

OPTIMIZING CHARACTER EDUCATION BASED ON THE HADITH OF RASULULLAH SAW AT SDIT KHAIRUR RAHMAN MEDAN

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Abstract

Character education plays an important role in shaping the young generation who will determine the direction and success of the nation's development in the future. This study aims to analyze how the strategy of internalizing the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW shapes the character of students at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the optimization of character education is carried out through three main strategies: daily hadith habits, teacher role models, and curriculum integration. This strategy has succeeded in instilling character values such as honesty, patience, responsibility, compassion, independence and discipline which are also taken from the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Keywords: Character Education, Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Islamic Elementary School.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia, which has spanned several decades since its independence, has predominantly emphasized the cognitive dimension, aiming to produce intelligent, skilled, and proficient individuals. However, this focus has potentially led to the emergence of individuals with compromised personality and integrity. It is not surprising that dishonesty, the manipulation of fake degrees, corruption, greed, collusion, nepotism, ethnic unrest, murder, and a series of other incidents consistently dominate the news in this country. The education sector in Indonesia is currently grappling with a complex crisis. Beneath brilliant academic achievements and magnificent facilities lies a fundamental problem: a decline in moral values (Nurjaman, 2025).

A recent report by Ipsos, which addresses the most pressing global issues, indicates that Indonesia is the country most concerned about corruption. This survey

was conducted among over 25,000 participants aged 16 to 74 in 29 countries worldwide between January 24 and February 7, 2025 (Yonatan, 2025). Witnessing events that reflect declining morals and the loss of ethical conduct and character has prompted us to seek ways and solutions to improve character values in this nation. Education, in general, plays a crucial role in character development and individual growth (Nasution et al., 2018). Character education is a fundamental element in shaping an excellent national generation, not only in terms of intellect but also morality and spirituality. Amidst contemporary challenges, Islamic educational institutions are expected to be the primary foundation for instilling noble values, especially from the basic education level. Quality education is recognized as one of the key instruments for realizing Indonesia's vision as an advanced nation with strong character. The urgency of character education within the context of Islamic education is also emphasized by Komalasari & Yakubu (2023).

The importance of Islam-based character education, particularly for early childhood, has been widely discussed in the literature (Muslim, 2017). The implementation of character education reinforcement programs, especially in Islamic Religious Education, is a significant focus (Lubis, 2018). Nevertheless, the actual implementation of character education in Indonesia still faces various challenges. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2023 indicates that over 30% of ethical violations at the elementary school level involve bullying and a lack of respect for teachers. There is a mismatch between the concepts taught and the reality on the ground. This phenomenon is known in character education literature as the 'knowing-doing gap,' where students may know good values but fail to apply them in their daily behavior (Arthur et al., 2019). Moral challenges, including the issue of corruption among the younger generation, demand a responsive approach to character education (David Muhammad et al., 2023). This problem is exacerbated by findings that the implementation of character education is often hampered by a lack of role models from educators. From the perspective of educators, research by Nasution et al. (2022) highlights issues where many teachers lack the skills and creativity to develop engaging learning media, leading to student boredom. According to research by Fadillah & Ramadhani (2019), teachers' competency in using digital technology remains low, especially regarding inadequate training and limited supporting infrastructure. This prevents digital technology from being fully integrated into the learning process effectively in various schools, including MTs Muhammadiyah 15 Medan Deli, which is the focus of the study by Ruslan Muhammad et al. (2025). External factors, such as a lack of family support or understanding, can hinder the application of values taught at school (Chairunnisa et al., 2023). The enhancement of character education in elementary school students is crucial in facing the global technological era (Rohila, 2023). Islamic Religious Education plays a fundamental role in building student character and

strengthening morals amidst various contemporary challenges (Afifuddin, 2022). Therefore, synergy among family, school, and community is vital for successful character formation. The role of parents is equally important in shaping the character of elementary school-aged children, as outlined by Pratiwi et al. (2023).

Issues and resolutions within the cluster of Islamic education have been a central concern in recent research (Rochim, 2024). In an effort to address this moral crisis, SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan has adopted the Hadiths of Rasulullah SAW as its primary approach. Islam, as a religion of mercy to all worlds (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), possesses a rich source of moral and ethical values. This approach leverages the power of narrative and storytelling, which psychologically form the foundation for individual identity and moral understanding (McAdams, 2001). More than just rules, the Hadiths of Rasulullah SAW offer a distinct and comprehensive value framework for moral education within the Islamic tradition (Halstead, 2007).

The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of the character education model that makes the hadith of the Prophet PBUH the main source of value in elementary formal education institutions (SDIT). The focus of this research is on an integrative character education optimization strategy—combining habituation, example, and curriculum—as well as identifying the direct impact of internalizing specific hadiths on students' daily behavior. This study is very important considering the urgency of building strong character in the midst of increasingly complex moral and digitalization challenges, so it is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of relevant and sustainable character education models in Indonesia. This approach is expected to instill moral values more deeply due to its high historical, emotional, and religious significance for students. Therefore, this research aims to examine the optimization strategies of character education based on the Hadiths of Rasulullah SAW at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because its primary objective is to understand and describe the phenomenon of Hadith-based character education in a deep, rich, and holistic manner within its natural context at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan. The main strength of the qualitative descriptive approach lies in its ability to present a comprehensive summary of an event in everyday terms, remaining faithful to the data, and capturing the nuances from the participants' perspectives (Sandelowski, 2000). In other words, this approach allows the researcher to paint a complete picture of "what" and "how" these strategies are implemented, without being constrained by a rigid theoretical framework from the outset.

The research was conducted at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan, an Islamic educational institution that consciously integrates Hadith values into its education. Data

collection was carried out using three primary techniques—observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation—applied simultaneously as a form of methodological triangulation. The use of triangulation is not merely about combining data but is a fundamental strategy for enhancing the credibility and validity of findings through cross-verification (Patton, 2015).

1. Participant Observation: The researcher directly observed the learning process, teacher-student interactions, and habituation activities to capture real behaviors and non-verbal contexts that might not be revealed through interviews.
2. In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Head of Educational Quality to explore perspectives, meanings, and understandings regarding the optimization strategies of Hadith-based character education.
3. Documentation: Analysis was performed on relevant documents such as curricula, lesson plans, student handbooks, and school records to understand the formal framework underlying practices in the field.

Data analysis in this research adopted the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which is a systematic approach to managing and interpreting qualitative data. This analysis process involved three concurrent streams of activity:

1. Data Reduction: This stage involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from field notes and interview transcripts. In this study, reduction was carried out by identifying and coding data relevant to the implementation strategies and impact on character.
2. Data Display: The reduced data were then organized into matrices, charts, or networks. This allowed the researcher to clearly see emerging patterns, relationships, and themes, for instance, by mapping the connections between the Hadiths taught, teacher delivery methods, and observed student behavior.
3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: From the outset of the research, the researcher began to draw provisional conclusions, which were then continuously tested, debated, and verified with new data iteratively. This process ensured that the final conclusions were truly robust, accountable, and firmly rooted in the empirical evidence collected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan, a dialogue with the Head of Educational Quality at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan revealed that, "From its very inception, this school has branded itself as a character education school. This is one of the underlying reasons for its establishment, where its founder – Mr. H. Zulman – hoped that this school would prioritize character education in its learning." It was found that Hadith-based character education is implemented integratively and has a significant impact on student behavior. The implementation model and character formation outcomes can be described as follows:

1. Hadith-Based Character Education Implementation Strategies

The application of character education at SDIT Khairur Rahman is not limited to religious subjects but is integrated into all aspects of school life through three main strategies. This approach aligns with modern character education perspectives that emphasize the importance of a holistic and comprehensive approach.

a. Daily Hadith Habituation

This strategy is realized through daily activities where students are regularly encouraged to memorize and understand the meaning of selected Hadiths. This process is more than just knowledge transfer; it is a conscious effort to build moral habituation. Its pedagogical foundation is consistent with Aristotelian virtue ethics, which views character as a collection of virtues acquired through repeated practice until they become second nature. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017), a leading research institution, asserts that character is not only taught but also must be caught and sought through consistent practice. This aligns with research by Aulia Dinda & Pasaribu Munawir (2025) which found that consistently implemented school culture is very effective in shaping students' religious character. Phenomenological studies also show that student character formation can be effective through prayer habituation (Purwanto et al., 2024).

By repeatedly reciting Hadiths about honesty, patience, or cleanliness, the school actively forms neural pathways in students' brains, ultimately leading to automaticity or the automatization of moral responses. This means that in certain situations, students are expected to respond ethically intuitively, rather than through burdensome conscious deliberation (Lapsley & Yeager, 2013). Thus, daily habituation is a method to transform normative knowledge from Hadith into ingrained moral reflexes.

b. Teacher Role Modeling

Teachers play a central role as figures for students' behavioral reference in daily life. The role of teachers is very important in the world of education because, in addition to being required to provide character education and be good character examples for their students, teachers also play a role in transferring knowledge to students (Annisa Nurul et al., 2020). This strategy is based on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which states that humans learn efficiently through observation. However, the process is more complex than mere imitation. Students engage in observational learning, where they pay attention, retain, reproduce, and are motivated to imitate teacher behavior.

When a teacher demonstrates patience when dealing with struggling students, or shows honesty when admitting a mistake, students don't just see an action. They see how Hadith values are applied in real-life contexts, complete with accompanying emotional responses. Teachers become a living "moral compass" in the classroom (Pike, 2020), making abstract moral concepts concrete, understandable, and most importantly, achievable. This role modeling provides concrete evidence to students that the values they memorize are not utopian ideals but can be practiced in everyday life.

Research from UMSU also emphasizes the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping student character in the school environment, not only as instructors but also as role models, guides, and inspirations (Syifa Isnaini et al., 2024).

c. Value Integration

Character values from Hadith are integrated into all subjects, including those outside of religious studies. This strategy is an implementation of the whole-school approach and aligns with how the Qur'an Hadith subject is implemented in the 2013 Curriculum, covering planning, implementation, and assessment (Abrianto et al., 2018), which aims to avoid "compartmentalized morality"—i.e., the notion that ethics are only relevant during religious lessons. By integrating Hadith values into various subjects, the school demonstrates the universality and relevance of these values. The CTL (Contextual Teaching and Learning) model approach is also used to implement character education in mathematics subjects in elementary schools (Puspita et al., 2019). The implementation of character education, especially in Pancasila learning in elementary schools, has been a focus of study.

For instance, the Hadith about amanah (trustworthiness) can be discussed in science class when addressing the importance of research data integrity. Hadiths about compassion for living beings can be integrated into IPAS (Science and Social Studies) lessons. This "infusion" approach, where moral values are woven into the fabric of the curriculum, has proven significantly more effective in forming a coherent moral worldview compared to teaching them as isolated subjects (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). Other studies show the relevance of value integration in various subjects, such as the integration of maritime knowledge into the Civics curriculum as a multidisciplinary approach to national character building (David Muhammad et al., 2024). This helps students understand that being a Muslim with noble character is relevant in every aspect of life, whether they are calculating, reading, or experimenting.

2. Strengthening Student Character through Hadith Value Internalization

The effectiveness of internalizing these Hadith values is evident in the measurable and observable transformation of student behavior. This confirms that Hadith not only functions as normative texts but also as powerful pedagogical tools when connected to students' concrete experiences. This positive impact is consistent with research by Fazlurrahman & H. M. N. (2024) who found that learning short Hadiths linked to daily practices is effective in instilling character values.

a. Formation of Patience Character (Hadith on Prohibiting Anger)

The internalization of the Hadith, "لَا تَغْضَبْ وَلَكَ الْجَنَّةُ" (Don't be angry, and paradise will be yours) (HR. Tabrani), provides students with strong cognitive understanding and spiritual motivation. The promise of "paradise" as a reward for controlling anger transforms students' perception from merely suppressing emotions to an act of high spiritual value. Practically, students learn to pause before reacting during conflicts, for example, when disagreeing with a friend. They are trained to choose calmer responses

because they understand the awaiting reward. Consequently, they not only become more patient individuals but also actively contribute to creating a peaceful school environment, as conflicts between friends tend to decrease and are resolved more constructively. This aligns with research in emotion regulation, which shows that cognitive reappraisal is a very effective strategy for managing negative emotions (Gross, 2015). Motivationally, the promise of "paradise" serves as a strong external incentive, which gradually internalizes into intrinsic motivation to become a patient person. As a result, students not only learn to restrain anger but are consciously able to control emotions in difficult situations, which directly reduces conflicts among friends and builds a more peaceful school climate.

b. Formation of Honesty Character (Hadith on Honesty)

The application of the Hadith, "عَلَيْكُمْ بِالصِّدْقِ فَإِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ إِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ" (Be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to paradise) (HR. Bukhari and Muslim), enables students to gain a deep metaphorical understanding of the importance of being an honest person. This foundation helps students understand that honesty is not just ordinary speech but a primary foundation in forming noble character and a path to Allah SWT's pleasure. This understanding cultivates an awareness that every word spoken carries moral and spiritual responsibility. This is reflected in their habit of being truthful in various situations, both at school and at home. The honest character that develops in students not only strengthens their relationships with others but also reflects their closeness to the true values of Islam. This concept aligns with Vygotsky's "scaffolding" theory of learning, where noble values like honesty become an initial support that helps students develop a deeper moral understanding. The courage to speak the truth, even when difficult, shows the successful internalization of honesty values as a provision for a life pleasing to Allah and guiding them on the path of goodness leading to paradise.

c. Formation of Cleanliness Character (Hadith on Cleanliness)

The Hadith, "الطُّهُورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ" (Purity is half of faith) (HR. Muslim), effectively connects a physical act (purification) with a fundamental spiritual concept (faith). This connection elevates the status of cleanliness from merely a health matter to a reflection of one's quality of faith. As a result, students become more motivated to maintain personal hygiene and their surrounding environment as an expression of faith. This change is clearly visible in daily habits such as regularly washing hands, ensuring clothes remain clean, and tidying desks and study spaces without being prompted. This healthy and clean lifestyle is built naturally and consistently from an early age. Research by Schnall et al. (2008) suggests that physical cleanliness can lead to more lenient moral judgments, indicating a two-way relationship between cleanliness and morality. By making cleanliness a part of faith, students are motivated to maintain personal and environmental cleanliness not only for health reasons but as an expression of piety. This

is seen in the habits of washing hands, maintaining tidiness, and a healthy lifestyle developed from an early age.

d. Formation of Learning Enthusiasm Character (Hadith on Seeking Knowledge)

In this regard, SDIT Khairur Rahman has the spirit to make students have a passion for knowledge and civility. When the Hadith, "طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ" (Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim) (HR. Ibn Majah), is internalized, the act of learning changes its meaning for students. Learning is no longer viewed as a boring school assignment but as a sacred "obligation" equivalent to worship. This understanding fosters intrinsic motivation and high enthusiasm within them. A sense of responsibility to excel also grows, not out of fear of punishment, but out of awareness to fulfill their religious duty. This is evident in the increased activeness of students in class; they are more courageous in asking questions, enjoy reading, and actively participate in discussions to deepen their knowledge. According to Damon (2008), education that instills a sense of purpose in life can dramatically increase student engagement and resilience in learning. This is proven at SDIT Khairur Rahman, where students show greater enthusiasm, cultivate a sense of responsibility to achieve, and become more active in asking questions, reading, and discussing as a form of fulfilling this obligation.

e. Formation of Compassion and Empathy Character (Hadith on Compassion)

The Hadith, "مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ" (Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy) (HR. Bukhari and Muslim), teaches a concept of reciprocity that is easily understood by children. They learn that to receive compassion, they must first give it. This simple logic encourages them to empathize and put themselves in others' shoes. As a result, a genuine sense of care for others emerges, whether towards parents, teachers, or friends. Their behavior becomes softer, they are more willing to help, and consciously avoid actions that could hurt others' feelings, thereby creating a warm and supportive social climate in the school environment. Extensive research by Eisenberg & Miller (1987) has confirmed the strong relationship between empathy and the tendency to engage in prosocial behavior. As a result, students become more affectionate towards parents, teachers, and friends, and show a gentler attitude, less inclined to hurt others.

Overall, based on research conducted at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan, the main findings indicate that strengthening character education based on the hadith of the Prophet PBUH is carried out integratively through three main strategies: daily habituation of hadith, examples from teachers, and curriculum integration. This strategy succeeds in instilling essential character values such as honesty, patience, responsibility, compassion, independence, and discipline which are directly sourced from the hadiths of the Prophet PBUH.

CONCLUSION

In this digital age, the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping student character is increasingly relevant (Siregar, 2023). Islamic education plays a vital role in forming an excellent younger generation (Widya Ningsih, 2025). Hadith-based character education at SDIT Khairur Rahman Medan has been successfully implemented through a synergistic, integrative method. This method does not operate in isolation but combines three reinforcing pillars:

1. Daily Hadith Habituation: Students regularly memorize and understand selected Hadiths to repetitively instill values.
2. Teacher Role Modeling: Educators serve as living behavior models, reflecting noble Hadith values in daily interactions.
3. Curriculum Integration: Hadith values are not only taught in religious subjects but are also integrated into all other subjects to ensure their continuous relevance.

The synergy of these three pillars ensures that character education comprehensively addresses moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. This integrative approach proves highly relevant and effective in shaping students' personalities holistically, encompassing moral, spiritual, and social aspects.

Specifically, this research demonstrates that the internalization of selected Hadiths—such as those concerning prohibiting anger, cleanliness, honesty, compassion, and seeking knowledge—directly forms fundamental character traits. Among the characters successfully instilled are honesty, patience, responsibility, compassion, tolerance, discipline, and social empathy. Hadith, with its historical and spiritual power, proves to serve as a moral compass guiding students in the digital era. Thus, this educational model holds significant potential in shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also morally and spiritually strong.

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