



Living the Values: Management of Religious Culture and Student Character Development in Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the management of religious organizational culture development in improving students' character. This research employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, students, and parents. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings revealed that the development of religious organizational culture was implemented through four management functions proposed by George R. Terry, namely planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. Planning involved formulating religious programs and implementation strategies, organizing focused on assigning roles and responsibilities to school members, implementation was carried out through religious habituation activities such as congregational Dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, Qur'anic reading, and collective prayers, while evaluation was conducted continuously to monitor program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. The study found that religious organizational culture contributed significantly to the development of students' religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and respectful behavior. These findings imply that systematic and sustainable management of religious organizational culture can serve as an effective strategy for strengthening character education and fostering positive student behavior in educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and continuous effort to transmit knowledge, values, and culture from one generation to the next, thereby shaping the quality of future societies (Maksum et al., 2025; Pangastuti et al., 2025). In the contemporary era, educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' academic competencies but also to cultivate moral and ethical values

that guide responsible behavior (Rifki et al., 2024; Sarip et al., 2023). Character formation has become increasingly important because the rapid advancement of globalization and digital technology has significantly influenced the attitudes and lifestyles of young people (Rahmah & Ilham, 2022). While technological development provides opportunities for learning and communication, it also exposes students to various negative influences that may weaken their moral awareness and social responsibility. Therefore, educational practices that emphasize religious and character values are essential to strengthen students' internal control and moral foundations. Value-based education plays a crucial role in addressing behavioral challenges among students (Belle & Chemen, 2025). Consequently, strengthening religious values through educational processes is an important strategy for developing responsible and ethical citizens.

One of the major challenges faced by contemporary society is the decline of character values among students, reflected in disciplinary problems, reduced social responsibility, and increasing exposure to behaviors that contradict moral and religious norms. Educational institutions are often confronted with difficulties in balancing academic achievement and character development. Character formation constitutes a fundamental component of the learning process because character significantly influences an individual's future success (Rahmah & Ilham, 2022). Furthermore, educational development has continuously evolved in terms of curriculum, instructional methods, and management systems to respond to societal changes and emerging challenges (Fenezia & Armiami, 2025). Despite these developments, many schools still struggle to establish effective strategies for integrating character education into students' daily experiences. This situation highlights the need for educational approaches that systematically cultivate positive habits and moral values through continuous practice. Therefore, strengthening character education through religiously oriented school programs has become an increasingly relevant and urgent concern in the current educational context.

In practice, schools have implemented various initiatives to internalize religious values and foster students' character development. One observable phenomenon is the establishment of religious culture through routine religious activities that become part of students' daily experiences within the school environment. Field observations indicate that schools actively organize programs such as congregational Dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, collective Qur'anic reading, and daily prayers before and after learning activities. These programs are designed to encourage students to develop religious habits and positive attitudes through consistent practice. However, the sustainability and effectiveness of such activities depend heavily on proper management and organizational support. Without systematic planning, implementation, and

evaluation, religious programs may become ceremonial activities that fail to produce meaningful behavioral changes. This phenomenon demonstrates that the success of religious culture development requires not only religious activities themselves but also effective management processes that ensure consistency, participation, and continuous improvement in character-building efforts.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of religious education and religious habituation in strengthening students' character. Islamic education has long been recognized as a significant educational field that contributes to the development of morality, spirituality, and personal responsibility among learners (Nhlakanipho et al., 2025). Historically, the development of Islamic education in Indonesia demonstrates that religious values have served as a fundamental basis for character formation through the internalization of Islamic teachings and educational reform processes (Farid, 2017). Furthermore, schools have increasingly sought to integrate religious values into everyday activities through the establishment of religious cultures. Such initiatives aim to create educational environments where religious principles are reflected not only in worship activities but also in students' attitudes and behaviors. However, the implementation of religious culture remains challenging because students are simultaneously influenced by globalization and external cultural trends that may not align with religious values (Masru'ah et al., 2025). These conditions necessitate continuous efforts to strengthen character education through well-managed religious programs.

Although previous research has contributed valuable insights into religious character education, several limitations remain. Examined the implementation of religious character education management through extracurricular Islamic activities and religious habituation programs (Zulela et al., 2022). However, their study primarily focused on specific activities rather than exploring the broader development of religious organizational culture within schools (Ayu et al., 2024). Similarly, investigated religious habituation as a strategy for strengthening students' religious character (Masturin, 2023). Nevertheless, the study did not comprehensively analyze how management functions influence the development and sustainability of religious culture. As a result, previous studies have tended to emphasize program implementation while paying limited attention to the managerial processes that support cultural development. This gap is significant because effective character formation requires not only religious activities but also systematic planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. Therefore, a deeper understanding of religious culture development from a management perspective remains necessary (Ni'mah et al., 2023).

This study offers a different perspective by examining religious organizational culture as an integrated management system rather than merely a collection of religious activities. The research focuses on how managerial functions are utilized to design, organize, implement, and evaluate religious culture programs that influence students' character development. By exploring the interaction between organizational culture and management practices, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how religious values can be institutionalized within school environments. This perspective is important because sustainable character development requires consistent organizational commitment, structured implementation mechanisms, and continuous evaluation processes. Consequently, the study contributes to the development of educational management practices that support the strengthening of religious values and character education in schools.

Based on the issues, phenomena, and research gaps identified above, this study investigates how religious organizational culture is managed to improve students' character development. The study specifically addresses three aspects: planning, implementation, and evaluation of religious organizational culture. It is argued that systematic and sustainable management of religious culture can foster positive habits, strengthen religious awareness, and enhance students' discipline and responsibility. Through an in-depth examination of management processes, this research is expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the role of religious organizational culture in character formation and offer practical recommendations for educational institutions seeking to strengthen character education through religious values.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the management of religious organizational culture development in improving students' character. A qualitative case study was selected because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena comprehensively within their natural setting and to understand participants' perspectives regarding a particular issue. This approach is appropriate for examining planning, implementation, and evaluation processes related to religious culture development in schools. Furthermore, qualitative research seeks to interpret social realities through descriptive data in the form of spoken and written words as well as observable behaviors, as emphasized by (Akhyar et al., 2024).

The research was conducted at SD Negeri Andungsari II Tiris Probolinggo, which was purposively selected because the school consistently implements various religious programs as part of its organizational culture. These programs

include congregational Dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, collective Qur'anic reading, and daily prayers before and after learning activities. Research participants consisted of the principal, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, other teachers, students, and parents who were directly involved in the implementation of religious culture. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation (Supriyandi et al., 2025). Interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding the planning, implementation, and management of religious culture programs, while observations were used to examine religious activities in their natural setting. Documentation was employed to support and complement the data through school records, photographs, and other relevant documents.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and focusing information relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the organized data were presented systematically in narrative form to facilitate interpretation and understanding (Asasiyah et al., 2025). The final stage involved verifying findings and drawing conclusions based on recurring patterns and relationships identified throughout the analysis process. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, source triangulation and method triangulation were applied by comparing information obtained from different participants and data collection techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

School Context

The research was conducted at SD Negeri Andungsari II Tiris Probolinggo, an elementary school that emphasizes the development of students' religious character through various religious habituation programs. Religious values are integrated into daily school activities and reflected in students' interactions with teachers and peers. Students are accustomed to greeting teachers politely, showing respect, and practicing positive behaviors in the school environment.

Although the school does not have a mosque or prayer room, religious activities are routinely carried out in classrooms. These activities include congregational Dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, Qur'anic reading, and prayers before and after lessons. Religious habituation has become part of the daily school routine and involves the participation of teachers and students.

Planning of Religious Organizational Culture

The planning of religious organizational culture was carried out through meetings involving the principal, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and classroom teachers. These meetings were conducted at the beginning of the academic year to determine religious programs that would be implemented throughout the school year.

The planned programs included congregational Dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, Qur'anic reading activities, and prayers before and after learning. The planning process was also based on observations of student discipline and attendance, particularly issues related to tardiness. Through these meetings, schedules and implementation procedures for religious activities were established and communicated to teachers and students. Activity schedules were displayed in classrooms to facilitate implementation.

Organizing Religious Organizational Culture

The organization of religious organizational culture involved the distribution of responsibilities among school personnel. The principal acted as the policy maker and supervisor of program implementation. Islamic Religious Education teachers were assigned as coordinators responsible for organizing and monitoring religious activities.

Classroom teachers assisted in supervising students during daily activities, while students participated as the main implementers of the programs. Students from higher grades were also given responsibilities to lead certain activities according to a predetermined schedule. This organizational structure enabled the implementation of religious activities to run systematically and continuously.

Implementation of Religious Organizational Culture

The implementation of religious organizational culture was carried out through routine daily activities. Every morning before classroom learning began, students participated in congregational Dhuha prayer. The activity was conducted at approximately 07.00 a.m. and involved all students under the guidance of teachers.



Figure 1. Documentation of students participating in congregational Dhuha prayer as part of the daily religious culture program.

Figure 1 shows students participating in congregational Dhuha prayer before the learning activities begin. The two photographs illustrate male and female students performing the prayer together under the supervision of teachers. This activity is conducted routinely every morning as part of the school's religious culture program and involves all students in developing religious habits and discipline.

Following the Dhuha prayer, students recited Asmaul Husna together. The activity was led by students according to a rotating schedule, particularly students from Grades IV, V, and VI. Teachers supervised and guided the implementation of the activity.

Students then continued with Qur'anic reading activities. Students who were able to read the Qur'an participated in collective recitation, while lower-grade students who had not yet mastered Qur'anic reading recited short surahs and daily prayers. Teachers provided assistance and guidance throughout the activity.



Figure 2. Documentation of students participating in collective Qur'anic reading activities before classroom learning begins.

Figure 2 shows students participating in collective Qur'anic reading activities before classroom instruction begins. The photograph illustrates students reading the Qur'an together in the classroom under the guidance of teachers. This activity is conducted regularly to improve students' Qur'anic reading skills and to strengthen their familiarity with religious practices as part of the school's daily routine.

The implementation of religious culture also involved disciplinary measures. Students who arrived late were required to perform additional prayer cycles and complete memorization tasks. Teachers consistently monitored student participation and attendance during religious activities.

In addition to daily activities, the school conducted periodic religious programs, including Istighosah activities held every Jumat Legi and commemorations of Islamic holy days. Students actively participated in these activities alongside teachers and school staff.

Information obtained from parents indicated changes in students' daily habits. Parents reported that students became more accustomed to waking up early, arriving at school on time, reciting Asmaul Husna, reading the Qur'an, and demonstrating more respectful behavior at home and in social interactions.

Evaluation of Religious Organizational Culture

Evaluation of religious organizational culture was conducted continuously through observation of students' attitudes and participation in religious activities. The principal monitored student discipline, prayer habits, and daily behavior within the school environment.

Teachers observed students during religious activities and recorded their participation and progress. Particular attention was given to students' punctuality, involvement in prayer activities, Qur'anic reading abilities, and respectful behavior toward teachers and guests.

The evaluation process identified several positive developments among students, including improved discipline, increased participation in religious activities, greater familiarity with Asmaul Husna, and more consistent Qur'anic reading practices. Students were also observed greeting visitors politely and demonstrating respectful behavior in daily interactions.

The evaluation also identified several challenges. Some students did not consistently participate in activities, some forgot to bring their Qur'an, and several students still experienced difficulties in reading the Qur'an. Teachers addressed these issues through supervision, guidance, and follow-up assistance. Family habits and varying levels of parental support were also reported as factors influencing students' consistency in practicing religious habits outside school.

Overall, evaluation activities were conducted through observation, monitoring, and reflection on the implementation of religious programs to ensure that religious habituation activities continued to be carried out regularly within the school environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the management of religious organizational culture development at SD Negeri Andungsari II was implemented through four interconnected management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. The planning stage involved the principal, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and classroom teachers in designing religious programs and determining implementation strategies. This finding is consistent with the view that the development of religious culture in schools is closely related to the principal's managerial functions, including planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating programs that support the habituation of religious values (Nasrullah et al., 2023). The results confirm that the success of religious culture development is strongly influenced by the principal's ability to coordinate stakeholders and integrate religious values into school programs. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the relevance of educational management theory in explaining how religious culture can be systematically developed through effective managerial practices within educational institutions.

The organizing stage revealed a clear distribution of roles among school members, where the principal acted as the policy maker and supervisor, teachers functioned as coordinators and facilitators, and students became the primary actors in implementing religious activities. This finding supports the view that organizational effectiveness is influenced by the clarity of responsibilities and coordination among organizational members. Compared with previous studies that generally emphasize the role of school leaders in religious culture development, this study demonstrates that the involvement of all school stakeholders contributes significantly to program sustainability. Practically, this finding implies that schools seeking to strengthen religious culture should establish a well-defined organizational structure that encourages collaboration and collective responsibility among principals, teachers, and students.

The implementation stage showed that religious organizational culture was actualized through continuous habituation activities, including congregational Dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, Qur'anic reading, and other religious programs. These activities were carried out routinely and integrated into students' daily lives. This finding is in line with the perspective of Ngainun Naim, who states that religious values are manifested through their

application in everyday life rather than merely being taught conceptually (Rohimah, 2024). Likewise, Muhaimin argues that religious culture in educational institutions is formed through a process of internalizing religious values through habituation (Taja et al., 2021). The findings of this study strengthen these arguments by providing empirical evidence that regular and structured religious activities can facilitate the internalization of religious values and transform them into observable behaviors among students. From a practical perspective, the study demonstrates that religious habituation programs can serve as an effective strategy for character education when implemented consistently and supported by teachers' guidance and supervision.

The evaluation stage revealed that schools continuously monitored students' participation, discipline, and behavioral development through observation and reflection (Rabbani et al., 2024). The evaluation results were used to identify challenges, such as inconsistent participation, limited family support, and difficulties in Qur'anic reading, as well as to formulate follow-up actions. These findings reflect the implementation of the controlling function within George R. Terry's POAC management framework, indicating that evaluation serves not only as a measurement tool but also as a mechanism for continuous improvement (Najiyah & Prayogi, 2023). Theoretically, this finding extends the application of management theory within the context of religious culture development by demonstrating that evaluation contributes significantly to maintaining program effectiveness and sustainability. Practically, it suggests that schools should establish systematic monitoring mechanisms to ensure that religious culture programs remain relevant and responsive to students' developmental needs (Supriyandi et al., 2025; Wasehudin et al., 2024).

Another important finding of this study is that religious organizational culture contributes significantly to the development of students' character, particularly in terms of religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and respectful behavior (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024). Students demonstrated greater punctuality, commitment to religious practices, and positive interactions with teachers and peers. These findings are consistent with the concept of character education proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which emphasizes the importance of values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, social awareness, and moral behavior in educational settings (Cahyanto et al., 2025). However, unlike previous studies that often discuss religious culture primarily from a spiritual perspective, this study reveals that religious organizational culture also plays an important role in strengthening students' social and behavioral character. This finding highlights the multidimensional impact of religious culture on both spiritual and social aspects of student development.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of educational management functions and character education outcomes within the framework of religious organizational culture development in an elementary school context. While previous studies have generally examined religious culture, school management, or character education separately, this study demonstrates how the four management functions operate simultaneously to facilitate the internalization of religious values and character formation. Therefore, this research contributes theoretically by enriching the discourse on educational management and religious culture through an integrated management-character framework. Practically, it provides a model that can be adopted by other schools seeking to strengthen students' character through systematic religious culture development. The study further contributes empirical evidence that effective management of religious organizational culture can create a sustainable educational environment that supports both spiritual growth and character development in accordance with the goals of national education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the systematic implementation of religious organizational culture management through the functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC) plays a significant role in strengthening students' character development at SD Negeri Andungsari II Tiris Probolinggo. The most important finding is that the consistent habituation of religious activities, supported by effective school management, teacher role modeling, and stakeholder involvement, enables the internalization of religious values that are reflected in students' discipline, responsibility, politeness, and religious behavior. These findings provide a theoretical contribution by enriching the discourse on educational management and character education through demonstrating how religious organizational culture serves as a practical mechanism for character formation in elementary schools. In addition, the study contributes empirical evidence that the integration of management functions and religious habituation can create a sustainable educational environment that supports both spiritual and character development. However, this research is limited to a single-school case study and primarily focuses on observable behavioral outcomes, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore recommended to involve multiple schools with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, employ longitudinal approaches to examine the long-term impact of religious culture programs, and explore the influence of family and community factors on the sustainability of students' character development.

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