

*Regular Research Article*

# The Strategy of Ethics Education as a Means of Student Character Building: A Case Study at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro

## Abstract

The integration of character education is very important for developing students' ethical values despite challenges from family backgrounds and the influence of digital media. This descriptive qualitative study examines ethical education strategies at Muhammadiyah 1 Metro High School through participatory observation, interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, and documentation analysis. The research reveals that effective character building occurs through three integrated approaches: (1) systematic religious activities including prayers and tahafidzm programs, (2) development of social responsibility through clean Fridays and fundraising activities, and (3) consistent modeling of ethical behavior by teachers. These findings indicate that sustainable character education requires instilling ethical values in everyday school culture beyond formal instruction, with successful implementation depending on school-family collaboration and digital literacy initiatives. This study provides educators and policymakers with evidence-based strategies for implementing comprehensive character education programs, offering a replicable framework for building an ethical foundation in contemporary students.

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## 1. Introduction

Metro City is a city that has a vision of a City of Education, this vision is reinforced by the number of schools in the city. Metro City is one of the cities with the highest number of students in Lampung Province. In addition to being the City of Education, Metro City also has cultural diversity from various tribes and different customs. Since the Dutch colonial era, Metro City is a city that has a higher educational civilization. Metro City was a fragment of Central Lampung Regency in 2000, where Metro City became the center of government at that time. After the division, Metro City became one of the cities that became an educational destination for people in Lampung Province. Many educational institutions in Metro City are filled by people who live outside Metro City. Therefore, many migrants want to study in Metro City because it is considered to have a better quality of education than other district cities.

The decline in ethical values among today's youth has become a significant problem caused by uncontrolled promiscuity. The high rate of juvenile delinquency in schools creates a bad image for the world of education [1], where teenagers engage in disturbing acts such as gang fights, drug use, and other crimes. School fights are often triggered by trivial matters such as romantic problems or violence between students [2]. Promiscuity, which has long existed in various places [3], is driven by factors such as the existence of communities/gangs, inappropriate use of digital technology, alcohol consumption, and promiscuity [4]. Promiscuity is a form of deviant behavior that exceeds the limits of norms and rules [5], so that children are no longer obedient and respectful to their parents; they prefer to hang out outside the home rather than being close to their parents. Advances in communication technology also have negative effects, such as a decline in Generation Z's interest in reading and an increased risk of involvement in deviant relationships [6]. Therefore, parents have an important role in providing understanding and support so that adolescents can grow up in a healthy and positive manner [7].

The development of social media, smartphones and the internet, which are the daily activities of adolescents today, has had a major influence on one's ethics. The freedom to use digital technology has both positive and negative impacts on brain development and behavior. Technology as an extension tool of human capabilities, not 'shackling' our own behavior and lifestyle. Every innovation comes with an impact, both positive and negative, on human life [8]. The current generation has started to use digital technology for daily needs such as online shopping, making creativity videos, creating skills and others. Every innovation is designed to make a useful contribution to various activities in life [9].

The formation of ethics in schools is a challenge for every educator and stake holder in the school. Some of the deviant actions previously described above also affect the behavior of students at school. At SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro there are also students who are affected so that teaching ethics to students requires patience and process. Although they are heading towards adulthood, getting used to something good is a problem faced by teachers [10]. It is still found in schools that students are late for school, lazy in learning and worship and so on. It is necessary to create a culture or habit that can change the attitudes and bad habits of students for the better. In addition, the role of the family as a partner of teachers in shaping students' character needs to be improved in guiding and directing to positive actions. Students who experience problems cannot be separated from family problems so that parents have an obligation to monitor their children's activities at home [11].

Ethical education can also be influenced by family education. Family is the main education for a child at home, they will learn a lot about life. Parents are the first example for children, a place where children begin to imitate the behavior they see from parents [12]. Parents have an important role in shaping adolescent character. The decline in adolescent character is influenced by several factors such as broken homes, economic factors and promiscuity. A family environment that is not ideal, such as a broken home family, household breakdown due to the death of one of the parents, constant conflict, or economic difficulties, can be a trigger factor for juvenile delinquency [13]. Families have an important role in educating their children to become a great generation and ready to face the challenges of the times. The family will be great if the family has a good education for their children at home.

This study aims to describe the strategy of ethics education in shaping student character at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro. The discussion will include an understanding of the meaning of character education, factors of character formation, the role of Islamic religious education in character formation, mental formation of children, educating student morals, preparing a superior generation. This journal is expected to contribute to educators, educational institutions, and policy makers in preparing a superior generation with character.

## 2. Literature review

Ethics education is an effort to shape the character of students through a process of guidance, teaching, and habituation aimed at ensuring that students have a clear conscience and are able to

demonstrate good behavior in their words, actions, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and work based on religious values, norms, and morals [14]. Ethics plays an important role for every individual, especially Generation Z, who are developing alongside technological advances, becoming accustomed to open access to information and able to adapt to the values offered by this openness [15]. The dominant role of technology in this generation has a positive impact [16].

The formation of ethics is influenced by internal and external factors, where internal factors originate from the family environment, which is very important in supporting the formation of a child's character [17]. A harmonious family provides positive energy for a child's development because it is the initial and most important environment in the process of personality formation [18]. Meanwhile, external factors originate from the environment outside the family, which plays a role in influencing changes in children's morals [19]. Islamic Religious Education has an important role in shaping children's personalities and morals, because religious teenagers will behave well [20], [21]. Therefore, ethics education is an urgent need that must be implemented in a structured manner in schools, especially at Muhammadiyah 1 Metro High School.

### 3. Methods

This research was conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro using a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it is considered capable of providing an in-depth description of the strategy of ethics education in shaping character and preparing a superior generation. The subjects in this study include principals, teachers, and students who are directly involved in the implementation of ethics education in the school environment. The researcher conducted participatory observation by directly observing learning activities in the classroom, religious activities such as Dhuha and Zuhur prayers in congregation, tahfidz programs, social activities such as Clean Friday, and daily interactions of school residents that reflect the practice of ethical values.

In addition to observation, data collection was also conducted through in-depth interviews with the school principal, several teachers and students to gather information on the strategies, practices and challenges faced in implementing ethics education. The interviews were conducted directly with an open-ended question guide tailored to the role of each informant. Additional data were obtained through documentation techniques, namely by reviewing school documents such as syllabi, student work programs, and student character activity reports. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The entire analysis process was carried out systematically to obtain a complete understanding of the implementation of ethics education in the context of the formation of superior generation at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro, it was found that ethical education has been implemented systematically and integrated in learning activities and non-academic activities. The results of this study are presented in several main points as follows:

#### 4.1. Implementation of Ethics Education at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro

Ethics education is not only taught formally through subjects such as Islamic Religious Education and Civics, but also informally through extracurricular activities, religious activities, and daily school culture. The school implements values such as discipline, responsibility, courtesy, honesty, and social care. Some programs that support this implementation include:

Duha prayer activities are carried out to increase obedience and devotion to God Almighty. With duha prayer activities, students will be taught how a student gets closer to Allah SWT. The religious character formed through the habituation of dhuha prayer in congregation includes various values, one of which is honesty. This value is seen when students who come to the madrasa have not done

ablution, consciously take the initiative to do ablution first, considering that ablution is one of the valid requirements in carrying out prayer [22]. Duha prayer activities are carried out in the morning before learning activities are carried out.

The students have gone to the place of worship in an orderly and neat manner after the entrance bell is rung. This activity is carried out to improve ethical values because students have approached the creator. Then the students perform zuhur prayers in congregation with the intention of increasing devotion to Allah SWT and it is an obligation for every Muslim to perform zuhur prayers at school. Through these religious activities, students can be better prepared to face various challenges in the world, able to distinguish between right and wrong, and get closer to Allah. In addition, they learn to respect each other and foster compassion, which ultimately helps them to be well accepted in the community. [11]. The activities of duha prayer and zholat zuhur in schools are expected to build a Muslim person who has faith and devotion so that a Muslim person who obeys Allah SWT will be realized.



Figure 1. Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers in congregation every day

The school program carried out in the formation of noble character is the tahfidz program. The tahfidz program is carried out before starting the first hour of learning by involving tahfidz teachers. This program is carried out to improve students' understanding in learning the verses of the Qur'an. The students are also taught how to read and understand the verses of the Qur'an so that they can be applied in everyday life. Qur'an tahfidz activities in schools play a role in shaping the character of students to have a deep love for the Qur'an, maintain its sanctity, and give birth to a generation that grows as ahlul Qur'an [23]. With the habituation of reading al qur'an verses through the tahfidz program, it is expected to be able to form good character and avoid bad character. Students who diligently read the Qur'an will avoid the temptation of the devil who can affect the human soul at any time. The students' psychology will be well maintained if they always read the Qur'an because their hearts and feelings will be well directed. Activities carried out in addition to tahfidz are fostering noble character, these activities are carried out to foster and guide students to have good character. The formation of character will be achieved if coaching is carried out continuously and continuously by making a gradual schedule.



Figure 2. Tahfidz program and noble character development

The activities programmed by SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro in the context of shaping character are clean Friday activities. This activity aims to form a spirit of mutual cooperation and cooperation in an effort to create love for cleanliness. Based on various studies related to the application, cultivation, and development of character through school culture, the Clean Friday program which is carried out regularly according to the schedule at school can make a positive contribution to the formation of student character. Therefore, the school needs to continue to support the program components through well-designed planning. As students in Muhammadiyah schools, they should love cleanliness and care for the environment.

Clean Friday activities can realize students' personal good character because they will always care about the environment that is not clean and tidy. In addition to these activities, SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro also implements social fundraising activities to help others. Social fundraising is conducted once a week to all students in the school. The students are withdrawn funds according to their sincerity because this activity is voluntary. The funds that have been collected are then distributed to those in need both for internal schools and the surrounding environment. The character of social care is one of the important values that need to be instilled today, considering that social care is starting to decrease, especially among students. This can be seen from various problems that arise, such as quarrels, bullying actions, and other negative behaviors [24].



Figure 3. Clean Friday activities and social fundraising

#### 4.2. The Role of Teachers and the School Environment

Teachers play an active role as role models in shaping students' character. From the interviews, it is known that teachers consistently instill ethical values in daily interactions in the classroom. A teacher with good character has great potential to shape students who have better character as well [25]. Principals also emphasize the importance of habituation and exemplification as the main methods in character building. A religious, clean, and orderly school environment also supports a conducive learning atmosphere for student character building.

#### 4.3. The Impact of Ethics Education on the Formation of a Superior Generation

Ethics education that is implemented in a sustainable manner is proven to have a positive influence on the development of student character. This can be seen from:

- Increased student discipline and responsibility, both in academic assignments and other school activities.
- The emergence of social care and empathy, especially through social activities that directly involve students.
- Improved academic and non-academic achievements, as a reflection of positive character traits such as hard work, self-confidence, and a spirit of healthy competition

According to the documentation, students who are active in the character-building program also tend to show improvement in grade point average as well as involvement in organizations and city-level competitions.

#### 4.4. Obstacles and efforts to overcome them

The strategy of ethics education that was carried out experienced challenges and obstacles that

did not always go well. Some of the obstacles faced by schools in implementing ethical education include:

- Students' family backgrounds that are less supportive of positive habituation at home.
- The challenge of social media influences that are not in line with ethical values.
- Student associations that are not fully controlled properly, especially when students return home from school.

To overcome this, the school collaborates with parents through activities such as parenting, supervision related to children's habits at home and providing digital literacy coaching so that students can sort out good information.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on research conducted at Muhammadiyah 1 Metro High School, this study shows that ethics education can be effectively implemented through the systematic integration of religious, social, and character-building activities. The findings reveal that the multi-faceted school successfully shaped students' character through daily congregational prayers (Dhuha and Zuhur), the Al-Qur'an memorization program, Friday clean-up activities, and social fundraising. These practices created a structured routine that instilled discipline, honesty, social responsibility, and environmental awareness in students. This research proves that teachers play an important role as character models through consistent exemplary ethical behavior in daily classroom interactions, demonstrating that effective character building occurs when ethical education is integrated into the daily school culture, not limited to formal instruction.

This study identifies practices including diverse family backgrounds, the influence of social media, and social circles that can undermine character development efforts. However, a collaborative approach between schools and parents through important programs and digital literacy training is an effective response to these contemporary challenges. This research provides evidence-based strategies for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers who wish to implement comprehensive character education programs. The integration model demonstrated at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro highlights the importance of ongoing commitment, systematic implementation, and collaboration between the school and family environments to successfully build students with a strong ethical foundation to face the complex challenges faced by the contemporary youth generation.

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**Ethical Compliance:** This research involved human participants including school principals, teachers, and students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro. All research procedures were carried out in accordance with ethical principles and obtained proper approval from the school and participants. The research methodology respects academic integrity and scientific objectivity in examining the implementation of ethical education for the formation of students' character. Confidentiality and participant rights were maintained throughout the study, and no procedures posed a potential harm or risk to participants.

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