Strengthening Youths’ Morals Through Character School

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Abstract
This study investigates the effectiveness of character schools (known as "sekolah karakter or sekuter") in instilling moral values in adolescents, particularly in the context of today's technology-driven world where children can easily access information independently, including content that may not be suitable for their age. Iqro Club is an institution dedicated to religious and social activities, providing a platform for positive engagement, skill development, and the cultivation of a respectful and virtuous Muslim identity among adolescents. The research problem addressed in this study revolves around understanding how character schools (sekuter) contribute to moral reinforcement in adolescents. The primary objective is to assess the practical implementation of moral strengthening through character schools (sekuter). This research adopts a qualitative approach, employing a case study research design, and is conducted at Iqro Club in Pekalongan Regency. Data collection methods encompass observation, interviews, and document analysis, while data analysis involves data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The study findings reveal three key stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. During the planning phase, Iqro Club formulates a tailored lesson plan and curriculum that align with the specific needs of adolescents. The implementation phase adheres to established standards, including opening procedures, Quran recitation, content delivery, discussions, and concluding activities. Importantly, the content and discussions are strategically designed to address moral indicators. Finally, in the evaluation phase, participants are required to complete a daily checklist to assess their progress and engagement in the character school program.

Keywords: Character school, iqro club, youth’s morals

Introduction
Humans have stages of growth from the womb, birth, children, adolescents, adults to old age. In general, human growth can be observed with the naked eye, for example, the growth of teeth, weight gain, etc. Meanwhile, human development takes place within the individual, for example, language development, changes in attitude, and behavior. Adolescence is characterized by the process of searching for self-identity, building relationships, and developing interest in finding out careers. (Amseke & Panis, 2020) Adolescence is often called
the period of strum (storm) and pressure (drang or stress), this period is known for uncontrolled emotions both internally and externally. Internally it can be known due to glandular changes and externally it can be known by the coercion of the surrounding environment in dealing with new situations. This period does not happen to all adolescents, but in general adolescents will face it with stable emotions to adapt to a new social environment and new community behavior. (Sofa Muthohar, 2013)

Adolescents need a supportive environment because when the environment understands the conditions of adolescents, the respect and possibility for adolescents to introduce themselves will increase, reducing the challenges and difficulties they face. In contrast to an environment that does not support them to develop, parents and teachers do not understand the challenges associated with the rapid changes that adolescents experience, and they believe that the situation cannot be improved. This is because there is no support, and many of the problems adolescents experience start because they are unable to solve their own problems, which leads to further problems. (Chairunnisa, 2020) As a result, adolescents are prone to moral decline.

At this time juvenile delinquency is not only increasing in number, but also increasing in the type of action, both delinquency in general (social delinquency) and individually (individual delinquency). The delinquency committed by these adolescents leads to actions that are negative and destructive, even criminal in nature, so that it has a negative impact that is very detrimental to society. (Syafrizal, 2017) Moral is a value that applies in a social environment and regulates a person's behavior, which means that morals are the benchmark used by society to determine whether human actions are good or bad as humans. Fellow humans have the right to judge the morals of other humans as good or bad based on behavior based on existing norms. (Nurmalisa & Adha, 2016)

Indicators of moral degradation are marked by the level of juvenile delinquency in the last three years. Based on data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), pornography and cyber crime cases reached 500-600 or around 16.37% of the total number of cases, such as cases of student brawls, violence in schools, online sexual crimes, pornography, and social media. (Rega Maradewa, 2020) Recently, a video was circulated containing a teenager doing indecent acts in a park in Pekalongan. The video shows a male teenager in a white shirt sitting on an iron swing while a female teenager wearing a hijab sits on the lap of the man in the white shirt. (Adelia, 2022)

According to Valkenburg and Piotrowski, the positive impact of social media use on adolescent moral development is sometimes underemphasized in today's digital world. This raises concerns about the adverse effects of modern technology on adolescents, such as involvement in immoral acts that violate norms of decency and decreased interest in socializing with the surrounding environment. According to Hasanah and Kumalasari, the use of mobile phones reduces adolescents' ability to meet face-to-face with peers in the real world, so they become more self-centered. As a result, virtues such as unity, dedication, and helpfulness decline, while selfishness and individualism flourish. (Amseke & Panis, 2020)

The growth of various moral deviations among adolescents is closely related to several influencing factors, namely First, the weak grip on religion which has formed a tradition that science can achieve anything. As a result, religious beliefs begin to fade, belief in Allah SWT only becomes a symbol, and prohibitions and orders are no longer obeyed. When a person's grip on religious teachings weakens, the controlling force within him is lost. The emergence of various moral deviations among teenagers is inseparable from various factors, among others: First, the loose grip on religion when it has become a tradition that everything can be achieved with science. This results in religious beliefs starting to be pushed aside, belief in Allah SWT is just a symbol, prohibitions and commandments are no longer heeded. The loosening of one's
grip on religious teachings, then the controlling force that is in him is lost. The emergence of various moral deviations among teenagers is inseparable from various factors, among others: First, the loose grip on religion when it has become a tradition that everything can be achieved with science. This results in religious beliefs starting to be pushed aside, belief in Allah SWT is just a symbol, prohibitions and commandments are no longer heeded. The loosening of one's grip on religious teachings, then the controlling force that is in him is lost. Second, there is a lack of effective moral development in households, schools and communities. The moral development of children has been done in a plenary manner, children are taught formulas about good and bad so that children are raised without knowing morals, not by instilling attitudes that are considered good to improve children's morals. The third factor is the spread of a materialistic, hedonistic and secularistic culture. (Audah Mannan, 2017)

Facing the impact of acts of moral degradation and even acts of violence caused by teenagers who are still trying to find their identity, in carrying out actions they are always carried away by emotions and do not think in advance about the impact that will be caused good or bad. In dealing with this, there needs to be many parties involved, both from the family, environment, school and government. Efforts to foster and develop adolescents continue to be improved in line with the ongoing national development process both in formal education, the family environment and the wider community, given that adolescents have the same position as part of the wider community who will one day become the successor of the nation. (Audah Mannan, 2017)

In the journal article written by Audah Mannan with the title "Moral Coaching in Shaping Youth Character", the similarity is the subject matter, discussing moral coaching and adolescents. The difference is in the research location. Then the journal article written by Syafrizal with the title "Development of Adolescent Morality in the Family (A Solution Religious Approach)" the similarity is on the subject matter, discussing morals and adolescents. The difference is the research location.

Based on the above statement, it can be concluded that there are several cases that show moral degradation in adolescents influenced by the environment and technology. Thus, there is a need for an activity to develop morals so that adolescents can have good morals. Character School (sekuter) is one of the activities organized by Iqro Club Pekalongan Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). This NGO is engaged in religious, social and youth character building under the auspices of the Department of Youth, Sports and Tourism of Pekalongan Regency. This NGO is one of the institutions in Pekalongan district with members and the target of its activities is the younger generation. In addition, this NGO also exists in competitions at the district and even provincial levels. This proves that the young generation of iqro club pekalongan is a young generation that is different from the current condition of the younger generation, where they are active in positive activities and able to excel.

Therefore, the author is interested in raising it in a research title "Moral Strengthening in Adolescents Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter)"). The purpose of this research is to find out how to strengthen the morals of adolescents through Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter) activities.

Method

The research methodology employed in this study adopts a qualitative approach, specifically utilizing the Retrospective Case Study research design. This research design allows for a comprehensive examination of a particular case, including the potential for follow-up actions aimed at its healing or improvement. Importantly, these healing actions are not necessarily conducted by the researcher alone but may involve other qualified individuals or
experts. The researcher's primary role is to offer insights and recommendations based on the findings of the research.

Data for this study were gathered through a combination of observation, interviews, and the collection of relevant documentation. These data collection methods were chosen to provide a well-rounded and holistic view of the case under investigation.

Subsequently, the data analysis process involved several key steps, including data reduction, which entails the organization and simplification of raw data, data presentation, where the findings are conveyed in a coherent and understandable manner, and conclusion drawing, which involves synthesizing the results to derive meaningful insights and recommendations.

In essence, this research methodology was carefully chosen to allow for a thorough exploration of the case in question, with the ultimate aim of contributing valuable input and recommendations for the case's healing or improvement, to be executed by experts or relevant stakeholders in the field. This collaborative approach ensures a comprehensive and effective response to the case's needs.

Results and Discussion

Character school activities are an activity carried out by Iqro Club with the aim of developing learning achievements, self-capacity and developing skills according to their potential, instilling Islamic values intensively in sekuter participants, as a means to form a polite and accomplished Muslim personality, with the target of adolescents. (Iqro Club, 2018)

The implementation of character schools (sekuter) in adolescents is one of the efforts to achieve the goal of increasing morals, in this case good morals. In adolescence, above the age of 10, children should already be aware that rules and laws are made by humans and when assessing an action, they consider the intention and also the consequences. (Santrock, 2011)

The implementation of Iqro Club Pekalongan District's character school (sekuter) activities consists of several stages, including:

Planning

The planning done by Iqro Club is to create a curriculum and learning plan. This planning is done as a reference for mentors in carrying out character school activities (sekuter). Learning plans and also the character school curriculum are packaged simply and not in the form of lesson plans or the like. (Iqro Club, 2018).

Implementation

Implementation is a process of activities carried out between mentors and sekuter participants. From the results of the research, the implementation of the character school has been good because it has been carried out routinely once a week for small groups and routinely once a month for the implementation of scooters for large or classical groups. The existence of this routine implementation makes teenagers in Pekalongan district have a positive agenda and becomes a place for them to learn and develop outside of school.

Opening

In the implementation of character schools, the opening is guided by the MC. The MC can be determined at the time of the activity or informed in advance to the person concerned well in advance of the event. Thus, they will learn public speaking at every meeting. This is in accordance with the purpose of character school (sekuter), which is to develop self-capacity and develop soft skills according to their potential.
Tilawah Al-quran

Every Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter) implementation has recitation of the Quran, either in classical or small groups. There are differences in each implementation. In classical groups, tilawah is done by appointing one person to recite the Koran, but in small groups tilawah is done by each participant. Thus, before they start the next agenda they first interact with the Quran. This is one way to always remember the creator.

Providing material or other agenda

The material is given to participants in accordance with the curriculum that has been made. In the implementation of the classical character school (sekuter), mentors use lecture, discussion and question and answer methods, besides that there are quizzes and 1 special session called the sensitive room, where character school participants express their hearts through writing and are collected to the mentor who provides the material at that time.

As for the small group, researchers found that they jogged together in Kajen square before the material. The material was delivered by the mentors during their break after jogging using the discussion method. The implementation in both groups, whether small group or classical, is good because it is in accordance with the standard implementation of the character school (sekuter).

Discussion

After the material was given, the discussion continued. Discussion in small groups is in the form of discussion about problems that exist around, problems experienced by participants individually, either in the form of problems at school or at home. After the participants convey their problems, the mentor directs them to find solutions together. Here there is openness between participants and mentors.

While the discussion carried out in the classical group was in the form of further discussion of the material that had previously been delivered by the mentor. Here, several participants were seen asking questions to the mentor regarding the material that had been discussed. Thus, the discussion here can be in the form of questions and answers about the material that has been delivered or about problems that exist around the community.

Closing

After the above series of events are carried out, the last is the closing. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the closing in the form of prayer led by the participant on duty, this applies to classical groups and small groups. After that, it ended with a group photo session.

Evaluation

Evaluation is carried out after the character school (sekuter) activities are completed. Evaluation can be done in 2 ways, namely using a checklist that has been provided by the mentor and using digital via whatsapp group. Evaluation is carried out periodically to find out how far the improvement of each target in character school participants (sekuter). If there is a decrease, find the cause and then find a solution. When the target has been carried out well and done repeatedly until it becomes a habit, additional targets are added.

A person's moral development is inseparable from three aspects, namely empathy, conscience and self-control.
Empathy

Empathy is a person's ability to put themselves in another person's position to understand and feel what others feel. Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted by researchers, the implementation of character schools already has materials that refer to the discussion of empathy. In addition, in every delivery of material or discussion mentors often mention or discuss empathy. Such as helping a friend in solving a problem, visiting a friend who is sick, providing support and encouragement when a disaster occurs.

In this case, character school participants get material related to empathy and in practice mentors have inserted empathy material in everyday life. Character school participants can learn about empathy through discussion and can apply it directly in their daily lives.

Conscience

Conscience can be an internal standard that a person has regarding what is capable and good to do and what is not capable, should not be done and is not good for him to do. The existence of a conscience makes a person consider the implementation of his desires. A teenager should be able to determine what is good and what is bad for him. Therefore, when a child gets a good environment and feels the benefits for his life, the child will develop well and be able to make choices to always be in goodness.

Self-control

Self-control is a person's ability to determine their behavior. Based on the results of observations and interviews, researchers found that the character school has a target, both worship, academic and moral targets for its participants. Where the targets are carried out by character school participants every day and periodic evaluations are carried out once a week. The self-control that exists in this character school aims to make participants better than before, in terms of worship, academics and morals. Self-control in character schools is in the form of a target checklist. Such as mandatory prayers, recitations, sunnah prayers, sunnah fasting, career paths, rankings at school, and how to dress according to Islamic teachings.

Based on research conducted by the author, moral reinforcement is carried out through three stages, namely planning, implementation and evaluation. Planning is done by preparing curriculum and lesson plans as a reference for mentors in carrying out activities. Implementation is carried out in several ways, namely opening, reciting the Koran, providing material or other agendas, discussion and closing. Furthermore, the evaluation is carried out by filling out the checklist provided by the mentor or by filling out a digital checklist through the WA Group, this evaluation helps mentors know the improvement of Character School participants in terms of morals and behavior. In a journal article written by Audah Mannan entitled "Moral Development in Shaping Adolescent Character (Case Study of Tuak Drinking Teenagers in Suli Village, Suli District, Luwu Regency)", there are four moral development methods, namely the exemplary method, habituation method, advice method and story method. The implementation of the character school in the discussion session also uses the advice method and story method, the implementation of the habituation method in the character school itself is to get used to reading the Koran before starting the activity, this can be a positive affirmation to start the activity.
Morals

The word moral comes from another word "mos" which means habit. The thing that humans must have is morals. In other words, morals are teachings about good and bad human actions and attitudes. Immanuel Kant expressed his opinion that morality is a matter of inner belief and attitude, not just an adjustment to rules that come from outside, derived from the rule of state law, religion or customs. In another sense, it is stated that morality is a law that has been written in the human heart to be carried out with full responsibility. In other words, a person has a strong will to carry out everything that is in the heart as an obligation. The criteria for a person's moral quality can be seen from his loyalty to his own heart. (Saifuddin & Hanik, 2020)

Morality comes from the root word "moral." "mos" means habit, "mores" means morality. Moral is the good and bad of human actions, attitudes, obligations, and responsibilities. A condition in which a person remains energized, passionate, disciplined and so on. (Alviana, 2018). According to its definition, morals are good and bad actions that are determined by individuals by social values, culture.

Moral Indicators

Individual moral values consist of honesty, discipline, and conscience. While social moral values consist of empathy, respect for others, self-control, justice. In the book "Building Moral Intelligence", Borba states that there are three moral values referred to as moral core, namely empathy, conscience and self-control. These three aspects have important value in the development of a person's morality. (Ibung, 2008).

First, empathy is the ability to put oneself in another person's position to understand and feel the thoughts and feelings of others. In the process, empathy involves not only feelings but also flexibility and thinking, because in empathy a person is required to be flexible and able to try to see the problem from another person's point of view, and can even feel what others feel. (Ibung, 2008). Secondly, conscience holds moral potential and every human being with the help of their intellect is able to distinguish between good and bad things. Its nature is sacred and the voice of the heart is honest, so you often hear the phrase "don't deny your conscience", "ask your conscience", etc. (Muchson & Samsuri, 2012). Third, self-control is the ability of individuals to determine their behavior based on certain standards such as morals, values and rules in society in order to lead to positive behavior this statement was conveyed by Tangney, Baumeister and Boone. (Ramadona & Mamat, 2019)

Stages of moral development

In the book Child Development by John W. Santrock, Piaget observed several children from the age of 4-12 who were playing marbles, the aim was to find out how to think about and use the rules of the game. In addition, Piaget also asked about ethical issues such as lying, stealing, justice and punishment. The conclusions of this observation are

Children aged 4-7 years show heteronomous morality, the first stage of moral development in Piaget's theory. Children still think that justice and rules are properties of the world that cannot be changed and are not controlled by people.

Age 7-10 years children are in the transition period, showing some of the characteristics of the first stage of moral development and some of the characteristics of the second stage of autonomous morality.
Age 10 and above children show autonomous morality. They are aware that rules and laws are made by humans and when judging an action, they consider the intentions as well as the consequences. (Santrock, 2011).

Adolescence

Adolescence comes from the Latin adolescene which means to maturity or to grow. Many figures interpret adolescence, such as according to Perti DeBurn, adolescence is a period of growth between children and adults. Adolescence is a period of developmental transfer between childhood and adulthood which is usually 12 or 13 years old and ends in the teens or early decades, the occurrence of developmental processes such as psychosexual changes, changes in relationships with parents and the goals they will achieve where the process is the process of forming future orientation, this is the opinion of Papalia and Olds. (Jahja, 2011)

The meaning of adolescence is also mentioned in health science and other sciences such as biology and physical science, explaining that adolescence is the process of developing human genitals that experience maturity. Anatomically, it is the maturity of human genitals, where a person has a perfect body shape and functionally the genitals are already functioning perfectly. (Sarwono, 2010)

Characteristic of Adolescence

Adolescence as an important period. Adolescence is an important period, there are several periods that are important because of the consequences that directly affect attitudes and behavior. All development requires mental adjustment and the need to form new attitudes and interests.

Adolescence as a period of transition. Adolescence is a time of transition. transition from childhood. Children have to leave everything childish behind as they transition into adolescence.

Adolescence as a period of searching for identity. When entering adolescence many of them search for an identity. They begin to imagine a personal identity and are no longer satisfied with their friends in every way.

Adolescence as an age of fear. There are several well-known opinions about adolescence. Adolescence has a variety of meanings and many of them are negative. The cultural stereotype of a child who looks untidy, tends to behave in a corrupt and destructive manner, and is untrustworthy to the point where adults must supervise and guide is the meaning of adolescence.

Adolescence as an unrealistic period. Often adolescents tend to view life unrealistically. Such as having unrealistic ideals, which causes the heightened emotions that are characteristic of early adolescence.

Adolescence as the threshold to adulthood. As they approach adulthood, adolescents become anxious to leave their teenage years behind and want to give the impression that they are almost adults, by focusing on themselves and their adult-related behaviors. Such as in terms of clothing, ways of thinking and they may even smoke or engage in sex acts. (Hurlock, n.d.)

Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter)

Sekolah Karakter is an activity carried out by Iqro Club Pekalongan Regency. The target of this activity is teenagers to adults. There are several groups of character schools, namely small groups and large or classical groups. Small groups have at least 5-10 children and 1 companion, while large groups are around 20-50 children or even more. This activity is
carried out once a week according to the agreement in one group, this applies to small groups. While the large group or classical is held once a month by inviting a speaker or speaker.

In each meeting there are several methods of delivering the material. The character school participants receive material (hard skills) by using the discussion method and they also get soft skills, where they learn to communicate, speak in front, manage time, determine their own decisions, solve a problem, etc. As a means of entertainment, there are usually fun cooking, rihlah, sports, and gift exchange. In addition, as a means of entertainment, it is usually interspersed with fun cooking, rihlah, sports, and gift exchange. This is done so as not to get bored. In the fun cooking method, in addition to practicing cooking, sekuter participants also get material, such as how to serve good food and how to entertain guests. Then rihlah (traveling), sekuter participants are invited to travel to the nearest tour, with the existence of rihlah being a means of refreshing and also tadabur nature.

The purpose of this activity is to develop learning achievements, self-capacity and develop skills according to their potential, instill Islamic values intensively in character school participants (sekuter), as a means to form a polite and outstanding Muslim personality. (Iqro Club, 2018)

Curriculum Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter)

Semesters 1: Cheerful sekolah karakter, The beautiful of Living with Islam, The virtue of knowledge, There is no word as beautiful as ukhuwah, The virtue of morning prayer. Gaul ala Islam, School okay organization oye, My worship is steady, Be a charming Muslim, True honesty, Muhammad is my idol, The miracle of Quran, Prophet Yusuf, For you my parents, Positive feeling.


In addition to the material above, mentors use themes such as tawhid, fiqh, morals, Islamic history, about adolescents and their development. mentors usually look for material that is being discussed. The following is an example of supporting material for Iqro Club Pekalongan's Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter) : Intention to seek knowledge, The happiest people, 7 groups that get the shade of Allah SWT, Be charming Muslimah, Criteria of a Muslimah, My life is a reflection of my prayer, Preparation for Ramadan I, Ramadan II Preparation, Teenage menstruation, Let's do good, Sensitive Space "It's Okay to not to be Okay.", Love or ideals. (Iqro Club, 2018)

Conclusion

The implementation of character schools, known as Sekolah Karakter or Sekuter, adheres closely to a well-structured curriculum and established mechanisms. These carefully designed curriculum and mechanisms play a significant role in the moral development of adolescents. Let's delve deeper into how this implementation aligns with the curriculum and mechanisms and how it contributes to strengthening adolescent morals:

Character schools follow a predetermined curriculum that serves as a roadmap for mentors and participants alike. This curriculum is meticulously crafted to cater to the specific needs and developmental stages of adolescents. The subjects and themes covered in the curriculum are chosen with the intention of promoting moral development.
The mechanisms embedded in character schools are purposefully designed to reinforce moral values. Within the framework of the curriculum, there is a clear emphasis on moral indicators. These indicators include qualities such as empathy, self-control, and responsible decision-making.

Character schools employ various teaching methods, including material presentation and group discussions. During these sessions, participants engage with topics and subjects that are directly related to moral development. Through these discussions, they explore concepts such as empathy, honesty, and self-discipline, which are essential components of strong moral character.

One of the key mechanisms for assessing moral development is the daily checklist. Participants are required to fill out this checklist every day. The checklist likely includes questions or prompts that encourage participants to reflect on their behaviors and actions. This daily reflection allows individuals to gauge their progress in terms of moral development.

The effectiveness of character schools in enhancing adolescent morals is assessed through the achievement of moral indicators. The positive outcomes observed in participants, such as their ability to empathize with others, make sound life choices, and exhibit self-control, are indicative of the program’s success.

In summary, character schools, or Sekolah Karakter (Sekuter), are structured educational programs that focus on moral development in adolescents. The curriculum, mechanisms, and daily checklists are all carefully designed to align with this objective. Through material presentation and discussions related to moral indicators, participants are guided towards strengthening their moral character. The positive outcomes observed, including heightened empathy, responsible decision-making, and self-control, underscore the effectiveness of character schools in nurturing good morals in adolescents.

Conflict of interests

The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

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