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Implementation and Effectiveness of Religious Development Programs through Habit-Forming Strategies in Shaping Students' Character

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Abstract

Religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' values, habits, and spiritual discipline from an early age. This study aims to describe the implementation of the religious development program for students and analyze the effectiveness of habit-forming strategies in shaping students' religious character. The research approach uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the main activities of the religious program include Duha prayers every Tuesday-Friday, daily congregational Zuhr prayers, daily donations, memorization of the Qur'an, and Night for Building Faith and Piety activities. The implementation of the program is supported by a habitual approach combined with the integration of religious values into all subjects and a character assessment system based on the observation of students' religious behavior. The support of the school environment and parental involvement are important factors in the sustainability of the program. Analysis based on Glock and Stark's theory shows that this program covers all dimensions of religious diversity, namely ideology, ritual, experience, intellectual, and consequential. Thus, the development of religious diversity is effective in shaping students' religious attitudes, spiritual discipline, and social character.

Keywords

Descriptive Qualitative, Glock and Stark's Theory, Habit-Forming Strategies, Religious Development, Religious Education.

1. Introduction

Religious education is one of the fundamental goals of Islamic educational institutions, as it is through diversity education that students are expected to develop consistent attitudes of faith, piety, and religious morals. A study by Sutarto (2018) explains that diversity, as an affective attitude in Islamic education, encompasses cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions and must be developed from an early age through interactions between the school and family environment. Formal education at Islamic Elementary Schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah/MI*) in particular offers significant opportunities for developing diversity because this level coincides with the development of students' religious thinking and attitudes, which still need to be conditioned. Research on diversity development programs at the MI level shows that routine habits such as congregational prayer, memorization (*tahfidz*), recitation of the Koran, and extracurricular religious activities can strengthen students' religious identity.

Teachers, as role models, play a crucial role in shaping religious character and conditioning students. Abidin (2024) stated that teachers' role models in daily life influence the internalization of religious values in students, as students learn not only theory but also practical experiences in interpersonal relationships and examples of teacher action at school. Challenges to implementing religious development include limited time for religious activities in schools, as time is limited and students must follow the learning schedules of their respective classes. Despite the importance of religious development programs in Islamic elementary education, previous studies have largely emphasized the types of religious activities and their outcomes, while limited attention has been given to how these programs are implemented through systematic habit-forming strategies in daily school life. Moreover, there is still a lack of in-depth qualitative analysis that explores the effectiveness of habituation strategies, supervision mechanisms, and environmental support in shaping students' religious character. Therefore, the central research problem addressed in this study is how religious development programs are implemented through habit-forming strategies and how these strategies effectively contribute to the formation of students' religious character within the context of formal Islamic elementary education.

Qualitative data links concepts to local conditions. Religious activities at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel have included habituation from grades 1-6, namely the habituation of Duha prayer, the habituation of congregational Dzuhur prayer, daily alms, there are also flagship programs carried out on Saturdays, namely Tahfidz for grades 1-3, Computer Engineering for grades 4, and scouts for grades 5 and 6. Also, incidental activities: commemoration of Islamic Holidays and night of faith and piety (*Malam Bina Taqwa/MABIT*). Based on initial observations and informal interviews with teachers, the process is carried out routinely, and there is also supervision from teachers or teachers in charge, as well as supporting facilities such as classrooms, mosques, halls, and appropriate toilets. Such conditions indicate the existence of a strategy to strengthen implementation so that the development of religiosity is not only formal but holistic and comprehensive in the daily lives of students (Rukmana et al., 2024). The impact of religious activities at Al Hidayah Rancaseel Elementary School is that students memorize, understand and are disciplined about prayer times, know and understand the wisdom of giving alms and parents also respond positively to the activities or implementation of religious activities at Al Hidayah Rancaseel Elementary School.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the implementation of the religious development program for students and analyze the effectiveness of habit-forming strategies in shaping students' religious character. This study offers novel contributions by providing a qualitative and process-oriented analysis of religious

development programs that integrates habit-forming strategies, teacher supervision, school environment, and parental support into a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on program outcomes, this research highlights how habituation operates as a holistic and sustainable mechanism in shaping students' religious attitudes, spiritual discipline, and social character in everyday school practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Religious Development Program

Glock and Stark's multidimensional theory of religiosity provides a foundational framework for understanding religious development in educational contexts, identifying five core dimensions: ideological (beliefs), ritualistic (practices), experiential (feelings), intellectual (knowledge), and consequential (behavioral effects) (Glock & Stark, 1965). This framework remains empirically validated in contemporary Islamic education research, particularly in analyzing how students develop religious proficiency across multiple dimensions (Juanda et al., 2024; Edy & Sumarta, 2024). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental ecology theory, a child's character is shaped through ongoing interactions within their immediate environment, particularly between family and school. Habitual religious practices at school, such as daily prayers, memorization, and charitable activities, combined with parental support at home, create a continuous and reinforcing environment for the internalization of religious values.

Religious development programs in Islamic educational institutions represent systematic efforts to nurture students' spiritual growth, moral character, and religious identity through structured activities and conducive learning environments. According to Nurizah and Amrullah (2024), religious character formation in primary education occurs through Islamic habituation practices that systematically integrate religious values into daily school routines. The systematic literature review by Chotimah et al. (2025) reveals that effective religious development requires comprehensive institutional commitment beyond superficial implementation. Research demonstrates that habituation strategies embedding religious practices into daily routines are crucial, with Wakhudin and Anggoro (2023) emphasizing that habituation methods create consistent patterns of religious behavior that become internalized values. Furthermore, Umah et al. (2022) demonstrate that habituation of Dhuha prayer in primary schools significantly contributes to students' spiritual discipline and religious commitment. Implementation components include worship rituals, moral education, Quranic studies, and Islamic cultural activities. Alijaya et al. (2025) reveal that project-based Islamic education enables students to deepen religious understanding while developing teamwork and character values.

2.2. Religious Character

Students' religious character refers to internalized values, attitudes, and behavioral dispositions reflecting Islamic principles that guide actions according to religious teachings. Drawing on Glock and Stark's theory, religious character encompasses belief, knowledge, consistent ritual practice, spiritual connection experience, and manifestation of religious values in everyday behavior (Glock & Stark, 1965). Recent applications demonstrate its continued relevance in analyzing the five dimensions of religiosity in contemporary Islamic educational practices (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Religious character formation involves complex moral and spiritual development through social interaction, modeling, and experiential learning (Gherasim, 2024; Fristyarini et al., 2025). Research by Nursalim et al. (2024) reveals that effective character formation requires systematic integration of cognitive, affective, and

behavioral dimensions through intentional educational strategies. Teacher modeling plays a pivotal role, with Amin and Lestari (2023) demonstrating that Islamic education teachers instilling values through habituation significantly influence students' internalization of religious behaviors. Teachers embodying the values they teach serve as living examples of Islamic character by Nurani et al. (2024), while practical approaches embedding Islamic values through integration in learning, daily habituation, and experiential activities create comprehensive frameworks for development by Sari et al. (2024).

Habituation strategies are critical mechanisms for character formation based on the *ta'arwud* principle. Miftahurrohmah et al. (2024) demonstrate that systematic habituation practices create consistent religious behavior patterns deeply embedded in students' character, highlighting synergy between school-based habituation and parental reinforcement. Environmental context significantly influences development, with research emphasizing that character education must be applied holistically through learning processes and school culture (Isroani & Huda, 2022; Hanafiah et al., 2024). The systematic review by Arif and Chapakiya (2024) reveals that implementing religious character education requires optimizing integration between government, schools, parents, and the community while incorporating local wisdom models.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design to obtain an in-depth and contextual understanding of how student religiosity development programs are implemented in an Islamic elementary school setting. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore social and educational phenomena holistically, particularly the processes, meanings, and interactions involved in religious habituation practices within the school environment. The study was conducted at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel, located in Garut Regency, West Java, which was purposively selected due to its structured and routine implementation of religious development programs integrated into daily school activities.

The research subjects consisted of the school principal, teachers, and students, who were deliberately chosen using purposive sampling. The principal was selected as the key informant due to their role in policy formulation, program planning, and institutional supervision of religious activities. Teachers were chosen because they are directly responsible for implementing religious programs, supervising habituation practices, and serving as role models in students' daily religious behavior. Students were included as the primary beneficiaries of the program, providing insights into their experiences, behavioral changes, and internalization of religious values. The inclusion of these three groups enabled a comprehensive understanding of the program from managerial, implementational, and experiential perspectives.

Data were collected through multiple techniques, including (1) direct observation of routine religious activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic memorization (*tahfidz*), and daily almsgiving to capture actual practices and behavioral patterns; (2) in-depth interviews with school leaders, teachers, and students to explore perceptions, motivations, supporting factors, and challenges; and (3) documentation analysis, including activity schedules, program reports, and institutional records, to support and verify observational and interview data.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. To ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation of data sources and methods was applied. This methodological approach was chosen to systematically describe the implementation process, identify supporting and

inhibiting factors, and analyze the impact of the program on students' religiosity development in a comprehensive and reliable manner.

4. Results

4.1. Implementation of the Student Religious Development Program

MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel is an Islamic elementary school established in July 2008 under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In its early years, the school experienced a period of limited development for approximately four to five years. However, since 2015, MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel has shown significant growth, particularly as increasing numbers of families from Cigagade Village chose to enroll their children aged six to seven years. Initially, the school operated with only one class consisting of around 10–15 students and was supported by six teachers. Over time, the institution expanded and now accommodates 105 students with a total of nine teachers, supported by its own dedicated school building. This institutional growth reflects increasing community trust in the school's educational and religious programs, indicating that MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel has developed sufficient organizational capacity to implement structured religious development activities in a sustainable manner (Ginanjari et al., 2025).

Geographically, MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel is located in Rancaseel Village, Cigagade Village, Blubur District, Limbangan, Garut Regency. The school is situated in the center of a residential area, providing easy access for the local community. Its building layout is designed to support a conducive learning environment, with classrooms positioned away from the main road to minimize noise from traffic and public transportation. The surrounding environment consists of residential areas to the north and west, while rice fields border the southern and eastern sides, creating a calm and supportive atmosphere for teaching and learning activities. Research indicates that a school's physical setting, including its location and layout, plays a significant role in fostering a focused and positive learning climate (Sher & Inamullah, 2025). Such a physical environment supports emotional comfort and concentration, which are essential conditions for the internalization of religious values through habituation and reflective learning.

In terms of facilities and infrastructure, MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel is supported by adequate learning resources that contribute to the achievement of educational objectives. The school is equipped with six classrooms, a teachers' office, a principal's office, an administration room, a multipurpose hall, a mosque, student and teacher toilets, a canteen, a storage room, and a parking area. Several classrooms are equipped with LCD projectors and projector screens to support the learning process. The library provides copies of the Qur'an and supporting religious learning materials, including resources for the Furudlul Ainiyah (*Gerakan Furudlul 'Ainiyah/GEFA*) program, although its physical condition requires moderate improvement. The availability of facilities supports a conducive learning environment and facilitates the implementation of both academic and religious development activities at the school (Sher & Inamullah, 2025).

Teaching and learning activities at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel are conducted in the morning from 07.00 to 14.00 WIB. The school places strong emphasis on the quality of educators, recognizing that competent educational personnel play a crucial role in the success of the learning process. This commitment is reflected in the educational background of the teaching staff, the majority of whom hold undergraduate degrees in education. In the 2025/2026 academic year, MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel employs a total of nine teachers and one education personnel member. Qualified educators play a crucial role as role models, ensuring that religious values are not only taught but also demonstrated consistently in daily interactions. This aligns with research emphasizing that effective character

education relies heavily on teachers who embody the values they teach, serving as living examples for students (Nurani et al., 2024). Teachers are assigned to both class-based instruction and specific Islamic subjects, including Fiqh, Qur'an and Hadith, Aqidah, and student religious development activities, ensuring that academic instruction and religious education are delivered in an integrated manner.

Regarding student enrollment, MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel accommodates 105 students in the 2025/2026 academic year, consisting of 55 male and 50 female students distributed across six grade levels. Class sizes are relatively balanced, with student numbers ranging from 11 to 22 per grade. This distribution allows teachers to provide effective supervision and personalized guidance, particularly in the implementation of religious development programs based on daily habituation and structured activities. Smaller class sizes are often associated with more frequent and meaningful teacher-student interactions, which are critical for monitoring progress and reinforcing desired behaviors in character education (Hanafiah et al., 2024). The results and discussion section of this study describes the implementation of the religious development program at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel. Data were obtained through direct observation of daily and weekly religious activities, as well as conditional activities such as the Commemoration of Islamic Holidays (*Peringatan Hari Besar Islam/PHBI*). Smaller and balanced class sizes facilitate closer teacher-student interaction, which enhances behavioral monitoring and character reinforcement. The researcher conducted observations and in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and parents, as well as several students, and a review of school program documents.

4.2. Effectiveness of Habit-Forming in Shaping Students' Religious Character

The results of the study show that the development of religiosity at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel is implemented through a structured and consistent habitual approach strategy. This aligns with established educational principles where systematic habituation is recognized as a foundational method for instilling values and shaping character (Muslich, 2022). The main program includes Duha prayer every Tuesday to Friday at 07.00 – 08.00, the initial activity, the teacher conditions all students to perform ablution, then enter the hall and prepare to pray Duha together but not in congregation like obligatory prayers, only with the congregation aims to facilitate memorization of prayer readings and prayers after Duha prayer, after that the PAI teacher gives a lecture about religion until 08.00 and students are conditioned again to enter the class.

Dzuhur prayer in congregation every day, students in grades 2 and 3 are conditioned to pray in congregation Dzuhur in the hall and for students in grades 4, 5 and 6 are required to pray in congregation Dzuhur in the mosque with the guidance and control of a male teacher, then daily alms by setting aside student pocket money of IDR 500 collected at the homeroom teacher aims to train or accustom them to have a sense of empathy or social, sincere, responsible and frugal in using money, As for memorizing the Al-Qur'an juz 30 and selected letters such as selected verses related to religion, carried out on Fridays in learning with the homeroom teacher, and on Saturdays guided by a special teacher or mudabbir for students in grades 2 – 6 who choose the Tahfidz interest. then the Night of Faith and Piety Development activity which is carried out once every 6 months is attended by students in grades 4 to 6, the activities are carried out 2 days and one night with religious activities from 1:00 PM on the first day to 2:00 PM on the next day, students stay overnight at school and are filled with religious activities, aiming to train and accustom students to independent learning, responsibility, simplicity, and many more wisdom that can be felt by students. For PHBI, it is carried out once a year, such as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, and Isra Mi'raj is carried out with religious competition activities.

This structured habituation approach enables students to experience religious practices repeatedly, allowing religious values to shift from external routines to internalized personal commitments. This program instills Islamic values not only through knowledge, but also through practice and direct experience felt by students. According to Muslich (2022), habituation is an effective character education strategy for instilling religious values because it involves cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in an integrated manner. Thus, the habit of regular worship forms a religious personality rooted in students' spiritual discipline. The findings confirm Muslich's perspective, as students not only understand religious teachings cognitively but also demonstrate them through disciplined worship and social behavior.

Teachers at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel integrate religious values into all subjects. For example, in science lessons, students are invited to interpret natural phenomena as signs of God's power, while in Indonesia, students practice making speech texts about Islamic teachings. This integrative learning model strengthens students' intellectual religiosity, aligning with the knowledge dimension in Glock and Stark's framework. This model is in accordance with the concept of an integrative curriculum that emphasizes the unification of religious values with all fields of knowledge. Zubaedi (2015) explains that the integration of religious values in learning creates a synergy between science and faith that shapes students' spiritual awareness in every learning activity. This strengthens the intellectual dimension in Glock and Stark's (1965) theory, where religious knowledge becomes the basis for a rational and reflective understanding of faith.

Religiousness assessment at this school is conducted continuously through observations of religious behavior and reports from Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI*) teachers. Indicators assessed include discipline in worship, honesty, social concern through almsgiving, and politeness in interactions. This evaluation aligns with the behavioral consequences dimension of Glock and Stark's theory, which assesses the extent to which religious beliefs are manifested in concrete actions. Observations indicate that students demonstrated significant improvements in consistent worship and social responsibility, particularly after active involvement in daily almsgiving and memorization activities. Such assessment reflects the consequential dimension of religiosity, where belief is evaluated through observable moral and social behavior, as conceptualized by Glock and Stark. This character-based assessment practice aligns with Samani's (2019) view, which emphasizes the importance of evaluating attitudes and behavior as indicators of successful character education.

The implementation of the religiousness program is effective due to the synergistic support of teachers, the principal, and parents. A conducive school environment, along with adequate infrastructure and facilities, such as a mosque, classrooms, and a hall, a regular schedule of activities, and visual Islamic propagation media, fosters a strong sense of religiosity. Parents also support this by practicing worship at home, assisting with memorization, and participating in religious activities. This support creates a sustainable religious ecosystem. This collaboration forms a holistic religious ecosystem, ensuring consistency between school-based habituation and home-based reinforcement. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), in his developmental ecology theory, a child's character formation is influenced by the interaction between the microenvironment (family and school). Therefore, the alignment between home and school strengthens both experiential and ideological dimensions of religiosity, enabling students to live out religious values beyond the classroom. Thus, the synergy between home and school strengthens the experiential and ideological dimensions within the Glock and Stark framework, as students not only understand religious values but also experience them in real life.

5. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that all religious activities at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel reflect four dimensions of religiosity according to Glock and Stark (1965), namely: (1) ideological dimension through the instilling of aqidah and faith values in learning; (2) ritual dimension through worship practices such as prayer, tahfidz, and daily alms; (3) experiential dimension through spiritual experiences in MABIT activities, PHBI activities and daily class prayers; and (4) intellectual and consequential dimension through the integration of religious values into students' lessons and social behavior. A systematic habituation approach makes religiosity not just a routine, but an identity and moral awareness of students. This finding is in line with the results of Samsu (2025) which confirms that the habituation of worship and collective religious experiences in schools can strengthen students' spirituality, responsibility, and social character.

Beyond confirming previous findings, this study provides deeper insight into how the habituation process operates as a mechanism of internalization rather than simple repetition. Regular religious practices, such as Duha prayer, congregational Dzuhur prayer, and daily almsgiving, function as structured moral training that gradually shapes students' discipline, empathy, and sense of responsibility. This supports the argument of Muslich (2022), who emphasizes that character education through habituation is effective when cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and behavioral practice are integrated continuously. In the context of MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel, these three dimensions are evident as students understand religious teachings, experience spiritual meaning, and demonstrate moral behavior in everyday school life. Moreover, integrating religious values into academic subjects, as shown in science and Indonesian lessons, enhances intellectual religiosity, aligning with Glock and Stark's knowledge dimension. Recent studies highlight that integrative curricula that embed religious content in multiple subjects can reinforce moral reasoning and strengthen students' ethical decision-making in daily life (Zubaedi, 2015; Sutarto, 2018).

Experiential activities, such as PHBI celebrations and overnight MABIT programs, provide meaningful opportunities for students to connect religious teachings with lived experience, enhancing the experiential and consequential dimensions of religiosity. This confirms Abidin (2024), who emphasizes the importance of combining classroom instruction with real-life religious engagement to produce holistic religious character development. Teachers' active supervision and parental involvement also contribute to creating a consistent religious environment, fostering continuity between school and home practices.

This study contributes to contemporary Islamic education research by providing a process-oriented qualitative analysis of religious development programs at the Islamic elementary school level. Unlike prior studies that primarily focus on outcomes or isolated activities, this research demonstrates how systematic habituation strategies, supported by teacher supervision, curriculum integration, and parental involvement, effectively cultivate students' religiosity across all dimensions of Glock and Stark's framework. The findings offer practical insights for Islamic schools seeking to implement sustainable and holistic religious character education rooted in daily school practices.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of religious development at MI Al-Hidayah Rancaseel is carried out systematically through a habituation strategy combined with the integration of religious values in every aspect of learning and school activities. Programs such as Duha prayer, Dzuhur prayer in congregation, donations, tahfidz, and MABIT, as well as the commemoration of Islamic holidays, have succeeded in

creating a conducive spiritual environment and shaping the religious character of students. The support of the principal, teachers, and parental involvement strengthens the sustainability and effectiveness of development. Based on Glock and Stark's theory, this implementation includes ideological, ritual, experiential, intellectual, and consequential dimensions that complement each other in building students' religiousness. This approach not only instills discipline in worship and moral responsibility but also fosters social awareness and spiritual maturity, indicating that schools can adopt an integrated habituation model to cultivate holistic religious character. The alignment of school programs with home practices creates a consistent and supportive religious ecosystem, which can be adapted by other Islamic elementary schools aiming for similar outcomes.

Despite these strengths, the study has limitations. It is conducted in a single school context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings, as differences in school culture, teacher competence, student backgrounds, and community involvement could influence program implementation and effectiveness elsewhere. While the specific activities and schedules may not be directly replicable, the underlying principles of structured habituation, integration of religious values, and collaborative support from educators and parents provide a transferable framework for other institutions seeking to enhance students' religiosity systematically. Future research could investigate the longitudinal impact of religious habituation on students' moral, social, and academic outcomes across multiple schools, explore the integration of digital learning platforms or community-based initiatives in supporting religious character development, and conduct comparative studies between different types of Islamic schools to better understand contextual factors that influence program effectiveness.

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Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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