

## Moral Development Strategies for Students at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak

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### Abstract

Moral development in non-formal Islamic education is essential for strengthening students' Qur'anic literacy, manners, worship discipline, and moral-spiritual awareness. This study aims to analyze moral development strategies for students at Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ) Anwarul Masalik Keruak. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving the head of the TPQ and three *ustaz/ustazah* who were actively engaged in Qur'anic learning from August to September 2022. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while trustworthiness was strengthened through source, technique, and time triangulation. The findings show that moral development was implemented through three main strategies: habituating noble character (*akhlak al-karimah*) toward puberty, training discipline and devotion in worship, and cultivating *muraqabah* awareness. These strategies were carried out through greeting routines, polite speech, cleanliness practices, Qur'anic recitation, daily prayers, moral advice, exemplary stories, and reinforcement of the belief that every action is under Allah's supervision. The main constraints included the influence of the environment outside the TPQ, differences in students' backgrounds, and the absence of a measurable moral development guide. This study concludes that moral development in TPQ needs to be managed consistently, collaboratively, and evaluatively so that moral-spiritual values are not limited to verbal advice but become embedded in students' daily habits. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on moral education in non-formal Islamic learning institutions, while practically, it offers implications

for strengthening structured, measurable, and habituation-based moral development programs in TPQ.

**Keywords:** Moral Development; Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an; Non-Formal Islamic Education; Habituation; *Muraqabah* Awareness

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is essentially directed at developing human potential holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, spiritual, social, and moral dimensions. From this perspective, education cannot be understood merely as the transfer of knowledge, but also as a process of character formation, self-control, and internalization of moral values in everyday life. Therefore, moral development is an important element of Islamic education, especially when children are in a developmental phase that still requires role modelling, habituation, and continuous value reinforcement (Ainiyah, 2013; Bafadhol, 2017; Warasto, 2018; Warsah, 2018).

Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ) is a non-formal Islamic education institution that has a strategic function in developing Qur'anic reading and writing skills, worship discipline, and students' social manners. In practice, TPQ serves not only as a space for teaching Qur'anic recitation but also as a moral education environment closely connected to community life. Studies on TPQ indicate that the success of moral development is strongly influenced by the consistency of ustaz/ustazah, patterns of habituation, environmental support, and directed management of activities (Haerudin, 2021; Nurbayani, 2021; Salman, 2022).

The urgency of moral development becomes stronger because children and pre-adolescents are at a stage of religious and moral value development that requires concrete guidance. At this stage, values of goodness are more easily understood when presented through repeated behavior, familiar examples, and activities aligned with their experiences. Previous studies have emphasized that the development of religious and moral values in children needs to be carried out through gradual, communicative approaches that correspond to learners' psychological development (Ananda, 2017; Ardiyanti, 2022; Herawati, 2017; Nurjanah, 2018).

In moral education, habituation and role modelling strategies occupy an important position. Habituation helps students perform good behavior consistently, while role modelling presents concrete forms of the values being taught. Several studies show that character values are more effectively instilled when educators not only provide advice but also build an orderly, religious, and supportive learning atmosphere for daily moral practice (Alawi, 2019; Cahyaningrum et al., 2017; Khofifah & Mufarochah, 2022; Oktaviana et al., 2022; Solihah & Faizin, 2021).

In addition to habituation and role modelling, moral development is also related to strengthening spirituality. Moral values in Islamic education are directed not only toward external compliance but also toward inner awareness that humans are accountable to Allah and to others. Therefore, activities such as Qur'anic recitation, prayer, moral advice, exemplary stories, and self-reflection need to be designed as means for shaping students' moral-spiritual character (Ayu & Junaidah, 2018; Devianti et al., 2020; Firdaus, 2017; Hasan, 2019; Sakwin & Muqowim, 2020).

Although studies on moral education have developed, research examining moral development strategies in community-based TPQ still needs to be strengthened. Many studies have more frequently discussed character education in formal schools or early childhood education, whereas moral development practices in TPQ have distinctive characteristics because they occur in a non-formal, religion-based learning space and depend strongly on the closeness of ustaz/ustazah to the community. This gap provides an important basis for examining moral development practices in TPQ more contextually.

TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak is one Qur'anic education institution that implements moral development through learning activities and daily habituation. Based on preliminary observations on 17 July 2021, the ustaz/ustazah had habituated students to greet others, speak politely, respect peers, maintain cleanliness, and dispose of waste properly. However, some students still needed to be reminded repeatedly. This condition shows that moral development cannot be sufficiently carried out through advice alone, but requires strategies that are more directed, consistent, and periodically evaluated.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze moral development strategies for students at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak. The focus of the study is directed toward forms of habituating noble character (akhlak al-karimah), training discipline and devotion

in worship, and cultivating muraqabah awareness as part of students' moral-spiritual development.

## **METHODS**

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was selected because the purpose of the study was to understand and describe moral development strategies that occurred naturally within the TPQ environment. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to obtain a contextual understanding of the practices, meanings, and constraints of moral development based on the experiences of educational actors.

The study was conducted at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak from August to September 2022. The main subjects of the study were three ustaz/ustazah who were actively involved in Qur'anic learning activities. Institutional information was also obtained from the head of the TPQ to strengthen the description of programs, routines, and patterns of student development. The subjects were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the moral development process and understood the dynamics of learning at the TPQ.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information on development strategies, implementation constraints, and forms of moral reinforcement carried out by the ustaz/ustazah. Observations were conducted to examine learning routines, interactions between the ustaz/ustazah and students, habituation of manners, and worship practices. Documentation was used to trace supporting information concerning TPQ activities, learning records, and other documents relevant to the research focus.

The main research instrument was the researcher, supported by interview and observation guidelines. The interview guide was directed toward three main focuses, namely the habituation of noble character (akhlak al-karimah), worship discipline, and the cultivation of spiritual awareness. The observation guide was used to record students' behavior, patterns of guidance by the ustaz/ustazah, and forms of habituation that emerged during learning activities.

Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting information relevant to the research

focus. Data display was presented in the form of thematic narratives and a findings matrix. Conclusions were drawn gradually by considering the relationships among interview, observation, and documentation data. These stages of analysis refer to a qualitative data analysis model that emphasizes the continuous processes of data condensation, display, and verification of findings (Miles et al., 2014).

Data trustworthiness was strengthened through source, technique, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the ustaz/ustazah and the head of the TPQ. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Time triangulation was conducted through repeated observations during the research period so that the data obtained were more stable and accountable.

## RESULTS

The findings show that moral development at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak was implemented through strategies integrated into Qur'anic learning activities and students' daily routines. These strategies included the habituation of noble character (akhlak al-karimah), training discipline and devotion in worship, and cultivating muraqabah awareness. The three strategies were interrelated because the development of outward behavior was strengthened through worship practice and inner awareness.

**Table 1. Matrix of Findings on Moral Development Strategies at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak**

Strategic Focus	Main Practices	Finding Notes
Habituation of noble character (akhlak al-karimah)	Greeting others, polite speech, respecting peers, maintaining cleanliness, and disposing of waste properly.	Some students followed good habits, but consistency was still influenced by the environment outside the TPQ.
Discipline and devotion in worship	Qur'anic recitation, memorization of short surahs, daily prayers, learning manners, and advice before or after learning.	Worship activities became a medium for spiritual development, but the variation of strategies still needed improvement.
Muraqabah awareness	Introduction to Allah's attributes, tadabbur of verses, exemplary stories, and reinforcement of the awareness that actions are supervised by Allah.	This strategy helped students understand morality as a spiritual responsibility, not merely external compliance.
Implementation constraints	Differences in students' backgrounds, the influence of external peer interaction, and uneven understanding of development strategies.	TPQ requires moral development guidelines that are more planned, consistent, and periodically evaluated.

### **Habituation of Noble Character (Akhlaq al-Karimah) Toward Puberty**

The first strategy observed in learning was the habituation of noble character (akhlaq al-karimah). The ustaz/ustazah guided students to become accustomed to greeting others when entering and leaving the learning room, speaking politely, respecting teachers, appreciating peers, maintaining cleanliness, and disposing of waste properly. These habits were reinforced repeatedly through direct guidance, educative reminders, and examples of everyday behavior.

Habituation was also directed toward preparing students to enter puberty. The ustaz/ustazah viewed that students need to be guided from an early age so that they become familiar with religious obligations, manners toward teachers, manners toward parents, and social responsibility. In practice, this development was carried out through brief advice before or after learning, reinforcement of positive behavior, and simple habituation closely related to students' activities.

Field findings show that habituation had not yet operated fully consistently. Some students still needed to be reminded to maintain cleanliness and follow the guidance of the ustaz/ustazah. This indicates that habituation requires continuity among TPQ activities, families, and students' social environments.

### **Training Discipline and Devotion in Worship**

The second strategy was training discipline and devotion in worship. In TPQ activities, development was directed not only toward the ability to read the Qur'an but also toward manners when reading, readiness of the heart, and earnestness in participating in worship activities. The ustaz/ustazah trained students through Qur'anic recitation, memorization of short surahs, daily prayers, and reinforcement of orderly attitudes during learning.

Devotion was understood as an inner attitude trained gradually. The ustaz/ustazah sought to cultivate the awareness that reading the Qur'an is not merely an oral activity but an activity that requires earnestness, respect, and calmness. Therefore, students were directed to improve their sitting posture, listen to their peers' recitation, and avoid disrupting the learning process.

Observation results show that worship practice and Qur'anic recitation played an important role in calming the learning atmosphere. However, some students still required

more varied approaches so that worship activities were not perceived as monotonous. This condition requires ustaz/ustazah to develop development methods that are more communicative, engaging, and appropriate to students' age.

### **Cultivating Muraqabah Awareness**

The third strategy was cultivating muraqabah awareness, namely the awareness that Allah knows every action, thought, and intention of human beings. The ustaz/ustazah cultivated this value through the introduction of Allah's attributes, exemplary stories, simple tadabbur of Qur'anic verses, and advice on the importance of honesty, sincerity, and responsibility.

The cultivation of muraqabah awareness was carried out using simple language and was connected to students' experiences. When students were reminded to be honest, maintain cleanliness, or respect peers, the ustaz/ustazah linked these behaviors to the belief that every action has the value of worship when performed with the right intention. In this way, morality was understood not only as a social rule but also as a spiritual responsibility.

The constraint identified was that not all students immediately understood the inner meaning of this advice. Some students still required concrete examples and repeated habituation. Therefore, the cultivation of muraqabah awareness needs to be conducted gradually through role modelling, habituation, simple dialogue, and continuous behavioral evaluation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings show that moral development at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak was grounded in habituation, role modelling, worship discipline, and spiritual awareness. This pattern is consistent with studies of moral education that position moral formation as a gradual process rather than an instant outcome. Students' morality is developed through behavioral repetition, value reinforcement, and consistent educator figures (Bafadhol, 2017; Warasto, 2018).

The habituation of noble character (akhlak al-karimah) in TPQ is relevant to the view that character education for children and pre-adolescents needs to begin with behavior close to everyday life. Greeting others, cleanliness, politeness, honesty, and social concern are concrete behaviors that can be observed and practiced. This finding supports

studies emphasizing that habituation and role modelling are effective for shaping moral values when implemented consistently in a learning environment (Alawi, 2019; Cahyaningrum et al., 2017; Khofifah & Mufarochah, 2022).

The role of ustaz/ustazah is an important factor because moral development requires consistent role models. Educator role modelling does not merely convey moral messages but also demonstrates how these values are practiced. In this context, ustaz/ustazah function as guides, directors, and models of religious behavior. This is consistent with the findings of Oktaviana et al. (2022), who stated that educators play an important role in planning, implementing, and evaluating moral education through habituation.

The strategy of discipline and devotion in worship shows that moral education in TPQ is inseparable from spiritual development. Qur'anic recitation, memorization, prayer, and religious advice serve as media for forming inner calmness, responsibility, and awareness of carrying out religious commands. The development of religious values in children requires a process close to their experiences and supported by repeated activities (Ananda, 2017; Haerudin, 2021; Sakwin & Muqowim, 2020).

The cultivation of muraqabah awareness strengthens the inner dimension of moral development. In Islamic education, morality is related not only to visible behavior but also to intention, self-control, and the human relationship with Allah. Strengthening the awareness that Allah knows every action is consistent with the basic principles of moral education that connect moral behavior with spiritual responsibility (Firdaus, 2017; Hamim, 2014; Hasan, 2019; Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

This finding also shows that moral development needs to consider students' developmental stages. Children and pre-adolescents are not always able to understand moral concepts abstractly; therefore, religious values need to be explained through examples, stories, dialogue, and practice. The studies of Herawati (2017), Nurjanah (2018), and Ardiyanti (2022) affirm that the development of religious and moral values in children requires a gradual approach appropriate to learners' psychological and social development.

From an institutional perspective, moral development in TPQ needs to be managed more systematically. Ardi et al. (2019) showed that moral development in strengthening character education requires clear planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the TPQ

context, such planning can take the form of daily habituation guidelines, indicators of student behavior, reflection schedules, and routine communication with parents.

The main constraints in this study were the influence of the environment outside the TPQ and the suboptimal variation of development strategies. This problem confirms that moral development cannot be assigned to the TPQ alone. Families and communities need to become part of the development ecosystem so that values practiced in the TPQ are not interrupted when students are outside the institution. Nurbayani (2021) and Salman (2022) also emphasized the importance of continuity in moral development within community-based TPQ environments.

Conceptually, this finding strengthens the view that moral education must integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. Students need to know correct values, feel the importance of those values, and practice them in everyday life. Thus, moral development is oriented not only toward normative understanding but also toward the formation of habits and sustained moral awareness (Ayu & Junaidah, 2018; Devianti et al., 2020; Muzakki, 2018; Riami et al., 2021).

The practical implication of this study is the need for a simple yet measurable moral development design. TPQ can prepare a list of core behaviors to be habituated each week, build an educative reward system, conduct brief reflection with students, and communicate behavioral development to parents. In this way, moral development can move from a spontaneous pattern toward a more systematic and sustainable pattern.

This study has limitations. First, the study was conducted in one TPQ; therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalized broadly. Second, the main data were obtained from three ustaz/ustazah and the head of the TPQ, so the perspectives of students and parents were not explored in depth. Third, the study did not yet use a measurable behavioral evaluation instrument. Future research may involve students, parents, and TPQ managers more broadly and develop a model for evaluating moral development that is appropriate to the characteristics of non-formal Islamic education.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that moral development strategies for students at TPQ Anwarul Masalik Keruak were implemented through three main patterns, namely the

habituation of noble character (akhlak al-karimah), training discipline and devotion in worship, and cultivating muraqabah awareness. These three strategies were carried out through simple routines closely related to students' lives, such as greeting others, speaking politely, maintaining cleanliness, reading the Qur'an in an orderly manner, praying, listening to advice, and understanding that every action is under Allah's supervision.

The main contribution of this study lies in its affirmation that moral development in a community-based TPQ requires integration among behavioral routines, worship practice, and strengthening spiritual awareness. Moral development cannot be sufficiently carried out through the delivery of advice alone, but needs to be supported by the role modelling of ustaz/ustazah, consistent habituation, family support, and periodic behavioral evaluation.

Practically, TPQ is advised to prepare daily moral habituation guidelines, strengthen pedagogical training for ustaz/ustazah, build communication with parents, and conduct simple evaluations of students' behavioral development. Future research is recommended to test a more measurable model of moral development by involving students, parents, and the community so that development strategies can be formulated more comprehensively.

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