

MAPPING IDEA & LITERATURE FORMAT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Character Education Reinforcement Based on School Culture in Developing Students' Social Skills at MI Miftahul Huda Jambu Kediri

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ABSTRACT

Social skills are a person's ability to interact with others to communicate and understand the attitudes of others according to the condition and situation at that time. Character education reinforcement based on school culture can help students acquire social skills. Character education reinforcement based on school culture is character education reinforcement achieved by internalizing PPK values in school culture, which can build students' social abilities through continuous and sustained activities that result in habituation. MI Miftahul Huda is elementary schools implementing character education reinforcement based on school culture. This study aims to describe the implementation of character education reinforcement based on school culture, students' social skills, and character education reinforcement based on school culture in developing students' social skills. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study type. Observation, interviews, and documentation perform to obtain the data. Data analysis include condensation data, display data, dan verification. The study results describe that: 1) The implementation of character education reinforcement based on school culture at MI Miftahul Huda through emphasizing habituation, setting an example, school development planning, establishing and complying with school regulations, also developing students' interest, talent, and potency through extracurricular activities. 2) Students' social skills evident in character education reinforcement based on school culture at MI Miftahul Huda Jambu is cooperation, responsibility, assertiveness, empathy, and self-control.

Keywords: Character Education, Reinforcement, Social skills.

I. Introduction

Elementary school students require more than basic literacy and numeracy skills. They also need competencies that shape them into respected and valued members of society. Among these, social competence is essential (Ramadhani, 2020). Socialization occurs daily among students, between students and teachers, and within the broader school community. Social skills serve as a foundation for interaction; without them, individuals struggle to adapt to their environment. Conversely, those with strong social skills can cooperate effectively, demonstrate empathy, and resolve problems constructively. Thus, social skills such as responsibility and discipline must be instilled from an early age (Samsudin et al. 2026). In the 21st century, social skills are increasingly critical for several reasons. First, complex interactions with digital media—smartphones, television, laptops, and other devices—often reduce sensitivity to others and discourage face-

to-face interaction. Second, empathy and social awareness decline as individuals prioritize online presence over real-world engagement, favoring platforms such as Snapchat, Secret, and Whisper over WhatsApp. Third, adolescent conflicts have intensified in recent years due to intolerance and provocative behavior. Fourth, building relationships and social networks is vital to fostering effective social skills (Sudarmiati, 2022).

Nevertheless, challenges remain. (Amin 2022) highlights that many children exhibit disrespect toward teachers, use impolite language, act individualistically, and show little concern for their environment, resulting in littering, vandalism, and damaged school facilities. Education therefore plays a central role in preparing a generation that is both knowledgeable and socially competent. According to Gresham, Elliot, Vance, and Cook, key aspects of social skills include responsibility, cooperation, assertiveness, empathy, and self-control (Fardilla, Soetjipto, and Suardana 2020). These aspects are closely linked to character formation. Hence, the development of social skills cannot be separated from character education, which aims not only to instill values but also to internalize them into daily behavior. Within schools, this internalization is most effective when embedded in everyday routines and practices rather than confined to specific programs. The social skills instilled and developed in students are inseparable from the character instilled in the strengthening of character education implemented in each school. The characters formed in strengthening character education can be integrated into the school culture or what is called school culture-based character education reinforcement (PPK). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, culture-based character education reinforcement (PPK) is the development of the PPK program carried out by internalizing PPK values in the school culture in the form of routine activities, spontaneous activities, exemplary behavior, and programmed activities (Kemendikbud, 2017). School culture is an activity that becomes a habit in schools. Therefore, through habituation activities in the implementation of school culture-based character education reinforcement (PPK) can develop students' social skills, which can be carried out continuously and sustainably. PPK values include religiousness, integrity, nationalism, mutual cooperation, and independence.

School culture-based PPK holds strong potential for enhancing social competence. However, existing studies often emphasize character as the primary outcome of character education programs, while the role of social skills—developed through the internalization of values—remains underexplored. Similarly, research on school culture tends to focus on programs and values without detailing how culture functions as a habituation mechanism for social skills. MI Miftahul Huda Jambu Kediri exemplifies the implementation of PPK, aligning cultural practices with its vision and mission through extracurricular activities, outbound programs, nature exploration, and other routines. Initial observations reveal that students demonstrate social skills in daily life, such as helping peers, cooperating, and queuing patiently for activities like ablution. These behaviors emerge not as isolated acts but as outcomes of repeated habituation within the school environment. This condition warrants further investigation, as it suggests a strong link between the habituation of character values in school culture and the development of social skills. This study therefore seeks to examine the practices, processes, and mechanisms of school culture-based character education in fostering social competence. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by broadening understanding of the relationship between character education, school culture, and social skills, and practically by offering schools strategies for character education that emphasize habituation and the systematic development of social competence.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Character Education Reinforcement Based on School Culture

Character Education Strengthening (PPK) is an educational movement initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture to develop students' character through the integration of spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), PPK emphasizes five core values: religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity. These values are implemented through intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities, involving collaboration among schools, families, and communities. School culture serves as an important medium for

implementing character education because it encompasses shared values, norms, traditions, and routines within the school environment (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Character education based on school culture is realized through habituation, teacher role modeling, school development planning, school regulations, and extracurricular activities. Consistent implementation enables students to internalize character values through daily experiences rather than formal instruction alone.

Furthermore, school culture can incorporate local values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, politeness, and religiosity. Wibowo emphasizes the importance of culturally contextualized education in developing students' responsibility and cooperation, while Tilaar highlights the role of cultural foundations in maintaining educational relevance and local identity. Hajar et al. (2026) further highlight the role of cultural mechanisms, habituation, and school environments in supporting character development. This perspective is relevant to understanding how school culture-based character education can be implemented in the context of MI Miftahul Huda Jambu Kediri. The implementation of PPK may face challenges related to teacher competence, program consistency, and digital influences. However, collaboration between schools, families, and communities can strengthen the sustainability of character education. Therefore, school culture-based PPK requires consistent planning, role modeling, and participation from the entire school community.

2.2. Students' Social Skills

Social skills refer to the behaviors and abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively and appropriately with others. Gresham and Elliott (2008) identify social skills through dimensions such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. These competencies support students in developing positive relationships, communicating effectively, managing emotions, and participating in group activities. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains that behavior develops through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within the social environment. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the influence of interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments, including family, school, and society. These perspectives indicate that students' social skills develop through continuous interaction and experience.

In the context of character education, values such as cooperation, integrity, and responsibility can strengthen students' social skills. Their development can be supported through cooperative learning, role-playing, extracurricular activities, and daily social habituation. Nevertheless, challenges related to teacher readiness, limited instructional time, and social skills assessment may affect implementation. Based on the literature, school culture-based character education provides an environment for students to practice and internalize character values through repeated activities and social interaction. This study therefore examines the implementation of character education reinforcement based on school culture and its development of students' social skills at MI Miftahul Huda Jambu Kediri, focusing on cooperation, responsibility, assertiveness, empathy, and self-control.

III. Research Method

The research approach used is a qualitative. This research has a natural setting, because the researcher reveals the actual facts related to the strengthening of culture-based character education, without fabricating facts or providing treatment. This research uses a case study research type, because it begins with a problem related to the strengthening of character education based on school culture. This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of PPK based on school culture, student social skills and PPK based on school culture in developing school skills. This research was conducted at MI Miftahul Huda Jambu Kediri, because the school has implemented the character education enhancement (PPK) based on school culture, has a social skills development program and activities that can develop students' social skills, and has a superior program related to student character formation. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted descriptively through of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Observation was conducted by observing various character education

strengthening activities at the school principal, representatives of teachers from upper, middle, and lower grades. Documentation was carried out by documenting various activities that demonstrate character education enhancement (PPK), recording interviews, and other supporting documents. Data analysis includes data condensation, data display, and data verification.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Character Education Reinforcement Based on School Culture

Character Education Enhancement (PPK) is a movement launched by the government to shape students' character through spiritual development, emotional development, and physical education. Character Education Strengthening encompasses five core character values: religiosity, mutual cooperation, nationalism, independence, and integrity. These five values are integrated into the school culture, hence the term "school culture-based Character Education Strengthening." School culture-based Character Education Strengthening (PPK) focuses on fostering habits and shaping a culture that embodies the core values of Character Education Strengthening (PPK), which are prioritized by educational institutions. This habit formation is integrated into all school activities, as reflected in a conducive school atmosphere and environment (Hendarman 2018). The implementation of school-culture-based character education has five key applications: emphasizing habit formation, setting a good example, planning school development, establishing and adhering to school rules, and developing interests and talents through extracurricular activities.

a. Emphasizing the development of habits

This practice involves instilling the core values of PPK through daily school activities, whether they are daily, weekly, monthly, or annual routines. Habit formation is a deliberate activity carried out repeatedly (Mulyasa, 2013). Habits formed through repetition become ingrained in a person, and they are carried out without hesitation or waiting for instructions from anyone—they are performed immediately because they have become a deeply rooted habit. Habit formation is practiced at MI Mifathul Huda Jambu. The morning routine begins with greeting the teachers who welcome students at the school gate, praying before class, reciting verses from the Quran, and performing the Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers in congregation—alternating between lower and upper grades—as well as classroom duty upon arrival and before leaving school. In addition, there are also routines such as greeting teachers with " " and kissing their hands, the 3S routine (greeting, smiling, and saying hello), collective supplication (istighosah) by teachers and students, a ceremony every Monday, Friday charity (infaq), exercise every Friday, and "Clean Friday" at the end of every month.

The character-building activities carried out at the school not only instill good habits in daily life but also develop students' social skills. It is hoped that these activities will become ingrained habits in the students, so that they will eventually perform them consciously, without needing prior instruction from teachers. This will help foster good character in the students. This statement aligns with the following assertion: that habit-forming activities can be utilized by teachers in the daily character-building process to foster students with good or commendable character, as the activities students engage in are positively ingrained (E. Mulyasa & Dwi Ispurwanti, 2013). Based on research by Widi Astuti, habit-forming activities have a significant influence on the development of students' religious character. Religious character itself is one aspect of character that is strengthened through character education. The habit-forming activities carried out at MI Miftahul Huda are tailored to the school's or madrasah's circumstances and vision and mission, which eventually become part of the institution's culture or distinctive characteristics. Furthermore, teachers closely monitor, supervise, and actively participate in implementing these activities—not only in the classroom but also outside of it. As a result, the habit-forming process is more effective, and students' character development and social skills can flourish.

b. Setting a Good Example

Setting a good example at school is not the responsibility of the principal alone; rather, every member of the school community plays a role in setting a good example for others. Teachers play a key role in implementing character education at school as role models, inspirers, motivators, catalysts, and supervisors (Wiyani, 2012). As teachers, it is indeed their duty to set a good example for their students, since they serve as role models at school for the children they teach. This ensures that students have an idol worth emulating in every aspect. The examples they set take the form of words, speech, actions, and good behavior. It is hoped that the exemplary conduct demonstrated by the principal, educational staff, or teachers will be emulated by their students, so that students develop good manners and character. At MI Miftahul Huda Jambu, teachers demonstrate exemplary conduct by striving to set a good example through their words, actions, and behavior; by participating in school activities and adhering to school routines; and by arriving at school on time. They also embody the Javanese proverb that teachers are “respected and imitated”—meaning students look up to and emulate them based on their words and deeds.

c. School Development Planning

School development planning is carried out by creating programs that are not available in the surrounding area. The programs developed at this school are the Islamic Character School (ICS) and the Islamic Excellence School (IES). These two programs are the hallmarks of MI Miftahul Huda Jambu and serve as the distinctive features of this madrasah. The IES and ICS programs are the spearheads of an educational movement that prioritizes not only academic knowledge but, more importantly, fundamental religious devotion and the cultivation of an Islamic character that embodies “rahmatan lil alamin” (a blessing for all creation). These two programs are the madrasah’s flagship offerings, giving it a competitive edge over other schools and serving as a major draw for parents who wish to enroll their children there.

d. Establishing and Adhering to School Rules

At MI Miftahul Huda Jambu, school rules have been established that must be followed by the entire school community. The school’s efforts to publicize these rules—which students must know and follow—are carried out by posting the code of conduct on the available bulletin boards. In addition, the school communicates these rules directly to students so they can clearly understand the code of conduct and the importance of following it (Aunurrahman 2021). Students who violate the rules face disciplinary actions handled by their respective homeroom teachers. Consequently, the specific penalties vary by class, depending on the homeroom teacher and the consensus of the students in that class. These sanctions include sweeping and cleaning the classroom or school grounds, praying alone while standing, and even paying a fine. Furthermore, guidance and counseling are necessary so that students who violate the rules learn their lesson and become more disciplined. If they continue to violate the rules, their parents will be summoned to the school. Every educational institution has its own set of rules and regulations tailored to its specific circumstances, with the goal of shaping students into well-behaved, orderly, and disciplined individuals

e. Developing interest, talents and potential through extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities at MI Miftahul Huda include Scouting, marching band, rebana, MTQ, Quran memorization, painting, calligraphy, table tennis, badminton, chess, and soccer. These extracurricular activities are conducted according to their respective schedules. Through these activities, the school fosters core values that shape students’ character. The extracurricular programs implemented at the school aim to: (a) enhance students’ abilities in the areas of knowledge, affect, and skills; (b) develop students’ talents and interests as part of personal development toward fostering well-rounded, positive individuals; (c) foster independence, self-confidence, and creativity; and (d) deepen and broaden students’ knowledge. This means enriching, strengthening, and supplementing students’ knowledge related to academic subjects in accordance with the available extracurricular programs; (e) to enhance the quality of faith and piety toward Allah SWT; (f) to increase national and civic awareness; and (g) to foster virtuous character (Wiyani 2013).

4.2. Students' Social Skills

Social skills are the abilities a person needs to interact and socialize with others. These skills include behaviors that must be learned so that students can express positive or negative feelings in interpersonal relationships without hurting others. Social skills need to be taught from an early age so that children social skills can be properly formed and developed. These social skills equip children for their future as social beings living in society. The foundations of social skills is also explained in the Quran regarding social interaction, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat: 13 as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Meaning: O people! Indeed, We have created you from a man and a woman, then We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Compliant. (QS. Al-Hujurat 49: Verse 13).

The verse above states that, in addition to worshiping Allah, the purpose of human creation is to engage in social interaction (getting to know one another—*ta'aruf*—interaction, communication) among fellow human beings, within human communities, and among tribes, nations, and countries. This means that Allah has endowed humans with the potential to interact socially with one another in an intelligent manner (Naimah 2019). It is important to develop social skills in school, as Cadler noted that social skills are essential and should be a priority in teaching. Teaching is not merely about developing academic skills. A crucial step in developing social skills is discussing with fellow teachers or parents which social skills should be prioritized, selecting one social skill, practicing it, reflecting on it, and finally reviewing and practicing it again after making improvements—repeating this process of reflection until students have truly mastered the skill (Maryani 2011). The development of social skills does not focus solely on learning in the classroom with teachers; rather, it can be fostered through character education implemented in schools. It is hoped that the strengthening of character education carried out in schools will not only shape the character traits as defined by the Ministry of Education and Culture but will also develop students' social skills. The values inherent in character education can be integrated into school culture. Through school-culture-based character education that incorporates the five core values of PPK, students' social skills can be developed. The social skills that should be developed in elementary education include cooperation, responsibility, assertiveness, empathy, and self-control. These social skills can be developed through various school-culture-based PPK activities that incorporate the five core values of PPK.

a. Cooperation

At MI Miftahul Huda Jambu, the aspect of cooperation is also evident when students take turns on duty upon arriving at and leaving school each day. This activity creates opportunities for students to interact and communicate while completing tasks together. Furthermore, the aspect of cooperation is also evident in the implementation of school rules and activities that require student involvement.

b. Responsibility

At MI Miftahul Huda Jambu, a sense of responsibility is evident when students carry out school programs, including school development planning. As members of the school community, students are also responsible for implementing these programs to collectively develop a better and more advanced madrasah. Students are seen to be earnest in carrying out each of these madrasah programs. This compliance demonstrates that students follow the rules, while responsibility also encompasses the awareness to complete tasks and be accountable for their actions. Based on this explanation, it is evident that students possess a sense of responsibility that has been developed through adherence to school regulations and madrasah programs—including school development planning—which are integral to the school's culture.

c. Firmness

Assertiveness is a person's ability to interact with courage and self-confidence. This assertiveness can manifest as the courage to ask others for help, as well as the self-confidence to interact with anyone. At MI Miftahul Huda Jambu, this assertiveness is evident when students communicate fluently. This is evident when students participate in the weekly Monday assembly. It is also evident when students take part in cross-class extracurricular activities, which lead to interactions with different peers, fostering communication and helping them develop the courage to interact. Based on this explanation, the aspect of assertiveness as a social skill at this school is evident in the reinforcement of character education rooted in the school's culture.

d. Empathy

Empathy was evident in the Friday charity activities and the teachers' exemplary behavior in sharing. Observations revealed instances of sharing among students, including when students brought food and shared it with their classmates. These findings align with the views of Walker and McConnel, who define empathy as a social behavior that supports student interactions at school, as well as with (Mahabbati et al. 2017) who identify empathy as one aspect of social skills.

e. Self-control

Self-control is evident in students' behavior when waiting in line before performing wudu, maintaining order while preparing to perform the Dhuhr prayer in congregation, and participating in the ceremony in an orderly manner while paying attention to the sequence of activities. Teachers accompany students throughout the activities, ensuring that their orderly behavior is directly supervised. As noted in Chafidatul Ulum's research, students' self-control in thematic learning manifests in their adherence to rules set by teachers and their punctuality in completing assignments (Ulum 2018).

The strengthening of character education implemented by schools is guided by the concept book and guidelines for strengthening character education (PPK) compiled by the PPK team of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The strengthening of character education implemented through the school culture carried out every day becomes a habit that will shape or produce good character in students, which in turn can develop students' social skills. The implementation of strengthening character education (PPK) based on school culture contains five main PPK values: religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity. These five main values are realized in strengthening character education based on school culture, which includes emphasizing habits, providing examples, planning school development, establishing and complying with school rules, norms and developing students' talents, interests and potential through extracurricular activities. Through these school cultural activities carried out by students every day, students can develop their abilities in interacting and socializing with their surroundings, which are called social skills.

At MI Miftahul Huda Jambu, the implementation of character education strengthening based on school culture also begins with planning the PPK program, as well as developing programs that support PPK, which involve all members of the madrasah. And all madrasah members are involved in implementing PPK, by emphasizing habituation to students. In addition, in implementing this PPK there is direct guidance from the principal, so that its implementation can be monitored, supervised by the madrasah principal and can be made improvements directly if there is an inappropriate implementation. The implementation itself requires good cooperation between fellow teachers, to remind each other to carry out habits both during class hours and outside of class hours. The way teachers implement habituation by reminding each other makes the implementation of PPK more optimal, so that good character in students is more quickly ingrained. Habituation carried out by students every day will become ingrained habits in students, which can shape their character in students, as well as develop students' social skills. Habituation is an effort to instill character that is practiced repeatedly so that it becomes a habit and forms the character as expected. And through habituation, students become accustomed to doing many positive things that are born from the habit of practicing positive things.

V. Conclusion

This study shows that the strengthening of school-culture-based character education at Miftahul Huda Jambu is a) carried out through habit formation, b) role modeling, c) school development planning, d) the enforcement of rules and norms, e) and the cultivation of interests and talents through extracurricular activities. These practices provide a context for the development of students' social skills, which are observed in the form of cooperation, responsibility, assertiveness, empathy, and self-control. Theoretically, these findings confirm the importance of habit formation and modeling while expanding the understanding that school culture can serve as an ecosystem that connects character values with students' daily social practices. Practically, madrasahs need to integrate character education into the entire school culture through consistent habit formation, teacher modeling, the enforcement of rules, mentoring, and activities that encourage social interaction. Future research could more rigorously examine the relationship between school culture, character education, and social skills through a research design involving multiple schools with different characteristics and contexts, as well as more in-depth analysis

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