

Peers as an Educational Microsystem and Their Influence on the Formation of Student's Morality

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ABSTRACT

Peers as a social environment for learning to adjust to group standards, learning to share feelings, be sportsmanlike, learning to accept, and carrying out responsibilities. The purpose of this research is to find out and describe the influence of peers in shaping the morality of students. The method in this study used qualitative research with descriptive research types. The data sources are one school principal, two teachers, and four students. The instruments used are observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques include data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The results of this study indicate that activities that can influence peers in shaping student's morality include teaching and learning activities in the classroom, religious activities such as Duha prayers in congregation, memorizing of the Qur'an, and religious lectures on certain days. Peers can also provide positive outcomes for students, such as providing new information, social support, and motivation. This is because peer relations are reciprocal, helping each other, trusting each other, loving each other, and complementing each other to form a positive character or good morals for students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Engaging in social interactions is essential for socialising within a culture. Life in society is dependent on social interaction. The realisation of such interconnectedness in life can only be achieved through collaborative efforts and effective communication among individuals or organisations with a shared objective. Upon the encounter of two individuals, social interaction commences. They engage in mutual criticism, exchange handshakes, engage in conversation, or maybe engage in physical altercation. (Kwak and Lee, n.d.) The presence of teachers, peers, and the surrounding environment is crucial in daily educational endeavours. Schools can also impact students in numerous ways, such as students' motivation in learning. The social milieu within the school, encompassing teachers, administrative personnel, and peers, has the potential to exert an influence on students (Zhu, 2021).

The things that also influence the educational process are playmates and people who are around students, such as neighbours, school friends, close friends and others. When children reach adolescence, the time spent with their parents decreases relatively compared to their peers, and peer relationships

become more prioritized or used as a reference rather than the guidance and management of older people. (Winkler et al., 2021) One of the things that also influence the educational process is playmates and the people around students, such as neighbours, school friends, close friends and others. As children move into adolescence, time spent with parents decreases relative to peers. Children's relationships with peers are used more or less as a reference than their parents (Widia et al., 2023). Peers can have a positive or negative influence. Many negative things can be influenced by peers such as teenage acquaintances, indiscipline and so on. Parents must provide social support to protect or isolate children from the types of negative associations with peers that cause early delinquency and that the best protection against peer-motivated delinquency is a strong parent-child bond (Walters, 2020).

Furthermore, family, school, and community are important factors related to students' racial-ethnic attitudes and also to students' academic achievement. The negative impact of peers was also seen during the Covid pandemic which required schools to close. The education system is less than perfect for face-to-face learning, especially for children from low-income families. The impact of peers is also changing: schools allow children from different socio-economic backgrounds to mix, and this effect disappears when schools close. Students from low-income neighborhoods suffer a year's worth of learning loss and endure negative impacts from peers in the community where the child lives. Meanwhile, children from high-income environments usually remain unaffected because they have higher levels of control (Agostinelli et al., 2022).

A study conducted by (Firdaus et al., 2021) stated that the influence of peers greatly influences a person's character. In his research, it was stated that peers had an influence on the smoking behavior of public elementary school students. This indicates that a person's character can also be influenced not only by family and school environment factors but also by peers, who also have a role in influencing a person's negative character. If analyzed, this study has similarities in the discussion aspect of peer theory. However, the difference can be seen in several aspects such as: methods, and analysis used as well as theoretical studies. The theoretical study of Firdaus et al. only focused on peers and students' smoking actions. Meanwhile, this study will use the integration of general and religious theoretical approaches related to peer studies and morality.

Therefore, a student in his association must be able to choose friends to hang out with. This is where the role of parents and teachers is to always direct and guide and supervise how the social conditions of their children. As an example, when childrens at school, the influence of the child's friends is very strong and enters his soul more quickly. Good friends have a good effect on the child, whereas bad friends have a bad effect on the child. This influence can be seen in the attitudes and morals of children, both in the form of actions and words (Firdaus et al., 2021).

Human morality is a problem that Islam wants to fix through the Prophet Muhammad. This is reflected in his statement "Indeed I was sent to perfect noble morals". In essence, there is nothing that humans can be proud of before God's judgment later, except good morals. The realization of good morals for each student is expected to strengthen and enhance his personality as a human being who has ideals and ideas and as a creature of God (Baharun et al., 2019).

Perfecting human attitudes and behavior both individually and in groups in accordance with Islamic law is not an easy thing to do. In living this life, humans always experience changes, one of which includes morals in everyday interactions. Humans are God's glorious creatures because of the gifts God gave him, in the form of a mind that distinguishes him from other creatures. The authors chose a private Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Sukabumi as a research location, because the authors still found that in this educational institution, there were still the following symptoms: there were still some students who used to speak impolite words, there were some students who liked to make fun of his friends, some students still discriminate between friends in hanging out, and some students still don't want to help friends who are in need of help.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach that seeks to include information in the form of narratives about the main phenomena explored in research that is used to answer research problems related to data. (Winarno, 2015) Meanwhile, the type of research used is descriptive qualitative research. Sources of data in this study are primary and secondary data. The primary data in this study are one of school principals, two teachers and four students. Secondary data sources come from school data such as curriculum documents at MTs Al-Musthofa Sukabumi, lesson plans, and activity schedules at MTs Al-Musthofa Sukabumi, books, journals, articles, and research results that are relevant to the environmental impact of peers on the formation of *akhlakul karimah* student.

The data collection techniques in this study are observation, interviews and documentation. This type of observation used by researchers uses moderate participation. In this observation, there is a balance between the researcher being an insider and an outsider. Meanwhile, the interview techniques used were structured and semi-structured interviews. This is consistent with (Budihardjo, 2012) statement that interviews are the process of obtaining information for research purposes by way of face-to-face questioning and answering between the questioner or interviewer and the respondent using a tool called an interview guide.

The researcher also made criteria in determining some of the respondents with the following criteria: first, the principal as a leader in the school, and interacted a lot and knew all the problems that existed in the school. Second, the homeroom teacher for class VIII plays an important role, and is the main control over matters related to learning and students' conditions. Third, several class VIII students at Mts Al-Musthofa Sukabumi met the criteria in this study. Furthermore, documentation techniques derive data in the form of pictures and writing, which includes teaching and learning activities.

The data analysis technique used in the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique in (Fendt, 2018) which includes: data collection, data reduction, data display and verification. Data processing techniques and data interpretation are carried out using observation, interviews and documentation. Then, data reduction in this research is the process of distilling or extracting information so that concepts and relationships that are truly important or essential are found. At this stage the writer summarizes, chooses the main things, focuses on the important things, according to the writer's theme and throws away what is not necessary. Data that has been reduced will provide a clear picture and make it easier for writers to collect further data and search for it if needed (Sugiyono, 2015).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Environmental Impact of Peers in Shaping Students' Morals*

Character education must be realized that it is very important for students in order to form a better personality in accordance with the character values that apply to society. In the educational process of forming students' *akhlakul kharimah*, a positive environment is needed that is able to help students in the formation of these morals, and one of them is peers. The impact of peers is very varied, such as the strength of character, honesty, humor, kindness and justice most desirable and important in a friend. The influence shown by peers can be a teenager's perspective, love, kindness, intelligence, teamwork, leadership and sense of humor. Dyadic analysis of a child's peers will be able to provide clues regarding the role of character strengths which are positively related to the quality of a child's friendships with their peers. Character or moral education will have positive relevance for teenagers who can be influenced by peers (Wagner, 2019).

Students' character or morals are also influenced not only by family but also by peers and society revealing that a person's character is not only influenced by one institution or one environment, but a person's character can be created by family, friends, relatives, teachers, and religious leaders who have a role in shaping a person's character. And peers can be examples and advisors in carrying out school programs that can shape student morals. (Hermino & Arifin, 2020). And that's in line with the researchers conducted interviews with several parties, one of them was the resource person at RSW as the Principal of MTS Al-Musthofa Sukabumi, explaining that:

"At MTs Al Mustofa, it is indeed the duty of every child to discipline himself against the good habits taught in learning or in the education of every teacher." (RSW, 2022).

The resource person also added that this school also has programs that support the formation of student character. The following is an excerpt from RSW's interview as Principal of MTS Al-Musthofa Sukabumi:

"For our program there are also those who must involve parents of students in its application. An example is when they arrive at school, the children must meet their teacher and polite with the teacher and then with their friends in class, arrange sandals, picket, pray before learning begins, including when changing hours, and read Al-Quran 15 minutes every morning before lessons begin." (RSW, 2022).

The ESW resource person as an Islamic Religious Education Teacher also conveyed how the activities and programs at MTs really support students so that they have Islamic character. The following is an excerpt from the interview with the ESW resource person:

"And at Mts al-Musthofa it was designed from the start by combining the national and general education curricula but adding some Islamic education, so at Mts Al-Musthofa the character education of akhlakul karimah is indeed very dominant" (ESW, 2022).

From the statement above, it can be concluded that the programs at MTs Al-Musthofa have advantages, namely in terms of character building in students which are implemented in several activities or programs at school and emphasize the role of peers. This can be seen from the habituation programs held in class and in the MTS Al-Musthofa environment which greatly affect student morals. Starting from daily habituation activities as well as learning in the classroom.



Figure 1. Dhuha prayer activities are led by peers at MTs Al-Musthofa.



Figure 2. teaching and learning activities at MTs Al-Musthofa.

The family, school, community, and social environment play a significant role in developing children's positive character. School and community (social environment) have a significant role in growing children's positive character. Families and society must accustom children to always apply character values in everyday life. For the development of character values in schools, all school agents or stakeholders participate in instilling these values in children. (Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2021) From the explanation above, researchers can clarify that if society, including peers, impacts positive character or students' moral development in a better direction or can create positive characters, positive peers will also provide a positive environment for students or teenagers.

3.2 The Positive and Negative Impacts of Peers in Giving Influence to Students' Morals

Researchers also found in the field the positive impact that peer association has on the morals of students at Mts Al-Musthofa as several statements from several sources that researchers have done. Some of the positive impacts that can be clarified on the results of interviews with informants are first, peers can help solve problems. Second, peers can provide motivation in developing self-potential. As the statement by the informant SN said that peers have a positive side in terms of solving problems:

"If I have friends, I can have various problems, like stories and so on. Sometimes my friends also give me solutions after I finish talking to them." (SN, 2022).

In addition to solving problems, peers also have a role or influence in motivating self-development. This can be clarified from the statements of RSW informants regarding the positive side of peers. The following is a snippet of the interview:

"I am a person who lacks self-confidence, but my friend gave me encouragement. At that time, I was invited by a friend to join extracurricular activities but I didn't want to, I told my friend that I was not confident. But my friend said. It's okay, we're both going, when are you going to try again?" (RSW, 2022).

This is in line with Desmita's statement which reveals that humans are social beings who cannot live alone in the sense that they need other people to carry out their lives. Like a student who also needs a friend to help him carry out his daily life (Desmita., n.d.). In line with (Abdullah et al., 2019) who emphasized moral education and inherent character with social aspects. Both also argue that character education in schools must be constructive and played by components of the family, school, peers and society. Because of that moral values must be given by social groups such as families, schools and communities that must be cooperative with one another. Related to this, of course, the role of peers in providing positive encouragement must be followed by positive thoughts, and it can be maximized if there are peers at school who are also formed with a positive environment, as well as in exploring one's own potential. Being wrong in choosing the environment will affect the results of exploring self-potential.

If there are positive friends, it indirectly also makes students always enthusiastic in living their daily lives. The impact of bad peer behavior, such as saying dirty and unkind words will have a negative effect. On the other hand, positive peers will have a positive impact, including social character (Nike Astrea, 2019).

Besides positive impact, peers also have a negative impact. Some of the negative impacts caused by the peer environment, such as the first, cause closed characters and hostility. Second, negative culture is a destroyer of parental and teacher control values. The two negative impacts can be seen from the statements of the informants of the researchers. The following is an excerpt from an interview with an RSW resource person about the negative impact of peers:

"Students at this school come from different places and have different characters. Sometimes, we also find students who are shunned by their classmates at this school. Groups of lazy students stay away from diligent students, and vice versa. So that, sometimes differences in views lead to conflict and finally fights. (RSW, 2022).

The ESW resource person also said that it was related to the negative impact of peers. The following is an excerpt of the researcher's interview with ESW sources:

"Children who are not accepted/excommunicated by their peers, of course, there are several factors that make this happen. To solve this, we must also know what caused the child to be ostracized. And what is clear is that children who are not accepted/excommunicated by their friends are protected" (ESW, 2022).

From the perspective of the ecological theory of child development, the influence of peers is just as important as family and school in shaping student character. The negative character can be caused by the influence of peers. As an example, according to both, the lack of protection from parents and peers who are not good enough will have an impact on child delinquency. (Carlos Valiente et al, 2017).

In this case, (Hermino & Arifin, 2020) also prove the influence of peers on children's character. According to him, children who are victims of bullying and like to fight with their peers have a tendency to be aggressive. In addition, students who get high peer support from their peers will feel that they are loved, and cared for, thereby increasing their self-confidence. Someone with high self-esteem tends to have a sense of self-confidence and self-belief that they are able to master situations and produce positive results. Junior high school students conduct verbal bullying behavior, physical bullying, and cyberbullying. There are several factors of bullying: behavior within seniority, the history of being a victim of bullying, economic status, violence from the media, family, and peer factors. The impact of bullying behavior can be felt for victims and the more bullies or people who do the bullying (Nurlia & Partini, 2020).

Thus, the school needs to identify which student's behavior causes him to be rejected by the surrounding environment, or precisely that behavior arises from the result of environmental rejection. Aggressive students often use physical, verbal and/or social aggression against their peers. This aggressive behavior could be the result of peer rejection. Unfortunately, when this aggression appears, it triggers greater and prolonged friction and rejection from peers. Besides peers can help solve problems. The negative influence of peers can also provide motivation in developing self-potential. Every student who enters *the* MTs AL-Musthofa school has brought the character of the upbringing of his parents at home which is a control for his parents, but after school the interaction with his parents is minimal. This can be seen from the researcher's interview with the informant SN. The following is a snippet of the interview:

"At the beginning of each new school year these students still look innocent, but over time they have become accustomed to the school environment because in every activity they are always together so that their character changes to follow their friends. Sometimes we meet a child whose family is good, because he is influenced by his friends the child becomes not good. (SN, 2022).

The resource person from SF added that the formation of student morals cannot be separated from the influences in the surrounding environment. At school, of course, students are always in touch with friends who are called peers. In this case peers can also influence student character, although in this case they still have to be under the supervision and direction of the teacher and father. The following is an excerpt from the interview with the SF source:

"There are various forms of peer association in the MTs Al-Musthofa Sukabumi school environment, namely some are friends with groups and some are closed. This was explained directly by students named Salwa Nurlatifah and Siti Fatimah. (SF, 2022).

To reduce these problems, of course the teacher is one of the subjects that makes the morals or character of students better. In addition, teachers must also prevent students from treating their peers with bad attitudes. Because this can affect other students to be reluctant to do school activities. This solution can be done by not rolling the seat, with the aim of continuing to provide protection to students who are treated badly.

Meanwhile, (Reksiana, 2019) stated that character education is not only the responsibility of school education institutions, there must be a role for the social environment, including peers who can also be responsible for providing character/moral education to children. This is further strengthened from the juridical aspect as stated in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 and on Presidential Regulation no. 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education which was later strengthened

again by Permendikbud No. 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education in formal education units. In (Osher et al., 2020) said that in a microsystem environment such as peers it is necessary to have a positive climate. Such as parental support and control, good peers, and a supportive community environment. This will have a positive influence on the development of the child's personality. Not to be left behind says that a good micro-system environment is needed to have a positive influence on adolescents.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the good or bad behavior of a person depends on who he is friends with or how the child's social environment is. If a child is accustomed to gathering with pious and good friends, this will have a positive impact on him. Meanwhile, if a child is used to hanging out with friends who like to smoke, and are lazy, then this will also have a negative impact on him.

3.3 The Process of Forming Children's Character in a Peer Environment in the Formation of Student Morals

Akhlak is a noble or commendable character. Good morals are also born from good qualities, namely in accordance with the teachings of Allah SWT and His messengers. Associated with morals in Islam is often associated with the word Islamic ethics, because Islamic disciplines cannot be separated from Islamic values and ethics. Moral education in Islam is manifested in the morals of the Prophet Muhammad. Morals occupy a very important position and are considered to have the main function in directing the life of Muslims (Pratiwi et al., 2020).

Islamic education is fundamentally based on moral instruction. Formal moral education should take place in schools, whereas informal moral education should take place in families, say both authors. Based on the work of Hayati (2018). Islamic education is based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, which serve as sources for all aspects of Islamic education, including but not limited to: paradigms, ideas, principles, theories, and methods. One must be knowledgeable of the many kinds of morality, including those that pertain to one's relationship with God, with one's own self, and with one's parents or family. While he acknowledges that some of these moral forms are only theoretical, he insists that they be put into practice in the here and now (Nur, 2017).

Regarding moral education, ES sources also stated that good morals will be instilled in students at MTs Al-Musthofa with several indicators such as being diligent, praying frequently, being trustworthy and so on. The following is an excerpt of an interview with ES sources:

"Yes, there are many characteristics of akhlakul karimah students at MTs Al-Musthofa who are good, diligent, obedient to worship, trustworthy by doing assignments and collecting three on time. (ES, 2022)

This explanation was reinforced by RS sources who stated that students who have good character or morals certainly have good personalities at school. The following is an excerpt from the interview with the RS informant:

"Students here are good students who obey the rules, although there are some students who still violate it, in general we can still control it." (RS, 2022).

Based on the results of the interviews above, it can be stated that morality is behavior, character, character, character which is based on Islamic values originating from the Al-Quran and Hadith which discuss the relationship between humans and Allah. In the process of forming student morals, the role of peers can also be seen from how peers become a motivator for students seen from the way their friends want to invite them to study together at home, invite them to pray in congregation together at school. Peers also give each other encouragement and support for their peers who are more active in learning and are able to get equally good grades. (Rozi & Hasanah, 2021)

In teaching moral education, Thomas Lickona explained the need for a comprehensive approach. The intended comprehensive approach leads to the involvement of all scopes contained within the

education microsystem. According to Lickona, peers can play a role in character education for students in terms of creating a positive moral culture at school through community service, disciplinary activities, and other social activities (Lickona, 1993). Peers can also be mediators for students, for example taking the time to listen to students' stories, complaining about students providing support or solving problems that have been experienced by students. Apart from that, it also provides moral support at any time, which is very important in the development of children, especially since the encouragement comes from their closest friends. (Collado et al., 2017)

There are supporting factors that influence the formation of student character in relation to the role of peers, namely: being considered similar to himself and fulfilling needs because physical attractiveness affects first impressions, and children tend to choose those who look attractive as playmates and as good friends (Hayati, 2018). Familiarity at school or the neighborhood is important because choosing friends in a child's environment is limited to a relatively narrow area. But children also tend to choose their classmates and friends of the same sex. In the context of behavior, of course, because children prefer friends who are good, honest, generous, friendly, and sportsmanship. (Widodo, 2020)

In this case the school must also have rules for students and homeroom teachers who seek to monitor and shape the choleric personality of students. As stated by the resource person SR as in the interview excerpt as follows:

"We in this school must apply school rules or regulations that are sanctions but educate so that students want to be responsible for doing assignments like other friends. Because if they give assignments together, they will work together so that the task can be completed quickly, but there are also friends who don't want to work." (SR, 2022).

This is also in line with the statement from source R, who also revealed that schools apply a disciplinary system to foster students' choleric attitudes at MTs Al-Musthofa. The following is an excerpt of the interview with the source R:

"So we as friends will admonish him to carry out his duties according to his responsibilities. If we do it but one of our friends doesn't work, then his name will not be listed so that he is aware and wants to do what he is assigned to do." (R, 2022).

From this explanation, it can be stated that the role of peers in shaping the morals of students at MTs Al-Musthofa Sukabumi is based on togetherness in building friendships. With friendships that are built between peers can provide new information, social support, and foster a positive attitude for students. This is because peer relations are reciprocal between humans who help each other, trust each other, love each other, and complement each other so as to form positive characters or good morals.

There are also things called "hidden religious curricula," which include things like morning Duha prayers with everyone present, *tahfiz* (reading the Qur'an together after the Duha prayers), midday prayers, and religious talks on some days. Also, when the class is in session, the teacher and homeroom teacher are fully responsible for everything, especially when it comes to teaching the kids. This includes running the class and explaining everything that is happening in it (SR, 2022).

This is in line with the statement (Nafiah, 2018), which states that in carrying out moral education in schools, schools must establish partnerships with various parties such as peers, school staff, family and the community who can contribute to forming a moral society. This model demands the allocation of free time, both for families, schools and communities. Variations of activities arise from the manager's creative ideas, then insight into adequate moral education and participation from parents and the community. Parents, schools and peers play a major role in children's pro-environmental actions. However, there are still few parents who know how these social agents can shape environmentally caring attitudes in the younger generation. The role of parents and peers in regulating pro-environmental behavior in children aged 12 to 19 years is very significant. Pro-environmental learning is needed. In addition, descriptive norms from parents and peers directly influence

adolescents' pro-environmental behavior and indirect influence, through personal norms. Adolescents seem to play an accurate role in the perception of environmental actions carried out by those closest to them (Collado et al., 2017).

The influence of peers in shaping a person's character even though the main influence is the family. However, according to him, peers also have an important role in influencing a person's morals because they are included in a child's social environment, where children often spend time with their peers. (Agostinelli et al., 2022). In this case, it can be said that peers have an influence in shaping the character or morals of students through programs and activities that have been carried out by students at MTs Al-Musthofa.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study's data analysis and verification indicate that students' social environments at MTs Al-Musthofa Sukabumi play a role in shaping their moral character. One way in which students' classmates at MTs Al-Musthofa Sukabumi impact them is through the school's official and religious curricula, which aim to mould students' personalities in a predetermined way. Classroom instruction and student study, as well as religious practices like tahfiz, reading aloud from the Qur'an, and special lectures, all have the potential to shape students' moral character through their interactions with their classmates. New information, social support, and inspiration are just a few ways in which students' peers might positively influence them. This is due to the fact that students develop admirable character traits and strong moral principles through their interactions with their peers, which are inherently mutually beneficial. To fully understand the microsystem's impact on students' moral growth, research should expand its scope beyond just peers; the current study only examines a subset of this system.

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