

DEVELOPING RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN FOSTERING STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The research objectives are to describe the process of developing religious culture in fostering students' spiritual intelligence. To find out the forms of developing religious culture in developing students' spiritual intelligence. To describe the factors that influence the development of religious culture in developing students' spiritual intelligence. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research type. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique uses the interactive Miles, Huberman, and Saldana method with the steps of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion the process of developing religious culture through internalization, socialization, and enculturation. Forms of developing religious culture include: religious climate, religious habituation, and a culture of smiling greetings. Factors supporting the development of religious culture at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung are going well, with support from schools, parents, and the environment. However, inhibiting factors remain unresolved due to limited facilities and infrastructure.

Keywords: Religious Culture, Spiritual Intelligence, Developing

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INTRODUCTION

The pervasive moral decline across various societal levels in contemporary times has raised profound concerns in education. The persistence of systemic corruption, coupled with escalating instances of substance abuse, brawls among youth, promiscuity, unwanted pregnancies, and violent crimes, highlights a deepening crisis of values. If left unaddressed, these destructive behavioral patterns risk becoming normalized within broader social norms, systematically eroding the nation's core values. These socio-moral pathologies have sparked widespread skepticism regarding the pedagogical effectiveness and institutional relevance of religious education, leading many to critique it as inadequate in

mitigating character degradation. Consequently, there is an urgent need to systematically integrate religious culture within formal schooling, establishing structural mechanisms that guide student behavior both academically and socially. Schools, as front-line educational institutions, must continuously innovate their pedagogical strategies to meet stakeholder expectations and adapt to contemporary societal challenges.

The institutionalization of religious culture serves as an essential foundation for shaping students' mindsets, attitudes, and conduct, steering them toward moral integrity, responsibility, and nobility of character (Machfudz, 2020: 86; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Cultivating a religious atmosphere operates as a strategic medium to align educational objectives by integrating cognitive knowledge, practical skills, and ethical values into holistic personality development. Fostering a religious culture across all institutional tiers is paramount, as an enduring faith and ethical grounding thrive when deeply embedded within the educational milieu. Consequently, strategic initiatives to build a religious culture are crucial, as they directly shape student behavioral patterns (Abdullah, 2014: 45; Emmons, 2000a).

Mts Zainul Hasan Balung was selected as the research setting due to its sustained public trust and long-standing reputation since 1987 for preserving a strong religious culture. The institution integrates daily religious routines—such as Dhuha prayers before instructional hours, congregational Dhuhur prayers before dismissal, and the systematic practice of courteous greetings—with structured monthly activities, including teacher home visits (*anjangsana*), Tasbih prayers, Istighosah, and collective supplications. Annual events such as the 1st of Muharram bazaar and the Nuzulul Qur'an procession further reinforce this religious foundation.

Preliminary observations indicate that MTs Zainul Hasan Balung maintains a dual commitment to academic rigor and spiritual formation, recognizing that intellectual capacity without moral grounding (*akhlak*) is insufficient. Monthly *anjangsana* visits to students' homes foster strong parent-teacher partnerships while reinforcing positive character development. Given the vital role of religious culture in shaping spiritual intelligence, this study investigates "Developing Religious Culture in Fostering Students' Spiritual Intelligence at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach designed to investigate and interpret complex educational and social phenomena in their natural settings (Yusuf, 2017: 338). Specifically, a descriptive qualitative methodology was utilized to observe, document, and analyze facts and institutional dynamics systematically

without altering variables or testing formal statistical hypotheses. The primary subjects of this study were purposively selected to provide comprehensive perspectives, consisting of: (1) the Principal, (2) the Vice Principal of Student Affairs, (3) the Guidance and Counseling (BK) Teacher, (4) the Aqidah Akhlak Teacher, and (5) Representative Students from Grades VII, VIII, and IX.

Data collection relied on primary qualitative techniques: participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis (Samsu, 2017: 98). Participatory observation allowed the researcher to engage directly in daily school activities and evaluate the ongoing implementation of religious practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted across all selected key informants to obtain detailed qualitative insights regarding structural processes, institutional support, and spiritual formation strategies. Documentary analysis was concurrently conducted to corroborate verbal accounts with physical records, policy documents, and activity photos.

Data analysis followed the interactive framework outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014: 31), which comprises three continuous streams: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data condensation phase, raw field notes, interview transcripts, and collected documents were selected, focused, simplified, and transformed into thematic categories. The condensed data were structured into narratives, summaries, and tabular displays to present clear patterns. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through iterative cross-checks across the dataset.

To ensure data trustworthiness and rigorous qualitative validity, triangulation techniques were applied using both source triangulation and method triangulation (Samsu, 2017: 101). Source triangulation involved cross-verifying statements across multiple key informants (e.g., cross-referencing principal reports with student testimonies). Method triangulation was established by comparing observational data against interview transcripts and corroborating both with official institutional documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Process of Developing Religious Culture

The development of a religious culture at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung follows a systematic progression designed to internalize core values. According to the Principal, Sudarmono, the process begins by instilling foundational Islamic values and drawing moral principles from prophetic traditions. These values are communicated systematically to ensure sustained implementation and to help students adapt them to their broader social environments (Interview, November 24, 2022).

This structured approach is reinforced through continuous institutional guidance. Agus Salim, Vice Principal of Student Affairs, noted that building culture requires persistent reinforcement. School personnel regularly deliver brief admonitions and reminders about appropriate social conduct before daily dismissal, encouraging students to maintain ethical behavior beyond school grounds (Interview, November 24, 2022).

Furthermore, program evaluation plays a central role in maintaining these initiatives. Kunti, a Guidance and Counseling teacher, highlighted that monthly evaluation sessions are conducted specifically for religious activities to review progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure long-term program development (Interview, November 24, 2022).

Observational findings confirm that religious culture is fostered by modeling prophetic traditions, encouraging peer-to-peer socialization, and helping students apply these principles in their daily routines. The following documents the process of developing a religious culture.



Figure 1: Internalization



Figure 2: Socialization



Figure 3: Enculturation

In summary, the development process progresses sequentially through value internalization (shaping individual mindsets), socialization (reinforcing shared social norms within the school), and enculturation (embedding these practices into daily habits).

2. Structural Forms of Religious Culture Development

Data regarding the specific forms of religious culture at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung revealed three core components:

a. Religious Climate

Creating a supportive religious climate is central to cultivating spiritual intelligence. Nasim, an Aqidah Akhlak teacher, explained that daily instruction begins with collective Qur'anic recitation led by designated leaders. Additionally, monthly anjangsana visits include mobile recitation sessions (hafalan keliling) at students' homes, allowing parents to track their children's progress while highlighting the school's distinctive educational focus (Interview, May 28, 2022).

Observational data verify that daily routines begin with school-wide Qur'anic recitation broadcast from the campus mosque, supplemented by monthly Khatmil Qur'an sessions hosted at alternating student homes, as well as regular congregational Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers.



Figure 4: Teacher Duty Supervision



Figure 5: Collective Qur'an Recitation



Figure 6: Congregational Prayer

These practices create a supportive environment that encourages students to maintain daily devotional habits, such as reading the Qur'an and praying regularly, both at school and at home.

b. Religious Habituation

Habituation practices at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung are systematically embedded in daily routines. Kunti (Guidance and Counseling teacher) shared that students are required to remove their footwear before entering classrooms and use designated foot-washing stations. This practice reinforces the distinction between physical cleanliness and ritual purity (thaharah). Additionally, students stand when a teacher enters the room as a mark of respect for the educator's role in conveying knowledge (Interview, August 2, 2022).

Field observations confirm that students routinely stand to greet teachers upon arrival and utilize foot-washing stations to maintain classroom cleanliness and personal hygiene.



Figure 7: Teacher Welcome Routine



Figure 8: Foot Washing Station



Figure 9: Parent-Teacher Home Visit

These structured habits reinforce respect for educators, highlight the spiritual value of seeking blessings (*barakah*), and teach practical distinctions regarding cleanliness and ritual purity.

c. Culture of Smiling, Greeting, and Welcoming

The school community actively practices smiling, greeting, and welcoming everyone they encounter. Nasim noted that students are taught to initiate greetings accompanied by a smile whenever they meet a teacher (Interview, May 28, 2022). Field observations confirmed these practices occur consistently across both school grounds and external public settings.



Figure 10: Culture of Smiling, Greeting, and Welcoming

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, the culture of smiling, greeting, and welcoming at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung can accustom students to greeting their teachers and peers whenever they meet. These greetings often take the form of a peace greeting (salam), conveyed through a smile.

Based on interview results, observations, and documentation across the indicators above, it can be provisionally concluded that religious culture development includes a religious climate, religious habits such as mobile memorization through home visits (anjangsana), and a culture of smiling, greeting, and welcoming.

A conducive religious climate at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung helps students form the habit of reading the Quran and performing congregational prayers both inside and outside the madrasah. Furthermore, religious habits at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung accustom students to respect those who have educated and imparted knowledge to them, while fostering an awareness of the importance of spiritual blessings (barakah), demonstrated through respect for teachers.

Additionally, religious habits at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung encourage students to maintain cleanliness and recognize that what is considered clean is not necessarily ritually pure (suci). Finally, the culture of smiling, greeting, and welcoming habits encourages students to greet their teachers and peers upon meeting, with the greeting expressed through a peace greeting accompanied by a smile.

2. Factors Influencing the Development of Religious Culture

a. Supporting Factors

Developing a religious culture relies on active collaboration among all stakeholders. Sudarmono highlighted that school staff, parents, and community members work together harmoniously, as the institutional

programs deliver clear positive value (Interview, June 6, 2022). Observations showed that teachers actively participate in supervision duties, ranging from leading congregational prayers to checking dress code compliance before class entry.



Figure 11: Support from the School

Overall, school leadership, parental involvement, and community oversight work cohesively, with community members reporting student truancy if they observe students outside school grounds during school hours.

b. Inhibiting Factors

Key inhibiting factors relate primarily to physical infrastructure and scheduling. Sudarmono noted limitations in facility infrastructure and occasional scheduling conflicts (Interview, June 6, 2022). Field observations revealed that delays in the school transport van picking up students living far away occasionally shorten the time allocated for Dhuha prayers or overlap with the first period.



Figure 12: School Transport Vehicle



Figure 13: Learning the Qur'an

Based on interview results, observations, and documentation, the inhibiting factors affecting religious culture at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung include limited infrastructure and facilities. This significantly impacts school activities, ranging from the punctuality of school transport vehicles picking up students living far away so they can arrive on time for Dhuha prayer, to the sound system connecting audio from the mosque to each classroom. Furthermore, teachers are required to work hard to educate students who cannot read the Quran at all; in addition to extending working hours, this proves quite draining.

From the interview, observation, and documentation results across the indicators above, it can be provisionally concluded that three supporting factors at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung complement each other: support from the school, parents, and the environment. The environmental factor provides support by helping monitor students and promptly reporting to the school if any are found leaving campus.

Meanwhile, the inhibiting factor remains limited facilities and infrastructure, which heavily affect school activities—from the timeliness of school transport vehicles picking up distant students to ensure punctual attendance for Dhuha prayer, to the sound system transmitting audio from the mosque to every classroom. In addition, teachers must exert extra effort to instruct students with no prior ability to read the Quran, which requires additional time and demands considerable physical energy.

Table 1: Research Findings

1	The Process of Developing Religious Culture	The process begins with internalizing core values to shape students' cognitive perspectives on reality. This is followed by social habituation and rule adoption within the group, ultimately integrating into student enculturation.
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2	Forms of Developing Religious Culture	Key forms include a religious climate, structured religious habituation (such as home-based memorization via anjangsana), and a culture of smiling, greeting, and welcoming. These practices foster habits of Qur'anic reading, congregational prayer, respect for teachers, hygiene awareness, and polite social conduct.
3	Factors Influencing the Development of Religious Culture	Supporting factors include strong alignment among school staff, parents, and the surrounding community. Inhibiting factors center on limited infrastructure, transport delays affecting prayer schedules, audio distribution limitations, and the extra instruction required for students with low initial Qur'anic literacy.

Based on the findings above, this aligns with the theory presented by Aris Kurniawan (2020): Cultural development is the process of maintaining or enhancing community habits within developmental research that describes how culture and society change over time, influenced by global dynamics. The development process includes: 1. Internalization, 2. Socialization, and 3. Enculturation.

Furthermore, character building through structured habituation and environmental support in fostering positive social behaviors also aligns with the principles of character education program implementation (Hermawan & Azizah, 2023). Furthermore, the findings above are in line with the theory proposed by Haidar Putra Daulay (2019: 129), which states: Creating a strong religious atmosphere within the educational environment encompasses interpersonal interactions, attire, the school environment, and worship practices. Likewise, it aligns with the theory presented by Shaykh Umar bin Ahmad Baradja in the book *Akhlaq Lil Banin Volume 2* as follows:

وَمِنْ الْأَدَابِ مَعَ الْأُسْتَاذِ : أَنْ تَقُومَ لَهُ إِذَا كُنْتَ جَالِسًا , اخْتِزَامًا لَهُ
وَتَعْظِيمًا , وَلَا تَجْلِسُ حَتَّى يُأْذِنَ لَكَ بِالْجُلُوسِ

From which it can be concluded that part of the proper etiquette (adab) toward a teacher requires a person who is seated to immediately stand up upon meeting the teacher as an expression of respect and reverence (ta'dzim), and to refrain from sitting down again until the teacher permits to do so. Furthermore, Asmaun Sahlan (2009: 117) argues that, from a cultural perspective, smiling, greeting, and welcoming demonstrate that a community possesses peace, politeness, mutual consideration, tolerance, and respect.

Additionally, the findings regarding the supporting factors for developing a religious culture align with the theory proposed by Stephen Murgatroyd and Colin Morgan, as cited in Asmaun Sahlan (2009: 141): Efforts to realize a religious culture in schools or madrasahs will not run optimally without support from all school components, including the principal, teachers, students, and even the students' parents. In management terms, these stakeholders are referred to as internal educational customers.

Finally, the findings on the inhibiting factors in developing a religious culture are also consistent with the theory outlined by Ali Maksum (2016: 227–228): The rapidly expanding globalization of life, turning like a wheel and shaping global society, introduces modes of living that negatively impact the lives of Muslim communities.

CONCLUSION

First, the process of developing a religious culture at MTs Zainul Hasan Balung operates through three structured phases: internalization, socialization, and enculturation. Second, the primary forms of religious culture include a supportive religious climate, structured religious habituation, and a culture of smiling, greeting, and welcoming. These forms foster clear moral reasoning and reflective decision-making, confirming that the overall program for enhancing spiritual intelligence operated effectively during the 2022/2023 academic year. Third, supporting factors demonstrate strong alignment across school administration, parents, and the surrounding community. Conversely, inhibiting factors center on infrastructure limitations, transport logistics affecting schedule precision, and unresolved resource constraints.

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