

## **Implementation of School Culture-Based Character Education: A Multi-Site Study at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar**

**Zulfitri<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

**Arismunandar<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

**Wahira<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

### **Abstract**

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of school culture-based character education through a multi-site study at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar. The focus of this research includes the primary character values being developed, the strategies for implementation, and the challenges encountered. This research utilizes a qualitative approach with a multi-site study design. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The informants in this study included school principals, teachers, and students. The results of the study show that both schools focus on developing the character values of being religious, disciplined, independent, and responsible. Implementation strategies are dominated by the instillation of theory, modeling, and structured routine habituation. These strategies are proven effective in shaping student character; however, the implementation faces internal challenges such as the diversity of student backgrounds and the commitment of teachers, as well as external challenges including the influence of outside culture, particularly from gadgets, and a lack of consistent support from parents. This study concludes that the effectiveness of character education is highly dependent on the synergy of internal strategies and the ability to mitigate external challenges.

**Keywords:** Character Education, School Culture, Boarding School



## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the problem

One of the most concerning issues in the world of Indonesian education is the moral decadence of the nation's youth. This issue needs to be watched carefully to prevent a "lost generation". The decline in the nation's character over time has become a serious topic of discussion. Character is a crucial component in the formation of personality and influences how a person interacts with their environment. Therefore, the character problems faced by Indonesia's younger generation should not be taken lightly. This is compounded by the challenges of the disruption era and society 5.0, which are marked by rapid advances in information technology that often foster individualistic attitudes among students.

The urgency of this issue is reflected in national policy. The Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System mandates that education must develop students' potential to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. This was further strengthened by Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the Strengthening of Character Education (PPK).

Schools, as educational institutions, have a very important role in shaping student character. However, in practice, character education in schools often remains focused on cognitive aspects, while affective aspects are often neglected. One effective solution for implementing character education is through school culture. A positive school culture can contribute to improving student character and learning motivation.

*Islamic Boarding Schools* are educational institutions that play a significant role in character education, often with a more in-depth approach compared to other educational institutions. SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar are two schools with an *Islamic Boarding School* background. SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros, a boarding school for girls, has a distinctive culture known as *Malebbi'*, a value adopted from local Bugis culture focusing on female elegance and noble morals. Meanwhile, SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar, located in Makassar City, has a unique culture called *Passiara*, adopted from the local Makassar culture, which aims to explore student potential and shape their religious values. Both schools have achieved "A" accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M).

Previous research on the implementation of character education based on school culture provides an initial foundation. A study by Ali et al. [cite start](#) at SD Maitreyawira Palembang found



that implementation was successful due to the support of the school community and the role of the principal. Research by Tomia et al. [cite start](#) at SMP Negeri 1 Teluk Keramat showed that character education was implemented through spontaneous activities, routines, modeling, and conditioning. Given the unique cultural approaches of SMA IT Darul Istiqamah and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah, exploring their best practices can serve as a model for other schools in Indonesia<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the author is interested in conducting a study entitled

### **Implementation of School Culture-Based Character Education: A Multi-Site Study at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar**

#### **Formulation of the problem**

This research will attempt to answer several key questions that will be revealed through research at the two schools

1. What are the main character values developed at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar?
2. What are the strategies for implementing school culture-based character education at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar?
3. What are the challenges faced in implementing school culture-based character education at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar?

#### **Research Method**

- **Research Approach**

This study uses a qualitative method with a multi-site study approach<sup>37</sup>. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena occurring in the context of character education at various schools.

- **Research Design**

This study uses a multi-site design, conducted at SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar, two schools that have similar cultural characteristics, to provide a deeper picture of the implementation of school culture-based character education.

- **Research Focus**

The focus of this research is to explore how school culture-based character education is implemented at the two schools, concentrating on: the main character values developed, the implementation strategies, and the challenges faced



- Research Data and Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data sources include the School Principal, teachers, and students at both schools. Secondary data sources include documents such as school profiles, vision and mission statements, school regulations, student activity schedules, and other supporting documents.

- Data collection technique

The data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and document studies. Observations were conducted to get a direct picture of the character education practices applied<sup>45</sup>. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals, vice principals, teachers, and students to explore policies, experiences, and challenges. Documentation was collected to supplement data from observations and interviews, including curriculum, school policies, and teaching materials<sup>47</sup>.

- Data Validity Techniques

To ensure data validity, the researcher used triangulation by comparing data obtained from various sources (interviews, observation, documents) and various methods (source and method triangulation).

- Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used is the model from Miles and Huberman (1984), which consists of three main activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

## RESULT

### Strategic Planning in Improving Character Education

The strategic planning at both SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar is centered on the development of core character values derived from their respective visions, missions, and foundational philosophies. These values form the *what* of their character education programs. At **SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros**, five main character values are consistently developed:

1. **Religious:** This is the main foundation, implemented through intensive worship habits and religious studies. Key activities include the *Daily Activity* schedule which starts with *Qiyamullail* (night prayer) at 2 AM, followed by the "Golden Time Quran" for Quranic interaction, and mandatory *Dhuha* prayer



2. **Discipline:** This is instilled through a highly structured daily schedule documented in the student *handbook*. The "TILAWA" program (early to bed, early to rise) is a fundamental practice for time discipline. A system of rewards and punishments, along with mandatory extracurriculars like scouting, reinforces this value
3. **Responsible:** Students are trained through self-reliance in carrying out tasks and understanding the consequences of their actions. Simple habits like cleaning their own beds and washing their own dishes instill personal responsibility. Co-curricular programs like the Student Executive Body (BES) and mandatory community service further develop social responsibility
4. **Independent:** As a boarding school, independence is heavily emphasized. The demanding daily schedule requires students to manage their own time and needs. Programs like professional observation and internships, which are conducted outside the dormitory, directly train students' self-reliance and adaptability
5. **Globally-Minded:** In line with its vision, the school aims to produce graduates with a global perspective. This is supported by programs like overseas trips, life skills training, and seminars. The unique "Malebbi" culture, which integrates local values with Islamic principles, is taught to be relevant in a global context. At **SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar**, the development of character is consistently based on the teachings of the Al-Quran and Sunnah, with a vision to produce a generation of Muslim preachers and fighters (*da'i dan mujahid*). Five main values are the focus:
  1. **Religious:** This value is the primary foundation of all activities. It is implemented through compulsory congregational prayers five times a day, routine *Halaqah Al-Quran* (Quranic study circles) after Subuh and Asar prayers, and regular religious lectures (*kajian*). The dress code is also strictly enforced according to Islamic law for all members of the school community
  2. **Discipline:** Discipline is systematically enforced through a strict daily schedule that governs all student activities from waking to sleeping. The *Morning Spirit* assembly held every morning serves as a mechanism to reinforce discipline and motivation. Strict rules on environmental cleanliness, with students organized into cleaning groups, and specific dress codes (e.g., mandatory use of inner sleeves and socks) are also key components
  3. **Responsible:** This value is actively instilled through participation in student organizations and daily duties<sup>73</sup>. The Student Intra-School Organization (OSIS) holds significant responsibility for



supervising other students, organizing activities, and enforcing rules. Group cleaning duties also foster a sense of collective responsibility for the environment.

4. **Independent:** The boarding school environment inherently fosters independence. The packed daily schedule requires students to manage their time and personal needs effectively. Leadership development through OSIS and the personal approach of supervisors in problem-solving—where students are guided to find their own solutions—further strengthens this value.
5. **Polite and Courteous (*Sopan Santun*):** This is a hallmark characteristic emphasized at the school. The culture of *Salam, Senyum, Sapa* (Greeting, Smile, Address) is consistently practiced and monitored. Adab (etiquette) is taught directly and practiced, especially in interactions with elders. There is even a special "Adab Division" within OSIS to model and uphold this value.

### Implementation of the Character Education Strategy

Both schools employ a multi-faceted strategy to implement the aforementioned character values, transforming them from abstract concepts into lived realities. The core strategies are instilling theory, providing role models, and consistent habituation.

SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros implements its strategy through:

- **Instillation of Theory:** The process begins with a two-week New Student Orientation Program (MOPD) focused on teaching *adab* and school culture. The unique "Mar'atus Shalihah" curriculum integrates the local "Malebbi" culture, with all rules documented in a student *handbook*. This theoretical foundation is reinforced through regular religious studies (*Kajian Kitab*), group discussions (*Tarbiyah*), and smaller focus groups (*Circle Time*).
- **Modeling (*Keteladanan*):** The school emphasizes that character is caught, not just taught. The school's founder and teachers are primary role models, with a clear Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for teacher conduct and attire. Teachers undergo regular training and evaluation—including feedback from students—to ensure they are effective role models. Senior students are also expected to be role models for their juniors.
- **Habituation (*Pembiasaan*):** This is the cornerstone of the implementation strategy, manifested in the *Daily Activity* schedule. The entire 24-hour routine, from *Qiyamullail* to scheduled naps (*Kailullah*), is designed to be a continuous practice of the target character values<sup>90909090</sup>. The boarding school environment is key to this, allowing for constant guidance and consistent enforcement.



- **Guidance and Counseling:** A multi-tiered support system is in place. Every student has Academic and Moral Advisors (PAA). If issues escalate, they are referred to counselors at the Learning Support Center (LSC), and then to the school psychologist, ensuring that every student is monitored and supported

SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar employs the following strategies:

- **Instillation of Theory:** Values are explicitly integrated into the "pesantren curriculum," which is socialized to all teachers and students. Teachers are instructed that character is a primary learning objective, not just cognition. Theory is reinforced through weekly lessons on *adab* (which students must memorize), regular religious sermons (*ta'lim*), and daily advice during the *Morning Spirit* assembly
- **Modeling (Keteladanan):** The implementation process flows from the teachers (*ustazah*) to the OSIS members, and then to the general student body. Teachers are required to be role models in speech, dress, and worship. OSIS members, who have significant authority, are also expected to be exemplary figures for their peers.
- **Habituation (Pembiasaan):** The daily schedule is extremely structured and serves as the primary tool for habituation. Routines include congregational prayers, Quranic circles, group cleaning duties, mandatory language use (Arabic/English), and the
- *Morning Spirit* assembly. The culture of 3S (Salam, Senyum, Sapa) is also consistently practiced.
- **Student Organizations (OSIS):** OSIS plays a uniquely crucial role in implementation. It acts as an extension of the school administration in supervising students and enforcing discipline. All students in a particular grade level are involved in OSIS, embodying the school's motto "Ready to be led and to lead. This provides a practical training ground for leadership, responsibility, and independence

### Evaluation of the Character Education Strategy

Despite the robust strategies, both schools face a set of common challenges in implementing their character education programs, which can be seen as a form of ongoing, informal evaluation of their strategies.

SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros faces the following challenges:

- **Internal Challenges:** A significant challenge is the diverse backgrounds of the students Many come from affluent families and are accustomed to being served, making the initial



adaptation to the self-reliant and disciplined life of a boarding school difficult. The commitment of new teachers, who may not yet fully grasp the school's culture, also poses a challenge to consistent implementation.

- **External Challenges:** The most dominant external challenge is the influence of the outside world, particularly from gadgets, when students go home for holidays. The school refers to this as a "virus" that requires a "brainwashing" or re-orientation session upon the students' return. Another significant challenge is the inconsistent support from some parents, who may not cooperate with disciplinary actions or may even defend their child when they are in the wrong, thereby undermining the school's efforts

**SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar** encounters similar obstacles:

- **Internal Challenges:** The "pampered" nature (*manja*) of many incoming students makes it difficult to instill values of hard work and independence. Managing the use of technology presents another hurdle; while technology is helpful, there is a constant struggle to integrate it without eroding the core values of pesantren education. Ensuring that all teachers consistently prioritize character messages in their teaching, rather than just cognitive content, is an ongoing effort. Lastly, a lack of human resources has stalled the *halaqah* counseling program, which was an effective avenue for students to discuss personal problems.
- **External Challenges:** While the school reports strong support from parents and the community, there is an underlying concern about students' ability to maintain the values they've learned after graduation. There are instances where graduates change their style of dress (e.g., hijab) after leaving the controlled environment of the pesantren, indicating that the influence of the outside world remains a powerful, long-term challenge

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Strategic planning** at both SMA IT Darul Istiqamah Maros and SMAS Buq'atun Mubarakah Makassar is structured around a core set of character values—primarily religiousness, discipline, responsibility, and independence—which are derived from their respective visions and missions and guide all school policies and programs.
2. The **implementation of the strategy** at both schools is effectively carried out through a combination of three main approaches: the instillation of theory through integrated curricula



and religious studies, consistent modeling by teachers and school leaders, and intensive habituation through highly structured daily routines made possible by the boarding school system.

3. The **evaluation of the strategy**, as seen through the challenges faced, reveals that while the implementation is effective, its success is continuously tested. Both schools face similar internal challenges related to student adaptation and teacher consistency, and external challenges from the pervasive influence of outside culture and technology, as well as the need for unwavering parental support to reinforce the values taught at school

## REFERENCES

- Amelia, C., Aprilianto, A., Supriatna, D., Rusydi, I., & Zahari, N. E. (2022). The Principal's Role as Education Supervisor in Improving Teacher Professionalism. *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 144–155
- David, F. R. (2009). *Manajemen Strategi*. Salemba Empat.
- Dike, D., & Parida, L. (2020). The micro leadership strategy of the principal to implementing character education in elementary school. *Jurnal Prima Edukasia*, 8(1), 51–66. 125
- Faujiah, S., Syaifudin, M., Andriani, T., & Penulis, K. (2023). Implementasi Manajemen Strategi dalam Lembaga Pendidikan. *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Sistem Informasi*, 4. 126
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. Bantam Books. 127
- Moleong. (2005). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Media Kita. 128
- Stolp, S. W., & Smith, S. C. (1995). *Transforming School Culture*. In Director.
- Sugiyono. (2020). *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R & D*. 129
- Triatmanto. (2010). Tantangan Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Di Sekolah. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*; Edisi Khusus Dies Natalis UNY., 29, 187–203. 130
- Winataputra, & Sri. (2017). *Pedoman Umum Penggalan dan Perwujudan Nilai Akhlak Mulia Bagian Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (PPK)*.  
Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Dasar Dan Menengah. 131

