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School Culture and *Akhlakul Karimah* Development among Elementary Islamic School Students

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ABSTRACT This study investigates the role of school culture in fostering *Akhlakul Karimah* among students at MI Al Huda Pacitan. Character education has become a major concern in contemporary Islamic elementary education, particularly in developing students' moral values and positive behavior. This research employed a qualitative case study design to explore how school culture contributes to the formation of noble character among students. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, as well as documentation analysis. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that school culture significantly contributes to the development of *Akhlakul Karimah* through three major dimensions: religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and a supportive social environment. Religious habituation activities, including congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and daily supplications, promote discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness among students. Teacher role modeling strengthens moral values by providing concrete examples of ethical behavior and Islamic conduct. Furthermore, a supportive social environment encourages empathy, cooperation, mutual respect, and social responsibility through positive interactions within the school community. These three dimensions operate synergistically to facilitate the internalization of Islamic values and the development of noble character traits. The study concludes that school culture serves as an effective mechanism for integrating character education into students' daily experiences. The findings contribute to the literature on Islamic elementary education and provide practical implications for strengthening character development through value-oriented school culture.

Keywords: School *Culture; Akhlakul Karimah; Character Education; Islamic Elementary School; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.*

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the central concerns in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in the context of elementary education where students experience significant moral, social, and emotional development. Educational institutions are expected not only to facilitate academic achievement but also to cultivate positive values, ethical behavior, and social responsibility among learners. In Islamic educational settings, character education is closely associated with the development of *Akhlakul Karimah*, which refers to noble character grounded in Islamic teachings and manifested through daily behavior. The cultivation of *Akhlakul Karimah* is considered an essential objective of Islamic elementary schools because moral values are viewed as inseparable from intellectual development. Recent studies indicate that schools play a crucial role in fostering students' moral development through structured educational experiences, institutional values, and habitual practices embedded within the school environment(Bier et al., 2021). Consequently, understanding how school culture contributes to character formation remains an important area of educational research.

School culture represents a system of shared beliefs, values, norms, traditions, and practices that influence the behavior of all members of the educational community. It encompasses both formal and informal aspects of school life, including leadership practices, teacher-student interactions, disciplinary policies, religious activities, and social relationships among students. A positive school culture can create an environment that supports the internalization of moral values and encourages students to demonstrate ethical behavior in their daily activities. According to (Fullan, 2019)school culture significantly shapes students' attitudes, learning motivation, and behavioral development because it determines the quality of interactions occurring within the educational setting. Similarly, educational researchers have emphasized that sustainable character formation requires a supportive school culture that consistently reinforces desired values through everyday practices (Bier et al., 2021).

In Islamic elementary schools, school culture is often enriched by religious values that guide educational activities and social interactions. Religious routines such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Islamic greetings, and moral habituation programs are commonly integrated into daily school practices. These activities function as mechanisms through which Islamic values are transmitted and internalized by students. Studies conducted in Islamic educational institutions reveal that continuous exposure to religious practices contributes significantly to the development of honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, and empathy among learners (Sari et al., 2024). Therefore, school culture in Islamic schools serves not only as an organizational framework but also as a medium for character education rooted in Islamic principles.

The concept of *Akhlakul Karimah* occupies a central position in Islamic education because it reflects the ultimate purpose of human development according to Islamic teachings. Noble character encompasses various virtues, including honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), responsibility, respect, humility, discipline, and compassion toward others. These values are expected to guide students in their interactions with teachers, peers, parents, and the wider community. Islamic scholars argue that character formation should begin at an early age because childhood represents a critical period for value internalization and habit formation (Anwar, 2026). Furthermore, contemporary educational research suggests that character development is most effective when moral values are consistently practiced rather than merely taught as theoretical concepts(Lickona, 2013). Consequently, educational institutions need to establish environments that facilitate the practical implementation of moral values in students' daily lives.

Recent studies have highlighted the relationship between school culture and character development across different educational contexts. Research conducted byNurani et al., 2024) found that religious school culture positively influences students' moral behavior through habitual religious activities and exemplary conduct demonstrated by teachers. Likewise, (Hadi&Prayogi, 2025)reported that Islamic school environments characterized by strong religious

traditions contribute significantly to the development of students' discipline and social responsibility. International studies also support the notion that school culture plays a fundamental role in shaping students' character by creating opportunities for value internalization and ethical decision-making (Purwaningsih&Ridha, 2024). Despite these findings, limited research has specifically examined how school culture contributes to the development of *Akhlakul Karimah* among students in Islamic elementary schools located in rural Indonesian contexts.

MI Al Huda Pacitan represents an Islamic elementary school that actively integrates religious values into its educational practices and institutional culture. The school implements various programs designed to cultivate students' moral and spiritual development, including daily religious routines, character habituation activities, and teacher role-modeling practices. These initiatives provide a unique context for exploring how school culture influences the formation of *Akhlakul Karimah* among elementary school students. Understanding this process is particularly important because school culture operates as a hidden curriculum that shapes students' values and behaviors beyond formal classroom instruction. Furthermore, examining the experiences of students and educators within this context can provide valuable insights into effective strategies for character education in Islamic elementary schools.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, this study seeks to investigate the role of school culture in fostering *Akhlakul Karimah* among students at MI Al Huda Pacitan. Specifically, the study aims to explore the forms of school culture implemented within the institution, examine how these cultural practices contribute to students' moral development, and identify factors that support the cultivation of noble character in the school environment. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on Islamic character education and provide practical recommendations for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen character formation through school culture in Islamic elementary education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the role of school culture in fostering *Akhlakul Karimah* among students at MI Al Huda Pacitan. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena in depth and to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within their natural settings (Lim, 2025). The case study design was considered appropriate because the research focused on a specific educational institution that implements various school culture programs aimed at character development. Through this approach, the researcher was able to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how school culture contributes to the formation of students' noble character. The study was conducted at MI Al Huda Pacitan, an Islamic elementary school recognized for integrating religious values into daily educational practices. The research took place from January to March 2025. The school was selected purposively due to its consistent implementation of character-based educational programs and religious habituation activities.

The participants consisted of the school principal, six teachers, and twelve students selected through purposive sampling. The principal and teachers were chosen because they were directly involved in designing and implementing school culture programs, while the students were selected based on their active participation in school activities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding the implementation of school culture, perceptions of character education, and factors influencing the development of *Akhlakul Karimah*. Observations focused on daily school activities, including religious routines, classroom interactions, and character habituation programs. Documents such as school regulations, vision and mission statements, activity schedules, and character education programs were analyzed to support and validate findings obtained from interviews and observations. The use of multiple data collection techniques enabled methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the study.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman(Miles &Huberman, 2020), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were first organized and coded according to emerging themes related to school culture and character development. Subsequently, the coded data were categorized into broader thematic patterns to facilitate interpretation and understanding. Data displays in the form of matrices and thematic descriptions were used to identify relationships among categories and concepts. The validity and trustworthiness of the findings were ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the research field. Participants were given opportunities to review interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations to confirm accuracy. Ethical considerations were also observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and using the collected information solely for academic research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSION

RESULTS

The findings of this study reveal that school culture at MI Al Huda Pacitan plays a significant role in fostering students' *Akhlakul Karimah*. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that character development is not merely taught through classroom instruction but is embedded in daily school practices and interactions. The school culture is reflected through religious habituation programs, teacher role modeling, and a supportive social environment that consistently reinforces moral values. Students are exposed to various activities designed to cultivate discipline, responsibility, honesty, respect, and empathy. These cultural practices create opportunities for students to internalize Islamic values through direct experience. Furthermore, the consistency between school policies and daily implementation strengthens the effectiveness of character education. The analysis generated three major themes regarding the contribution of school culture to the development of *Akhlakul Karimah*among students

Religious Habituation as a Foundation for *Akhlakul Karimah* Development

One of the most prominent aspects of school culture at MI Al Huda Pacitan is the implementation of religious habituation programs. These activities include congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation before lessons, daily supplications, Islamic greetings, and the practice of maintaining cleanliness as part of faith. Such routines are conducted consistently and involve all members of the school community. Teachers explained that these activities are intended to develop positive habits that gradually become part of students' character. Through continuous participation in religious routines, students learn the practical application of Islamic teachings in everyday life. Consequently, religious values are not perceived merely as theoretical concepts but become integrated into students' behavior. The findings suggest that habitual religious practices function as a primary mechanism for character formation.

The interview with the principal highlighted the importance of religious habituation in shaping student behavior:

"We believe that good character cannot be formed instantly. Therefore, students are continuously guided through daily religious activities so that noble values become habits in their lives." (Principal Interview, April 2025)

This statement indicates that school leaders perceive character development as a long-term process requiring continuous reinforcement. The emphasis on habituation aligns with Islamic educational principles that prioritize practice and consistency in moral formation. Students who repeatedly engage in positive behaviors gradually develop self-discipline and moral awareness. The principal also emphasized that all educational activities should reflect Islamic values. Consequently, religious culture becomes the foundation upon which other character education

initiatives are built. The findings demonstrate that leadership commitment significantly contributes to sustaining religious school culture.

Classroom observations further confirmed the implementation of religious habituation programs. Before the first lesson began, students gathered to recite short chapters of the Qur'an and perform collective prayers. Teachers actively supervised these activities and provided guidance when necessary. Students participated enthusiastically and demonstrated familiarity with the established routines. During break times, many students voluntarily greeted teachers and peers using Islamic expressions. Observation data also revealed that students maintained orderly behavior while preparing for congregational prayer. These practices indicate that religious values have become integrated into the daily life of the school community. The consistency of these activities contributes to the development of students' spiritual and moral character.

Interviews with students revealed that religious routines influenced their attitudes both inside and outside school. One student explained:

"After getting used to praying together at school, I also try to pray on time at home because my teachers always remind us." (Student Interview, April 2025)

This statement illustrates how school culture extends beyond the school environment and affects students' behavior in their personal lives. The transfer of positive habits from school to home suggests successful internalization of moral values. Students reported becoming more disciplined and responsible as a result of participating in religious activities. Furthermore, parents noted improvements in their children's religious commitment and daily behavior. These findings demonstrate that religious habituation serves as an effective strategy for promoting *Akhlakul Karimah* among elementary school students.

Teacher Role Modeling in Strengthening Moral Values

The second major theme concerns the role of teachers as moral exemplars. Findings indicate that students closely observe and imitate teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions. Teachers are expected to demonstrate honesty, discipline, respect, patience, and responsibility in their daily conduct. Participants consistently emphasized that teacher behavior has a stronger influence on students than verbal instruction alone. Therefore, educators consciously strive to embody the values they seek to instill in learners. The school leadership also encourages teachers to maintain professionalism and ethical conduct. As a result, role modeling has become an integral component of school culture. The findings reveal that teacher example significantly contributes to students' moral development.

According to one classroom teacher:

"Students imitate what they see. If teachers arrive on time, speak politely, and respect others, students tend to follow the same behavior." (Teacher Interview, April 2025)

The teacher's statement highlights the importance of consistency between moral instruction and actual behavior. Students are more likely to internalize values when they observe those values being practiced by respected adults. Teachers reported making conscious efforts to model positive attitudes during classroom interactions and extracurricular activities. They viewed themselves as living examples of Islamic character rather than merely transmitters of knowledge. This perspective strengthens the effectiveness of character education initiatives implemented within the school.

Observational data supported these interview findings. Teachers consistently greeted students warmly, used respectful language, and demonstrated patience when addressing student mistakes. During classroom activities, teachers encouraged honesty by praising students who admitted errors rather than concealing them. They also emphasized fairness when resolving conflicts among students. In several instances, teachers reminded students about proper manners through gentle guidance rather than punitive measures. Students responded positively to these interactions and frequently mirrored the respectful behavior demonstrated by their teachers. Such observations indicate that teacher role modeling creates a learning environment conducive to moral development.

Students themselves acknowledged the influence of teacher behavior on their character formation. One participant stated:

"I want to be like my teacher because she is kind, patient, and always helps students." (Student Interview, April 2025)

This statement demonstrates the extent to which teachers function as moral references for students. Admiration toward teachers motivates learners to emulate positive behaviors and attitudes. The findings suggest that teacher role modeling strengthens students' understanding of moral values by providing concrete examples of ethical conduct. Consequently, character education becomes more meaningful because students can observe how values are applied in real-life situations. The integration of moral instruction and teacher example therefore represents a critical factor in the development of *Akhlakul Karimah*.

Supportive Social Environment and Character Reinforcement

The third theme concerns the role of the school's social environment in reinforcing positive character development. Findings indicate that interactions among students, teachers, and school staff contribute significantly to the cultivation of *Akhlakul Karimah*. The school promotes mutual respect, cooperation, empathy, and responsibility through various social activities and behavioral expectations. Students are encouraged to assist one another, resolve conflicts peacefully, and demonstrate concern for the well-being of their peers. Such practices create a positive social climate that supports character formation. Participants consistently described the school environment as welcoming and family-oriented. Consequently, students experience moral values not only through formal programs but also through everyday relationships.

The vice principal explained:

"We try to create a family atmosphere where everyone respects each other. Character education becomes easier when students feel valued and supported." (Vice Principal Interview, April 2025)

This perspective reflects the school's belief that positive relationships facilitate moral development. When students feel accepted and respected, they are more likely to demonstrate similar attitudes toward others. School administrators therefore prioritize the creation of an inclusive and caring environment. Various collaborative activities are organized to strengthen social bonds among students. These initiatives reinforce the values promoted through religious and academic programs. As a result, school culture functions as a comprehensive system supporting character education.

Observations revealed numerous examples of positive social interaction among students. During group assignments, students cooperated effectively and shared responsibilities fairly. Older students frequently assisted younger pupils without being instructed by teachers. Acts of kindness such as helping friends carry books or providing support during learning activities were commonly observed. Furthermore, students demonstrated respect toward school staff and visitors by greeting them politely. These behaviors suggest that values promoted through school culture have been successfully internalized. The supportive social environment encourages students to practice moral values in authentic situations.

A student participant reflected on the importance of mutual respect within the school community:

"Our teachers teach us to help friends and not make fun of others. If someone has difficulties, we try to help them." (Student Interview, April 2025)

This statement illustrates students' awareness of the moral expectations embedded within school culture. The emphasis on empathy and cooperation contributes to the development of social responsibility and compassion. Students learn that moral behavior extends beyond individual religious practice and includes positive relationships with others. Consequently, the social environment serves as an important context for strengthening *Akhlakul Karimah*. The findings indicate that character education is most effective when supported by a community that consistently models and reinforces desired values.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that school culture at MI Al Huda Pacitan contributes substantially to the development of students' *Akhlakul Karimah*. Religious habituation provides opportunities for moral practice, teacher role modeling offers concrete examples of ethical conduct, and a supportive social environment reinforces positive values through daily interactions. These three elements operate synergistically to create a comprehensive character education system. The consistency of cultural practices across different aspects of school life enables students to internalize Islamic values more effectively. Consequently, school culture emerges as a significant factor in shaping students' moral character and behavioral development.

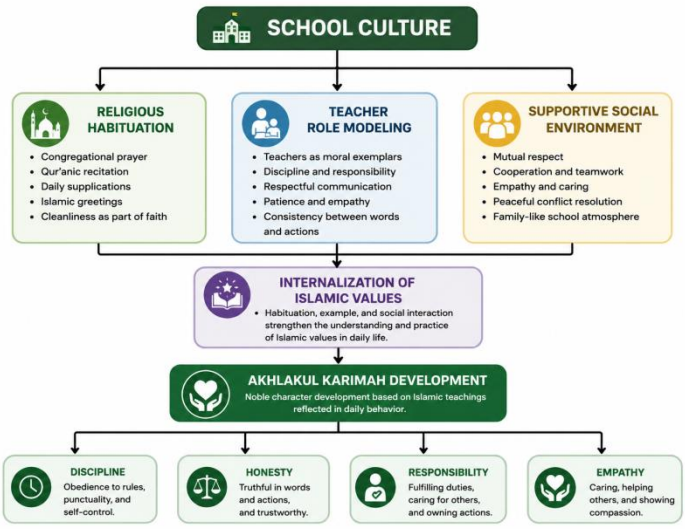


Figure 1. School Culture and *Akhlakul Karimah* Development Model at MI Al Huda Pacitan

Figure 1 illustrates that the development of *Akhlakul Karimah* among students at MI Al Huda Pacitan is influenced by three interconnected dimensions of school culture, namely religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and a supportive social environment, which collectively facilitate the internalization of Islamic values and foster positive character traits.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that school culture plays a significant role in fostering *Akhlakul Karimah* among students at MI Al Huda Pacitan. The development of noble character was influenced by three interconnected dimensions of school culture, namely religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and a supportive social environment. These findings support the argument that character education is most effective when moral values are integrated into the daily experiences of learners rather than delivered solely through formal instruction. School culture functions as a hidden curriculum through which values are continuously communicated, practiced, and internalized by students. This process enables learners to transform abstract moral concepts into observable behaviors within their everyday interactions. Consequently, the formation of *Akhlakul Karimah* becomes a lived experience embedded within the educational environment. The findings reinforce contemporary perspectives emphasizing the importance of contextual and experiential approaches to character education.

The first major finding concerns the role of religious habituation in shaping students' moral character. Daily religious activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, supplication, and Islamic greetings provided structured opportunities for students to practice Islamic values consistently. These routines encouraged self-discipline, responsibility, obedience, and spiritual awareness among learners. The findings support previous studies indicating that religious school culture contributes significantly to character formation by creating opportunities for repeated moral practice (Nasution&Nafi, 2026). According to Islamic educational philosophy, character develops through continuous habituation and repetition of virtuous actions until they become stable dispositions. Therefore, the consistent implementation of religious activities at MI

Al Huda Pacitan aligns with classical and contemporary theories of moral development in Islamic education. The study confirms that religious habituation serves as an effective strategy for promoting *Akhlakul Karimah* at the elementary school level.

The effectiveness of habituation observed in this study can also be explained through social learning theory. Students acquire values and behavioral patterns through repeated engagement in social practices that are reinforced by the educational environment. When positive behaviors are routinely encouraged and rewarded, they gradually become part of students' personal character. This interpretation is consistent with findings reported by (Lickona, 2013), who argue that character education becomes sustainable when schools establish routines that encourage students to practice moral values regularly. Similarly, (Maulida et al., 2025)emphasize that moral development is strengthened when ethical principles are embedded within everyday school experiences. The findings suggest that religious habituation provides a practical mechanism through which Islamic values can be internalized effectively. Consequently, religious routines contribute not only to spiritual growth but also to broader dimensions of character development.

Another important finding concerns the influence of teacher role modeling on students' moral behavior. Participants consistently reported that teachers served as examples of honesty, discipline, patience, respect, and responsibility. Students were observed imitating teachers' actions and attitudes in various situations, indicating the significant impact of educator behavior on character formation. These findings support Bandura's social learning perspective, which suggests that individuals learn through observation and imitation of significant role models. In educational contexts, teachers occupy a central position as moral exemplars whose behavior communicates ethical expectations to students. Previous studies have similarly concluded that teacher modeling constitutes one of the most influential factors in character education programs (Sanderse, 2013). Therefore, effective character education requires educators to embody the values they seek to cultivate among learners.

The importance of teacher role modeling is particularly evident within Islamic educational settings. Islamic pedagogy emphasizes the concept of uswahhasanah (good example), whereby educators demonstrate moral principles through their daily conduct. Students are more likely to internalize values when they observe those values being practiced consistently by respected adults. The findings indicate that teachers at MI Al Huda Pacitan consciously sought to align their actions with the moral messages delivered during instruction. Such consistency enhanced the credibility of character education initiatives and strengthened students' motivation to emulate positive behaviors. Similar conclusions have been reported by (Hidayat, 2025), who found that teacher exemplarity significantly influences students' religious and moral development. Consequently, teacher professionalism should encompass not only pedagogical competence but also moral integrity and ethical leadership.

The study also revealed the importance of a supportive social environment in reinforcing *Akhlakul Karimah*. Positive relationships among students, teachers, and school staff contributed to the creation of a school climate characterized by mutual respect, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. This finding aligns with school climate theories emphasizing the role of interpersonal relationships in promoting social and emotional development (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). A positive social environment provides opportunities for students to practice moral values through authentic interactions with others. Rather than learning ethical principles solely through instruction, students develop moral competence by applying those principles in real-life social situations. The findings therefore support the view that character education should involve the entire school community rather than focusing exclusively on classroom activities.

The supportive environment observed at MI Al Huda Pacitan also reflects the communal nature of Islamic education. Islamic teachings emphasize social responsibility, compassion, and mutual assistance as essential dimensions of moral character. Through collaborative activities and positive peer interactions, students learn to respect differences, resolve conflicts peacefully, and

support one another. These experiences contribute to the development of empathy and social awareness, which are key components of *Akhlakul Karimah*. Previous research has similarly found that positive peer relationships enhance students' moral reasoning and prosocialbehavior(Nucci& Narvaez, 2008). Therefore, creating a supportive social climate should be considered an integral aspect of character education programs in Islamic schools.

Another significant implication of the findings is the interconnected nature of the three dimensions of school culture. Religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and supportive social relationships function synergistically rather than independently. Religious activities establish moral foundations, teacher behavior provides concrete examples of value implementation, and social interactions offer opportunities for practical application. Together, these dimensions create a comprehensive system that facilitates the internalization of Islamic values. This finding supports ecological approaches to character education, which emphasize the interaction between individual, social, and institutional factors in moral development (Yang, 2021). Character formation is therefore best understood as a multidimensional process influenced by multiple aspects of the educational environment.

The findings also contribute to the growing literature on Islamic elementary education in Indonesia. While previous studies have examined character education in Islamic schools, relatively few have explored the specific relationship between school culture and *Akhlakul Karimah* development within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The present study demonstrates that school culture functions as a strategic instrument for integrating religious values into students' daily experiences. By embedding moral education within school routines, relationships, and institutional practices, schools can enhance the effectiveness of character development initiatives. These findings are particularly relevant for educational policymakers seeking to strengthen character education in response to contemporary social challenges affecting young learners.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single Islamic elementary school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Furthermore, the study focused primarily on participants' perceptions and observable behaviors without measuring long-term character outcomes quantitatively. Future research may therefore investigate the relationship between school culture and character development across multiple Islamic schools using mixed-methods approaches. Comparative studies involving different educational settings could provide a broader understanding of effective strategies for fostering *Akhlakul Karimah*. Longitudinal research may also be useful for examining how school culture influences students' moral development over time.

Overall, the findings confirm that school culture constitutes a powerful mechanism for promoting *Akhlakul Karimah* among elementary school students. Religious habituation programs, teacher role modeling, and supportive social environments collectively facilitate the internalization of Islamic values and encourage positive behavior. The study highlights the importance of creating educational environments in which moral values are consistently practiced, modeled, and reinforced through daily experiences. Character education should therefore be viewed not merely as a curricular component but as an integral aspect of school culture. Through a comprehensive and value-oriented school culture, Islamic elementary schools can contribute significantly to the formation of morally responsible and socially engaged future generations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that school culture plays a significant role in fostering *Akhlakul Karimah* among students at MI Al Huda Pacitan. The findings demonstrate that character development is not solely achieved through formal instruction but is strongly influenced by the values, norms, and practices embedded within the daily life of the school. Through a consistent

and well-established school culture, students are provided with continuous opportunities to internalize Islamic values and translate them into positive behavior. The integration of religious activities, moral guidance, and supportive social interactions contributes to the formation of students' noble character. Consequently, school culture functions as an effective medium for strengthening character education in Islamic elementary schools.The study identified three major dimensions of school culture that contribute to the development of *Akhlakul Karimah*. First, religious habituation activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, daily supplications, and Islamic greetings encourage students to practice Islamic teachings consistently and develop positive habits. Second, teacher role modeling serves as a powerful source of moral learning, as students tend to imitate the attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by their teachers. Third, a supportive social environment characterized by mutual respect, cooperation, empathy, and responsibility reinforces the moral values promoted through school programs. These three dimensions operate synergistically to facilitate the internalization of Islamic values and support students' moral growth.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the successful development of *Akhlakul Karimah* depends on the consistency between school policies, teacher practices, and students' daily experiences. Character education becomes more effective when moral values are repeatedly practiced and reinforced across various school activities rather than being limited to classroom instruction. The alignment between religious habituation, exemplary leadership, and positive social interactions creates a comprehensive character-building ecosystem that encourages students to demonstrate discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, and empathy in their everyday lives.This study contributes to the growing literature on Islamic character education by highlighting the importance of school culture as a foundational element in promoting moral development among elementary school students. The findings suggest that Islamic elementary schools should prioritize the establishment of positive school cultures that integrate religious values into both academic and non-academic activities. Future research may explore the long-term impact of school culture on students' character development across different educational contexts and investigate the role of family and community partnerships in strengthening the sustainability of *Akhlakul Karimah* formation.

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