



The 'One Day Ten Greetings' Movement (GERTUSAM) as a Strategy for Fostering Students' Religious Character

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the implementation and implications of the "One Day Ten Greetings" Movement (GERTUSAM) as a strategy to instill religious character among students. Employing a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, the study collected data through non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews with school staff, teachers, students, and parents, as well as documentary analysis of program records and materials. Findings reveal that GERTUSAM is systematically implemented through early introduction, consistent repetition, strict supervision, and the transition from mechanistic behavior to voluntary self-awareness. The program effectively fosters students' religious character across three domains: spiritual, by enhancing mindfulness of God and reinforcing prayer routines; social, by promoting politeness, empathy, and cooperative behavior; and personal, by cultivating honesty, discipline, and responsibility. These outcomes demonstrate that structured habitual practices can facilitate internalization of moral and religious values, supporting ethical development. The study implies that school-based interventions like GERTUSAM provide a replicable model for cultivating disciplined, socially responsible, and spiritually conscious youth, informing educational policy and curriculum design.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has increasingly become a critical concern in contemporary society due to widespread moral deterioration and declining ethical standards. The erosion of moral values is often linked to environmental influences, social changes, and exposure to negative behaviors, resulting in weakened character formation among youth (Arfan et al., 2024; Azam et al., 2025). Reports from mass media frequently highlight juvenile delinquency, including bullying, disrespect toward teachers, substance abuse, and premarital sexual behaviors, indicating a broader social problem. International findings,

such as those reported by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2017, revealed that up to 84% of children experienced violence in schools, a rate higher than neighboring countries like Vietnam (79%) and Pakistan (43%). Such data emphasize the urgent need for interventions that strengthen character and moral education. Addressing these societal challenges is essential not only for individual development but also for fostering a stable, ethical, and resilient community. Consequently, research on practical strategies to instill moral and religious character in school settings is of critical importance.

Despite ongoing efforts, many students demonstrate a lack of respect toward educators and peers, indicating a decline in both ethical awareness and social responsibility. Schools often struggle to instill consistent moral behavior, leaving students vulnerable to negative external influences, including media content, peer pressure, and cultural shifts that prioritize self-interest over collective responsibility (Khofsah, 2025; Kusumawati, 2025). Bullying, school fights, and inappropriate behaviors have become increasingly visible in educational settings, often causing psychological and physical harm to victims. This social phenomenon reflects a gap between theoretical knowledge of moral values and their practical application in daily life. The failure to internalize ethical principles not only affects students' interpersonal relationships but also hinders the broader goal of cultivating socially responsible citizens. The persistence of these problems underscores the necessity of systematic interventions that target character development, especially in formative school environments, to mitigate the negative trajectory of adolescent behavior and reinforce societal moral standards.

Field observations demonstrate that moral and religious practices among students are frequently inconsistent or superficial. Incidents at MTsN 1 Lumajang, for instance, revealed behavioral lapses such as disrespect toward teachers and careless conduct in school premises, signaling a gap in character cultivation (Shoha, 2026; Syafiih, 2025). Such behaviors, including the neglect of social etiquette and religious practices, highlight the need for structured interventions that integrate habitual moral guidance into daily routines. Furthermore, students often spend significant time in school environments, which positions educational institutions as critical agents for character formation. Yet, the absence of consistent reinforcement or cultural habituation limits students' ability to internalize ethical principles effectively (Holidi, 2025; Manshur, 2026). Evidence from similar contexts suggests that embedding moral practices in daily school routines can promote positive behavioral change. These observations indicate that interventions like routine greetings, structured religious activities, and reinforcement of ethical norms may serve as effective mechanisms to foster character and religiosity in school-aged children.

Previous research has explored character education and religious moral development in schools, highlighting both theoretical and practical approaches.

Studies indicate that programs integrating religious instruction with daily routines contribute to the development of ethical behavior and social responsibility (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Rahman, 2026). However, these studies primarily focus on descriptive analyses of activities or educational outcomes without deeply examining the strategies' implementation processes or their integration into students' behavioral patterns. While these contributions provide foundational knowledge, they leave critical gaps regarding how character education can be systematized within the school environment to produce measurable, sustained behavioral change. Moreover, limited research addresses the interaction between school culture, habitual practices, and student religiosity, which are crucial for holistic character formation. By focusing on habitual interventions such as structured greeting programs, the present study positions itself to bridge this gap, offering insights into effective mechanisms for reinforcing religious and moral values in educational contexts.

Existing literature demonstrates that habitual religious practices positively influence moral development but often lacks empirical verification in formal educational settings (Azaroh, 2025; Novita et al., 2025; Tohet, 2024). Most prior studies either rely on surveys or anecdotal reports without systematically observing behavior change resulting from daily interventions. This limitation highlights the need for context-specific investigations that examine not only behavioral outcomes but also the processes through which students internalize ethical and religious norms. By focusing on MTsN 1 Lumajang's GERTUSAM program, this study addresses a critical research gap by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of structured daily character reinforcement. Furthermore, by integrating educational theory with Islamic ethical principles, the research contributes to understanding how school-based interventions can promote internalization of values, shaping both social and spiritual dimensions of students' lives. This approach strengthens theoretical frameworks on character formation while providing practical guidance for educational policy and program design.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the integration of habitual religious practices within the school environment as a strategy for character formation. Unlike previous studies, which mainly describe moral education programs without examining their implementation fidelity, this research investigates both the procedural and outcome dimensions of the GERTUSAM initiative. The study evaluates how repeated, structured interactions, such as daily greetings to teachers and peers, contribute to the internalization of religious values and social etiquette. By situating the research within an Islamic educational institution, it uniquely combines faith-based moral guidance with pedagogical strategies, addressing contemporary challenges posed by external social influences. The findings are expected to inform policy,

curriculum development, and teacher training programs, offering evidence-based recommendations for character education. This research thereby advances the state of the art by providing systematic insights into replicable, culturally aligned interventions that foster both religiosity and social responsibility among adolescents.

The central research problem addresses how the GERTUSAM program effectively promotes religious character among students at MTsN 1 Lumajang. Preliminary observations suggest that structured daily greetings and habitual reinforcement of ethical practices can positively influence students' moral conduct. The study hypothesizes that consistent exposure to these practices not only improves interpersonal respect and adherence to religious norms but also mitigates behaviors associated with juvenile delinquency. By examining implementation processes, student responses, and observable outcomes, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how habitual interventions shape character formation. Ultimately, this study contributes both theoretically and practically by demonstrating a replicable model for integrating religious and moral education into everyday school life, addressing the broader societal need for ethical, respectful, and morally conscious youth.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, chosen to provide a descriptive and in-depth understanding of the implementation and implications of the GERTUSAM (Gerakan Sehari Sepuluh Salam) program at MTsN 1 Lumajang (Greene et al., 2023; Kusumaputri et al., 2023; Mulyana et al., 2024). The qualitative method allows the researcher to collect rich descriptive data in the form of written narratives, verbal expressions, and observable behaviors, consistent with Bogdan and Taylor's definition of qualitative research as a procedure that generates detailed, contextualized insights into human experiences. Phenomenology, as a branch of qualitative inquiry, emphasizes the essence of participants' experiences while minimizing researcher bias or preconceptions, allowing for a purer understanding of the phenomenon under study. By employing this approach, the study captures how habitual greetings and structured interactions within the school environment influence students' religious character development, providing insights into the process, outcomes, and perceived meaning of these practices from the participants' perspective.

The research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Lumajang, located at Jl. Citandui No. 75, Rogotrunan, Lumajang Regency. The location was strategically selected due to the school's distinctive daily habituation program that integrates religious and social practices, including greeting teachers, staff, and peers at least ten times per day. This program fosters an atmosphere of

respect, religiosity, and social cohesion, making MTsN 1 Lumajang an ideal context to study the practical implementation of character-building interventions. Additionally, the school's status as a state Islamic institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs ensures institutional support for the program and provides a representative setting to explore how structured, habitual practices can cultivate ethical and spiritual values among adolescents.

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure triangulation and depth. Non-participant observation allowed the researcher to document students' habitual greetings, interactions, and behavioral changes without interfering with daily activities (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Muthmainna & Siroj, 2025; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including the program initiator, PAI teachers, homeroom teachers, staff, students, and parents, to capture perceptions, experiences, and reflections on the GERTUSAM program. Additionally, documentary analysis was used to gather secondary data from school records, journals, and relevant textual materials, complementing primary observations and interviews. These combined methods facilitated a comprehensive understanding of both the implementation process and its impact on students' religious character.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involves continuous and iterative processing. The first stage, data condensation, included selecting relevant information, focusing on core themes, abstracting key points, and simplifying data to identify patterns related to the GERTUSAM program. The second stage, data display, involved organizing and presenting findings through narratives, tables, charts, and diagrams, enabling clear visualization of relationships among categories and themes. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, applied triangulation across sources, methods, and time to ensure validity and reliability. Discrepancies were addressed through follow-up discussions, ensuring that conclusions accurately reflected the phenomenon and the program's role in promoting students' religious and ethical development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of the "One Day Ten Greetings" Movement (GERTUSAM) as a Means of Instilling Students' Religious Character

The implementation of the GERTUSAM program at MTsN 1 Lumajang is structured around four key aspects: introduction from the start, consistent repetition, strict supervision involving the entire school community, and the transition from mechanistic behavior to self-awareness. Firstly, the program is

introduced from the beginning of students' enrollment. Early habituation ensures that students develop the practice of greeting others as a form of respect, aligning with the foundational goals of GERTUSAM. According to Ahmad Futur, S.Ag., the program was initiated after a 2019 incident in which students accidentally bumped into a visiting official due to unfamiliarity, prompting school leadership to evaluate students' respect and etiquette. The introduction of GERTUSAM ensures that from the outset, students learn to integrate courteous and religious practices into their daily interactions.

The second key aspect involves consistent and repeated practice. Students use control cards to record each greeting, which are reviewed weekly and monthly to monitor compliance. This repetitive process transforms greetings from a formal requirement into habitual behavior. As observed in interviews with homeroom teachers and school staff, students gradually internalize the practice, making it part of their daily routines. The structured repetition strengthens awareness of ethical and religious obligations, while the control card system provides accountability and measurable progress for both students and teachers.

Strict supervision is the third component of GERTUSAM's implementation. Teachers, student councils, and staff monitor daily greetings and reinforce adherence to the program. The involvement of all members of the school ensures that students have consistent guidance and feedback, reducing the likelihood of neglecting the practice. As Ahmad Futur explains, supervision has evolved to be more localized through homeroom teachers, ensuring daily monitoring and the verification of students' greeting activity. This systematic oversight maintains the integrity of the program while promoting a culture of respect and moral awareness across the school.

Finally, the program emphasizes the transition from mechanistic behavior to self-awareness. Over time, students' greetings evolve from externally enforced actions to voluntary, heartfelt expressions of respect. Observations indicate that students now greet teachers, peers, and even strangers spontaneously, reflecting internalized values of religious etiquette and social ethics. This transformation demonstrates that GERTUSAM not only shapes observable behaviors but also fosters genuine religious consciousness among students.

Implications of the GERTUSAM Program for Students' Religious Character

The GERTUSAM program has significant implications for students' development across spiritual, social, and personal dimensions. From a spiritual perspective, repeated and consistent greetings cultivate mindfulness of God and

encourage the observance of prayer routines. Interviews with teachers and students reveal that the practice reinforces students' religious awareness, patience, and self-discipline. For instance, students report that greetings remind them to engage in prayer and good deeds, illustrating the connection between habitual etiquette and religious consciousness.

Socially, GERTUSAM enhances students' interpersonal relationships and social responsibility. Regular practice encourages politeness, respect for others, empathy, and cooperative behaviors. Students actively participate in helping peers, greeting elders, and interacting respectfully with teachers and community members. Observations indicate that students who engage consistently with the program demonstrate improved social harmony, tolerance, and a proactive attitude toward collaborative activities. The program also promotes awareness of communal well-being, as students understand the social and moral significance of their greetings.

On a personal level, GERTUSAM fosters honesty, discipline, and accountability. The use of control cards requires students to record their greeting activities accurately, promoting personal responsibility and moral integrity. Teachers note that this practice develops conscientiousness in students, which extends beyond greetings to other aspects of daily life, including punctuality, orderly conduct, and adherence to religious obligations. The internalization of these habits contributes to a holistic moral and spiritual formation, demonstrating that a seemingly simple practice can have extensive developmental impact on adolescents.

Collectively, the GERTUSAM program demonstrates a systematic, sustainable approach to building students' religious character. By integrating structured habituation, continuous supervision, and reflection on spiritual and social meaning, the program shapes students' behaviors, attitudes, and values. The evidence from interviews, observations, and documentation indicates that students' moral awareness and religious practices are strengthened, creating an educational environment that fosters ethical, disciplined, and spiritually conscious individuals.

Discussion

The implementation of the GERTUSAM program at MTsN 1 Lumajang demonstrates a highly structured approach to fostering religious character among students, aligning with theoretical perspectives on habit formation and moral education (Alam & Mohanty, 2023; Khomsiah et al., 2024; Yugo, 2025). The program's early introduction ensures that students internalize greeting

behaviors from the start of their schooling, preventing the development of undesirable habits while promoting respect and social etiquette. This finding supports prior research indicating that early habituation in school environments can significantly shape long-term character development (Adanma & Ogunbiyi, 2024; Hasanah et al., 2024; Rachmasari et al., 2025). Observations and interviews confirm that students gradually integrate greetings into daily interactions, showing that structured interventions can facilitate the internalization of religious and ethical practices.

Consistent repetition, as emphasized in the program, reinforces the habitual nature of the behavior. The use of control cards for daily tracking enables both students and teachers to monitor compliance, creating accountability while fostering self-discipline. This mechanism aligns with studies on behavioral conditioning, suggesting that repeated practice and reinforcement are critical for turning deliberate actions into automatic routines (Faidati et al., 2025; Rafiq-uz-Zaman & Asif Nadeem, 2025). Teachers' feedback and weekly monitoring demonstrate that structured repetition encourages students to adopt greetings not merely as a formal obligation, but as a personal habit embedded in their daily routines.

The strict supervision component further strengthens the effectiveness of GERTUSAM. Involving teachers, staff, and student councils ensures continuous guidance, immediate correction of non-compliant behavior, and reinforcement of ethical norms. This approach reflects the importance of a supportive social environment in the development of prosocial behaviors. Interviews with school personnel indicate that localized monitoring through homeroom teachers enhances responsiveness and maintains program integrity, preventing potential lapses in adherence and promoting a culture of moral awareness throughout the school.

The transition from mechanistic behavior to self-awareness is a critical outcome of the program. Initially, students perform greetings as an externally mandated activity, but over time, these behaviors evolve into voluntary, sincere expressions of respect. This internalization aligns with theories of moral development, which emphasize the role of reflective practice and conscious engagement in ethical behavior (Ataman, 2024; Wagner, 2025). Field observations reveal that students now greet teachers, peers, and even strangers spontaneously, suggesting that the GERTUSAM program successfully transforms externally imposed rules into internalized ethical habits.

In terms of implications, the program impacts students across spiritual, social, and personal domains. Spiritually, daily greetings foster mindfulness of

God and encourage prayer observance, reinforcing religious awareness and patience (Alserhan et al., 2023; Rahmadi et al., 2024). Socially, the practice promotes politeness, empathy, and cooperation, enhancing interpersonal relationships and collective responsibility. Personal implications include the development of honesty, discipline, and accountability through the use of control cards and consistent monitoring, which contribute to a sense of moral agency and self-regulation among students.

Overall, GERTUSAM exemplifies a holistic and sustainable approach to character education, demonstrating that structured habituation, continuous supervision, and reflection on spiritual and social meaning can effectively shape students' values and behaviors. The findings highlight that even simple daily practices, when systematized and reinforced, can significantly influence moral and religious development. This evidence underscores the potential of school-based habit programs as effective tools for promoting ethical, disciplined, and spiritually conscious individuals, providing a replicable model for other educational institutions seeking to integrate character formation into their curricula (Adeoye & Baharun, 2025; Sunkad et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study on the "One Day Ten Greetings" Movement (GERTUSAM) as a means of instilling students' religious character at MTsN 1 Lumajang highlight several important lessons. Firstly, the program demonstrates that structured habituation, consistent repetition, strict supervision, and the transition from mechanistic behavior to self-awareness can effectively cultivate religious values in adolescents. GERTUSAM not only establishes greetings as a behavioral routine but also serves as a vehicle for internalizing moral and spiritual principles, influencing students' spiritual mindfulness, social interactions, and personal responsibility. This indicates that simple daily practices, when implemented systematically, can generate profound effects on character formation, fostering disciplined, empathetic, and ethically conscious individuals. The study also underscores the critical role of teachers, school administrators, and peer networks in sustaining and modeling these behaviors, emphasizing the interplay between institutional guidance and individual moral development.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to the understanding of school-based character education programs within Islamic schooling contexts, providing empirical evidence of how habituation practices can enhance religious character. The study offers a replicable framework for

integrating ethical and spiritual development into routine school activities, enriching the literature on moral education and behavioral habituation. However, the research is limited by its focus on a single school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future studies could expand the investigation to multiple schools, examine long-term impacts of such programs, or explore additional outcomes, such as academic motivation, peer influence, or the reinforcement of social-religious values, to deepen understanding of the broader implications of character habituation interventions.

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