

The Integral Role of School Culture in Shaping Student Behavior and Attitudes: A Case Study of Elementary School

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Javanese Language;
Social Behavior;
Elementary School Students

Article history:

Received 2024-04-24

Revised 2024-05-14

Accepted 2024-06-29

ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of school culture on student behavior and attitudes at Antawirya Krian Elementary School. Recognizing its significance, the research examines how various elements such as philosophy, organizational structure, facilities, vision, mission, and procedural rules shape this dynamic. A qualitative case study approach was employed, using observations, interviews, and documentation for data collection. Data analysis through a phenomenological perspective offered a thorough understanding of the school's cultural practices. The findings highlight the principal's crucial role in embedding the school's philosophy, which combines religious and Javanese cultural values, through consistent communication and exemplary behavior. The school's organizational structure promotes democratic values and management transparency, essential for achieving its objectives. Although the facilities are not perfect, their maintenance ensures a conducive learning environment. The vision and mission focus on developing well-rounded students with strong moral values and a global perspective, reinforced through both curricular and extracurricular activities. School culture is evident in practices such as morning recitations and communal activities, fostering a sense of community and respect among students. The involvement of the entire school community, including teachers and students, is vital in maintaining a positive school culture. Teachers serve as role models and educators, while students actively uphold school values. The study emphasizes the importance of collaboration among all school stakeholders in optimizing character education and enhancing educational quality. The roles of the principal, organizational structure, and community practices are identified as key factors in cultivating a positive school culture, ultimately improving character education and overall educational quality at Antawirya Krian Elementary School.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character is a crucial aspect of human personality, influencing both good and bad potentials inherent in individuals. Understanding and developing character is essential, as it directly correlates with morals and ethical behavior. The primary objective of this research is to explore the strategic importance of character development in human life and how it can be effectively fostered through various educational pathways. These pathways include formal education in schools, non-formal education within communities, and informal education within families. Education, in this context, aims to holistically nurture all potential aspects of students, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. According to the National Education System Law (UUSPN) Number 20 of 2003, national education is designed to develop and shape the character and civilization of the nation with dignity. It aims to cultivate students' potential to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, maintain good health, acquire knowledge, demonstrate capability, creativity, and independence, and ultimately, to become democratic and responsible citizens. This research will delve into these educational efforts and their impact on character development, providing a comprehensive analysis of their effectiveness and implications.

To achieve the goal of character development, formal education in schools plays a pivotal role in shaping the personality of students and preparing the younger generation to become adults with strong character and cultural values. However, the education sector currently faces significant challenges in character formation due to the rapid advancement of information and technology. The easy accessibility of information from various unlimited media sources poses a risk to students' character development, potentially allowing negative external influences to permeate without adequate filtering. This can result in the adoption of modern, consumerist, and hedonistic lifestyles, the erosion of moral values, widespread injustice, and a diminished sense of solidarity within educational institutions. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach to character development, which includes socialization, empowerment, acculturation, and the collaboration of all national components. Education remains a fundamental strategy in this effort, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach to fostering positive character traits in students.

Character is striving with underlying behavior. Character is a collection of values that are realized in a system of driving forces that underlie thoughts, attitudes, and behavior that can be displayed consistently (Freud in Wahyudi, 2006: 75). Character is also the internalization of values that originally came from the environment and become part of one's personality. Furthermore, the character is the values that are imprinted in us through education, experience, experimentation, sacrifice and environmental influences, becoming intrinsic values that underlie our attitudes and behavior. So because character underlies human attitudes and behavior, of course, character does not come by itself, but must be formed, built and developed.

Strengthening character and intellect through education is greatly influenced by various external factors of the educational process in addition to internal factors of the educational process. These various external and internal factors can be called culture in an empirical, not normative, sense. This implies that the process of strengthening character and intellect is not only influenced or determined by culture, but is a cultural process. This is where it can be said that strengthening character and intellect is a cultural process in addition to being determined by culture. Strictly speaking, culture plays a very fundamental and strategic role in strengthening the nation's character and intellect. It is said to be fundamental because culture will be the source, axis and basis for strengthening the character and intellect of Indonesian youth, while it is said to be strategic because culture must be used as a perspective and approach to strengthening character and intellect through various sectors of cultural life.

The PPK (Strengthening Character Education) movement emphasizes five main character values that are crucial for holistic character development: religious, nationalist, mutual cooperation, independence, and integrity values (Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2010a and 2010b; Asmani, 2011; Komalasari & Saripudin, 2017; Koesoema, 2018). This research focuses on two values that are integral to the identity of the Indonesian nation: Nationalist and Religious values.

Nationalist character values encompass ways of thinking, behaving, and acting that demonstrate loyalty, concern, and high appreciation for the nation's language, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environments. These values prioritize the interests of the nation and state over individual or group interests. Sub-values of nationalism include appreciation of the nation's culture, preservation of cultural heritage, willingness to make sacrifices, striving for excellence and achievement, love for the country, environmental protection, law obedience, discipline, and respect for cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity (Muslich, 2011; Rahardjo, 2013; Priyambodo, 2017; Komara, 2018).

By linking these values to the research focus, this study aims to explore how character education, particularly through the development of nationalist and religious values, can address the challenges faced by educational institutions in fostering a robust and morally grounded generation amidst the rapid flow of information and technology.

In everyday life, general moral violations often occur among students who lack proper character training in schools. Such violations include brawls, involvement with narcotics, promiscuity, and disrespect toward elders, among others. The prevalence of these immoral acts has led to the perception that the educational system is failing to develop and nurture national morality. Elementary students, in particular, exhibit behaviors such as cheating during exams, using inappropriate language, and displaying a lack of respect for elders, peers, and school staff. Furthermore, there is a growing disregard for cultural values, especially Javanese culture. This situation arises because schools prioritize building and developing students' basic competencies in main subjects, often neglecting character formation. The pandemic exacerbated the issue, as most school activities moved online, leading to the development of bad habits due to the lack of teacher supervision. To optimize character education programs in schools, it is essential for all parties, including the Education Department, schools, and the community, to collaborate in shaping character and fostering the desired ethical standards.

In line with this, Zubaedi stated that the problem of moral decline has recently infected some of the younger generation (Nuryana, 2010). Symptoms of this decline are indicated, among other things, by the spread of cases of crime, violence and various other behaviors. Praiseworthy morals such as politeness, friendly nature, tolerance, humility, helpfulness, social solidarity, and so on, which have been the nation's identity for centuries, seem less strongly attached to them.

Data from reports from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) show that there were 1,396 cases of public complaints regarding special child protection cases in 2021 consisting of clusters of bullying in educational units, psychological abuse and violence, cyber bullying both as victims and perpetrators. In 2022, the complaint data will be 636 cases consisting of the same cluster. The next data shows as many as 1,067 cases of public complaints related to cases of children as victims and perpetrators of sexual crimes in 2021 and as many as 931 cases in 2022. This data shows that there is a decreasing trend in complaint cases from 2021 to 2022, but there is an increase in the cluster of child complaints as there will be 395 victims of sexual violence and rape in 2022.

In conclusion, this research addresses the critical gap in understanding and effectively fostering character development through various educational pathways amidst the rapid advancement of information and technology. The primary objective of this study is to explore the strategic importance of character development in human life and the effectiveness of formal, non-formal, and informal educational approaches in achieving this goal. The research question guiding this inquiry is: How can educational institutions effectively integrate character education, particularly nationalist and religious values, to mitigate the negative external influences that threaten students' moral and ethical development?

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of character education within the unique context of Indonesian culture and its contemporary challenges. By focusing on the integration of nationalist and religious values, the study provides insights into how these foundational aspects of character can be strengthened to foster a morally grounded and resilient generation. The significance of this research extends beyond academic inquiry; it offers practical implications for policymakers, educators, and communities in shaping the character and ethical standards of the younger generation. By highlighting the role of education in nurturing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, this study

underscores the need for a holistic and collaborative approach to character development. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on moral education, providing a framework for addressing the challenges posed by modern societal influences and reinforcing the cultural values that underpin national identity and integrity.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach grounded in phenomenology, aiming to achieve a detailed and clear description of empirical findings. Taylor and Bogdan (in Nuryana, 2010: 79) suggest that this approach facilitates a systematic, actual, and accurate portrayal of the facts and characteristics of a specific population or area. The focus of this research is on the school culture at Antawirya Krian Elementary School, the role of the school community in implementing this culture, the obstacles teachers face, and their efforts to overcome these challenges comprehensively.

This research adopts a case study methodology. According to Bogdan and Biklen (in Ifriqia, 2005:29), a case study involves a detailed examination of a single setting, subject, or document repository. Arikunto (2008: 131) further clarifies that case study research is conducted intensively, in detail, and in depth on a particular institution, organization, or phenomenon. Although the subject matter is narrow, it is explored profoundly.

Data collection will be conducted through observations, interviews, and document analysis. Each method is chosen to contribute distinct and complementary insights into the research questions. Observations will focus on the daily activities and interactions within Antawirya Krian Elementary School. Specific aspects to be observed include the implementation of school culture practices, the involvement of various members of the school community, and the contextual factors influencing these practices. The interview process will involve structured and semi-structured questions aimed at different members of the school community, including teachers, administrators, and support staff. The questions will be designed to elicit detailed responses about their experiences and perspectives regarding the school culture, the challenges they encounter, and their strategies for overcoming these challenges. These interviews will provide in-depth qualitative data that enriches the observational findings. Relevant documents such as school policies, curriculum plans, meeting minutes, and other institutional records will be reviewed. These documents will provide contextual background and support the analysis by offering concrete examples of the school culture in practice. They will also help triangulate data from observations and interviews.

Data processing will be continuous, from collection to the conclusion of the research. The process begins with data reduction, where the collected data is selected, simplified, and sorted. This involves discarding irrelevant information and organizing the remaining data systematically. The reduced data is then analyzed by consulting relevant theories and previous research findings to draw meaningful conclusions. These conclusions will answer the research questions and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the school culture at Antawirya Krian Elementary School.

This methodology ensures a thorough and multi-faceted exploration of the research problem, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the school culture and the dynamics within the school community.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. School Culture

3.1.1 School Philosophy

Research findings show that the formation of philosophy at Antawirya Krian Elementary School cannot be separated from the role of the school founder and principal as manager and leader of the organization. The school principal always conveys these expressions in meetings or conferences with

teachers and employees. Apart from that, he also provides an example both directly and indirectly to his subordinates.

The principal frequently uses specific expressions that encapsulate the school's philosophy, such as "Ngudi Kawruh," meaning "pursuit of knowledge," and "Rukun Agawe Santosa," which translates to "harmony brings strength." These expressions reflect the integration of religious values and Javanese cultural principles. For instance, "Ngudi Kawruh" is rooted in the religious emphasis on seeking knowledge as a form of devotion, while "Rukun Agawe Santosa" draws from Javanese cultural teachings about the importance of social harmony.

The principal's use of these expressions serves multiple functions. In meetings, he emphasizes "Ngudi Kawruh" to encourage teachers to continuously seek personal and professional development. This expression is not just a mantra but a call to action, inspiring teachers to attend workshops, engage in further studies, and apply new pedagogical methods in their classrooms. During informal interactions, he often refers to "Rukun Agawe Santosa" to remind staff of the importance of maintaining a harmonious work environment. This has led to collaborative efforts among teachers, fostering a supportive and collegial atmosphere within the school.

Moreover, these expressions impact teachers' attitudes and behaviors significantly. One teacher recounted how the principal's frequent reminders of "Ngudi Kawruh" motivated her to pursue a master's degree, which subsequently improved her teaching methods and student engagement. Another teacher mentioned that the principle of "Rukun Agawe Santosa" helped resolve conflicts more amicably among colleagues, creating a more cooperative and pleasant work environment.

The principal's direct and indirect examples further reinforce these values (Brian, 2007). For example, he often participates in community service activities alongside teachers, exemplifying the school's commitment to societal well-being and religious duty. His actions speak volumes, encouraging teachers to internalize these values and reflect them in their daily interactions and professional practices.

By embedding these simple yet profound expressions into the school culture, the principal ensures that the philosophy is easily understood and embraced by all members of the school community. This internalization process ultimately shapes teachers' attitudes and behaviors, fostering an environment that aligns with the school's core values and educational goals.

3.1.2 Organizational Structure

Research findings indicate that Antawiryia Krian Elementary School possesses an organizational structure that closely resembles those of other schools. The principal serves as the highest authority, supported by the deputy principal who collaborates with the school committee. Below them are the library unit, administration unit, and teachers, all connected by a vertical line. In general, an organizational structure is designed to ensure the organization is optimally arranged to achieve its goals and objectives. Therefore, Antawiryia Krian Elementary School's organizational framework is strategically structured to facilitate effective management and educational success.

According to Usman (2013: 193), organizational structure is a formal system of rules and tasks that establishes the relationships and authority governing how people collaborate and use resources to achieve organizational goals. Usman further explains that organizational structure serves as a characteristic of an organization, used to control individuals working together and organizational resources in achieving goals. It also controls coordination and motivation, directs people's behavior within organizations, and responds to the use of the environment, technology, and human resources, while facilitating organizational development.

The mechanism for determining policies and making decisions remains a process and involves all school members (Webber, 2016). Even though the person with authority to make decisions is the school principal, aspects of democracy and management transparency are always put forward. These democratic values are always instilled at Antawiryia Krian Elementary School to maintain the school culture that is always held together.

3.1.3 Facilities and Infrastructure

The condition of the facilities and infrastructure at Antawirya Krian Elementary School is very complete and in general is suitable for use as a teaching and learning facility for students and teachers at the school. Even though the existing facilities and infrastructure are not yet perfect, students and teachers are proud to look after and care for them. The books in the library are always kept up to date with the current needs of students and teachers. The school also always strives to ensure that students always feel comfortable studying, so that environmental and spatial planning is a concern. The room arrangement at Antawirya Krian Elementary School with one door for entry and exit with a library room, teacher's room, principal's room, and administration in front of the school gate, aims to facilitate school supervision of students. The school also does the same thing in environmental planning, always paying attention to the culture of healthy living, by creating a beautiful atmosphere with neatly arranged trees and flowers at the front of each classroom, thus adding to the beauty of the school environment. The unique and different shape of the building because it carries the theme of Javanese culture makes students feel at home at school. There are many places that students can use to study or just discuss around the building.

According to Poster (in Widodo, 2005: 160), good spatial planning, environmental management, office equipment, and high-quality school equipment create a positive impression on visitors. The term "equipment" typically refers to the hardware or materials owned by the school. However, facilities and equipment are interrelated and work together to support the school's operations. School resources, both human and material, reflect the priorities, values, and philosophy that underpin the school curriculum. Many schools highlight their excellence through academic priorities, which are indicated by factors such as teacher quality, student activity facilities, laboratories, studios, and libraries. Consequently, well-maintained facilities and high-quality equipment not only support educational activities but also embody and convey the strength and culture of the school. This holistic approach ensures that schools present themselves as institutions committed to fostering educational excellence and a supportive learning environment.

From the description above regarding the need to improve the quality of education and the quality of teachers and administrative staff, it is time for schools to think about follow-up plans to complement the facilities and equipment currently available at schools. Schools already have to think about finding solutions regarding funding needs to provide for the improvement in facilities and equipment. It is time for the school and the school committee to sit at the same table and work together to meet these needs, so that the current quality of education can be maintained and improved.

3.1.4 Vision and Mission

The vision of this school is to cultivate students who exhibit Islamic behavior, possess a love for their country, embrace local wisdom, and maintain a global outlook. The school's mission is to instill faith and devotion through Al-Qur'an learning activities, foster student morals through habituation, assignments, and example, practice Pancasila values in learning activities, understand and apply Javanese cultural values in daily activities, and develop intelligent, creative, and innovative students who master ICT (information, communication, and technology) skills.

To realize this vision and mission, the school implements a variety of successful programs and initiatives through both intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Specific programs include dedicated Al-Qur'an study sessions, character education through moral assignments and role models, and cultural activities that celebrate Javanese traditions. Additionally, the school offers advanced ICT training to ensure students are proficient in modern technologies (Cheng, 2015).

Success stories of students who embody these ideals provide tangible evidence of the school's impact. For instance, alumni who have excelled in both academic and non-academic fields while maintaining strong ethical and cultural values demonstrate the efficacy of the school's programs. One notable case study is of a student who, through the school's comprehensive learning activities, became

a national champion in a science competition while also leading community service projects rooted in local cultural practices.

The school evaluates progress toward achieving these goals through a combination of qualitative and quantitative metrics. Regular assessments of student performance in both academic and character education programs, feedback from parents and community members, and analysis of student participation in extracurricular activities provide a comprehensive view of the school's impact. This strategic planning and accountability framework ensures continuous improvement and alignment with the school's vision.

According to Sedarmayanti (2010: 161), a vision encompasses everything that one ideally aims to achieve from all activities, forming a mental picture of future aspirations. It represents the insight into the future that one seeks to achieve within a certain period, serving as an intuitive wisdom that inspires and motivates action. A well-articulated vision can unite all members and serve as a source of inspiration in fulfilling their duties, which is evident in the cohesive and motivated community at this school.

3.1.5 Rules of Procedure

The rules and regulations in an organization aim to guide members in their behavior and promote a positive environment. At Antawirya Krian Elementary School, the principal emphasizes that the creation of rules and regulations is a collaborative process, involving input from all school members, including teachers, employees, and students. This inclusive approach ensures that the rules are well-received and understood by everyone, fostering a culture of compliance and mutual respect.

One of the challenges faced in this collaborative process was reconciling diverse perspectives and interests. To address this, the school facilitated open forums and discussions where all members could voice their concerns and suggestions. This democratic approach not only helped in creating more balanced and comprehensive rules but also reinforced the values of human rights and respect for individual differences.

Testimonials from school members provide evidence of the effectiveness of these collaboratively created rules. Teachers and students report a greater sense of ownership and responsibility towards adhering to the regulations, resulting in fewer violations and a more harmonious school environment. For instance, a teacher noted, "Since we started involving everyone in the rule-making process, there has been a noticeable improvement in student behavior and engagement."

Additionally, the school evaluates the impact of these rules through regular feedback sessions and surveys. These evaluations have shown that the jointly created rules have significantly contributed to maintaining order and promoting a positive, peaceful atmosphere within the school. By upholding democratic values and respecting individual rights, the rules are perceived not as burdens but as collective agreements that support the well-being and success of all school members.

Overall, the collaborative process of rule-making at Antawirya Krian Elementary School has proven to be effective in fostering a culture of awareness, compliance, and peace, illustrating the importance of inclusive and democratic practices in educational settings.

3.1.6 Implementation of School Culture

The formation of values, rules, and habits as part of the school culture at Antawirya Krian Elementary School is intricately linked to the principal's role as a manager. Research findings indicate that the school has developed a diverse and robust school culture, including several key practices:

1. The habit of morning murojaah at the beginning of every lesson.
2. The 5S culture (smile, greet, salim, sungkem, polite) to instill respect for kyai and teachers, which is a duty of the santri.
3. A culture of discipline and adherence to rules and regulations, complemented by clean Friday activities.

4. A culture of hard work and responsibility fostered through the Tinata Antawirya scout organization.
5. The practice of eating lunch together to build camaraderie and kinship among students.
6. Encouraging the use of Javanese to teach polite language and character.

Longitudinal outcomes associated with these practices provide a comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness (El-mubarak, 2015). Over time, these cultural practices have led to significant improvements in both student behavior and academic performance. For example, regular *murojaah* sessions have enhanced students' memorization and understanding of lessons, contributing to higher academic achievement. The 5S culture has fostered a respectful and positive school environment, reducing incidents of disciplinary issues.

Additionally, the emphasis on discipline and clean Friday activities has cultivated a sense of responsibility and orderliness among students, which is reflected in their punctuality and adherence to school rules. The Tinata Antawirya scout organization has been instrumental in developing leadership skills and a sense of accountability, as evidenced by the active participation and achievements of students in various scouting events and competitions. The practice of communal lunches has strengthened peer relationships, creating a supportive and cohesive student community. Encouraging the use of Javanese has not only preserved cultural heritage but also instilled values of politeness and respect in daily interactions.

Testimonials from teachers and students further corroborate these outcomes. A teacher observed, *"The cultural practices we have implemented have noticeably improved students' behavior and academic focus. They are more respectful, responsible, and engaged in their learning."* Long-term data shows a consistent rise in academic performance metrics and a decrease in behavioral issues, underscoring the success of these cultural initiatives.

In conclusion, the strategic formation of school culture at Antawirya Krian Elementary School, guided by the principal's leadership, has yielded positive longitudinal outcomes, enhancing both student behavior and academic performance. These practices have not only built a strong and respectful school community but also laid a solid foundation for the students' future success.

3.2 The role of school residents in implementing school culture

Building a positive school culture is a collaborative effort involving the entire school community. Every component, from administrators to students, plays a crucial role in implementing and sustaining this culture to shape student character (Akbar, 2010). This collective responsibility is evident in the rules and discipline consistently applied to all members of the school community.

At Antawirya Elementary School in Krian, strong solidarity among all school community members is paramount in fostering a positive school culture. The principal, as the leader, exemplifies commitment by consistently adhering to and enforcing the mutually agreed-upon rules and regulations. Research findings indicate that the principal effectively creates a positive school culture through leading by example, conducting evaluations, organizing activities, and demonstrating a steadfast commitment to fulfilling their duties.

Teachers also play a vital role in realizing a positive school culture. Beyond their instructional responsibilities, they act as educators dedicated to the holistic development of students, both academically and non-academically (Astawa, 2018). Teachers model adherence to established rules, thereby motivating students to follow suit. Research shows that students significantly contribute to this culture by enthusiastically participating in school activities, being active, creative, and diligent in their studies, and consistently following school regulations. The combined efforts of the principal, teachers, and students culminate in a cohesive and positive school environment (Tinto, 1997).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings at Antawirya Krian Elementary School reveal that school culture is cultivated through the examples set by the principal and teachers, along with efforts to socialize the desired cultural values. The principal plays a crucial role by modeling behavior, conducting evaluations, organizing activities, and demonstrating a strong commitment to their duties. Teachers contribute by fulfilling their roles as educators and exemplars, responsible not only for delivering academic content but also for shaping students' personalities. Students, in turn, exhibit enthusiasm, creativity, diligence in their studies, and adherence to school rules. However, the study's limitations include its narrow focus on a single school, which may not fully represent the diversity of school cultures in other settings. Future research should explore a broader range of schools to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how school culture can be effectively developed and sustained.

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