adequacy of the account also depends on transparent reporting of the research process (Stenfors et al., 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Parental Involvement through Home-Based Character Education

Home-based involvement was described through the routines parents used to communicate and reinforce expected conduct. Parents reported supervising prayer, homework, and social interaction while modeling honesty, responsibility, discipline, and respect. These accounts locate character education in ordinary family activities rather than in occasional advice alone. Teachers associated regular parental supervision with more consistent conduct at school. This association is an interpretation expressed within the case: the available evidence does not isolate supervision from other features of family life or establish how much behavioral variation it explains.

Parents described themselves as responsible for introducing moral expectations before these were reinforced at school. One parent explained, "We always remind our child to pray on time, speak politely, and complete responsibilities before engaging in leisure activities. These habits are practiced every day at home." Another parent emphasized that character education should begin within the family. Parents also described discussing behavioral issues and explaining acceptable and unacceptable conduct. The accounts indicate that reminders and explanation

accompanied daily routines. They provide evidence of parents' educational intentions and reported practices, while children's independent interpretation of those practices requires separate attention.

School observations documented students arriving on time, greeting teachers respectfully, following classroom regulations, completing tasks, and maintaining classroom cleanliness. Teachers noted that some students connected classroom expectations with practices encouraged at home. Observation records also associated parental monitoring with confidence and disciplined conduct. These observations are consistent with the interview accounts, but they capture behavior in particular school situations. They do not, by themselves, demonstrate stable moral dispositions or establish that the same behavior occurred when students were outside adult supervision.

SchoolParent Collaboration in Strengthening Character Values

The second theme concerned the arrangements through which parents and the school coordinated character education. Regular meetings, WhatsApp groups, progress reports, and parenting seminars enabled communication about expectations and behavioral concerns. Teachers described parental follow-up as important for continuing school guidance at home. The significance of these arrangements lies in the opportunities they created to exchange information and discuss responses. Their existence alone does not establish that every family participated equally or that communication was consistently reciprocal.

A teacher described the perceived benefit of coordinated guidance: "When parents follow up on the character programs implemented at school, students show faster behavioral improvement because they receive the same messages at home." The principal similarly emphasized continued reinforcement across settings. Parents participated in religious activities, parenting workshops, and school events, and teachers associated regular participation with discipline and social responsibility. These statements document participants' explanations of perceived improvement. Because no comparative rate of change was measured, the claim of faster improvement remains a teacher perception rather than a quantified result.

Observations documented parental attendance at meetings and character education activities, conversations about behavioral concerns, and participation alongside children at religious events. These encounters provided occasions for adults to coordinate expectations and for children to observe their cooperation. Communication also supported the identification and discussion of behavioral difficulties. Together, the accounts and observations indicate that collaboration was enacted through recognizable routines. The data do not establish whether less visible forms of home involvement were equally represented among families who attended fewer school activities.

Theme 3. Character Outcomes Associated with Parental Involvement

The third theme comprised character-related behaviors that teachers and parents associated with involvement. Participants reported discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, and religious commitment in students' everyday conduct. Examples included adherence to school rules, completion of responsibilities, and respectful interaction. Parents also described improvements at home following participation in school-supported programs. These reports support an account of perceived behavioral development, but the absence of a comparison group and systematic baseline measures prevents attributing improvement exclusively to parental involvement.

One parent described a change in household behavior: "My child has become more responsible in managing study time and household duties after we consistently applied the values discussed during school parenting programs." Another reported greater honesty and willingness

to admit mistakes. Teachers described empathy and cooperation during group work, while the principal considered behavioral difficulties easier to address when families collaborated. These examples identify conduct that participants understood as improvement. They do not directly measure moral reasoning, so the interpretation is limited to reported behavior and the meanings adults assigned to it.

Observed behaviors included helping classmates, responding courteously to teachers, participating in religious activities, and completing assigned tasks. Congregational prayer and Qur'anic recitation were visible components of school life. Teachers attributed part of this conduct to reinforcement at home, and observation records associated active parental support with fewer disciplinary difficulties. Such convergence strengthens the contextual interpretation of the case while leaving alternative explanations open. Participation, courtesy, and compliance are treated as observable indicators relevant to character education, not interchangeable measures of an underlying moral trait.

Cross-Theme Findings

Across the themes, three connected processes organize the findings: home-based guidance, schoolparent coordination, and continuing behavioral reinforcement. Families provided examples and expectations in daily life; the school provided organized activities and opportunities for shared discussion. Communication connected these settings and enabled adults to respond to particular concerns. Students' reported and observed conduct formed the behavioral evidence associated with this arrangement. The resulting model is an interpretive synthesis of the case, rather than a tested causal pathway or an estimate of the independent contribution of each process.

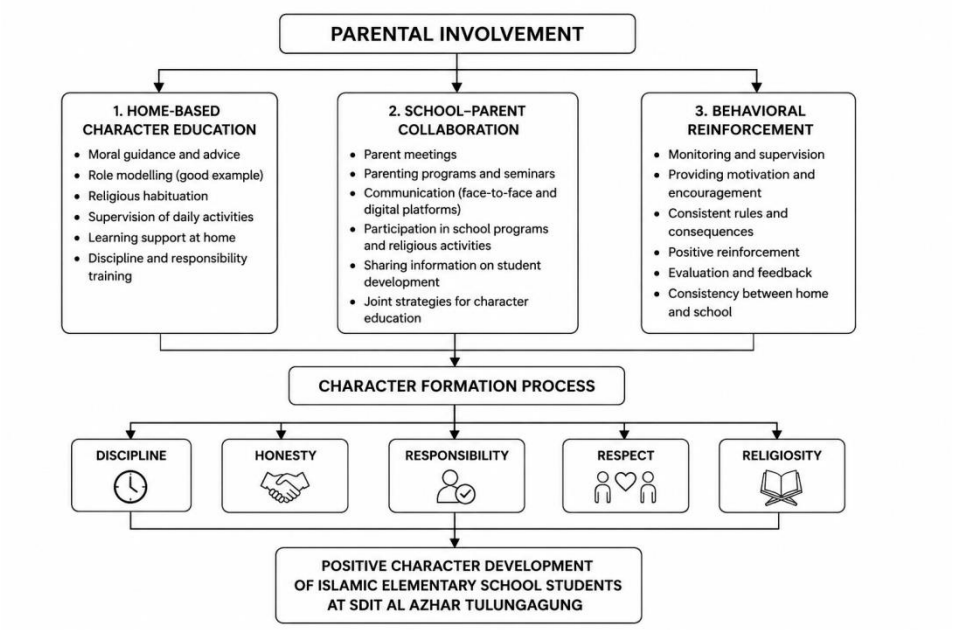


Figure 1. Conceptual model of parental involvement and character formation at SDIT Al Azhar Tulungagung

Discussion

Interpreting parental involvement

The findings suggest that the educational contribution of parental involvement lies in the interaction between repeated home practices and coordinated school guidance. The reported combination of modeling, reminders, discussion, and follow-up provides a plausible account of

how values become part of everyday conduct. This interpretation is consistent with research identifying relational processes and home-based supports within effective family–school interventions (Sheridan et al., 2019). It does not demonstrate the same effects at SDIT Al Azhar Tulungagung, because the present case study neither assigned an intervention nor measured change against a comparison condition. Its contribution is to describe locally meaningful practices and identify mechanisms that later research could examine more directly.

Home routines and religious practice

Home routines appear important because they repeatedly connect abstract values with identifiable responsibilities. Completing a task, admitting a mistake, or speaking respectfully gives a child an occasion to practice what an adult has explained. Research with Indonesian teachers likewise identifies habituation, integration, and imitation as approaches to character education (Hidayat et al., 2022). However, repetition should be interpreted alongside the quality of the relationship. Meta-analytic evidence distinguishes associations between different parenting approaches and prosocial behavior (Wong et al., 2021), while research comparing mothers and fathers cautions against assigning the educational role to one parent alone (van der Storm et al., 2022). For this case, the useful interpretation is that routines provide opportunities for learning; warmth, explanation, and children's responses help determine what those opportunities mean.

Religious routines gave character education a recognizable vocabulary and practical setting. Prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and respectful interaction linked family expectations with the school's Islamic identity. Research with Muhammadiyah elementary-school parents supports considering religiosity in accounts of parental engagement (Diana et al., 2021). Nevertheless, religious participation is not equivalent to prosocial conduct. A systematic review of children's religiousness and prosociality highlights the importance of how religion and helping behavior are conceptualized and situated (Zammit & Taylor, 2023), while broader work identifies contextual moderators of religious prosociality(Tsang et al., 2021). The present findings therefore support examining religious practices as opportunities for moral learning, without assuming that frequency of participation demonstrates honesty, empathy, or concern for all others.

Supervision can make expectations predictable, but its educational purpose should extend beyond securing obedience. The findings show adults monitoring routines; they do not establish whether students followed these routines willingly, through understanding, or mainly in response to reminders. Evidence that autonomy-supportive teaching can be followed by changes in autonomy-supportive parenting illustrates that influence across settings may be reciprocal rather than exclusively parent-to-child (Cheon et al., 2024). In this case, a defensible practical implication is to combine clear routines with age-appropriate explanation and opportunities for children to take responsibility. Whether that approach improves independent self-regulation would require evidence beyond the observations reported here.

Reciprocal school–parent collaboration

Schoolparent collaboration matters when communication enables joint understanding and problem solving. Meetings or WhatsApp groups may transmit instructions, but their stronger educational function is to allow parents and teachers to share observations and agree on feasible responses. A meta-analysis specifically examining parent–teacher relationships provides relevant evidence for treating relationship quality as an outcome of family–school engagement work (Smith et al., 2022). Research on consultation-based engagement also supports attention to structured collaboration around student and parent needs (Smith et al., 2021). Applied to this

case, the implication is to assess communication by the quality of follow-up and reciprocal exchange, not simply by counting messages or meetings.

The relationship between involvement and student development is unlikely to be uniform or direct. Family–school intervention research reports benefits across academic and social-emotional domains, with effectiveness shaped by intervention components and student characteristics (Smith et al., 2020). A study of economically vulnerable students found that school engagement mediated the association between home involvement and social-emotional development (Martinez-Yarza et al., 2024). This offers an alternative interpretation of the present findings: parental support may matter partly because it helps students participate more fully in school life. Since the case study did not test mediation, school engagement should be treated as a plausible explanatory pathway for future inquiry, rather than a mechanism demonstrated by these data.

Parenting seminars are most useful when they increase families' capacity to respond to concrete situations. A meta-analysis associates parenting self-efficacy with several dimensions of homeschool partnership (Ma et al., 2024). Indonesian research on preschool learning at home also indicates that accessible learning materials and tutorial videos can support parental involvement, although its age group and pandemic context differ from the present school (Sujarwo et al., 2022). These findings support considering brief examples, discussion of everyday dilemmas, and practical follow-up alongside seminars. The case itself does not demonstrate that seminar attendance increased parental competence. Schools should therefore distinguish participation in an event from evidence that families found the support usable.

Distinguishing conduct from internalization

Interpretation also requires separating character-related behavior from achievement and general adjustment. Academic syntheses address outcomes that are related to, but distinct from, honesty, empathy, and responsibility (Kim, 2020, 2022). Likewise, an Indonesian meta-analysis connects character education values with mathematics achievement rather than establishing lasting moral dispositions (Khadijah et al., 2021). The present reports of improved conduct should therefore be assessed on their own terms. Punctuality, task completion, admitting mistakes, and helping classmates offer different kinds of evidence; they should not be collapsed into a single claim that students have developed stronger character. More precise outcome definitions would strengthen both school evaluation and subsequent research.

Discipline and responsibility were visible in routines, but a child's ability to explain and apply a value in a new situation would provide a different kind of evidence. An elementary-school model using traditional games and Socratic questioning illustrates an approach that combines participation with reflection on conduct (Hafina et al., 2022). Scholarship on wisdom and moral education similarly makes practical moral judgment a relevant consideration (Kristjánsson, 2020). These perspectives suggest complementing reminders with discussion of why a rule matters and how to respond when obligations conflict. Research on online learning and responsibility among junior-high students also highlights that behavior is studied within particular learning arrangements (Saliman et al., 2023); its results should not be transferred automatically to younger pupils in this case.

Religious character also needs to be interpreted within the school's specific educational commitments. Studies of Islamic and other boarding schools show that institutional interpretation and organized routines can shape character programs (Miftahuddin et al., 2024; Sukendar et al., 2019), but their older students and residential settings differ from SDIT pupils

who move between school and home. Moreover, a review and meta-analysis distinguishes religious commitments to authority, purity, and social order from care-oriented morality (Saroglou&Craninx, 2021). For the present study, this means that religiosity, respect, and empathy should be discussed as connected but distinct concerns. Further inquiry should examine whether students extend care and fair treatment to peers with different backgrounds, rather than infer such conduct from observance alone.

The observed helping and cooperation suggest that character learning includes social competencies practiced with peers. Large-scale evidence on school-based social and emotional learning reports improvements across several outcomes while emphasizing variation in context and implementation (Cipriano et al., 2023). A whole-school meta-analysis also considers initiatives that connect curriculum, school environment, and family or community partnerships (Goldberg et al., 2019). These bodies of evidence place the SDIT findings within a broader educational context: home support is one part of an arrangement that also includes teacher practice, peer interaction, and school climate. They support examining these influences together, rather than attributing every positive social behavior to parental guidance.

Conceptual contribution and limitations

The conceptual model consequently emphasizes relationships among settings and the practices linking them. It is compatible with evidence associating involvement with children's adjustment (Barger et al., 2019), while retaining the possibility that children's characteristics also influence how adults become involved. The model should be read as a set of propositions: repeated practice may make expectations recognizable; dialogue may help children understand them; and communication may help adults coordinate responses. These propositions distinguish the observed activities from the developmental processes inferred from them. Testing their direction, durability, and relative contribution requires longitudinal or intervention designs and children's own accounts of their experiences.

An inclusive partnership must also recognize that visible school participation is shaped by opportunity. Critiques of deficit-oriented engagement discourse caution against treating families as the problem when institutional expectations overlook their circumstances (Goodall, 2021). Indonesian ethnographic evidence similarly shows that involvement takes place within socioeconomic constraints (Septiarti et al., 2022). Schools could therefore offer flexible meeting times, private consultation, and alternatives to digital communication, while recognizing guidance that occurs at home. These are practical recommendations, not additional findings about barriers measured in this case. Their purpose is to avoid equating limited attendance with indifference or placing responsibility for character development solely on parents.

The study's contribution is a contextual explanation of how reported family practices and school arrangements are connected to observed behavior. Its limits are equally important. A single case and purposive participation support depth rather than population estimates. Adult accounts may favor socially desirable interpretations, and observed behavior does not establish lasting internalization. Without baseline measures or a comparison group, improvement cannot be attributed to parental involvement alone. Transparent reporting of participant selection and analytic adequacy is essential; methodological reviews show that claims about saturation require justification in relation to the study's purpose and data (Hennink& Kaiser, 2022). Future studies should document divergent cases, strengthen children's participation, and examine changes across time. Evidence from character education and parental-involvement interventions offers a basis

for designing such work, while leaving the effectiveness of specific SDIT practices to be evaluated (Brown et al., 2023; Cosso et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

At SDIT Al Azhar Tulungagung, parents and educators described character education as a continuing process connecting home routines with school expectations. The findings identify home-based guidance, school–parent collaboration, and associated character-related behaviors, with behavioral reinforcement linking these dimensions. Modeling, explanation, supervision, and communication provided opportunities to practice discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, and religious commitments. Observations and participant accounts support this contextual interpretation, but do not establish causal effects or prove that visible conduct represents stable moral dispositions. The practical priority is to strengthen reciprocal communication and accessible parenting support while helping children understand the reasons behind expected behavior. Schools should recognize diverse forms of family involvement and distinguish religious participation, compliance, and prosocial conduct when evaluating their programs. Further research across settings and over time is needed to examine the durability of these patterns and the contributions of teachers, peers, family circumstances, and children's own agency.

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