



Character development of students through *aqidah akhlak* education: Insights from muhammadiyah educational institutions

a,¹Mufida Nidaul Azzahra, a,²Sutarman*

^a Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia
Corresponding author's email: sutarman17@pai.uad.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

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The background to this research is that many students often commit behavioral deviations and experience declining moral values in Indonesia. This research aims to explore the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education in developing student character at SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Yogyakarta. Qualitative methods with a descriptive approach were used to collect data through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results of the research show that the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education has succeeded in influencing the development of student's character, supported by a school environment that facilitates religious programs such as Duha prayers and congregational prayers. Aqidah Akhlak teachers play an important role in an effective learning process. Supporting factors include the teacher's role as a role model in behavior and action. In contrast, inhibiting factors include students' disharmonious family conditions, the influence of gadgets, and the challenges of mentoring teenagers who tend to be exploratory.

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Introduction

The era of globalization and the rapid development of technology and information is evident all around us. Technological advancements have a significant impact on culture, traditions, as well as the attitudes and character of society. These effects can be both positive and negative. One group significantly affected by the negative impacts is the younger generation, who are the future of the nation. Negative effects can become more serious, potentially leading to students becoming overly dependent on the digital world, especially if they lack a skeptical and critical attitude toward new developments. (Jamun, 2013). It is the responsibility of parents, educators, and the government to address these negative impacts. One effective approach is character development through education.

Education involves three aspects: the individual, the society or national community in which the

individual is situated, and all tangible factors, both material and spiritual, that influence the development of character, destiny, and the form of both individuals and society. (Nurkholis, 2013). Education is a deliberate and planned effort to create a learning environment where students are actively encouraged to develop their potential, including spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, moral values, and skills necessary for personal, social, and national interests. (Abd Rahman, 2022). One branch of Islamic education is *Aqidah Akhlak*. *Aqidah Akhlak* is a component of Islamic education that emphasizes the affective aspect, focusing on the internalization of divine and human values in students. This approach does not solely concentrate on theoretical cognitive issues but also aims to transform the cognitive knowledge of *Aqidah Akhlak* into meaningful insights that can be internalized and applied in behavior and attitudes.

The *Aqidah Akhlak* education provided by schools is a potential medium for character development and improving students' academic quality. *Aqidah Akhlak* is a subject designed to support the development of faith, piety, and moral character in students, tailored to their needs, potential, talents, and interests through activities specifically organized by educators and/or school staff with the appropriate skills and authority. It is hoped that the *Aqidah Akhlak* subject will enhance students' abilities, social responsibility, potential, and achievements. (Sy Syarifuddin, 2014). Success in *Aqidah Akhlak* education is measured across three domains: affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. One of the values of Islamic education conveyed through *Aqidah Akhlak* lessons at school, is subject to various challenges in practice. These challenges include students occasionally showing a lack of appreciation for school activities, sometimes accompanied by inappropriate and disruptive behavior. Using appropriate teaching methods can be a solution to foster more effective educational interactions in the learning process.

In this study, the researcher is interested in examining the Character Development of Students through *Aqidah Akhlak* Education: Insights from Muhammadiyah Educational Institutions at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School in Yogyakarta. This interest arose from the researcher's observation at the school, where several phenomena revealed that many students still exhibit behavioral and character deviations. The students have not yet met the criteria for good moral conduct and have limited experience in *Aqidah Akhlak* education. For instance, numerous students are disrespectful to teachers, inattentive during lessons, frequently late to school, and whose behavior does not reflect religious values. Although *Aqidah Akhlak* education at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School is not the sole factor in shaping students' character and personality, it significantly motivates students to apply religious values (tauhid) and commendable morals in their daily lives as an integral part of religious education.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, where the researcher aims to reveal data and

facts according to the conditions observed in the field. Qualitative research is a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or verbal words from various sources. The data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Subsequently, the researcher describes various scientific phenomena observed in the field. The research location chosen is Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School in Yogyakarta. Data validation used the triangulation technique and validation process during data collection through (1) data reduction from interview, observation, and documentation, (2) displaying data, then (3) conclusion and verification to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2015).

Result and Discussion

Result

In the process of character development, character building is one of the key components. Character building can be defined as the development of values, morals, ethics, and personality traits aimed at enhancing students' ability to make good or bad decisions, uphold positive qualities, and wholeheartedly implement these virtues in daily life. Character building is defined as an effort to improve a person's traits or behavior to make them better. It can be said that character building is a conscious, planned, directed, and systematic process, whether formal or informal, aimed at developing and enhancing the quality of character. (Andi Astitah, 2022).

Based on the research conducted on the implementation of *Aqidah Akhlak* education at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School in Yogyakarta, the process has been running smoothly through both learning and habituation at the school. The objective of *Aqidah Akhlak's* education at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School is to build students' character by Islamic values. In this process, teachers employ various approaches to shape students' character. One of the approaches implemented is the effective opening and closing of lessons. Teachers begin and end lessons with greetings, collective prayers, motivational messages, and appreciation for students' achievements. This helps in fostering discipline and positive attitudes among students. Additionally, teachers use engaging teaching methods to ensure that students understand the material and develop good character. One such method is the use of discussions and video presentations, which help make students more active and interested in learning. The implementation of *Aqidah Akhlak* education is also supported by several programs and routines in Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School of Yogyakarta, including:

1. **Congregational Dhuha Prayer:** This program helps build students' discipline as they regularly perform the Dhuha prayer together.

2. **There are five habits, namely: Smile, Greet, Salute, and Be Polite:** This culture is implemented to cultivate courteous behavior among students, both in interactions with their peers and with teachers.
3. **Friday Morning Study Sessions:** Every Friday, a study session is held after the Dhuha prayer, aimed at enhancing students' Islamic knowledge and teaching noble character.

The implementation of *Aqidah Akhlak* education in character development at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School in Yogyakarta has significant benefits, particularly in shaping students' character and morals. Character encompasses values related to the relationship with God, oneself, others, the environment, and actions based on religious norms, etiquette, culture, and customs. At Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School, students are encouraged to become disciplined, responsible individuals and to build a strong foundation of faith. According to Tri Suryani, the school principal, the benefits of implementing *Aqidah Akhlak* education include enhancing moral and ethical standards, improving religious character, developing noble character, and increasing discipline.

In addition to its benefits, the implementation of *Aqidah Akhlak* education at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School in Yogyakarta also involves both supporting and hindering factors. **Supporting factors** include the active role of teachers in guiding students, as noted by Muadzir who teaches *Aqidah Akhlak*. Additionally, the school's environment and routines, such as the regular practice of Dhuha prayer, mandatory congregational prayers, and the promotion of good manners, support character development, as mentioned by Principal Tri Suryani. **Hindering factors** include the typical desire for freedom during adolescence, the influence of peer interactions outside school, family conditions, and the impact of gadgets. Understanding these factors allows for targeted efforts to enhance the effectiveness of character development at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School in Yogyakarta.

Discussion

1. *Aqidah Akhlak* Education

Education is a process of human resource development aimed at achieving optimal social skills and individual growth, fostering strong relationships between individuals and their society and environment. Education is a process of "humanizing humanity," where individuals are expected to understand themselves, others, their environment, nature, and culture. In the simple and general sense, education means the effort to cultivate and develop both physical and spiritual potential in individuals according to societal and cultural values. Education and culture are interrelated and mutually advancing. (Abd Rahman, 2022).

In general, *Aqidah* refers to deep and true belief, faith, and conviction that is then manifested in one's actions. In Islam, *Aqidah* specifically means full belief in the Oneness of Allah

SWT, acknowledging that Allah is the supreme authority who governs everything in the universe. Aqidah can be likened to the foundation of a building, meaning it must be established before other parts. Here, the "building" refers to a correct, comprehensive, and perfect practice of Islam. (Amin, 2021). When discussing Aqidah, it is inseparable from Akhlak. Akhlak represents the manifestation of one's Aqidah; it is a trait ingrained within a person that leads to certain spontaneous actions without deliberation. Additionally, Akhlak can be defined as a stable personality within an individual that serves as the source of specific spontaneous behaviors. From this description, it is clear that Aqidah and Akhlak are an inseparable unity. Aqidah is the foundation of strong Akhlak. With a good Aqidah or belief, there will be a corresponding self-awareness to adhere to positive Akhlak values. Conversely, if a person has a poor Aqidah, their Akhlak values will also be negative.

2. The purpose of Aqidah Akhlak

Aqidah Akhlak plays a crucial role in encouraging students to study and practice their faith by developing good moral habits and avoiding bad behavior in their daily lives. Al-Akhlak Al-Karimah is essential for students to learn and integrate into their personal, social, and national lives. This is particularly important for addressing the challenges posed by globalization and various issues affecting a country, especially Indonesia. The objectives of the Aqidah Akhlak subject are:

1. Fostering the growth of knowledge, understanding, practice, habituation, and experiences related to Islamic principles to help students become Muslims who continuously develop their faith and piety towards Allah SWT.
2. As a manifestation of Islamic teachings and principles, creating noble individuals and avoiding reprehensible behavior in daily life, both in personal and social contexts. (KMA, 2014)

3. Character Building

Character building is defined as a deliberate and well-planned educational effort, whether formal or informal, that aims to foster, guide, and develop a balanced, comprehensive personality foundation, in harmony with one's knowledge and skills according to their talents and abilities. (Manan, 2017; Sutarman, et.al., 2022). Character development is a learning process aimed at developing and enhancing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve the abilities of individuals or groups. This development is not limited to the family and school

environments; it can occur anywhere. In schools, character development can be carried out through positive activities as well as through the implementation of subjects.

In his book *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali defines character as a trait deeply ingrained in the soul from which actions naturally arise without the need for deliberate consideration. (Tohidi, 2017). The character represents human behavioral values related to God, oneself, others, the environment, and the nation. These values manifest in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, speech, and actions, based on religious norms, laws, etiquette, culture, and customs. To have good character means not only to be a competent individual but also to contribute positively to society in terms of justice, equal rights, and mutual respect. From this definition, it can be concluded that character refers to attitudes, behaviors, motivations, and skills. It also includes the desire to do one's best, concern for well-being, honesty, responsibility, and good moral values.

4. Objectives and Functions of Character Building

The primary objective of character building is to ensure that individuals behave well and are intelligent. In Islamic history, the Prophet Muhammad SAW also emphasized that his main mission was to educate people to strive for good character. (Abdul Majid, 2013). The functions of character building are as follows:

1. To develop fundamental potential to have a good heart, positive mindset, and good behavior.
2. To strengthen and build the multicultural behavior of the nation.
3. To enhance the nation's civilization to be competitive in the global arena. Character building is implemented through various media, including family, educational institutions, civil society, political communities, the business world, and mass media.

Character building is carried out through various channels, including family, educational institutions, civil society, political communities, the business world, and the media.

Conclusion

The implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education in character development is crucial for addressing the impacts of globalization and technological advancements. According to research conducted at Muhammadiyah 4 Senior High School Yogyakarta, it can be concluded that the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education has a positive impact on shaping students' character. Various methods and programs, such as interactive learning, regular congregational prayers, and religious study activities, help strengthen character development at the school. The importance of Aqidah Akhlak education as an integral part of Islamic education lies in its aim to cultivate individuals who are faithful, pious, and of noble character. Furthermore, character development is

described as a conscious and planned process aimed at nurturing positive values within individuals. The goal of character development through Aqidah Akhlak education is to produce individuals with good, strong, and noble personalities by holistically developing students' potential in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

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