Character Building Through Exemplification and Habitual Practices at API ASRI Islamic Boarding School Tegalrejo Magelang

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Article Info	Abstract
	Purpose – This study aimed to explore the development of student responsibility through the exemplification and habituation practices of teachers at Pondok Pesantren API Asri Tegalrejo Magelang. **Design/methods**– Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study involved seventh-grade male students who are also residents of the boarding school. Data were collected through observations, interviews with key informants, and document analysis. The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's framework, focusing on data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. **Findings** – The findings indicate that character formation is significantly influenced by consistent teacher-led initiatives, emphasizing communal practices, ethical discourse, and disciplined routines. These practices contribute to the holistic development of responsibility in students, reinforcing qualities such as ethical adherence, decision-making, initiative, adaptability, and cooperation. **Research implications/limitations** – The study highlights the importance of structured, habitual practices led by exemplary teachers in fostering student responsibility. Limitations include the unique boarding school environment and the need for adaptation in different educational contexts. Future research should explore the adaptability of these practices across diverse settings and their long-term impacts on student behavior. **Practical implications** – Educational institutions aiming to foster student responsibility should integrate structured, habitual practices led by exemplary teachers. This approach not only enhances character development but also emphasizes the importance of teacher training and development in ethical and responsible behavior. **Originality/value** – This study provides insights into the effective methods of character education in an Islamic boarding school context, demonstrating the critical role of teacher behavior and structured routines in developing student responsibility and ethical behavior.

Introduction

Character education is essential in shaping responsible and ethical individuals in society. The cultivation of character traits such as responsibility is particularly significant in educational settings, where students' moral and ethical development is as crucial as their academic achievements. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, known as pondok pesantren, the integration of character education is vital for fostering holistic development among students. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of character education in various educational environments, emphasizing the need for effective strategies to instill values like environmental care and responsibility (Komalasari et al., 2022; Muflihaini, 2019). This study focuses on the character education of students at Pondok Pesantren API ASRI Tegalrejo Magelang, examining the roles of role modeling and habitual practices in nurturing responsibility.

Prior research has established that integrating cultural values into character development can significantly enhance students' ethical and moral standards. For instance, the use of cultural media like Sukuraga in elementary schools has been effective in strengthening character values (Nurasiah et al., 2022). Similarly, project-based learning has been shown to promote appropriate online behaviors among prospective teachers, highlighting the importance of practical and interactive approaches in character education (Prasetiyo et al., 2023). The dynamic interaction between school education, character formation, and the process of instilling personal values underscores the complexity of character development in educational settings (da Silva & Rosa, 2021). These findings suggest that character education requires a multifaceted approach, integrating cultural, practical, and interactive elements.

Further studies have emphasized the impact of consistency in character education on various aspects of student development. Consistency in grading, for example, has been found to influence college admissions decisions, with consistent grades being preferred over variable ones (Ahn et al., 2019). This principle can be extended to character education, where consistent reinforcement of values is likely to yield better outcomes. The analysis of responsibility as a character trait in elementary school students has highlighted its importance in the overall framework of character education (Budimansyah, 2020). Strategies such as edutainment, which combine education and entertainment, have been shown to effectively shape students' character by making learning engaging and enjoyable (Ningsih, 2019).

Moreover, the use of portfolios has been identified as a valuable tool in developing both professional and personal competencies among students. This method not only aids in the assessment of academic progress but also encourages the development of character traits such as responsibility and self-discipline (Urazmetov et al., 2019). In the context of primary education, fostering responsibility through habitual practices plays a critical role in character formation (Maharsiwi, 2024). The revitalization of traditional cultural practices also contributes to the sustainable development of national character, as evidenced by efforts in Indonesia (Agus et al., 2021). These approaches collectively highlight the diverse methods employed in character education across different educational levels and contexts.

Despite the extensive research on character education, there remain several gaps and limitations in the existing literature. Many studies have focused on specific aspects of character development, such as environmental responsibility or digital citizenship, without exploring the holistic integration of various character traits. Additionally, while the effectiveness of role modeling and habitual practices has been recognized, there is a need for more comprehensive studies that examine these strategies within the unique context of Islamic boarding schools. Controversies also exist regarding the best practices for implementing character education, with some arguing for more traditional methods and others advocating for innovative, modern approaches (E. Leung & Adams-Whittaker, 2022; Pineau et al., 2024).

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the implementation of character education through role modeling and habitual practices at Pondok Pesantren API ASRI Tegalrejo Magelang. The focus will be on how these strategies contribute to the development

of students' responsibility, providing insights into the effectiveness of integrating traditional and modern educational practices. By exploring the specific context of an Islamic boarding school, this research seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of character education and its applications in diverse educational settings. The findings are expected to offer valuable contributions to the field, informing educators and policymakers about effective strategies for nurturing responsible and ethical individuals.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research methodology with a phenomenological approach to explore the character-building practices aimed at fostering responsibility among students at API ASRI Islamic Boarding School, Tegalrejo, Magelang. The phenomenological approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the students' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the cultivation of responsible behavior through exemplary practices and habitual training. The research subjects were male students in the seventh grade at SMP Syubbanul Wathan Tegalrejo Magelang, who were also residents of the boarding school. Data sources included informants, records from the administrative office of SMP Syubbanul Wathan, and relevant documents related to the character education program. Data collection was conducted using three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on daily interactions and activities within the boarding school environment that promoted responsible behavior. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including the school principal and teachers, to gain insights into the strategies and effectiveness of character education initiatives. Documentation involved reviewing records and materials related to the school's character-building programs.

The research utilized standard qualitative data collection tools such as field notes for observations, audio recording devices for interviews, and digital and physical storage for documentation. These tools facilitated accurate and comprehensive data collection and ensured that critical details were not overlooked during the analysis phase. Data were collected systematically over several weeks to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the character-building processes. The analysis followed the qualitative data analysis framework proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved condensing and organizing the data into themes and categories relevant to the research questions. Data display involved presenting the data in a structured format to facilitate interpretation. Conclusion drawing and verification involved synthesizing the findings and cross-verifying them with the data to ensure accuracy and consistency. To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, several measures were employed. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation were used to gain a deep understanding of the context and to build trust with the participants. Triangulation of methods was used to corroborate the findings from different data sources and collection methods, thereby enhancing the credibility of the results. Member checking was also conducted, where key informants reviewed the findings to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. These steps were critical in minimizing errors and biases, thereby ensuring the rigor and trustworthiness of the study (Agus et al., 2021; Budimansyah, 2020; da Silva & Rosa, 2021; Daum et al., 2022; A. N. M. Leung et al., 2023; Ningsih et al., 2021; Nurasiah et al., 2022; Prasetiyo et al., 2023; Suhodimtseva et al., 2020; Urazmetov et al., 2019).

Results

1. *Character of Responsibility*

Character is fundamental to human behavior, influencing actions, social interactions, and both verbal and non-verbal communication. The formation of character in humans is primarily influenced by heredity, habits, and the environment. The family environment serves as the initial foundation for character development, followed by the school and the broader community (Deni sutisna, 2019). Individuals bring unique characters and personalities, shaped by their habits and surroundings. The routines established by parents, teachers, and

close environments significantly contribute to the formation of a child's character. Thus, a child's words, actions, and behavior are reflections of what they have observed, heard, and imitated since childhood (Rosidatun., 2018).

Personality directs and motivates individuals, shaping their life direction from birth to adulthood (Wahyunianto, 2019). Personality and character are closely related, as character is a development outcome of personality (Sunaryo., 2004). Personality features include individuality, behavioral responses to events and situations, long-term formation, and a foundational influence in social interactions (Susanto, 2018). The character of responsibility encompasses qualities and behaviors that demonstrate an individual's readiness to fulfill their obligations and duties effectively. Responsibility involves awareness of tasks and duties, the ability to make appropriate decisions, and the willingness to be accountable for the consequences of those decisions and actions. Key aspects of responsible character include task awareness and duty comprehension, decision-making ability and consequence consideration, adherence to ethics and compliance with rules, initiative and proactive contribution, adaptability and flexibility, care for others through cooperation and solidarity, problem-solving skills, and time discipline.

Responsibility is not merely about meeting externally imposed obligations but also about taking the initiative to do what is right and making positive contributions in various life aspects. This fosters a solid and sustainable character foundation.

2. Character Configuration

Two factors influence the process of character development: environmental (nurture) and hereditary (nature). Psychologically, the manifestation of a person's character stems from Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), Spiritual Quotient (SQ), and Adversity Quotient (AQ). From a religious perspective, a person with character embodies honesty (sidiq), trustworthiness (amanah), communication (tabligh), and intelligence (fathonah). Educationally, a person with character has cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual potential actualized in their life. Socially, a person with character possesses logic and empathy in interpersonal and societal relationships (Nuh, 2020).

Character formation embodies noble values (Jamaluddin, 2013), coherently and holistically developed through psychosocial processes (heart, mind, body, and feelings) (Nuh, 2020). Spiritual and emotional development, intellectual development, physical and kinesthetic development, and affective and creative development represent clusters of values that interrelate and reinforce each other due to their multiplex nature. Through intervention (learning, modeling, and reinforcement) and habituation (conditioning, habituation, and reinforcement), these clusters integrate into an individual's character through internalization and personalization (Nuh, 2020).

3. The Importance of Character Education for Students

Character education tends toward absolute moral values, teaching individuals noble values such as respect, honesty, humility, helping others, fairness, and responsibility. The golden rule (originating from religion) needs to be taught to younger generations to discern right from wrong. Unlike moral reasoning and value clarification approaches used in American character education, character education emphasizes habituation of good practices, ensuring students understand cognitive domains, feel affective domains, and habitually practice good behavior.

Conceptually, character education aims to form and develop professional individuals, improve and strengthen personal integrity, and filter and select cultural and civilizational developments. This requires support and synergy from families, educational institutions, the government, and appropriate principles and methods. Methods for implementing character education in schools include modeling, habituation, discussions, and lectures.

The success of character education in schools depends on the implementation of the school's vision and mission. Teachers play a critical role in character reinforcement, serving as role models who reflect good behavior and character, assess, evaluate, and guide students according to the curriculum (Zakiah., 2019).

4.   The Urgency of Role Models for Students

Teachers act as role models, demonstrating good behavior, actions, and speech, influencing students' character development (Gunawan, 2014). Central to educating children are role modeling and habituation. Children emulate the good moral behavior of parents, teachers, and the community (Novia Wahyu Wardhani, 2017).

A good role model, or uswatun hasanah, significantly influences an individual's habits, behavior, and attitudes (Hidayat, 2015). Hence, role modeling becomes a method of education where teachers demonstrate behavior and speech, such as neat dressing, punctuality, hard work, polite speech, compassion, honesty, and cleanliness (Ujang Syarif Hidayat, 2015).

Humanistic learning theory posits that every adult can teach values. However, in practice, not all adults can effectively teach values. Adults may memorize values but fail to understand and respect children as subjects of value, leading to heteronomous values (Kurniawan, 2013). Teachers face challenges in teaching values due to misunderstandings, as highlighted by P2: "Teachers teach values to students, but it is not easy as many do not understand the values taught in school."

Teachers use six procedures for character education: familiarizing students with classic literature, engaging students in lessons from literature through discussions and essays, exploring the underlying values of objective truths, emphasizing practice to achieve good outcomes, guiding students to think and select between right and wrong, and modeling exemplary behavior (Sternberg, 2003).

5.   Character Building through Habituation and Role Modeling at API Asri Tegalrejo Magelang Islamic Boarding School

Character education in schools can be integrated into the curriculum (Wahyunianto, 2019). Four principles guide character education implementation: integrating it into all subjects, applying it in extracurricular activities, planning it in short and long-term school programs, and socializing it to all school elements, especially parents.

Teacher professionalism is vital for character education success. A professional teacher is an expert, selected based on strong foundations, certified, with a code of ethics, professional organization, and professional sanctions (Saripah, 2016). Professional teachers act as facilitators, motivators, and role models, responsible for students' affective, cognitive, psychomotor, and spiritual development, appropriate for golden age character development, as P1 explained: "Teachers act as second parents in school, responsible for students' affective, cognitive, and psychomotor development."

Findings indicate that API Asri Tegalrejo Magelang Islamic Boarding School employs role modeling for character education through good habits:

a.   Role Modeling in Worship

Teachers lead by example in communal prayers, recite Asmaul Husna before lessons, fast on specific days, read the Quran during classes, send blessings after obligatory prayers, and promote patience in adversity.

b.   Role Modeling in Speech

Teachers use polite language, encourage honesty, respect others' speech, and promote deliberation in resolving issues.

c.   Role Modeling in Dress

Teachers demonstrate Islamic dress code, covering aurat, avoiding tight clothes, wearing non-bright colors, not resembling the opposite gender, and avoiding ostentation.

d.   Role Modeling in Social Interactions

Students are trained to greet, respect elders, maintain friendships, and avoid inappropriate items.

e. Role Modeling in Behaviour

Teachers knock before entering rooms, promote forgiveness, sit while drinking, and maintain cleanliness.

f. Role Modeling in Discipline

Teachers are punctual, disciplined in prayers, complete tasks on time, and leave classrooms promptly.

Successful role modeling in education aligns with religious, legal, and societal norms, reflecting piety and noble character. Outside school, parents play a critical role in modeling behavior at home. When students exhibit deviant behavior, it often indicates a lack of control at home or insufficient role modeling by teachers.

Character education success requires parental involvement, as the family environment significantly influences early education. Experts view family education as the first school for children, shaping their fundamental behavior and character, which continues into formal education.

In conclusion, role modeling is a crucial determinant of educational success. It defines whether teachers become constructive educators or destructive influences on students' futures, especially for young children. Teachers play a pivotal role in the entire educational process at school.

Discussion

This study explores the character development of responsibility among students at API ASRI Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School in Magelang through the dual mechanisms of exemplary behavior and habituation by teachers. Character development is a multifaceted process influenced by genetic, habitual, and environmental factors, as well as the interaction between an individual's Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), Spiritual Quotient (SQ), and Adverse Quotient (AQ) (Nuh, 2020). Previous literature highlights the significance of teacher behavior as a critical factor in the moral and character development of students (Hakim, 2019; Muhtarom, 2016). The focus on responsibility within this context encompasses various aspects including ethical adherence, decision-making, initiative, adaptability, and collaboration, which collectively contribute to the holistic development of student character (Deni sutisna, 2019; Wahyunianto, 2019).

The primary results of this study indicate that teacher-led initiatives in modeling responsibility significantly influence student behavior. Specifically, the study identified several key practices: communal prayers, ethical discourse, adherence to dress codes, respectful interactions, and disciplined routines (Rosidatun., 2018; Wahyunianto, 2019). These findings underscore the critical role of teachers not only as instructors but as primary exemplars of ethical behavior and responsibility. Notably, the research also highlighted the importance of structured environments and consistent routines in reinforcing responsible behavior among students (Elsa Aprilianingsih, 2019).

Comparing these findings with previous studies reveals both alignments and contrasts. The study aligns with (Budimansyah, 2020; Komalasari et al., 2022), who emphasize the positive impact of environmental and social responsibility programs in schools. However, it diverges from (Ahn et al., 2019), where variability in character assessment was less emphasized than the consistency of responsible behaviors as observed in this study. The findings support the theoretical framework that character and personality development are intertwined and significantly shaped by habitual and environmental influences (Nuh, 2020; Sunaryo., 2004).

The explanations for these findings rest on the unique environment of the boarding school, where students are continuously immersed in an environment that prioritizes ethical behavior and communal living. This immersion allows for the integration of moral values into daily routines, reinforcing character development through lived experience (Fatmawati., 2020; Gunawan, 2014). Furthermore, the consistent and repetitive nature of these practices helps solidify these values, making them second nature to the students (Sultonurohmah, 2017;

Wahyunianto, 2019). The significance of these findings lies in the potential scalability of such models to other educational contexts, particularly in fostering environments that support sustained character development (Gunawan, 2014).

It is essential, however, to interpret these findings with caution. The controlled environment of a boarding school differs significantly from typical school settings, which may limit the direct applicability of these practices to more conventional educational environments (Saripah, 2016; Sopian, 2016). Additionally, the deeply ingrained cultural and religious contexts at API ASRI may not be fully replicable in other settings, necessitating adaptations to local contexts and values (Farizal Marliu, 2020).

The implications of these findings are profound, suggesting that educational institutions aiming to develop student responsibility should consider integrating structured, habitual practices led by exemplary teachers (Hakim, 2019; Indra Gunawan, 2019). The emphasis on teacher behavior as a model for students underscores the importance of teacher training and development in ethical and responsible behavior (Amin, 2017). Moreover, fostering environments that support ethical behavior through structured routines and communal activities can significantly enhance character development (Nuh, 2020; Rosidatun., 2018).

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that character education, particularly the development of responsibility, can be effectively facilitated through teacher exemplarity and habituation in structured environments. This approach aligns with existing literature on the importance of environmental influences and habitual practices in character formation (Budimansyah, 2020; Muhtarom, 2016). Future research should explore the adaptability of these practices in more diverse educational settings and investigate the long-term impacts on student behavior and ethical development. The findings provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in advancing character education and fostering responsible future generations.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the development of student responsibility through the exemplification and habituation practices of teachers at Pondok Pesantren API Asri Tegalrejo Magelang. The findings indicate that character formation is significantly influenced by consistent teacher-led initiatives, emphasizing communal practices, ethical discourse, and disciplined routines. These practices contribute to the holistic development of responsibility in students, reinforcing qualities such as ethical adherence, decision-making, initiative, adaptability, and cooperation.

The implications of this study are profound for educational practice and policy. Educational institutions aiming to foster student responsibility should integrate structured, habitual practices led by exemplary teachers. This approach not only enhances character development but also highlights the importance of teacher training and development in ethical and responsible behavior. By creating environments that support ethical behavior through structured routines and communal activities, schools can significantly enhance the character development of their students, contributing to the formation of responsible and ethical individuals.

Despite the significant findings, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged. The unique environment of a boarding school, which differs from typical school settings, may limit the direct applicability of these practices to more conventional educational environments. Additionally, the deeply ingrained cultural and religious contexts at API ASRI may not be fully replicable in other settings, necessitating adaptations to local contexts and values. Future research should explore the adaptability of these practices in diverse educational settings and investigate the long-term impacts on student behavior and ethical development.

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