

The role of the principal in fostering *al-akhlaq al-karimah* among students at smait darul rasyid, east lampung

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has brought widespread Western cultural influences into Indonesia, creating both positive and negative impacts on students, particularly in the realm of moral development. School principals hold a strategic role in mitigating moral degradation by strengthening school-based character formation. This study aims to examine: (1) the current moral condition of students at SMAIT Darul Rasyid East Lampung, (2) the principal's role in fostering students' moral character, and (3) the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing moral development at the school. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed through data interpretation. The findings show that several moral issues remain, especially in students' discipline and practice of the 5S culture (Smile, Greet, Salute, Politeness, Courtesy). The principal plays a significant role through school culture by fulfilling seven leadership functions: educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator, implemented in programs such as Dhuha prayer, short religious talks, Qur'an recitation, routine prayers, and ceremonial activities. Supporting factors include strong teacher involvement and community participation, while inhibiting factors relate to students' individual characteristics and limited understanding of moral and ethical values (*akhlaqul karimah*).

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental process that plays a critical role in the holistic and balanced development of individuals and society. It is not merely a vehicle for transferring knowledge but also a transformative medium for instilling values and shaping the complete character of learners (Nurkholis, 2013). Within this context, education serves a strategic function in forming intelligent, morally upright, and character-driven individuals (Khummayroh & Khumairoh, t.t.; Musanna, 2017; Yulius Rustan Effend, 2022).

Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System explicitly states that the purpose of national education is to develop the full potential of students to become individuals who are faithful, devout, noble in character, and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills (UU RI, 2006). In the Islamic worldview, *akhlaq* (morality) serves as the central pillar of education. As emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, "Verily, I was sent to

perfect noble character" (HR. Ahmad, No. 8729), moral development is a foundational objective of Islamic education (AniesThasya, t.t.; Maharani, t.t.).

In the context of character education, the concept of *akhlaqul karimah* (noble character) becomes a central foundation. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Balai Pustaka, 2001), *akhlaq* is defined as moral character or behavior. In a broader sense, *akhlaq* refers to traits that are deeply embedded in the human soul, from which actions emerge naturally without the need for rational consideration. This understanding aligns with the hadith narrated by Baihaqi and Malik, in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated that he was sent to perfect noble character. Another hadith narrated by Tirmidhi emphasizes that the believer with the most complete faith is the one with the best character (Cook, t.t.; Fajri & Dafit, 2022; Huang, t.t.).

Etymologically, the word *akhlaq* originates from the Arabic term *al-khuluq*, meaning disposition, habit, or character. Terminologically, it refers to innate qualities within the human soul that give rise to spontaneous actions. In Islamic ethics, *akhlaq* encompasses not only outward manners such as etiquette and politeness but also inner spiritual values. Thus, *akhlaq* should not be equated merely with moral behavior, ethics, or courtesy, as it involves broader relational dimensions, including a person's relationship with themselves, with Allah, with fellow human beings, and with their surrounding environment (Maharani, t.t.).

One of the key ways to implement character education in schools is through the cultivation of a religious culture. This culture emerges from the habitual practice of religious values, consistently reinforced through daily routines until they become the dominant character of the school community (Fathurrohman, 2015). Religious culture, therefore, becomes not only a core identity of the institution but also an effective vehicle for instilling *akhlaqul karimah* (noble character) among students (Cook, t.t.; Daryanto & Tarno, 2015; Holilah dkk., t.t.; Lismarani, t.t.).

In this regard, the establishment of Pondok Pesantren Darul Rosyid serves as a concrete manifestation of efforts to develop educational institutions rooted in religious values. The origin of Pondok Pesantren Darul Rosyid dates back to approximately 2017, driven by the growing number of parents seeking Islamic boarding schools for their children to ensure a spiritually grounded education aligned with their faith. This initiative was also motivated by the vision to strengthen the philanthropic endeavors of Yayasan Nasional Abadi. The founding idea was initiated by Mr. Rohadi, who actively communicated his vision to the foundation. Through continuous dialogue and planning, the board members of Yayasan Nasional Abadi, chaired by Mr. Rohadi, eventually reached a consensus to establish Pondok Pesantren Darul Rosyid.

The pesantren was built on a total land area of 4,000 m², with 3,374 m² used for the school's infrastructure. The land was partially donated (*wakaf*) by Mr. Rohadi, a resident of East Lampung, while the remaining portion was acquired through direct purchase by the foundation. Over time, the governance of the pesantren transitioned from the foundation to a dedicated management team under Pondok Pesantren Darul Rosyid. Since its founding, the pesantren has been led by Ustadz Abu Ahmad Setyo bin Dahri, Lc, who has continuously strived to shape students into morally upright and knowledgeable Muslim individuals, well-versed in both religious and social sciences.

The pesantren comprises multiple educational levels, ranging from early childhood (PAUD and kindergarten) to elementary (SD), junior high (SMP), and senior high school (SMA) (Dwi Astuti dkk., 2020). The Islamic senior high school, SMAIT Darul Rasyid, officially began operations in the academic year 2020–2021 and has thus far graduated two cohorts. From 2020 to 2023, SMAIT Darul Rasyid was headed by Mr. Tubagus Harismawan, S.Pd., and since 2023, it has been under the leadership of Ustadz Walied Mujiono, S.H.

In terms of curriculum, SMAIT Darul Rasyid operates under the supervision of the

Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for East Lampung Province, particularly through the Division of Islamic School Development. Accordingly, the educational curriculum implemented at SMAIT Darul Rasyid adheres to the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), which is applied in all class levels. The curriculum is categorized as follows; general subjects are designed and supervised by the National Education Department, religious subjects are developed and coordinated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, local content includes intensive studies in classical Islamic sciences, such as Hadith, Fiqh, Nahwu, Sharaf, Tawhid, and others, which serve to enrich the students' religious understanding and internalize Islamic moral values.

In addition to its formal curriculum, the school also organizes extracurricular programs held every Friday and Saturday. These programs aim to support the holistic development of students by nurturing their interests, talents, and practical skills. Beyond enrichment, the extracurricular activities are intended to reinforce the values of discipline, responsibility, and cooperation in a more interactive and student-centered setting (Aishah & Wulan, t.t.; Aretha Widi Ailani dkk., 2022; Dwi Astuti dkk., 2020; Nurani dkk., 2024).

Despite its relatively recent establishment, the school has encountered several moral challenges among its student population. Based on interviews with the Vice Principal for Student Affairs, Mr. Eko Kurniawan, S.T., conducted on May 13, 2024, several concerns were raised regarding the consistency of students in practicing the 5S cultural values (Senyum, Salam, Sapa, Sopan, dan Santun – Smile, Greet, Salute, Politeness, and Courtesy). Some students were found to lack the habit of greeting unfamiliar teachers, showed inattentiveness during learning sessions, and displayed improper behavior within classroom settings.

Given the critical importance of instilling moral values within Islamic educational settings, this study aims to explore and analyze the role of the principal in guiding students moral development at SMAIT Darul Rasyid. This includes examining how school leadership practices contribute to the cultivation of *akhlakul karimah*, as well as identifying both the supporting and inhibiting factors in the moral formation process (Ahmad dkk., 2023; Ahmad Yusuf Sobri, t.t.; Huang, t.t.).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected to enable an in-depth understanding of the principal's role in fostering students moral character through the cultivation of school culture. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore meanings, actions, and experiences of participants within their natural settings (Ibrahim, 2015; Moleong & Surjaman, 2014; Ridder, 2014).

The research was conducted at SMAIT Darul Rasyid, located in Ratna Daya Village, Raman Utara Subdistrict, East Lampung Regency. The fieldwork was carried out from March to May 2024. The participants in this study included the school principal, one teacher, one Islamic educator (ustadz), and two students. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the moral development processes at the school.

Data were collected using three techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were carried out directly on school activities related to character building. In-depth interviews were conducted to gain insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants regarding the principal's role in moral development. Document analysis involved reviewing institutional records such as the school's vision and mission statements, work programs, and documentation of related activities (Gulo, 2002; Mamik, 2015; Yusuf, 2014).

Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes

three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was done by filtering and selecting relevant information. The reduced data were then organized and presented narratively to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn gradually by identifying patterns and emerging themes within the data (Afrizal, 2014; Emzir, 2012; Sugiyono, 2013).

To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation techniques were applied, including both source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from different participants, while methodological triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis (Sugiyono, 2013).

Result and Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the moral condition of students at SMAIT Darul Rasyid Lampung Timur, the role of the principal in guiding moral development, and the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of moral education within the institution. The findings from the research have been organized into three main categories: the moral condition of students, the role of the principal in fostering akhlakul karimah, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the process of moral development at SMAIT Darul Rasyid.

1. The Moral Condition of Students at SMAIT Darul Rasyid Ratna Daya

The first objective of this study was to assess the moral condition of students at SMAIT Darul Rasyid Ratna Daya. Data were gathered through various methods, including direct observation, in-depth interviews with key informants, and document analysis. These findings reveal that the overall moral condition of the students is generally positive. The students exhibit a sound understanding of moral values; however, some aspects require continuous reinforcement. A particularly notable area in need of sustained attention is the 5S (Senyum, Salam, Sapa, Sopan, and Santun Smile, Greeting, Address, Politeness, and Courtesy). Although students demonstrate an awareness of these practices, there is a consistent need for reminders to help internalize these behaviors, ensuring that they are not only understood but actively practiced on a daily basis. The implementation of these practices as a core part of the school culture remains an ongoing challenge, and further efforts are required to fully integrate these values into students daily routines.

It was observed that students are generally respectful and follow the rules of the school. However, the implementation of consistent positive reinforcement and continuous monitoring will help solidify these behaviors. In the absence of such reinforcement, there is a risk that these positive behaviors may not be fully internalized, making it necessary to continuously integrate moral education into every aspect of school life..

2. The Role of the Principal in Fostering Akhlakul Karimah at SMAIT Darul Rasyid Ratna Daya

Using various data collection techniques such as direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, this research found that the principal of SMAIT Darul Rasyid Ratna Daya has effectively implemented moral education through school culture. This is evidenced by the manner in which the principal fulfills multiple roles, including:

a. Principal as an Educator

As an educator, the principal takes on the responsibility of shaping the moral foundation of students by creating a conducive and supportive school environment. This is achieved by providing students with regular guidance, advice, and encouragement. The principal also ensures that teachers and staff receive the necessary support and resources to engage in moral education. In doing so, the principal fosters an environment where both

students and staff are empowered to engage in character-building activities that are aligned with the school's values and mission.

b. Principal as a Manager

The principal's role as a manager is essential in ensuring that the programs designed to foster *akhlakul karimah* are not only planned but also executed effectively. The principal has shown great success in implementing key management functions:

1) Planning

The principal has been proactive in designing school programs aimed at moral development. These include Dhuha prayers, recitation of prayers, and weekly flag ceremonies or assemblies. These programs are carefully planned to ensure that students are exposed to moral education consistently.

2) Organizing

The principal organizes these programs by scheduling Dhuha prayer sessions, appointing speakers for Dhuha reflections, coordinating prayer recitations at the beginning of lessons, and assigning facilitators for assemblies and flag ceremonies. The effective organization of these activities ensures that they are seamlessly integrated into the school schedule, providing students with regular opportunities to engage in character development activities.

3) Actuating

In addition to planning and organizing, the principal plays an active role in the execution of these programs. By personally overseeing the implementation of these activities, the principal ensures that they align with the school's values and objectives for moral education. These efforts help to create a structured and intentional approach to moral development, ensuring that students are consistently engaged in meaningful activities that reinforce *akhlakul karimah*.

4) Controlling.

The principal also plays a critical role in monitoring and evaluating the success of these programs. Through regular assessments, the principal can ensure that the objectives of the moral education programs are being met. This process involves identifying areas for improvement, providing feedback to teachers and staff, and making adjustments to the programs as needed to ensure that students are consistently exposed to moral education.

c. Principal as an Administrator

In addition to his role as an educator and manager, the principal also serves as an administrator who oversees the documentation and management of school records. The principal's administrative duties include recording instances of student misbehavior and documenting them in a scoring book, which serves as a reference for weekly evaluations. These evaluations provide a platform for discussions between the principal, teachers, and student supervisors, which helps to address any behavioral issues and ensure that the moral development programs remain on track. The principal's administrative approach contributes to the broader goals of the school by ensuring that any student violations are addressed promptly and that corrective measures are taken.

d. Principal as a Leader

The principal's leadership is central to the success of the school's moral education initiatives. The principal demonstrates leadership by actively participating in the moral education programs. For example, the principal personally leads the Dhuha prayer sessions and delivers reflections to the students, thereby setting an example for the rest of the school community. Additionally, the principal ensures that teachers are involved in the leadership of these programs, fostering a collaborative approach to moral education. This leadership role helps to create a school culture where moral development is seen as a collective

responsibility.

e. Principal as an Innovator

As an innovator, the principal actively seeks new ways to integrate moral education into the school culture. This involves creating a harmonious relationship between students, staff, and the broader school community. The principal's innovation is evident in the systematic scheduling of moral education activities such as Dhuha prayers, assemblies, and flag ceremonies. By ensuring that these activities are well-planned and effectively integrated into the school's overall schedule, the principal demonstrates a commitment to making moral education an integral part of the school's daily operations.

f. Principal as a Motivator

The principal plays a crucial role as a motivator, encouraging both students and staff to engage in moral education programs. This motivational role is exemplified during school assemblies and flag ceremonies, where the principal delivers speeches that inspire and encourage students to embody *akhlakul karimah*. In addition to speeches, the principal also rewards students who exhibit outstanding behavior by presenting them with awards and certificates. These recognition practices serve to reinforce positive behavior and encourage other students to strive for similar achievements.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Principal's Role in Moral Development at SMAIT Darul Rasyid Ratna Daya Lampung Timur

a. Supporting Factors

1) Support from Teachers and Staff

The active involvement of teachers and staff is a key factor in the success of moral education programs. Teachers play a significant role in facilitating activities such as Dhuha prayers, prayer recitations, and assemblies. Their commitment to supporting these activities ensures that students have the opportunity to engage in meaningful moral development programs on a consistent basis.

2) Support from the School Environment

The broader school environment also plays a supportive role. Administrative staff help to monitor and supervise student behavior outside of the classroom, ensuring that students adhere to the school's rules and values. This support from the school environment helps to create a holistic system where moral education is reinforced not only through formal programs but also in informal interactions and day-to-day activities.

b. Inhibiting Factors

1) Individual Student Characteristics

One of the primary challenges in moral education is the variability in students' personal faith and disposition. Adolescents, in particular, may face difficulties with self-regulation and may be influenced by their desires, which can hinder their participation in moral education programs. It is essential to address these individual differences and find ways to engage all students in the process of moral development.

2) Lack of Knowledge

Some students struggle to fully understand the principles of *akhlakul karimah*. Without a comprehensive understanding of moral values, it is difficult for students to consistently apply these principles in their daily lives. This gap in knowledge highlights the need for ongoing education and reinforcement of moral principles in the school setting.

Despite the comprehensive approach taken by the researcher, several limitations affect the study's findings:

a. Time Constraints

Due to the limited timeframe available for the research, the scope of data collection was restricted to specific areas directly related to the research objectives. As a result, certain aspects of the moral development process may not have been fully explored.

b. Geographical Scope

The study was conducted at SMAIT Darul Rasyid Ratna Daya, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational institutions with different contexts. Future research could expand the geographical scope to include multiple schools in different regions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing moral education.

This study underscore the strategic and transformative role of the school principal in fostering al-akhlaq al-karimah among students through the implementation of a values-based school culture. The principal's functions as an educator, manager, administrator, leader, innovator, and motivator are proven to be integral in directing and sustaining character-building efforts. These findings suggest that effective leadership in educational institutions must go beyond administrative duties to encompass moral and spiritual guidance.

The implication for practice is that school leadership training programs should place greater emphasis on moral leadership, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Principals should be equipped not only with managerial competencies but also with the ability to design and implement character education programs grounded in Islamic values. Moreover, the involvement of teachers, staff, and the broader school community plays a significant supporting role and should be continuously encouraged to create a holistic environment conducive to character formation.

From a policy perspective, these findings advocate for the integration of character education as a core component in school development strategies. Educational stakeholders are encouraged to establish frameworks that support moral leadership, promote spiritual values, and institutionalize ethical practices within the school system.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of inquiry to other educational levels and contexts to explore the adaptability of this leadership model. Comparative studies between institutions with varying cultural and religious backgrounds may also yield valuable insights into the universality and contextual relevance of the principal's role in moral education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the role of the principal at SMA IT Darul Rasyid in cultivating al-akhlaq al-karimah (noble character) among students is not only significant but also highly effective. The principal serves as a central figure in directing moral development efforts within the school environment by integrating various leadership functions into a cohesive character-building framework grounded in Islamic values. As an educator, the principal fosters a conducive learning atmosphere where values such as respect, discipline, and piety are internalized through structured religious and moral activities. These include daily and weekly routines such as salat dhuha, recitation of supplications before lessons, and Friday assemblies, all of which reinforce moral behavior through spiritual engagement. The principal provides continuous guidance and encouragement, not only to students but also to teachers and staff, in order to instill a shared commitment to character education.

In the role of a manager, the principal demonstrates the ability to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate a wide range of school programs aimed at nurturing good character. The principal develops detailed schedules and assigns roles for religious and moral activities, ensures the proper execution of these programs, and continuously

monitors their progress to ensure alignment with the school's vision and mission. This managerial competence ensures that the character-building initiatives are not sporadic, but systematically embedded into the school culture. As an administrator, the principal maintains comprehensive documentation of student behavior, particularly violations of school regulations, which are recorded and reviewed for evaluative and corrective purposes. This administrative function supports a culture of accountability, helping both students and teachers reflect on their behavior and strive for continuous moral improvement.

In carrying out the role of a leader, the principal exhibits strong moral authority and becomes a role model for both students and staff. By directly participating in school activities, such as delivering kajian dhuha (religious reflections) and serving as a speaker during flag ceremonies, the principal reinforces key values through example. Leadership is also demonstrated through the ability to mobilize and inspire teachers and staff to take an active role in the moral formation of students. As an innovator, the principal shows initiative in integrating moral values into all aspects of school life. This includes exploring new methods of character education, adapting programs to fit the needs of students, and encouraging creative solutions for moral issues within the school context. Such innovation ensures that moral education remains relevant, engaging, and responsive to contemporary challenges.

Finally, in the role of a motivator, the principal encourages and empowers all school stakeholders, particularly educators and students, to stay committed to moral growth. Motivational efforts are evident in the principal's speeches, personal interactions, and the acknowledgment of students achievements through awards and public recognition, all of which contribute to a positive and uplifting school climate. In sum, the principal of SMA IT Darul Rasyid plays a pivotal, multidimensional role in the moral development of students. The effective execution of these roles has created a structured and sustainable environment for the cultivation of al-akhlaq al-karimah, making the principal not only a leader of academic instruction but also a guardian of students moral and spiritual formation. These findings highlight the critical importance of visionary and value-driven leadership in Islamic educational institutions and offer valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and future researchers in the field of character education.

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