



Building Student Character through Worship in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

By encouraging individuals to become better people, it fosters a sense of social awareness that contributes to positive character development. In this regard, Islam recommends congregational prayer. Although it is not obligatory, congregational prayer carries a reward twenty seven times greater than praying alone. This study aims to explore the character values developed through the habituation of congregational Zuhur prayer. A qualitative research method with a case study approach was used. Data were collected from thirteen informants through direct interviews guided by a structured interview protocol. The interview data were analyzed thematically using Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model of Analysis. The findings indicate that congregational Zuhur prayer functions as an extracurricular activity in elementary schools designed to familiarize students with group worship. This practice contributes to the development of various character traits, including religious awareness, discipline, responsibility, and honesty. These results may serve as a foundation for future research on similar topics in different educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is an effort to support the development of children's physical and mental aspects, guiding their natural disposition toward a more humane and improved civilization (Sanjaya & Octavia, 2024; Wakhyudi & Setyorini, 2021). It is a continuous and ongoing process that contributes to sustainable quality improvement and aims to shape future generations rooted in the cultural values of the nation (Agbedahin, 2019; Hambali, 2021; Susanto, 2022). Character education carries a broader meaning than moral education, as it not only addresses issues of right and wrong but also focuses on cultivating habits of goodness in everyday life. This process encourages students to develop a strong awareness and understanding, enabling them to consistently demonstrate care and commitment in practicing virtues (Abidin, 2021; Ubaidah et al., 2023). Character formation provides an effective approach to help students internalize positive habits that benefit both themselves and their social environment (Rais, 2023; Rokhmah, 2021; Sahuri, 2022).

Character can be defined as a way of thinking and behaving that reflects an individual's identity in interacting and cooperating within the family, community, nation and state (Kosim, 2012; Rosmi, 2016; Santika, 2018).

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It is closely associated with moral values serving as spontaneous behavior or actions that have been internalized to the point of becoming second nature (Budiyono, 2023). Therefore, character is not merely taught theoretically but must be nurtured through consistent practice and reinforcement within daily educational activities.

The implementation of a habituation program can foster essential character values. These values represent the expected outcomes of both the learning process and the school or madrasah culture (Mazid & Suharno, 2019; Suardi et al., 2018). These values include components such as knowledge, awareness or willingness, and actions that reflect the internalization of these values in relation to God, the self, the environment, and the nation ultimately guiding individuals toward becoming *insan kamil* (Adhim, 2012; Hasanah, 2017).

Prayer, as one form of religious observance, serves as a medium through which a person can develop a broader perspective. When individuals understand the deeper spiritual meaning behind prayer, their worldview expands beyond rational thought and enables them to perceive matters beyond mere logic. Prayer also serves as a preventive measure against despicable thoughts and actions (Kandiri & Mahmudi, 2018).

The *Dzūbur* prayer is performed after the sun has passed its zenith until an object's shadow is equal in length to the object itself, excluding the shadow at the zenith. The term "congregation" derives from *al-ijtima'*, meaning gathering, and *al-jama'ah*, referring to a group united in purpose (Hardiansyah et al., 2021; Warasto, 2018; Yanti, 2022). In Islamic law, congregational prayer represents the connection between the imam and the congregation in a shared act of worship (Sholeha et al., 2022). It involves a group of at least two individuals performing prayer together (Sahuri, 2022).

Congregational prayer functions not only as a means of spiritual development and personal formation for Muslims but also holds significant social value (Syaroh & Mizani, 2020). Through practicing congregational prayer, Muslims can cultivate good moral character and strengthen social awareness (Ridwan et al., 2023; Wahrudin & Mukhibat, 2017). While not obligatory, congregational prayer is strongly encouraged in Islam and is said to carry a reward twenty-seven times greater than individual prayer (Darussalam, 2016).

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data sources were taken from twenty informants through in-depth interviews selected using purposive sampling technique (Febriani et al., 2022). The selection of informants must meet four criteria, namely that they are still active in the field under study, have competence related to the problem under study, are willing to take the time to provide information to researchers, and honestly provide information in accordance with the facts that occur in the field (Fitriani et al., 2022; Murniyetti et al., 2016). After the interviews were completed with all informants, the interview data was transcribed and themes were taken according to the objectives and needs of the research data. The data collection techniques used were observation, interview, and documentation. All data were analyzed using the milles and huberman analysis technique (Engkizar et al., 2025; Satrial et al., 2025). The analysis consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. To ensure the credibility of the findings, researchers also conducted triangulation by comparing information from different sources and methods. The

entire research process was carried out systematically and ethically, paying attention to the confidentiality and consent of the participants (Ardiningrum et al., 2021; Rahmi et al., 2021). As shown in the following picture

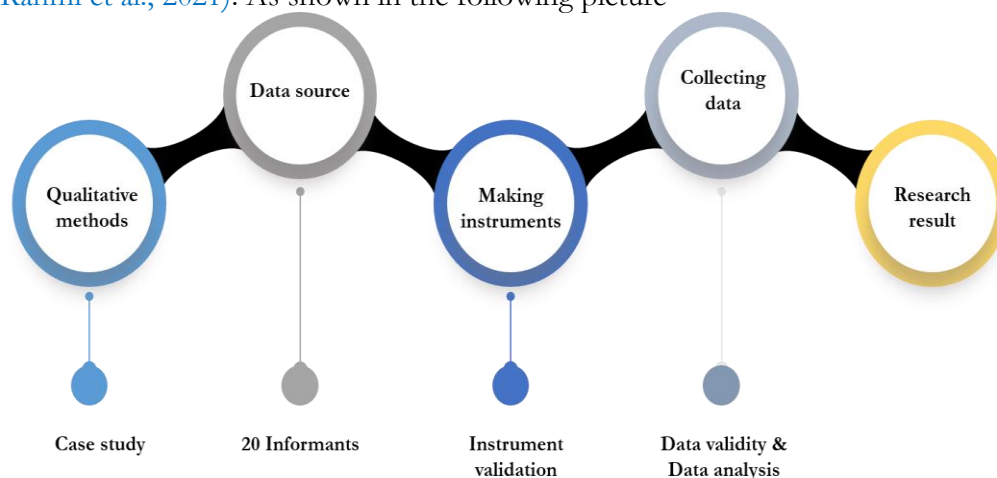


Fig 1. Research flow

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews conducted with thirteen informants, the results of the analysis clearly found that there are three important themes related to the Implementation of Dzuhur Berjamaah in Shaping the Character of Students in West Sumatra Elementary Schools. The three themes are as follows:

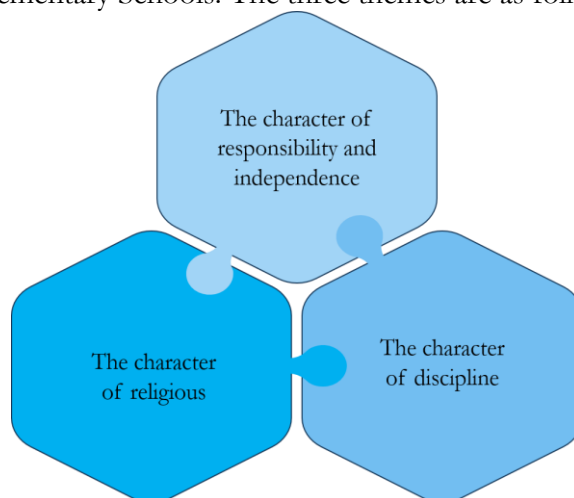


Fig 2. Building student character through worship in elementary schools

First, the character of responsibility and independence of students can be seen from their habit of performing Dzuhur prayers in congregation at school without having to be reminded. This shows that the habituation of worship has formed intrinsic awareness in students. One teacher said:

...They already know the schedule, when the bell rings they immediately run to the mosque, not hiding behind (informant).

In addition, students are also accustomed to doing various preparations and arrangements for worship independently, such as taking ablutions, arranging safes, and tidying up prayer equipment after the activity is over.

...Children are used to taking their own ablutions without being told. They also take turns arranging the prayer rows and tidying up the prayer equipment after it is finished. From

there we see a growing sense of responsibility and independence (informant).

Independence and courage are also evident when students are directly appointed to call to prayer during the Dzuhur prayer in congregation. Although not fully prepared, they still try to carry out the task with full responsibility. Based on the researcher's observation, the mentor teacher directly appoints students to be *muadzjin*, and after the adzan is finished, the teacher provides input as a form of learning (Arifin et al., 2020). One incident observed was when a student finished the adzan, the teacher gave a note that the rhythm of the adzan still resembled the *iqamah*. This reflects the process of character building through direct practice that supports students' courage and sense of responsibility.

The responsible and independent character of students can be seen from their habit of performing the Dzuhur prayer in congregation at school without having to be reminded. This shows that the habituation of worship has formed intrinsic awareness in students. One teacher said:

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Second, the discipline character of students can be seen from their orderliness in carrying out the Dzuhur prayer in congregation at school. Being orderly in worship is a form of discipline and responsibility towards one's obligations. These habits, if done consistently, will form a disciplined personal character. A teacher said that at the beginning of the program implementation, students were not fully orderly. However, over time they began to show positive changes:

...In the beginning, it must have been chaotic, because changing habits is difficult, so now thank God it has started to be orderly, even though they joke a lot but they have started to be orderly (informant).

Discipline is also reflected in the habit of students praying Dzuhur on time every day. They already understand the schedule and prepare before the call to prayer (Sultanik et al., 2022). In addition, the implementation of the picket schedule is also carried out according to the turn, which trains them to be responsible for the tasks that have been determined.

...The dzuhur prayer in congregation is held on time every day. Dcarri out Students know the time and are ready before the call to prayer. They also carry out the picket schedule according to their turn. This helps them learn discipline in their daily lives (informant).

Discipline is also seen in the attitude of students during ablution. Despite

limited water tap facilities, students still queue in an orderly manner. Teachers provide special supervision to ensure that order is maintained, including the arrangement of ablution places for male and female students (Murniyetti et al., 2016; Muslimin, 2023).

...All students perform ablution in the mosque, and because the water tap facilities are limited, so they queue. Especially if the water tap is off, students are advised to take a wuduk in the river for the boys, while the girls are separated in the position of taking a wuduk, and are supervised by the picket teacher (informant).

Third, the religious character of students can be seen from their habit of dhikr and prayer after performing Dzuhur prayer in congregation at school. Dhikr and prayer are practices that are highly recommended in Islamic teachings as a form of spiritual strengthening and self-reminder to Allah SWT. In this habituation activity, students are guided to offer prayers, especially praying for their parents after prayer. A teacher explained:

...After Dzuhur, students are told to dhikr and pray, especially praying for their parents (informant).

Other religious activities are also carried out routinely, such as reading prayers before and after learning and reciting the Quran together before the Dzuhur prayer. This habit slowly forms a religious attitude that is inherent in students' daily lives (Azis & Masrukin, 2019; Ridwan et al., 2020; Syaroh & Mizani, 2020). In fact, some of them have started to show concern for their friends who forget to pray, which is a sign that religious values are starting to grow naturally in them.

...The children are getting used to reading prayers before and after learning, as well as reciting the Quran together before the dzuhur prayer. Some of them even remind their friends if they forget to pray. This is evidence that religious values are starting to be embedded in their daily lives (informant).

This habit is not only a routine, but also an important part in shaping sustainable religious character. Through consistent habituation, religious values can be embedded more deeply and become part of students' behavior in daily life, both at school and at home.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research process that has been carried out, it can be understood that the habituation of worship in elementary schools makes a meaningful contribution to the character building of students. Although its implementation still requires consistent assistance and adaptation to school conditions, religious practices that are carried out regularly show potential in fostering positive values in students. This finding provides room for further strengthening through collaboration between teachers, parents and the school environment so that worship-based character building can take place in a sustainable and contextualized manner.

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Author contribution

Susan San Htay: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, **Ei Thet Hmoo**

Po: methodology, conceptualization, **Piyada Kaewkanlaya:** visualization, analysis, editing.

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