

Research Article

The Role of the Tahfidz Extracurricular Program in Fostering Character Education at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the tahfidz extracurricular activities at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo, aiming to maintain the memorization of students who already had a foundation before entering the school. This study aims to: (1) describe character education through tahfidz extracurricular activities; and (2) analyze the purpose of implementing tahfidz extracurricular activities at the school. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with the study conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo, Sukoharjo District, Sukoharjo Regency. The research was conducted on January until February 2025. Data collection techniques include interviews, documentation, and observation. The results of the study indicate that: (1) The tahfidz extracurricular activities can foster character education continuously and dynamically, shaping positive habits in students; and (2) In an effort to maintain memorization through tahfidz extracurricular activities, the school strives to create an effective schedule and methods so that students can participate without obstacles, providing a positive influence on the development of students' character.

Keywords: Tahfidz Extracurricular; Cultivating; Character Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Human character is partly shaped by formal and informal education. The development of a complete human personality (character building) is greatly influenced by religious education and the internalization of religious beliefs by students. (Hakim et al., 2014) stated that parents have the responsibility to lay the foundations of religious education and that character education, besides helping to shape the morals of the nation's children, is expected to be a key factor in enhancing the dignity and status of the Indonesian people. Character education is the main goal of education at all levels promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The natural disposition given by God is the starting point for character formation, which subsequently shapes identity and behavior. Environmental factors have a significant influence on the education process, meaning that the identity and behavior of students are largely formed by their environment.

Education aims to make people more mature in thinking and behavior by changing behavior, expanding knowledge, and gaining life experiences. According to the above thinking, the purpose of education is to help each student reach their full potential in terms of knowledge, attitude, and ability so that they can live according to their aspirations and possess a positive personality. Besides knowledge, education also focuses on affective and psychomotor components. (Sofiasyari et al., 2019).

As stated in Article 3 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, national education functions to develop talents and shape cultured and characterful individuals in order to enlighten the life of the nation. The goal of national education is to create individuals who are faithful and pious to God Almighty, of noble character, healthy, educated, capable, creative, independent, and who develop into democratic and responsible citizens. Shaping individuals with a sense of nationalism and religious spirit is the goal of national education as stated in the law. To achieve a faithful and pious society, education must be promoted. Islamic education, which draws wisdom from the Qur'an and Hadith, is one form of supplementary education. For children to grow and develop in a supportive, educated, capable, and moral environment, education requires the awareness of all parties involved in teaching one another and setting examples for students. Students' potential is developed based on their nature and the foundations they receive from organized learning, allowing them to live in harmony with their local and global communities. (Mutiar, 2023).

Character education is increasingly important in Indonesia's education system, along with various efforts to produce a new generation of students who are not only intellectually gifted but also possess strong morals and ethics. Raising the standard of character education is one of the main objectives in the development of the national curriculum. One of the main objectives of religious education, a form of character education, is to instill moral and spiritual values in students. The main goal of character education is to improve students' ability to live daily life by emphasizing morality, character, and etiquette. This education encompasses thought, behavior, and emotions in addition to intellectual growth. Character education encourages children to act morally, develop empathy, and learn to differentiate between good and harmful ideals. (Silvia Salsabila et al., 2024). Zubaedi (Swandar, 2017) Character education, sometimes referred to as moral education plus, essentially emphasizes the emotional (feelings/attitudes), cognitive (logical reasoning), and ability domains (skills, data processing, opinion expression, and cooperation). Through cooperation, honesty, discipline, and trust, this method aims to help children develop their nature and character by assisting them in internalizing societal values and ideas as moral strength in their lives. (Farida, 2016) argues that character education must be incorporated into the education system.

Character education, as expressed in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW, "Indeed, I was sent to perfect good character," is not something new in this era. In fact, moral education has been taught since the time of the Prophet. Based on these findings, we highlight the importance of character education in formal, informal, and non-formal environments. Given the moral ambiguity present both in the general society and educational institutions, character education becomes very important in the modern era. Moral reprimands include aspects such as children's respect for teachers, children's morals towards their peers, children's disobedience to laws, acts of violence, bullying, and even pornography. (Nasution, 2023). In Islam, character education is a conscious effort to help students understand, practice, and internalize ideas so that they can behave as complete human beings. Young people who receive character education tend to adhere more to religious values, respect the traditions of other religions, and live peacefully alongside followers of other religions. (Ahmad Firmansyah & Annur, 2022)

Implementing and maximizing the character education process from an early age is essential from primary school. Humans possess good potential from birth, but it needs to be nurtured and developed through socialization at home, school, and in the community. In this era of globalization, both adults and children have broad access to the latest technology. Technology is used in education because it greatly aids the learning process and the advancement of knowledge. Additionally, technology facilitates communication between educators and students. However, there are both benefits and drawbacks to using technology in the classroom. (Annisa et al., 2020)

A significant shift in the morals of the current generation, particularly among the youth and students, has begun to occur. Therefore, almost all parents and educators in Indonesia agree that character education is an essential component of education. Education is a deliberate and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to possess spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills required by themselves, society, the nation, and the state, in accordance with Law No. 20 of 2003 Chapter 1 Article 1 Paragraph 1 on the National Education System. Islamic education, based on Islamic teachings, seeks to develop each person's potential to the fullest, both in community life and personal life. (Muslim et al., 2021). It appears that today's education primarily aims to impart knowledge to enhance brain intelligence and technological skills. However, often neglected are the moral and spiritual intelligence that leads to extraordinary behavioral changes according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. As a result, the ethics and morals of students can gradually deteriorate. This statement aligns with Sudarsono's assertion, as quoted by Soedijarto, that although education produces intelligent individuals, it also causes them to lose integrity and humility (Mukti et al., 2023).

Each school uses different approaches to address urgent issues related to the formation of children's religious character. One form of moral guidance that educational institutions can undertake to foster religious character is through extracurricular activities, which are conducted outside of lesson hours to help students shape, guide, and direct their morals to avoid negative influences. (Rahmah Maulina et al., 2024). Extracurricular activities are conducted at school or outside school during times other than face-to-face learning to enhance and broaden knowledge and skills gained from various subjects. It is hoped that through extracurricular activities, particularly tahfidz (Quran memorization) extracurriculars, students' understanding, especially of religious teachings, will improve. Furthermore, these activities are intended to complement the education process at school and support the realization of effective learning outcomes and strategies. Additionally, through religious learning, utilizing extracurricular religious activities contributes to the growth of students'

faith and piety to Allah SWT (Surur, 2018).

Extracurricular activities are activities carried out at school or outside of school during times other than face-to-face learning sessions, with the aim of enhancing and broadening the knowledge and skills acquired in various classes. It is expected that through extracurricular activities, especially the Tahfidz extracurricular program, students' understanding—particularly regarding religious teachings—will be improved. In addition, extracurricular activities also aim to support the educational process taking place in schools and to help realize the concepts and approaches developed as tangible outcomes of the learning process. Furthermore, through religious education, the utilization of religious extracurricular activities can contribute to the growth of students' faith and devotion to Allah SWT. (Pratiwi, 2023)

Every school activity contains educational components and holds the power to shape students' personalities. An example of this is memorizing the Qur'an, which is categorized as an extracurricular activity. The objective of the Tahfidz Al-Qur'an curriculum is for students to internalize the principles of the Qur'an they have learned in order to develop their character, beyond merely memorizing and reading its text. The Tahfidz Al-Qur'an curriculum not only teaches students to read and memorize the Qur'an, but also encourages them to become more obedient and disciplined so that their behavior aligns with the values of the Qur'an. (Umj. Z et al., 1970). Based on the Law Number 20 of 2003, extracurricular activities are activities that provide benefits to students and can have a positive impact on each school. By shaping a dignified national character and civilization, national education functions to "develop students' potential to become individuals who believe in the One and Only God, are noble in character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible democratic citizens." (Fitrianingsih & Janattaka, 2020)

A person's aspirations and character are greatly influenced by their memorization of the Qur'an. Early memorization of the Qur'an helps improve reading, memory skills, and understanding of Islamic teachings. Through this approach, students will be better prepared to absorb the moral and ethical lessons found in the Qur'an, such as responsibility, tolerance, and integrity. With a strong religious foundation, individuals can grow in character and use it as a guide when facing various challenges in life. (Mariyono, 2024). The Qur'an memorization program at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo has achieved most of its targets since it was first implemented in 2015. Over the course of three years, the memorization target was only thirty surahs. Some students were able to memorize many additional *juz* beyond *juz* 30. Therefore, this additional Tahfidz program has had a positive impact on students upon graduating from SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo. Being able to lead prayers is one of the many valuable lessons gained from the additional Qur'an memorization program.

"The Utilization of Extracurricular Activities to Improve Student Achievement" is the title of several recent studies. Djafri defines extracurricular activities as any form of school activities that are not part of the regular curriculum. These activities aim to assist students in mastering their subjects after completing formal education. To achieve the desired outcomes, the implementation of extracurricular activities must be well-managed. Siti Ubaidah defines the management of extracurricular activities as a comprehensive, organized, and planned process that includes school activities conducted outside the classroom and curriculum in order to optimize the students' human resource (HR) potential. This is carried out to help students maximize their HR potential, both in applying what they have learned and in further developing that potential. (Sundari, 2021)

One of the objectives of these activities is to help students build their character. At SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo, students receive character education alongside regular education. The aim of character education is to help students reach their full potential by fostering the development of specific traits that will enable them to become individuals who are beneficial to themselves and their environment. This activity aims to assist students in mastering their subjects after completing formal education. The implementation of extracurricular activities needs to be well-managed in order to achieve the expected outcomes. To maximize human resource (HR) potential, Siti Ubaidah defines the management of extracurricular activities as a comprehensive, planned, and structured process that includes school activities conducted outside the classroom and curriculum.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to examine the role of the tahfidz extracurricular activities in fostering character education at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomena occurring in the field, as well as insights into the processes, meanings,

and contexts of the tahfidz activities' implementation.

In this qualitative descriptive study, the tahfidz extracurricular program is factually depicted as a strategy used to promote character education at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo. The qualitative approach is a research methodology that collects descriptive data from written or spoken words of individuals and from their observable actions. The study was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo, located in Sukoharjo District, Sukoharjo Regency, at a specific time and place. SMK Muhammadiyah 1 also collaborates with the Baitul Hikmah boarding school in implementing the extracurricular activities. The study took place from January to February 2025, with the tahfidz extracurricular activities at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo serving as the main subject of the research. The data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with tahfidz instructors and several students to gather information about the objectives, implementation, and impact of the tahfidz activities on shaping students' character. Observations were carried out during the extracurricular activities to directly witness the tahfidz learning process and the interactions between instructors and students. Documentation was used to supplement the data, including activity schedules, tahfidz curriculum, and photos and videos of the activities.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was done by selecting data relevant to the research focus. The reduced data were then presented narratively to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on field findings, which were then compared with existing theories and previous studies. Data validity in this research was maintained through source and method triangulation techniques to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the obtained data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Character education is a deliberate and organized human effort to teach and enable students to develop their unique character qualities so that they become individuals who are beneficial to themselves and their environment. It can be said that character education and moral education are closely related. Moral education consistently seeks to train and develop people's abilities so that they can improve themselves and lead better lives. (Fajri Annur et al., 2021.)

John W. Santrock defines character education as direct teaching given to children to instill moral principles and teach them moral knowledge to prevent prohibited behavior (Annur et al., 2021). Arif Rohman, S.PdI, an Islamic religious teacher at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo, stated that educators have a responsibility to help students develop both morally and intellectually. Meanwhile, the company's Deputy Head of Public Relations believes that what is most important is that businesses need people with good morals and character in addition to those with knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is crucial for schools to adopt this character education program. Character education at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo also has goals, including both worldly and spiritual objectives. From a spiritual perspective, teachers can feel the difference between students who possess intelligence and those with good morals or character, allowing them to experience a sense of peace when seeing and interacting with well-mannered students. With this, religious teachers especially assess students subjectively, meaning that students who demonstrate good attitudes or character towards teachers and respect them will receive additional grades compared to those who are intelligent but lack morals and character. From a worldly perspective, character education is highly needed by companies. This is because companies not only require employees with superior skills or abilities but also those with character and morals.

The main supporting factor in character building at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo is the cooperation between parents and the school. This is because some parents do not accept when their children are reprimanded or given sanctions by their teachers, as seen in many cases between parents and teachers in news reports on television or social media. In such cases, some teachers prefer a peaceful approach or give appropriate warnings, while others maintain a consistent approach in educating students. Parents can express their disagreement to the teacher if they feel their child is being unfairly scolded. Generally, education functions to shape students into well-behaved, tolerant, moral, noble, and resilient individuals. Religious values, Pancasila, and culture must be taught to students to achieve these goals. Additionally, there are many examples of character development, such as perseverance, discipline, honesty, and tolerance.

A lack of character education will lead to a moral crisis, resulting in negative social behavior such as drug abuse, theft, child aggression, and promiscuity. According to Thomas Lickona, there are at least seven reasons why people should start

receiving character education from an early age. First, the only way to ensure that children become good adults is through character education. Second, this training can enhance children's academic performance. Third, some children cannot develop good morals elsewhere. Fourth, character education can create individuals who can live in a multicultural society and respect and appreciate others. Fifth, in an effort to address the root causes of moral-social problems, including aggression, rudeness, dishonesty, a lack of work ethic, and others. Sixth, character education is the most effective method to shape personal behavior before entering the commercial or work environment. Seventh, one way to instill cultural values that are important for the efforts of a civilization is through character education. Character education is crucial for everyone, as explained in this explanation. Therefore, parents and educators must continuously instill moral principles in their children.

SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo also holds a tahfidz extracurricular activity, which provides a significant opportunity for students with a foundation from Islamic boarding schools to continue and maintain their memorization of the Quran. Teachers record 10th-grade students who already have memorization to participate in the tahfidz extracurricular so that the memorization they already have is maintained. This tahfidz activity is conducted during class hours at 09:00, allowing students to request permission from their subject teachers to attend the tahfidz program. Initially, students participated in this extracurricular tahfidz activity well, but after advancing to 11th and 12th grades, they gradually dropped out since the tahfidz activity was not mandatory for those grades. Initially, there were 28 tahfidz students, but only 11 remained active, and by the final graduation, only 6 students passed. With the tahfidz extracurricular, teachers hope that students can maintain good morals with both teachers and peers. The challenge for students participating in the tahfidz activity is boredom, prompting teachers to take various measures to prevent it, such as organizing a tahfidz camp (tadabur alam) at the Tawangmangu boarding school. The characteristics of students who actively participate in tahfidz activities and those who do not are very different. Active students generally exhibit good behavior both inside and outside the classroom. This is because, indirectly, if students truly understand the content of the Quran, it is expected that they can practice it in their own lives and surroundings.

The dangers can take various forms, such as forgetfulness, unfulfilled dreams, difficult life circumstances like the death of parents, or even not receiving Allah's punishment despite knowing one has sinned. Becoming trapped by desires and similar activities is an example of the inability to maintain proper behavior. Unresolved conflicts with friends are another common issue that can disrupt focus and even cause memory loss. Jealousy from friends who have not memorized the Qur'an and the restrictions imposed on those who have memorized it—out of fear that their memorization might be lost—are two common causes of broken friendships. The psychological impacts of reading and memorizing the Qur'an include serving as a remedy for worry, anxiety, and stress; enhancing academic achievement and mental well-being, as well as spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intelligence; reducing juvenile delinquency and fights; gaining great honor from Allah and His Messenger; providing healing for those who read and memorize it; and strengthening faith and loyalty to Allah SWT. We would certainly be delighted to see or meet someone who memorizes the Qur'an before moving on to the next topic of conversation because they radiate a positive aura that distinguishes them from others. Based on this, why is memorizing the Qur'an important? What are the benefits of memorizing the Qur'an? According to Shaykh Ibn Baz, memorizing the Qur'an is considered "sunnah" (Darbi, 89906 Nurun 'alad Fatawa). However, it becomes a communal obligation (fardhu kifayah) for those committed to memorizing the Qur'an. Muslims are required to study the Qur'an; otherwise, they bear the sin (Al-Mawsu'ah Al-Fiqhiyyah, 17/325). In order for the verses of the Qur'an to enter the heart of a Muslim and assist them in remembering Allah SWT, the Prophet Muhammad SAW encouraged reciting and memorizing the Qur'an.

The goal of Quran education is to introduce, familiarize, and instill noble character in students so they grow into individuals who have faith and piety to Allah SWT. Finding the right place and time, being active, diligent, persistent, thorough, patient, consistent, focused, setting and achieving goals, memorizing during prayers, and adopting these traits as daily habits are several success factors in learning Tahfidz Al-Quran. (Hakim, 2014: 36–42). Some of the benefits of memorizing the Quran: First, you will become among the best of people. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The best of you are those who learn the Quran and teach it," as narrated by Uthman in a hadith reported by Bukhari. Second, you will receive intercession (shafa'ah). The Prophet also emphasized in a hadith narrated by Muslim that the Quran can assist its readers by providing intercession for them. Third, there are many benefits. Reading parts or verses that we have not memorized can bring great benefits to us, as reading even a single letter can bring ten blessings or rewards. Fourth, your desires will be fulfilled by Allah SWT. Another advantage of memorizing the Quran is that it allows a person to ask Allah

SWT for what they wish. According to a hadith narrated by Tirmidhi from Sa'id al-Khudri Ra, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Allah says, 'Whoever is preoccupied with the Quran and remembering Me, I will grant him more than what I give to those who ask, and the superiority of Allah's words over other words is like the superiority of Allah over His creation.'" Fifth, it is like a beautiful house. Memorizing the Quran will bring peace and beauty to the heart. This is also conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in a hadith narrated by Tirmidhi. "Indeed, a person whose soul does not contain anything from the Quran is like a ruined house," said the Messenger of Allah, as narrated by Ibn Abbas. Sixth, let your brilliance surpass the splendor of the sun. The splendor of the sun will be overshadowed by the radiant light of Muslims who remember the Quran. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "On the Day of Resurrection, those who learned and practiced the Quran will be adorned with a crown of light." Its brilliance will surpass the beauty of the sun's light. They will be wrapped in a crown and a robe on the seventh day. The final virtue of studying the Quran is the crown and robe of honor and the pleasure of Allah. This signifies a high regard for those who memorize the Quran.

4. CONCLUSION

The Tahfidz extracurricular program at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sukoharjo plays a significant role in fostering students' character education. Through Quran memorization activities, students not only develop their spiritual abilities but also cultivate positive character traits such as discipline, responsibility, patience, and honesty. This learning approach, based on Quranic values, effectively builds students' integrity and morality, creating a religious and conducive school environment for the development of noble character. To ensure that the Tahfidz extracurricular program continues to have a positive impact, the school needs to provide more optimal support, such as improving facilities, offering competent mentors, and recognizing high-achieving students. Additionally, involving parents in the Tahfidz learning process is essential to strengthen character education within the family environment, ensuring that the positive values taught at school continue to be applied in students' daily lives.

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