

An Analysis of the Role of School Culture in Shaping the Religious Character of Students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

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Abstract

Education serves a pivotal role in shaping the religious character of students, establishing a fundamental foundation for a generation imbued with morals and noble virtues. The culture within a school represents a strategic approach to actualizing this objective. The school culture encompasses various practices, such as the students' customs of greeting, kissing the teacher's hand, performing the dhuha prayer, reciting prayers, and chanting shalawat. These practices are consistently applied and significantly contribute to the formation of students' religious character, exemplified by traits such as politeness, gratitude, seeking permission, and the habit of offering apologies. The primary aims of this research are to examine the implementation process of school culture, its influence on the development of religious character, and the specific religious traits fostered in students. This study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This study was conducted at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with the intention of elucidating the role of school culture in cultivating students' religious character. Data were gathered through interviews with the principal and team leader, direct observations in the field, and documentation during the execution of the International Teaching Assistance programme. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which encompasses data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The school culture at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare proves to be effective in shaping students' religious character. These findings underscore the significance of consistently reinforcing school culture to instil religious values from an early age.

Keywords: School Culture, Religious Character, Students Religious Character

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the best place to educate the nation's children and instill good character. This is based on the goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, namely to make students into people who believe and are devoted to God Almighty. This is in line with the first principle of Pancasila: Belief in the One and Only God. Therefore, education

needs to be expanded further in order to develop the next generation of the nation who are noble and intelligent (Mey et al., 2021).

To achieve the functions and goals of education, the role of religious education is absolutely necessary and the role of other educational institutions cannot be denied. One area of religious education is character education. Character education in schools is a subsection or subject of Islamic religious education. Learning al-karimah morals in schools teaches students to study and implement the material obtained in the form of habituation of commendable (good) moral character and avoiding reprehensible (bad) morals (Armaya & Ginting, 2022). Character education is not something new to us, especially in Indonesian national education, but all Indonesian education is most widely using the policy of the Ministry of National Education which implements character education for the next 5 years through the strategic planning of the Ministry of National Education 2010-2014 which is still thick in the memory of our education circles during the reign of President Abdurrahman Wahid, at that time the Minister of National Education Yahya Muhaimin, tried to revive character education & morals as a major order of state policy in 1999, especially for elementary & secondary education levels (Pasaribu, 2022). The term character is based on Greek, namely *charassein* & *kharax* which means tools for making or to engrave which means to carve, this term began to be used again in French "caracter" in the 14th century then after that it entered English as "character" which finally in Indonesian became character. Forming character is like carving on a gemstone or the top of a hard iron, character is a nature, nature, morals, or also a person's character that is formed based on the internalization output of various actions that are believed & underlie a person's views, thoughts, attitudes, & ways of acting (Fanreza & Pasaribu, 2016).

Currently, there are many incidents involving students who do not excel due to the lack of character education from their environment and family. Therefore, it is important to master character education. Character education not only informs about right and wrong, but also about implementing correct behavior so that students understand, feel, and want to act correctly to create good morals (Putra & Ginting, 2023). Character is a good value inherent in a person that is reflected in his actions. Character consistently radiates from the thoughts, minds, movements, emotions and intentions of a person or group of people, including values, abilities, moral capacity, and resilience in overcoming difficulties and challenges (Isnaini & Fanreza, 2024). A child's personality is shaped by the attitudes and actions he displays in everyday life. A child's personality is shaped by his environment, especially his home and school environment (Sitepu et al., 2022).

Character education is an important part of personal growth, especially in an era of social, cultural, and technological change that continues to innovate. Good behavior is an important part of character education. Manners include values such as politeness, ethics, kindness, and good behavior towards others. The implementation of effective character education can play an important role in character development today. Character education not only concerns academic aspects, but also the formation of individual character, values, and ethics, so it is important for educational institutions, families, and communities to work together

to implement character education that emphasizes character development (Oktaviyenna & Zailani, 2023).

Character in students must be of high quality, therefore character needs to be formed from an early age. Because early age is the golden age, at which age children will respond more quickly to what they hear & learn. And early age in children is the most synchronous in implementing character education in the continuation of further education (Brahmana & Pasaribu, 2023). Character education refers to basic education because it is difficult to change a person's personality if it has not been formed from an early age. By implementing character education properly, superior human resources can be produced who not only develop logical thinking but also intelligence from a moral perspective. The success of character education in schools depends on a positive school culture (Lachney et al., 2024; Moran, et al., 2025; Yang, 2024). This is because school culture is one of the impacts that influences student growth and development. School culture adapts to the values of each school and the habits created in schools will produce good behaviors if the success of character education in schools is determined by a positive school culture (Amiroh & Ginting, 2023).

Schools are a place for the community to develop individual capacities and abilities. With the concept of character education applied in schools, positive impacts can be seen in the development of students' character and abilities, both in terms of adaptation, decision-making, and behavior (Syaroh & Mizani, 2020). Character education is an integral part of the formation of a young generation that is able to face the challenges of the modern era. School culture plays a very important role in building the image of the school, improving academic achievement, developing religious character, and improving the quality of life. A healthy school culture is characterized by a dynamic, positive, and professional atmosphere. In a culture like this, all school residents can work optimally, efficiently, and enthusiastically, creating a collective spirit for mutual progress. School culture is the result of the history of the institution, the process of communication with the external environment, and the norms and values adopted by the school community (Maryamah, 2016).

However, the importance of the role of school culture in the formation of students' religious character often does not receive enough attention from educators, policy makers, and the community. This study aims to provide in-depth insight into how school culture can be an effective tool in instilling religious values in early childhood students. The results of this study are expected to be a practical guide for schools, especially in creating an environment that supports the development of students' religious character. In addition, the findings of this study are relevant for education policy makers in designing strategies that focus on building religious character as part of the national curriculum. This study also offers new insights for the community regarding the importance of collaboration between families, schools, and communities in forming a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has strong morals and ethics.

School culture emerges from the relational style between members in responding to certain problems, or from the way the school adopts attitudes and decisions towards real-life problems. One of the characteristics and advantages of a school is to maintain a strong school culture. The school aims to produce a

challenging, interesting, fair, creative, integrative school culture and is committed to realizing its vision, producing graduates with the quality of intellectual development and piety, honesty and integrity. Someone who is creative, can lead by example, diligent, tolerant, and can demonstrate leadership, and can respond to issues regarding human resource development to lead the development of science and technology based on Imtaq (Supratiningrum & Agustini, 2015). School culture is focused on a system of values, religion & habits that are accepted together, and carried out using real enlightenment, which is created by the school. A school environment that presents the same understanding among the school community, starting from the principal, teachers, staff, students & if necessary, builds the same mindset of the community using the school. School culture is a characteristic of a school that can be identified through the values it believes in, the character it has, the norms it displays and the actions shown by all school people who build a specific activity based on the school system. School culture is also a collection of values that underlie behavior, traditions, daily norms, which are expected to build religious character in every school person, especially students (Johannes et al., 2020).

The meaning drawn above, school culture is a practice implemented by schools and carried out by the school community to improve the quality of education and is considered a solution to the problems faced by schools. The practice of acclimatizing school culture carried out in each school varies depending on the characteristics and problem-solving needs of the school (Labudasari & Rochmah, 2019). The application of school culture plays a very important role as a manifestation of student personality, having a significant impact on changes in student behavior both at school and at home. This is because students are used to achieving at school, and they also practice this habit at home (Aziz & Ana, 2022).

Religious character is the most important foundation that must be instilled from an early age Because it is a set of religious values that are an important foundation in a person's life, Because the formation of a religious personality can be formed by habits that come from school culture, religious attitudes and behaviors can also be formed by habits related to the school's religious culture. The development of a religious personality is an important part of personal and social life, especially for those of us who adhere to religious beliefs. Religious personality includes moral, spiritual, and ethical values that are manifested in a person's daily behavior and are based on an understanding of the religion they believe in (Putriani & Pasaribu, 2024).

Religious character is very important to be instilled in students from an early age because the potential for intelligence and character develops at an early age. At this time, children's brain development reaches its peak, so character formation must start from the family, school, and community environments. The purpose of this character formation is so that children have good personalities as adults, have strong principles, and are accustomed to good behavior. Thus, they can become individuals who are useful to their environment through a directed educational and pedagogical process (Wasila & Pasaribu, 2024).

At Tadika and Taska TKC Educare schools, various school cultures have been implemented to form good habits that support the formation of students' religious character. Practices such as saying hello, thank you, apologizing, and getting used

to praying dhuha, reading prayers before and after studying, reciting shalawat every day, and maintaining social ethics have become part of the routine. However, some students still show bad behavior due to limited understanding of school culture or differences in individual character. Therefore, strengthening religious character requires synergy between family, school, and community (Prasetya, 2014).

Syaroh Mizani (2020) discusses the importance of character education in student adaptation and decision-making. However, this study does not highlight specific school culture practices in shaping religious character. (Maryamah, 2016) emphasizes the importance of school culture in building academic image and achievement, but has not explored in detail the relationship between school culture and the formation of religious character in early childhood students. (Prasetya, 2014) highlights the importance of family, school, and community collaboration in increasing religiosity, but has not provided practical guidance that focuses on sustainable programs in the school environment. (Suryanti Widayanti, 2018) examines the influence of school culture on the vision and mission of education, but does not explain effective implementation strategies to instill religious values in students.

Religious character is very important to be implemented in students from the beginning, because the potential for intelligence & character develops at an early age. At this age, the child's brain is significantly higher, character must be created since early childhood starting from the family environment, school and even the community environment. The purpose of forming this character is expected so that children have a good personality when they enter adulthood, they will have good principles & are accustomed to using good things too & as educated in terms of attitude as pious & pious children who are able to provide benefits to people around them and there is good output without the process of providing good pedagogy & education so that children have a religious character (Wasila & Pasaribu, 2024; Tian, et al., 2025; Kandoth, et al., 2024; Williams, 2024). In this school, namely Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, various school cultures have been implemented in this school so that students become good habits for the sustainability of instilling religious character in students. The school accustoms its students to carry out the school culture that has existed for a long time in implementing religious character. Students are accustomed to always say hello, say thank you, and say sorry if they do something wrong or ask for help, and other good words, at TKC Educare they have a habit of always teaching students to pray dhuha, read prayers before and after studying, say shalawat every day, and even children are taught not to take or eat what is not theirs, if they want it, students are accustomed to always asking permission first. Although there are still some students who still have bad behavior, this can happen because of the lack of understanding of students about school culture. And the different characters of each student can also be a problem when teachers teach children to get used to school culture. When increasing religiosity in students, of course, a stage is expected when increasing faith & piety to Allah SWT, the stages of increasing children's religiosity require the relationship between family, school, & society (Prasetya, 2014). Religious activity programs in schools must be implemented continuously and sustainably To improve the character education of modern

students In this case, the culture and climate of each school have a significant impact on the school management system, thus forming the vision, mission, and goals of the school itself. Graduates of each school also have an impact on the lives of the community The government wants all educational institutions to be able to realize their educational goals in their entirety (Suryanti & Widayanti, 2018). To achieve this, it is important to develop the religious side from an early age. The first thing you can do to promote the religious aspect in your school is to provide a good example for your students to emulate and follow (Rahma & Setiawan, 2023). It is very important for us to teach our children good character so that they always display good morals and noble character, Devotion, mutual cooperation, patience, honesty, self-confidence, etc. (Rahayu & Fanreza, 2024).

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The descriptive method was chosen because it is in accordance with the objectives of the study, namely to describe and analyze the phenomena that occur in Tadika and Taska TKC Educare in depth, especially related to the implementation of school culture in shaping students' religious character. The descriptive approach allows researchers to provide a detailed understanding of the processes, conditions, and practices that are ongoing in the context of the study (Hawari et al, 2024).

The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on exploring complex social phenomena, such as how school culture is implemented, how students respond to it, and how religious values are embedded in students' daily lives. This approach is in line with the objectives of the study which aim to understand the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of participants—especially the principal, teaching team, and students—in the context of religious character formation.

This approach provides space to explore the unique dynamics at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare that cannot be measured with quantitative data. The focus on subjective experiences and social interaction processes helps reveal aspects that may not be visible through quantitative methods. The main goal of this research is to understand how school culture can shape students' religious character, which requires in-depth analysis of behavior, practices and social interactions at school.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results were obtained from research carried out at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. With research focus (1) the process of school culture in shaping the religious character of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, (2) the role of school culture in shaping the religious character of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia , (3) the religious character possessed by students at Takika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The process of school culture in shaping the religious character of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The awareness as a natural behavior that is being formed from habits that create good character for students (Shiddiq, 2020). From the results of the

research carried out, the school culture that exists and is applied at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare is that students when they arrive at school and when they go home from school are required to say hello and kiss hands, then every morning students are directed to always pray dhuha in congregation, read prayers, and recite shalawat. Students are taught to always behave well, are always taught to say thank you, apologize, and always ask permission when asking for or borrowing something.

Because Tadika and Taska TKC Educare are different from Tk or Paud in the surrounding environment in Indonesia, where children's study hours in Malaysia are longer than in Indonesia, because most parents in Malaysia work, parents choose their children to go to school and be looked after until the afternoon at TKC Educare. Therefore, students spend more time at school than at home, automatically students will be more accustomed and accustomed to implementing the culture in school, and it is hoped that students can practice these good habits at home and in the community.

Figure 1 The process of forming the religious character of Tadika and Taska TKC Educare students, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare always say thank you when receiving something or after being helped by teachers or friends, always apologize when they do wrong to teachers or friends, always ask and ask permission when they want something, be it goods or food, always remember and carry out activities such as dhuha prayer, reading prayers and reciting shalawat, and always kissing and hugging teachers when entering class and going home from school. Students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare have characters that can be emulated or applied by students at other Tadika and Taska to develop characters that Allah SWT and Rasulullah SAW like.

The role of school culture in shaping the religious character of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Umpur, Malaysia

Interviews were conducted with the principal and the team leader at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare. The interview process was conducted semi-structurally, allowing for flexibility in exploring in-depth information while maintaining the core questions related to the effectiveness of interactive learning media in teaching Asmaul Husna. Questions focused on understanding the implementation, challenges, and perceived benefits of the media.

Figure 2 student interviews at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare Kuala Lumpur Malaysia



During the interview, the researcher also probed into the teaching strategies used, student responses, and the support provided by the institution. The responses were recorded and transcribed for detailed analysis. From the results of this study, the results were obtained regarding the role of school culture that can shape religious character in students, namely, (1) instilling religious values into each student, where these religious values are very much needed to improve religious understanding from the beginning to students, and have been implemented by Tadika and Taska TKC Educare. (2) becoming a good habit for students, because the more often school culture is implemented or done by students, it will not be an awkward thing to do, but will become a habit that can change character to be even better. (3) creating a more conducive school environment so that students can develop religious character within themselves, although there are certainly some people who think that students are still too young to do this, but it is precisely at this age that students will understand more quickly because at this age their receptiveness is quick to respond.

Religious character possessed by students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Figure 3 Observations of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare Kuala Lumpur Malaysia



The observation process used a structured observation sheet, focusing on aspects like student participation, teacher instructions, and the overall classroom atmosphere. Non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and interactions among students were also noted to capture the holistic learning experience. From the results of the research conducted, the results were obtained regarding the religious character possessed by all students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The students have very good characters, speak politely, although not all students are like that, almost all students have behavior that makes researchers impressed during the research. Students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare always say thank you when receiving something or after being helped by teachers or friends, always apologize when they do wrong to teachers or friends, always ask and ask permission when they want something, be it goods or food, always remember and carry out activities such as dhuha prayer, reading prayers and reciting shalawat, and always kissing and hugging teachers when entering class and going home from school. Students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare have characters that can be emulated or applied by students at other Tadika and Taska to develop characters that Allah SWT and Rasulullah SAW like.

DISSCUSSION

From the results of the research carried out, it is known that the school culture that exists and is applied at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare has been implemented very well. Students are taught to always behave well, such as saying thank you, saying hello, asking permission when they want to ask for or borrow something. So that students have the religious character expected by the school, teachers and parents. School culture also plays a very important role in shaping the religious character of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In line with the opinion of It is explained that school culture plays an important role in improving the image of the school, academic achievement, and religious character of students. This study expands Maryamah's view by focusing on the context of international schools in Malaysia that have a unique approach to shaping students' religious character (Maryamah, 2016), namely School culture plays a very important role in improving the image of the school, academic achievement, religious character, and quality of life and is characterized by being healthy, dynamic or active, positive and professional. School culture plays a very important role in shaping the religious character of students, although it does not only play a role in shaping religious character, but there is language that expresses this so that it can be said that school culture plays a role in shaping the religious character of students. Highlighting the importance of family, school, and community involvement in shaping students' religiosity. This study supports this opinion by emphasizing that the achievement of religious character formation at TKC Educare is also supported by collaboration with students' families (Prasetya, 2014) The results of the study above are in line with the opinion of stated that the implementation of school culture plays a significant role in changing student behavior both at school and at home. In this context, research at TKC Educare supports this claim by showing that students' religious behavior is not only applied at school but also in the family environment (Aziz & Ana, 2022;).

The application of school culture as a form of student personality has a significant impact on changes in student behavior both at school and at home. This is because students are used to achieving at school, and they also practice this habit at home. Emphasis on the importance of instilling moral values and character such as patience, honesty, and cooperation from an early age. The results of this study support this view by providing examples of real practices carried out through school culture (Rahayu & Fanreza, 2024). It is very important for us to teach our children good character so that they always display good morals and noble character, devotion, mutual cooperation, patience, honesty, self-confidence, etc. Aziz & Ana (2022) states that the implementation of a good school culture has a significant impact on changes in student behavior both at school and at home. This study uses a qualitative approach with a focus on direct observation and interviews, while several previous studies have used more quantitative methods. Rahayu & Fanreza (2024) Emphasizes the importance of character learning to create good morals, such as patience, honesty, cooperation, and self-confidence. This study uses a qualitative approach with a focus on direct observation and interviews, while several previous studies have used more quantitative methods.

This study provides a unique contribution by exploring the practice of school culture in Tadika and Taska TKC Educare in shaping students' religious character in a multicultural environment. This broadens the understanding of the application of school culture in an international context, especially in Malaysia. Schools can use the results of this study as a guide to develop a culture that supports the formation of students' religious character, adding to the literature on the influence of school culture on the formation of students' character in a multicultural environment, can be used by education policy makers to design programs to strengthen school culture.

Recommendations for further research, the use quantitative methods to explore the statistical relationship between school culture and students' religious character formation, conduct comparative research in other schools with different cultural backgrounds to broaden the generalizability of the findings, explore deeper the role of families and communities in supporting a religious school culture.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that school culture plays a very important role in shaping the religious character of students at Tadika and Taska TKC Educare. The implementation of a school culture that integrates religious values in accordance with Islamic teachings has been successfully implemented effectively. This is reflected in the behavior of students who almost all show religious character, such as politeness, honesty, politeness, and obedience to worship. This success cannot be separated from the collaborative role of the principal, teachers, and other staff in being role models and ensuring that the implementation of school culture runs consistently. This conclusion is not only relevant to Tadika and Taska TKC Educare but also has broader implications. The implementation of a school culture based on religious values can be adapted and applied in various other educational environments, both in local and international schools, with adjustments according to the local cultural and

religious context. Multicultural schools or with students from diverse backgrounds can learn from the approach applied at TKC Educare, namely integrating religious values into school culture systematically and sustainably. Religious character education can be applied in various types of schools to help build a young generation that has strong morals, ethics, and religious obedience. This study provides a basis for further studies on the impact of school culture in shaping religious character in different educational contexts. These findings can be a reference for policy makers to design educational policies that prioritize character formation based on religious values.

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