

## Islamic Character Building Strategies in Junior High School

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to describe and analyze how SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen's strategies are in realizing Islamic character for students. This research is a qualitative research. The subjects of this research are all teachers, Islamic boarding school caregivers, and archives, documents from schools and Islamic boarding schools at SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used is qualitative data analysis. The data analysis techniques used are data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen's strategies in realizing Islamic character for students are proven in aspects of faith and piety of students such as increasing the frequency of obligatory and sunnah worship, interest in studying religious knowledge, and the application of Islamic values in everyday life, the development of independence and responsibility such as in taking care of personal needs, completing tasks, and participating in school activities and instilling a social spirit and care through various activities, such as social service, charity, and helping others in need.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic character is a fundamental aspect in the formation of a complete student personality (Khaidir & Suud, 2020; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023), especially in the context of education in Indonesia which upholds divine and religious values. At the Junior High School level, the formation of Islamic character becomes very strategic considering that early adolescence is a critical period in the development of student identity and self-value (Syamsuddin et al., 2022). In this phase, students experience significant psychological transitions, where they begin to develop abstract thinking skills and seek meaning from various life experiences, including in the spiritual and religious dimensions.

The implementation of Islamic character formation strategies in junior high schools is becoming increasingly important amidst the currents of globalization and technological advances that bring various new challenges to the moral and spiritual development of the younger generation (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Saepudin, 2022). The phenomenon of moral degradation, deviant behavior, and the fading of religious values among adolescents is a shared concern that demands a systematic response from educational institutions (Kurata, 2024; Lessy et al., 2024). The strategy of Islamic character formation not only aims to instill understanding and practice of religious teachings, but also to foster attitudes of tolerance, compassion, honesty, responsibility, and other universal values that originate from religious values (Idris, 2023; Sodik et al., 2024).

The era of globalization and digital revolution has brought significant changes in the social dynamics and interaction patterns of the younger generation (Knell, 2021; Siagian & Yuliana, 2023). The ease of access to information and content from various sources without adequate filters poses new challenges for character education, especially Islamic character. The phenomenon of moral degradation, deviant behavior, and the fading of religious values among adolescents demonstrates the urgency of developing comprehensive strategies in the formation of Islamic character in formal educational environments, especially at the junior high school level.

SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen is one of the boarding school-based schools, where all students who intend to pursue education at the junior high school level, one of the main requirements is to live in a pesantren (Boarding School). SMP VIP Al-Huda focuses on the development of science and skills, as well as the development of religious attitudes and practices, and the improvement of morality and life independence. Based on a preliminary study on June 25, 2023, SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen has programs that tend to build the Islamic character of students. These programs provide values of discipline and good character formation, such as the habituation of reading *Asma'ul Husna* before the learning activities take place, reading *Surah Yaasin* every Friday, *infaq* on Fridays, and the inculcation of moral values carried out by teachers during the learning process. The condition of students who are required to live in Islamic boarding schools also supports efforts to foster the Islamic character of students at school.

Pesantren-based schools are a school model that integrates the advantages of the education system in schools and the advantages of the education system in pesantren (Chalim & Suhari, 2024; Mandasyahri et al., 2023). If the advantages of these two educational institutions are combined, it will create a strong educational force and have the potential to produce students who have reliable personalities, have intellectual intelligence, and have characters with spiritual and social strength. Graduates of Pesantren-Based Schools are expected to become reliable Indonesian people, have intellectual, spiritual, and emotional integrity, and have plural and multicultural characters, respect rights and obligations in social, state, and national life for the realization of a civil, characterized Indonesian society, and be able to stand on par with other nations in the world.

The formation of religious character is not only oriented to the inculcation of religious knowledge and rituals, but more than that, aims to integrate spiritual values into the student's personality so that it is manifested in daily attitudes and behaviors (Achadah et al., 2022; Gamage et al., 2021). Values such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, compassion, tolerance, and respect for differences are manifestations of religious character that need to be systematically internalized through various pedagogical approaches that are relevant to the characteristics of junior high school students.

Previous research indicates that the effectiveness of Islamic character formation depends heavily on the suitability of strategies with socio-cultural contexts, student developmental characteristics, and the ability of educational institutions to integrate religious values into all aspects of learning and school life. Research results from Tobing et al. indicate that the cultivation of Islamic character, especially in Islamic religious education, still faces obstacles, particularly the lack of learning time, which makes the habituation of Islamic character in students less than optimal (Tobing & Kamil, 2025). In contrast, the findings from Sariani et al. show that there are many challenges in developing students' Islamic character. There is a need for creativity from teachers and schools through programs aimed at developing Islamic character (Sariani et al., 2024). A comprehensive study is required, both in terms of content and the learning models used, including strengthening strategies to align with and respond to the character development of students (Hakim, 2022). However, the implementation of religious character formation strategies in junior high schools still faces various obstacles, ranging from limited understanding of appropriate pedagogical approaches, lack of collaboration between schools, families, and communities, to the challenges of adapting to technological developments and social changes.

This article aims to comprehensively examine various Islamic character formation strategies that can be implemented at the junior high school level by considering the dynamics of student development and contemporary challenges in character education. Through analysis of various approaches, models, and best practices in religious character formation, this article is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of more effective and meaningful character education. Furthermore, this article

also seeks to formulate strategic recommendations for educational stakeholders in optimizing the role of formal educational institutions as a vehicle for religious character formation that contributes to the formation of a morally and spiritually resilient generation amidst the complexity of the challenges of the times.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Islamic character building in junior high schools is a strategic effort to internalize values that are rooted in religious teachings and moral integrity. This process aligns with the concept of character education as a structured initiative aimed at shaping students' behavior and worldview (Achadah et al., 2022; Hakim, 2022). Character education, when grounded in Islamic principles, involves not only cognitive understanding but also habitual practice and internalization of values such as honesty, respect, discipline, and piety (Khaidir & Suud, 2020; Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023).

Several scholars argue that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) serves as the core framework for transmitting moral and spiritual values to students. This includes instilling behaviors through daily religious routines, modeling by teachers, and the integration of Islamic teachings into academic subjects (Idris, 2023; Retnasari et al., 2023; Tobing & Kamil, 2025). The integration of Islamic boarding school systems and pesantren-based educational models also proves effective in building strong character traits, especially through habituation and immersive religious environments (Chalim & Suhari, 2024; Mandasyahri et al., 2023).

In the digital era, character development faces new challenges. Teachers must innovate their strategies, including utilizing social media and digital platforms to effectively engage students (Sariani et al., 2024; Siagian & Yuliana, 2023). At the same time, concerns over moral degradation in modern education highlight the need for strong school culture and active parental involvement in character development (Lessy et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2021).

The implementation of school rules and regulations also plays a critical role in shaping student behavior. These formal structures help create disciplined learning environments conducive to character formation (Fekadu, 2019; Wicaksono & Hidayat, 2023). Further, the role of teacher-student communication is essential in transmitting religious values and fostering understanding and empathy (Negara et al., 2024a; 2024b).

Overall, effective Islamic character building strategies involve a combination of instructional methods, environmental factors, institutional support, and digital adaptation. Through the synergy of these components, junior high schools can better nurture students who embody Islamic values and contribute positively to society.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative approach of the phenomenological type. Phenomenological research is an approach in qualitative research that focuses on individuals' lived experiences related to a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). This approach aims to describe the meaning of several

individuals' lived experiences about a concept or phenomenon. The subjects in this study are the school principal, the head of the Islamic boarding school, the vice principal, the vice head of the Islamic boarding school, and the teachers of SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. Triangulation techniques are used for data validity. Data analysis techniques use the Miles and Huberman and Saldana model (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and data verification. The first stage is data collection, where researchers collect data through observation, interviews, and documentation in analyzing Islamic character formation strategies at SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen. Data collection in qualitative research is iterative, meaning it can be done repeatedly as needed until the data reaches saturation. Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming data that emerges from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical data. The data that has been selected and is in accordance with the research objectives is then interpreted in various forms such as descriptions, tables, diagrams, and so on. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verifying the collected data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic character is a public act, so it can be a determining indicator of a Muslim's goodness or badness. Islamic character can be understood as an effort to instill intelligence in students in thinking, behaving, and acting in accordance with the noble values that become their identity and are realized in their interactions with their God, themselves, fellow human beings, and their environment. The following are some indicators of Islamic character: 1) religious, 2) discipline, 3) honest, 4) responsible, and 5) caring for others.

### *Religious*

The character of honesty is a complex process that involves the interaction of various internal and external factors. The effectiveness of religious character development programs depends on a comprehensive approach that combines cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, as well as creating harmony between the values taught and practices in the environment. Role modeling, habituation, authentic experiences, and reflection are key components in this process.

Results of interviews with the principal of SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen, regarding the process of cultivating and instilling religious attitudes in all students, stated that:

*“To instill Islamic Character within SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen, we integrate the Islamic character concept into the school's national curriculum structure, which is integrated with the Islamic boarding school curriculum. This is packaged through three components: intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular, which aim to process and cultivate intellectual abilities (IQ, SQ, and EQ). Intracurricular refers to all teaching and learning process activities carried out at school according to the applicable curriculum program structure to achieve the minimum goals of each lesson based on students' academic values. Then, cocurricular activities are carried*

out through structured assignments related to one or more content or subjects. Cocurricular activities are intended to further understand the teaching materials that have been studied in intracurricular activities in the classroom to the fullest. Furthermore, the concept of developing students' soft skills is through extracurricular programs, which aim as a forum for students to develop their interests and talents while at school. Then, every day before starting learning, all students carry out scheduled habituations, including: flag ceremonies, joint prayers, chanting the Murodan Al Jurumiyah poem, reading verses from Al-Qur'an Juz 30, chanting Ngakidatul Nawam, chanting the Ala la Tanalu poem, reading Surah Yasin, and reading Asmaul Husna, orderliness, infaq every Friday, and personal cleanliness and health. Spontaneous habituations include: the habit of giving smiles, greetings, greetings, throwing garbage in its place, queuing culture, resolving disagreements (fights), reminding each other when seeing violations of school rules, social solidarity”.

Then, the results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School yielded the following findings:

“Within the Islamic Boarding School, the process of instilling Islamic Character is carried out through the Islamic Boarding School curriculum, which consists of, a) Sorogan memorization and understanding of Nahwu Shorof science, b) Sorogan memorization of the Al-Qur'an (Juz 'Ammah) fluently, c) Bandungan Book of Tafsir, Ihya' Ulumiddin, Fiqh, and Ta'limul Muta'alim, d) Diniyah School (Akhlaq, Tauhid, Fiqh, Tarikh, Arabic, and R. Mahidl). Religious culture within the Al-Huda Kebumen Islamic Boarding School is applied through various daily activities carried out by the students, such as moral development activities, namely congregational prayers, tadarus al-qur'an and books, recitations, religious lectures, and noble character development. The inculcation of Islamic Character values is carried out every day at the Islamic Boarding School”.

The statements above are reinforced by the results of interviews with the Vice Principal, Teachers, and Islamic Boarding School Administrators as actors who implement the planning concepts carried out by the school and Islamic boarding school, namely:

“As an implementing team on the ground, I deal directly with students in the process of implementing Islamic Character cultivation, which runs in accordance with existing school regulations. In intracurricular activities carried out by all religious and general subject teachers, they must plan syllabi and lesson plans that contain Islamic Character education containing Islamic teachings. In cocurricular activities, subjects are added as reinforcement of Islamic Character. Then, in extracurricular activities, extracurricular supervising teachers must make activity program plans that include materials, objectives, implementation bases, objects, implementation times, and internalization of Islamic Character education in these activities. As for habituation, make activity program plans that include making activity type schedules, implementation times, activity objects, and determining activity supervisors”.

The research results were also reinforced in interviews with Islamic Boarding School administrators, namely:

“The implementation of Islamic Character cultivation at Al-Huda Kebumen Islamic Boarding School is carried out every day through activities in the Islamic Boarding School, both during recitations and during daily life in the Islamic Boarding School

*environment from waking up to going back to sleep. All processes of Islamic Character cultivation within the Islamic Boarding School generally run in accordance with the rules that have been made, although sometimes there are still some students who commit violations, and students who violate will be given strict sanctions to create a conducive atmosphere and a proper Islamic Character process”.*



**Figure 1. Recitation activities as a religious character cultivation program**

Observations show that the cultivation of students' religious character has been widely carried out by SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen by implementing several religious programs, such as daily routine recitations. Recitation activities are a distinct advantage for SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen because the school is pesantren-based.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, the research found the concept of instilling religious character, namely: 1) the concept of cultivating and instilling religious attitudes has been designed through the school curriculum structure and Islamic boarding school curriculum, 2) there are three components, namely intracurricular, cocurricular and extracurricular to carry out the designed activity programs, 3) the existence of scheduled habituation activities and spontaneous habituation (incidental), 4) the existence of daily activities that are routinely carried out every day in the Islamic boarding school, 5) the application of Islamic values in everyday life both in schools and Islamic boarding schools.

The results of this study are relevant to previous research that the development of students' religious character needs to be integrated with the curriculum at school so that it becomes a culture at the school (Negara et al., 2024a, 2024b; Retnasari et al., 2023). The habituation method is one of the most effective methods in developing children's religious character (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024; Safitri et al., 2023).

### ***Discipline***

Effective disciplinary character development requires long-term commitment and a holistic approach. Schools need to consider disciplinary character not only as compliance with rules, but as the development of self-

regulation capacity that will be beneficial throughout life. The integration of disciplinary values in all aspects of school life and the involvement of all stakeholders are key to the success of this effort.

Results of interviews with the principal of SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen regarding the cultivation of discipline in all students are as follows:

*"SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen and the Kebumen Islamic Boarding School have a strong commitment to instilling discipline in all students. This is done through various programs and activities integrated into the school's education system. This is done through various learning activities at school through subjects, such as Islamic Religious Education, Pancasila and Citizenship Education, and local content or all existing subjects. Then the school applies project-based learning that encourages students to complete tasks independently and responsibly. This trains students' discipline in managing time and completing tasks on time".*

Then, the results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School stated that:

*"Students are also educated in terms of instilling discipline, in forms such as tahajud sunnah prayer activities, performing sunnah fasting, cleaning the room and the area around the Islamic boarding school, performing five daily prayers in congregation, eating together and cleaning up after finishing, helping friends who need help. So in the Islamic Boarding School not only religious knowledge is taught, but social competencies that can realize Islamic character in terms of discipline are also instilled through various kinds of daily activities and spiritual discipline values in students, such as obedience to religious rules and commitment to carry out worship".*

Results of interviews with the Vice Principal also reinforce this opinion, namely:

*"In terms of instilling discipline in all students at SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen, it is done by having clear and strict school rules about discipline. These rules cover various things, such as attendance, uniforms, behavior in class, and school order. The school also applies fair and consistent sanctions for students who violate the rules. These sanctions aim to discipline students and provide a deterrent effect so that mistakes are not repeated. The school also provides counseling guidance services to help students who have difficulties in terms of discipline. Guidance counselors provide guidance and direction to students to overcome discipline problems and improve self-discipline. In addition to this, it is also done through extracurricular activities such as scouting activities, which are one of the flagship extracurricular activities at SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen. This activity trains students' discipline in following rules, working together in teams, and completing challenging tasks".*

Based on observations, the cultivation of discipline at SMP VIP Al Huda Kebumen is carried out by integrating it into every learning activity and extracurricular activity. On the other hand, there are rules that must be agreed upon by all students to follow these regulations.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, researchers found the concept of instilling disciplinary character, namely, 1) the existence of project-based learning programs to instill discipline in completing these tasks, 2) the existence of scheduled Islamic boarding school activities that are carried out

every day, such as tahajud sunnah prayer activities, performing sunnah fasting, cleaning room and surrounding areas of the Islamic boarding school, performing five daily prayers in congregation, eating together and cleaning up after finishing, helping friends who need help, 3) the existence of rules and strict sanctions if violating the rules and provisions that have been made.

The results of this study are relevant to previous research which states that the application of rules can shape students' disciplinary attitudes. Consistent implementation of rules has a positive impact on the development of discipline (Dewi et al., 2021; Fekadu, 2019). The implementation of clear and firm rules can serve as a guide for students to behave in accordance with prevailing norms in the school environment. The formation of disciplinary attitudes is a process that requires habituation through consistently applied rules. When students are accustomed to following rules, they gradually internalize these disciplinary values and make them a part of their character.

### ***Honest***

The development of honesty character in schools cannot be done in isolation, but must be an integral part of the school culture. Effective honesty character education focuses not only on knowledge about the importance of being honest, but also on creating conditions that support the consistent practice of honesty. The main key is to create an environment where honesty is valued higher than success achieved through dishonest means. When students feel safe to be honest and see that honesty is valued in the school community, they are more likely to develop this character as an intrinsic value that they will carry throughout their lives.

Results of interviews with the principal of SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen regarding the cultivation of honesty in all students stated that:

*“The cultivation of honesty in students is done, among other things, through daily activities in the classroom by instilling moral values where teachers integrate honesty values into lesson materials, such as through discussions, moral stories, and discussions of verses from the Al-Qur'an and hadith about honesty. The school also applies an academic honesty system, such as not cheating during exams, doing assignments independently, and daring to report if they see irregularities. Teachers also give awards to students who dare to be honest, such as additional grades, praise in front of the class, or award certificates.”*

Then, the results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School reinforced this opinion, namely:

*“The cultivation of honesty in the Islamic boarding school is done through spiritual guidance, where ustadz/ustadzah become role models for students in behaving honestly. They always speak and act honestly in interacting with all students and various activity programs that support the occurrence of honesty in all students.”*

Results of interviews with one of the teachers at SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen reinforced this opinion, stating that:

*“As an Islamic Religious Education teacher who directly meets with all students, some of the things we do to instill honesty include integrating discussions about*

*honesty into lessons, teaching about the importance of appreciating honesty in a historical context, or exploring moral values that arise in literature. Then we as teachers not only teach about honesty, but also become role models and direct examples for students. This includes speaking honestly with students, appreciating honesty in evaluating student work, and practicing transparency in communication and daily actions."*

Results of interviews with administrators of the Al-Huda Kebumen Islamic Boarding School stated that:

*"From an early age, students are taught about the meaning of honesty and its importance in life. This is done through formal teaching in madrasah programs, character education, and moral lectures. The ustadz/ustadzah become role models for students in behaving honestly. They show honesty in all aspects of life, both in words, actions, and in scientific presentations. Students are accustomed to always speaking and acting honestly in their daily lives. This is done through various activities, such as memorizing verses of the Al-Qur'an about honesty, inspirational lectures about exemplary stories of honest people, and implementing an academic honesty system. In addition to this, the Islamic boarding school has clear and strict rules about honesty. These rules cover various things, such as prohibitions on lying, cheating, and stealing. Sanctions given to students who violate the rules about honesty are fair and educational. The aim is to provide a deterrent effect and help students understand the importance of honesty. Confrontation with violations of honesty is enforced consistently. This is important to show students that honesty is a very important value in the pesantren. Students who have difficulty in being honest receive individual guidance from ustadz/ustadzah or guidance counselors. This guidance helps students understand the root of their problems and find appropriate solutions. Regular recitations and studies about moral and character values, including honesty, are held periodically. These activities aim to deepen students' understanding of the importance of honesty and provide motivation to always behave honestly."*

Based on interviews of all the above informants, researchers found the concept of instilling honest character, namely, 1) the existence of instilling honesty through daily activities starting from classroom learning and activities in the Islamic boarding school, 2) the existence of giving awards to those who can apply honesty and sanctions for those who violate the concept of honesty as future guidance to instill the concept of honesty in daily life, 3) teachers at school, ustadz/ustadzah at the Islamic boarding school practice and give examples of honesty in their daily lives so that all students see and can directly imitate the relationship with honesty.

These results are relevant to previous research which suggests that giving rewards can strengthen students' intrinsic motivation to behave honestly, because they feel valued for their good moral choices. The application of rewards in character education can help students develop a deeper understanding of the importance of honesty in life. When honesty is valued and recognized, students tend to adopt this value as part of their moral identity (Ma, 2023; Salman et al., 2022). Additionally, the method of exemplary conduct can be an effective way to instill honesty in students. Exemplary conduct is a crucial component in effective

character education (Sudrajat et al., 2024; Wicaksono & Hidayat, 2023). When teachers demonstrate honesty in their daily actions, such as admitting mistakes, conveying accurate information, and keeping promises, students get real examples of how the value of honesty is applied in life.

### **Responsibility**

The development of responsibility character in schools is an important process that shapes students into independent, disciplined, and positively contributing individuals for students. With a comprehensive and sustainable approach, schools can play an important role in developing responsibility character in students.

Results of interviews with the principal of SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen regarding the cultivation of responsibility in all students are as follows:

*“At SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen, the cultivation of responsibility is carried out through various in-depth activities and approaches. Such as through projects or group assignments that emphasize individual responsibility in completing certain parts or tasks. For example, the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). This project is part of the Independent Curriculum, which contains various dimensions, one of which is the independent student dimension of Indonesian students, namely independent students who are responsible for their learning processes and outcomes. In schools, this is implemented through various kinds of activities, such as team-made waste management and utilization projects, where these activities require good scheduling, coordination with team members, and management according to agreed-upon time limits and good teamwork. This is just an example, for other activities there are still many, such as class cleaning duties, the cultivation of responsibility aspects carried out by all teachers in teaching in class and daily activities”.*

Then, the results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School reinforced this opinion, namely:

*“Several activities carried out at the Al-Huda Kebumen Islamic Boarding School to foster responsibility include various kinds of patterns that are carried out, such as scheduled cleaning duties of the Islamic boarding school environment, after eating together all students wash the eating utensils used, there are muezzin duties before performing congregational prayers, taking care of personal belongings and taking care of all the items in the Islamic boarding school and other structured activities to bring out a sense of responsibility in the students.”*

Results of interviews with the Vice Principal also reinforced previous research results that:

*“The development of programs and activities within the school environment in the form of the "Independent Class" program, this program gives students the opportunity to manage their own classes, such as cleaning the class, preparing learning tools, and helping teachers in the teaching and learning process. In addition to these activities, there is also a leadership election program, such as class leaders, OSIS leaders, and other organizational administrators. Students are involved in the election and nomination process, and are trained to carry out their duties and obligations as leaders responsibly. There is a "Student Savings Usage Limit" program, because the school is Islamic boarding school-based, this program*

*encourages students to use their savings in accordance with the rules made by the school and Islamic boarding school so that it fosters a sense of responsibility for managing their own finances. These are some of the applications of responsibility that exist."*

Based on the results of interviews and observations above, researchers found the concept of instilling responsible character, namely 1) the existence of a project-based activity assignment concept that can train a sense of responsibility, 2) there are structured daily routine activities both at the Islamic boarding school and at school, 3) the existence of the development of programs related to instilling a sense of responsibility, such as independent class culture, the use of student personal savings, becoming activity committees and electing leaders such as class leaders, OSIS leaders, electing organizational administrators.

### **Care of Others**

Social intelligence plays an important role in shaping students, not only in an academic context but also in overall character development. Results of interviews with the principal of SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen regarding the cultivation of caring for others in all students stated that:

*"In terms of instilling caring for others, the school accustoms students to perform obligatory and sunnah worship, such as prayer, zakat, and charity. These acts of worship not only strengthen students' faith, but also cultivate a sense of caring for others, especially for those who are less fortunate. On the other hand, the school program holds various social activities that involve students, such as social service, visits to orphanages, and fundraising for natural disaster victims. These activities provide opportunities for students to practice the values of caring for others directly. The school also implements building a culture of mutual assistance among students by encouraging them to help each other in learning, completing assignments, and facing difficulties. This culture helps students to be more aware of the needs and feelings of others. That's more or less what is applied at school".*

Then, the results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School showed that:

*"Students at the Al-Huda Kebumen Islamic Boarding School are required to study the Al-Qur'an and Hadith as well as study books according to their levels. In the verses of the Al-Qur'an and Hadith there are many teachings about caring for others, such as helping the poor, helping those in trouble, and sharing with others. The ustadz and ustadzah often tell exemplary stories from the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the companions, and other Muslim people that show caring for others. These stories aim to inspire the students and motivate them to imitate these noble behaviors".*

Results of interviews with one of the teachers at SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen who reinforced these results stated that:

*"The process of applying caring for others in the classroom is done by linking lesson materials with Islamic values related to caring for others, such as compassion, empathy, and mutual assistance. Then, giving real examples, such as helping friends who are having difficulties, sharing food with classmates, and maintaining class cleanliness. Furthermore, creating an Islamic classroom*

*atmosphere by applying greetings, prayers, and reading the Al-Qur'an at the beginning and end of lessons. This can help students to better understand and practice Islamic values in daily life. This is what I often do in classroom learning to realize caring for others".*

Based on the results of interviews and observations above, researchers found the concept of instilling caring for others, namely, 1) the existence of habituation of obligatory and sunnah worship, as well as social activities that aim to instill caring for others, 2) the obligation to learn the Al-Qur'an and Hadith as well as books according to their levels so that the exemplary stories that exist can inspire and cultivate caring for others, 3) the existence of habituation in the classroom by linking Islamic values about caring for others.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results show that the Islamic Strategies at SMP VIP Al-Huda Kebumen in realizing Islamic Character for students are evidenced in aspects of students' faith and piety such as increased frequency of obligatory and sunnah worship, interest in studying religious knowledge, and the application of Islamic values in everyday life, the development of independence and responsibility such as in taking care of personal needs, completing tasks, and participating in school activities and instilling a social spirit and care through various activities, such as social service, charity, and helping others in need. The recommendation in this research is that there needs to be the development of an integrated Islamic character development program in both the school curriculum and the Islamic boarding school curriculum by involving all stakeholders.

## FURTHER STUDY

Future research could explore the long-term impact of Islamic character building strategies through longitudinal studies. It is also important to compare the effectiveness of similar strategies in other Islamic schools, including analyzing the roles of teachers, parents, and boarding school supervisors. Subsequent studies might assess the effectiveness of specific programs (e.g., community service or religious mentoring), as well as the use of technology to support character development. Additionally, policy-oriented research on integrating Islamic character education into the school curriculum is recommended.

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