

THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL STRATEGY IN OPTIMIZING THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE AT SDIT FIRDAUS KAUMAN MOJOSARI

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Abstract

Researchers conducted the basis of students' moral decline. Especially in the aspect of technology which is developing rapidly, it has a negative influence that is eroding student circles. Religious culture is important in this case, because religious values function as a strong foundation for forming positive character and attitudes. The research aims to analyze the principal's strategy in optimizing the development of religious culture at SDIT (Integrated Islamic Elementary School) Firdaus. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collected through field observations, in-depth interviews with school principals, school principals and teachers as well as documentation enriched the research analysis. The initial assumption of success in optimizing religious culture development at SDIT Firdaus is influenced by the principal's ability to manage religious programs in a structured manner, be a role model and build harmonious relationships with teachers, students and parents. As well as managing all resources optimally, both infrastructure and training for teachers so that they become supporters in guiding students religiously.

Keywords: Strategy, Principal, Coaching, Religious Culture.

مستخلص البحث

أجرى الباحث أساس التدهور الأخلاقي للطلاب. خاصة في جانب التكنولوجيا التي تتطور بشكل متسارع، والتي لها تأثير سلبي يؤدي إلى تآكل الأوساط الطلابية. إن الثقافة الدينية مهمة في هذه الحالة، لأن القيم الدينية تعمل كأساس قوي لتكوين الشخصية والاتجاهات الإيجابية. هدف البحث إلى تحليل استراتيجية مدير المدرسة في تحسين تنمية الثقافة الدينية في المدرسة الابتدائية الإسلامية المتكاملة فردوس. واستخدم البحث منهجاً كفيئاً باستخدام مدخل دراسة الحالة. وقد أثرت البيانات التي تم جمعها من خلال الملاحظة الميدانية، والمقابلة المتعمقة مع مدير المدرسة ونائب مدير المدرسة والمعلمين، بالإضافة إلى التوثيق، تحليل البحث. تأثر الافتراض المبدئي للنجاح في تحسين تنمية الثقافة الدينية في المدرسة الابتدائية الإسلامية المتكاملة فردوس بقدرة المدير على إدارة البرامج الدينية بطريقة منظمة، وأن يكون قدوة يحتذى بها وبناء علاقات متناغمة مع المعلمين والطلاب وأولياء الأمور. بالإضافة إلى إدارة جميع الموارد على النحو الأمثل، سواء البنية التحتية أو تدريب المعلمين حتى يصبحوا داعمين في توجيه الطلاب دينياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستراتيجية ومدير المدرسة والتدريب والثقافة الدينية.

INTRODUCTION

The principal is someone who has a central role in determining the direction and dynamics of the school.¹ According to Mulyasa², there are seven main roles of school principals which are summarized in the acronym EMASLIM (educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator and motivator). The exclusive role of the school principal as the most significant leader in formulating strategies, policies and implementing programs. As a leader, the principal is tasked with mobilizing the school community to work together productively, motivating and creating a positive work environment. The principal leads by providing guidance, example, and support, both to teachers and staff. In an effort to design the direction of development of educational institutions, school principals must provide guidelines that are prepared in line with the goals, direction, vision and mission of the school. These guidelines play a role in determining strategy, shaping organizational culture and improving the quality of education.

A school principal plays a role as a strategy formulator, based on policies set by the government, foundations and school needs. Because policies are often general and abstract, the principal is tasked with translating them into practical steps that are appropriate for the school. One of the strategies implemented is the creation of strategic decisions between school needs and community needs. To ensure that this goes according to the vision and mission, priorities, methods and supervision are needed.

Current discussions of educational institutions are often adapted to society's needs, such as workforce needs in certain fields, the need for an efficient learning process using technology, and the challenges of forming students' morals and character. To harmonize this, appropriate strategies are needed to achieve positive feedback. In line with Johnson and Scholes' statement, strategy can be interpreted as the long-term direction of an organization designed to provide excellence by managing resources optimally in the face of environmental changes, so that it can meet market needs and stakeholder expectations.

Apart from the challenges of society's needs, there is also the increasingly widespread influence of globalization and foreign culture. Social media and technology are developing rapidly, bringing negative influences that can erode student circles. The weak implementation of students' religious values is a big challenge in schools. This is evidenced by behavior that does not reflect moral and religious values, such as lack of awareness of carrying out worship, dishonesty, cheating,

¹ Wahjosumidjo, *Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah: Tinjauan Teoritik Dan Permasalahannya* (Jakarta: PT. Raya Grafindo Persada, 2002), p. 24.

² Mulyasa, *Menjadi Kepala Sekolah Profesional Dalam Konteks Menyukkseskan MBS Dan KBK* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2005), p. 98.

and inappropriate remarks made by a student. Therefore, fostering religious culture is an urgent need in the world of education considering that moral decline and weak ethics have infected the nation at all levels of society.³

In an effort to prevent moral decline due to the negative impacts of globalization, school principals need to build positive habits in the school environment that are implemented regularly, such as congregational prayers, prayers, reading the Koran, giving alms and other activities. Considering the importance of cultivating religious culture in life and the negative influence of globalization on students, educational activities in schools must provide provisions in accordance with Law regarding the National Education System No. 20 of 2003 Chapter II article three which states that education functions to shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in an effort to educate the nation's life and develop students' competencies so that they become human beings who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, have morals, are knowledgeable, intelligent, creative, and democratic and responsible.⁴

Active leadership is very necessary to instill a religious culture in schools. School principals need to build an atmosphere that supports the development of religious culture. Apart from that, school principals also have an important role in increasing collective awareness about how important religious culture is in shaping student character. Overall, this phenomenon shows that school principals do not only focus on academic aspects, but also play a role in developing and strengthening religious culture to improve students' character and morality, which will ultimately contribute to the formation of better and more religious individuals in society.

Religious culture is a way of life that reflects religious values, applied consistently in daily activities, both by individuals and groups. In the school realm, religious culture refers to a series of habits, traditions and activities that instill religious values in students, such as group prayer activities, reading holy books and carrying out religious services.⁵ The hope is that it can shape students' character, such as honesty, responsibility and empathy. According to research results, religious culture plays a role of 44.32% in the development of student character in the educational environment.⁶

Based on the explanation previously provided, what actions should the principal take to maintain religious values in the school environment? Students are not only given religious

³ G. Johnson & K. Scholes, *Exploring Corporate Strategy* (Inggris: Pearson Education, 2002), p. 2.

⁴ Depdiknas, "Undang-Undang RI Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional" (Jakarta, 2003).

⁵ Leni Levana, "Konsep Budaya Religius Di Sekolah Umum" (IAIN Purwokerto, 2020).

⁶ Juwita Febriani, "Pengaruh Budaya Religius Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Siswa SMK IT Rabbi Radhiyya" (IAIN Curup, 2019).

knowledge, but are also taught how these values can become habits that are embedded in their daily lives. This is where it is important to carry out intensive research on school principal strategies through fostering religious culture, so that it can provide benefits to the lives of students, teachers and the entire school community.

The school principal's strategy for optimizing the development of religious culture was discussed by Fauzi⁷ who explained that this strategy involves school management through several stages, including school planning by formulating a vision and mission, implementation by placing human resources according to their respective potential, and evaluation carried out through comprehensive deliberation. On the other hand, this was also studied by Yuliana⁸ who revealed that religious culture is focused on seven things, namely habituation, extracurricular activities, PAI learning, PAI development, implemented through careful planning, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, this topic was also analyzed by Mahdi⁹ who stated that the school principal designed a religious culture strategy through meetings and deliberations with the teacher team, implemented religious programs such as congregations, religious studies, and carried out regular evaluations to ensure the sustainability of the program.

The main difference between this research and previous research lies in the integrative and innovative approach, namely combining or combining various aspects in a way that is creative and relevant to current developments. For example, teaching the value of honesty in mathematics and patience in sports. School principals are not just relying on routine activities, but are starting to combine religious values with technology and creativity. Apart from that, the differences also lie in the research sites which have their own characteristics in each school environment.

In this research, the object of interest is SDIT Firdaus. Basic level education under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture is developed with an integrated Islamic approach with a focus on forming students who excel in academics and have Islamic personalities. This school provides Islamic Religious Education learning, but in practice it is considered not optimal and less effective in creating religious values in students' daily lives. Based on field observations, the factors that cause this are the influence of the external environment and social media which often conflict with the principles taught in school. Materialistic and hedonistic teachings in today's

⁷ Akhmad Fauzi, "Manajemen Strategi Kepala Madrasah dalam Menciptakan Budaya Religius (Studi Kasus Di MTs Tahfizh Alam Qur'an Desa Winong, Kecamatan Jetis, Kabupaten Ponorogo)" (IAIN Ponorogo, 2021), h. 80.

⁸ Eka Yuliana, "Implementasi Budaya Religius Dalam Meningkatkan Kecerdasan Spiritual Peserta Didik (Studi Multisitus di MI Miftahul Falah Sukorejo Kecamatan Karangrejo dan MI Miftahul Huda Dono Kecamatan Sendang Kabupaten Tulungagung)" (UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, 2020).

⁹ Riandi Marisa Mahdi, Siraj, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah dalam Pembinaan Budaya Religius pada Sekolah Dasar di Kabupaten Aceh Utara", *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* Volume 7, no. 4 (2024).

students can influence their thinking patterns and behavior. Therefore, a stronger coaching program is needed to strengthen religious values among students with up to date and more creative coaching styles.

The aim of this research is to analyze the principal's strategy and its implications in optimizing the development of religious culture at SDIT Firdaus Kauman Mojosari. The initial assumption of success in optimizing religious culture development at SDIT Firdaus is influenced by the principal's ability to manage religious programs in a structured manner, become a role model and build harmonious relationships with teachers, students and parents. As well as managing all resources optimally, both infrastructure and training for teachers so that they become supporters in guiding students religiously.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method. The qualitative method is a research method that is collected in original or natural conditions (natural setting) with an emphasis on observations in the field and the data is analyzed in a non-statistical way.¹⁰ This method is also called the naturalistic research method. The reason for using qualitative research methods is because it allows researchers to understand how the phenomenon occurs, both the reasons and the process, especially in the context of social, cultural and human behavior. In this research, the researcher wants to interpret and analyze the development of religious culture carried out by the principal at SDIT Firdaus, through strategies or steps taken in depth.

The research location is SDIT Firdaus Kauman Mojosari. Data was collected through observation techniques, in-depth interviews and documentation. Research informants consisted of school principals, school principals and teachers. Observations were carried out to see directly the development of religious culture in schools, interviews were carried out to obtain in-depth information regarding the strategies carried out by school principals, in fostering religious culture, documentation was carried out to obtain written data that supported the research results.

The collected data was then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model through four main steps, namely data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and verification and drawing conclusions.¹¹ Data is collected by examining the phenomenon or event as a whole, as well as other parts of the activity. At this stage, the researcher tries to condense the data obtained in the form of field notes and documentation. After that, the data is presented and verified, then

¹⁰ Asep Ahmad Fathurrohman and Aan Daryana, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Islam*, ed. Giovani Van Rega (Bandung: Penerbit Kencana Utama, 2017), p. 23.

¹¹ Husnu Abadi, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ilmu, 2020), p. 163.

conclusions are drawn that answer the research focus. Data was obtained that can answer the objectives of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted by researchers at SDIT Firdaus on several informants, the findings in the field based on the two data collection techniques are presented in the form of a description as follows:

1. The root of the problem is that students' religious culture is declining

In an effort to determine the optimal strategy for fostering religious culture at SDIT Firdaus, several root problems were identified. The following are several main factors that contribute to the decline of religious culture, namely: religious activities in schools are only carried out formally, without strengthening religious values in daily life; increasing individualism due to the influence of modern lifestyles and technology, thus forming a daily culture that does not support religious values, such as activities that are collaborative, students care less about each other; lack of family support to cultivate religious activities at home, such as congregational prayers, reading the Koran, or discussing religion.

In the habituation of religious activities, whether carried out daily, weekly or monthly, they have been carried out but only as a formality, without being properly internalized by students and applied in everyday life. For example, during Dhuha prayer activities at school, students carry out this because it is part of the school rules, but apart from that, students do not apply religious values in their behaviour such as honesty, discipline, or caring for others. This shows that there is a gap between the practice and implementation of religious values in everyday life. Because ideally religious activities are not only ceremonial, but also shape students' character and morals in interacting with the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, technological developments make students' lifestyles modern because this tendency makes students focus more on themselves (individualism) and interact less. Digital interaction via cell phone is currently replacing direct interaction, as a result there is less interest in mutual cooperation activities, social service, or recitation of recitations that require joint involvement. Apart from that, dependence on technology kills students' awareness of sharing and caring for others.

The lack of parental support is also a problem that hinders the optimization of religious culture development. Because the family is the main environment where children learn about

religion, morals and ethics. The inactive role of parents and family members has a big impact, because there is no supervision and role models, especially in religion. The impact is that children are easily influenced by promiscuity and outside culture that is not in accordance with Islamic teachings. This may occur due to several factors such as busy parents, lack of understanding of religion, or an unsupportive family environment.

2. Forms of religious culture development at SDIT Firdaus

Religious culture development at SDIT Firdaus is carried out in various ways, including:

- a. Routine worship activities, such as the *dhuba* prayer which is held in the morning, morning *binnadhoh*, namely the habit of reading the Koran in the morning, praying together before and after studying, and midday prayer in congregation.
- b. Commemoration of Islamic holidays, such as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, commemoration of *Isra' Mi'raj* and *Ramadhan* huts are generally held every year.
- c. Getting used to Islamic attitudes, such as saying hello to *ustadz* and *ustadzah*, getting used to smiling greetings and greetings when meeting friends, maintaining class cleanliness by not wearing shoes in class, wearing clothes that are neat and according to Islamic law, the tradition of kissing and smiling at parents when taking students to school.
- d. Religious lessons and extracurriculars, namely lessons on reading and writing the Koran, oral exams and student *munaqasah*. The extracurriculars include *banjari*, recitations, calligraphy and *qira'ah*.
- e. An Islamic school environment, namely providing a prayer room at school, posting motivational verses on the classroom walls, having a schedule for *Dhuba* prayer imams, clean Fridays, religious tours, demonstrations of *Hajj* and *Umrah* rituals and outbound classes.
- f. Establishing religious activities with school partners, namely with the Al-Hidayah Islamic Boarding School Foundation, such as boarding school training which contains *munajat*, *halaqoh*, and *khot* training and then *santri* camp festival activities which contain *qiyamul lail* and competition events. Together with the surrounding community with a healthy eating program. Together with students' parents, such as friendship and guidance to achieve children's success, parents participate in students' oral exams.

3. Strategy for fostering religious culture at SDIT Firdaus

Strategic steps taken by school principals to optimize religious attitudes in schools include principals formulating policies that have superior methods applied to student learning that originate from the Integrated Curriculum, meaning that all student activities

starting from studying, worshiping and playing are packaged into one package of an Islamic integrated primary school education system. As in the learning process, there are additional subjects BTQ (reading and writing the Koran), Al-Islam, Religious Literacy and the Koran. Furthermore, in the process of worship there is Islamic character development such as the practice of prayer, the practice of the call to prayer, the practice of *Hajj* and *Umrah*. There are also daily morning *dhuba* and *binnadbor* activities carried out by students. Then there is developing students' skills with extracurricular activities such as *qira'ah*, calligraphy, *banjari* and recitations. Also added are play activities that are integrated and creative, such as Islamic outbound, Islamic studies, *Ramadhan* huts, festival camps and boarding houses. In this case, the principal added that what was mentioned previously was just practice, but what was actually being aimed at was the religious cultural values that were underlined. He said the value of faith is in the practice of ablution, the call to prayer, and the rituals of *Hajj*. The value of strictness and discipline is in daily activities such as midday prayers and morning *binnadbor*. The value of togetherness in outbound and camp festivals. The value of patience is in learning BTQ and the Al-Qur'an gradually and with great perseverance and so on.

One of the strategies used by school principals according to the head of the curriculum is to encourage students to be religious through a command and prohibition-based approach. By implementing school regulations accompanied by a system of sanctions and rewards. For example, students who do not wear complete clothing attributes will be given a sanction in the form of a payment of two thousand rupiah. Checks are carried out in front of the gate when students enter the school environment. Then there is also a reward system for students who demonstrate their achievements, including physical prizes such as award certificates or stationery. As well as non-physical prizes in the form of direct praise from the teacher or the opportunity to appear as a student with a good example. According to the principal, this fosters student discipline and responsibility.

The results of the interview with the administration teacher showed that the principal also set a good example, especially for students, arriving in the morning before the students and standing in front of the fence waiting for the students and greeting them with a warm greeting. This action includes good habits to foster a sense of responsibility towards teachers so that they are time disciplined. Then the strategy for cooperation with parents and the surrounding environment was also looked at, because the school principal required a policy that during the oral exam parents be present to accompany the students so that good harmonization can be formed between children and parents. The hope is that this habit can

foster a high level of affection for their children, so that the children are motivated to study harder so they can show the best results in front of their parents.

Likewise, the school principal's foundation actively coordinates, especially in terms of innovating worship activities to make them enjoyable. Previously, the boarding school activities only focused on evening prayers and reciting the Koran, but now interactive activities have been added for students such as gymnastics in the morning, breakfast and lunch activities which foster togetherness as well as sermon training which increases students' enthusiasm for recognizing beautiful and correct Arabic writing, this was conveyed by one of the homeroom teachers.

4. Optimal impact of religious culture

The optimal implementation of religious culture in schools has the potential to bring positive benefits to students, including aspects of personality, social relationships and academic achievement. The following are some of the positive impacts obtained:

- a. Personality aspects such as strengthening faith and piety, students becoming more consistent in carrying out worship and internalizing Islamic values in daily life; forming noble morals, students develop into individuals who are honest, disciplined, polite, and have a high sense of responsibility; increasing patience and perseverance, students are accustomed to overcoming challenges in a positive way and in accordance with Islamic teachings.
- b. Aspects of social relationships, such as developing positive relationships with teachers and friends, are realized through mutual respect, fostering affection, and giving appreciation to each other; strengthening social awareness, students become more interested in helping others and actively participating in social activities; Organizing a harmonious school environment, the school turns into a space that is comfortable, safe and filled with good values.
- c. Aspects of academic achievement, increasing concentration and motivation to learn, students become more focused in the learning process because they are accustomed to discipline and inner calm; build independent and responsible character, students are more organized in managing time and completing school assignments; encouraging academic and non-academic achievements, students are increasingly enthusiastic about participating in various Islamic competitions such as MTQ, calligraphy and religious speeches.

Discussion

This section will discuss the correlation between data found in the field with relevant theories and previous studies. Data findings obtained from observations, interviews and documentation will be analyzed through discussion of findings related to theory and previous studies. This section will be detailed according to the problem formulation that researchers have found, so that it can answer problems in the field.

1. The principal's strategy in optimizing the development of religious culture at SDIT Firdaus Kauman Mojosari

The school principal is the controlling center and the first person responsible for organizing educational activities, especially in forming character and optimizing all student activities. Systematic practical steps are needed so that the school environment supports these activities. Especially in an environment based on religious values such as an Integrated Islamic Elementary School.

In optimizing the development of religious culture in schools, it must be formed through imitation of traditions and habits, because the process of understanding religious values will be more effective if through direct example. Especially at elementary school age, learning to imitate will be easier for students to understand, because if it is just theory without practice, the real habits that are desired will be difficult for students to understand naturally. This opinion is in line with what Muhaimin expressed that there are two phases in the formation of religious culture, namely obedience or arrangement of scenarios from superiors to subordinates and the formation of the culture itself through a trial-and-error process and study.

The principal at SDIT Firdaus sets an example so that he can be a good example for students and teachers, namely by exemplifying time discipline, the principal arrives early and immediately stands next to the fence, so that teachers are equally encouraged to do the same. Another role in efforts to instill a religious culture is providing warm greetings and greetings to students and introductions. Then check the completeness of the student's clothing, if it is not complete, you will be subject to sanctions. This condition provides a view of opinion towards society, because significant repetition is formed. Continuous repetition has a dominant effect on changes felt by various parties. Steps like this were put forward by previous research studied by Eka Yuliana that the process of forming a religious culture was focused on structural models and formal models, the implementation process included

creating a religious atmosphere, example, habituation and civilization (punishment and rewards).

Another approach taken by school principals is through partnerships. This needs to be done so that support from external parties, both parents and the community, is maximized. Schools are educational institutions while the community is the user of educational services. This relationship needs to always be maintained in order to understand each other and avoid divisions. Some of the ways this is done are by cultivating the value of friendship through semesterly meetings. Fostering a sense of responsibility when attending students' oral exams, so that both of them know about their children's educational progress. Then, together with the foundation, they also developed boarding school activities and camp festivals as a form of support for students' religious culture. Mulyasa once expressed this topic in his book *School Principal Management and Leadership*, that partnership strategies both have an impact on student religiosity.

2. The implications of the principal's strategy in optimizing the development of religious culture at SDIT Firdaus Kauman Mojosari

The principal's strategy plays an important role in optimizing religious culture in the school. The approach used by the principal at SDIT Firdaus is an integrative and innovative approach. An approach that combines or combines various aspects in a way that is creative and relevant to current developments.

In terms of student personality, students become more disciplined in worship, have a more polite attitude, and are more active in religious activities. Then, for social relationships, students become accustomed to reminding each other and choosing friendships that develop good habits and leaving friendships that have a negative influence. The achievements obtained also increase because his self-confidence increases. Therefore, optimizing the role of school principals in fostering religious culture is very important in creating an Islamic and quality educational environment. This problem was also discussed by Wilda Arif in her thesis entitled *Strategic Management of School Principals in the Development of Religious Culture*, which has implications that run effectively and cannot be separated from the control of the principal and teachers, as well as influencing student behavior outside of school.

CONCLUSION

The strategy carried out by the principal of SDIT Firdaus to optimize the development of religious culture is an integrative and innovative approach. An approach that combines or combines various aspects in a way that is creative and relevant to current developments. The implications obtained are on students' personalities, students become more disciplined in worship, have a more polite attitude, and are more active in religious activities. Then, for social relationships, students become accustomed to reminding each other and choosing friendships that develop good habits and leaving friendships that have a negative influence. The achievements obtained also increase because his self-confidence increases.

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