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Sirojuddin & Mulyanto

From Daily Habits to Character Formation: Exploring Positive Habituation Practices in an Indonesian Public Elementary School

Sirojuddin [1], Tri Mulyanto [2]

[1,2]Universitas Muhammadiyah OKU Timur, Indonesia
* Corresponding author: sirojuddin260303@gmail.com[1], masmule3@gmail.com[2]

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze student character development through positive habituation at Sumber Asri Public Elementary School, focusing on habituation practices, the character values reflected in students' behavior, the roles of school community members, and supporting and inhibiting factors. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with three informants selected through purposive sampling, comprising the principal, a teacher, and a student. Data were collected in June 2026 through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that positive habituation practices include greetings, collective prayer, morning literacy activities, queuing, classroom duties, and school cleanliness activities. These practices reflected the values of discipline, responsibility, religiosity, politeness, environmental awareness, and cooperation. Consistent implementation, teacher role modeling, and parental support served as supporting factors, whereas some students' inconsistent participation and influences from outside the school environment posed challenges. Information provided by the teacher and student indicated perceived behavioral changes, particularly in discipline, politeness, responsibility, and the practice of certain positive habits at home. This study contributes by mapping the connections between school routines, role modeling by school community members, and character values reflected in students' behavior, including the continuity of habituation practices within the family environment. The findings also highlight the relevance of positive habituation to Islamic education through the daily practice of religious values and moral conduct.

Keywords: Character education, Elementary school, Positive habituation, Student character.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and religions that play a vital role in the social life of its people. This diversity positions education as a strategic arena for instilling values such as responsibility, tolerance, discipline, compassion, and respect for others from an early age (Samani, 2013). In the context of elementary education, character building cannot be achieved merely through the verbal transmission of values; rather, it must be embodied in educational practices that enable students to understand, experience, and internalize positive behaviors in their daily lives (Syahruddin & Ismail, 2026). The main challenge lies in how these values are translated into consistent behavior within the school environment, particularly through interactions between teachers and students, the implementation of routine activities, and a school culture that supports character development (Asrar et al., 2025).

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Education, in essence, serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also plays a fundamental role in shaping students' character. Collective character crises are closely associated with educational processes because they emerge from the accumulation of individual-level moral deficiencies that gradually develop into problematic cultural patterns (Hakim & Rohaeni, 2026). At the elementary school level, character development holds a foundational position because this is the stage at which students begin to establish habits, values, and attitudes that influence their future behavior. Both the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum place Character Education Strengthening as an important orientation through values such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, integrity, independence, and nationalism. The Merdeka Curriculum further reinforces these values through the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile (Ruyadi et al., 2026).

Despite the availability of this policy framework, various moral issues remain evident in school environments, including low levels of discipline, limited responsibility, impolite behavior, and students' inadequate ability to regulate emotions and interact positively with others. These conditions indicate that character formation cannot rely solely on theoretical instruction. It requires positive habituation implemented consistently, systematically, and continuously. This need is particularly relevant in light of recent research showing that character education in Indonesian elementary schools continues to face significant challenges, including teachers' limited understanding of character education concepts, inconsistent program implementation, and inadequate evaluation of its long-term effects on student behavior (Ratri & Atmojo, 2024).

Article 3 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System states that national education aims to develop students' potential so that they become individuals who are faithful and devout, of noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). This formulation of the goal serves as a guideline for every educational institution in fostering the character of the Indonesian people, thereby nurturing a generation that is not only cognitively intelligent but also possesses strong character and good moral integrity.

Elementary schools constitute the formal educational foundation for subsequent levels of education. Therefore, character education at this level plays a decisive role. Character values cannot be optimally cultivated by relying solely on classroom instruction. They require continuous habituation embedded in students' everyday lives until the practices become established habits. The habituation approach is particularly relevant because of its experiential nature. Students do not merely understand character values cognitively but also experience and practice them repeatedly until these values become internalized as relatively automatic patterns of behavior (Yasmin et al., 2026). Sumber Asri Public Elementary School (SD Negeri Sumber Asri), the setting of this study, is an elementary school that actively applies this approach through programs such as greeting, acknowledging, and smiling practices, morning literacy, classroom duties, collective prayer, queuing routines, and extracurricular activities designed to cultivate discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness. Through these routine activities, students are expected not only to understand character values conceptually but also to apply them in their everyday social interactions.

Research on habit formation as a character education strategy in elementary schools is by no means a new topic in the educational literature. Previous research generally indicates that character development through habit formation is closely linked to modeling, the school environment, and the reinforcement of values in students' daily activities. Habit formation and modeling have both been identified as crucial strategies for instilling character values in schools (Hendriana & Jacobus, 2017). The same pattern has been reported for student discipline, where habit formation and modeling simultaneously contribute to improvements in uniform neatness and personal hygiene (Safitri & Putri, 2026). Both studies share the view that character education

cannot rely solely on the verbal transmission of values but must be supported by observable behavioral examples and routines carried out repeatedly. International syntheses reach a similar conclusion, identifying role modeling, a supportive school ethos, and repeated opportunities to act as recurring features of effective programs (Berkowitz, 2011; Arthur et al., 2017). Thus, habit formation can be understood as a process that provides students with opportunities to consistently practice character values, while modeling helps students recognize concrete examples of expected behavior.

The next theme concerns the role of the environment and the sociocultural context in strengthening character development. Local wisdom can be drawn on in students' character development through proverbs, traditions, and other cultural symbols (Yani et al., 2025). Habit-forming programs in elementary schools can also support the reinforcement of nationalist values in efforts to shape students with Pancasila-based character (Pangestu & Sumadi, 2024). On a broader scale, a PRISMA-protocol-based systematic review of the hidden curriculum in elementary schools identified the importance of habit formation, modeling, and social reinforcement in character development (Vitriani & Sukiman, 2026). That review also emphasizes that the effectiveness of these mechanisms is linked to teacher consistency, school culture, and family support. In line with this, modeling, habit formation, a supportive school climate, the integration of character values across subjects, and extracurricular activities have been identified as strategies implemented concurrently in elementary schools (Aningsih et al., 2022). Comparatively, these studies show that character development does not occur through isolated routines but is linked to an environment that provides examples, reinforcement, and opportunities for students to apply the values they have learned. Nevertheless, the focus of each study differs: some emphasize discipline and nationalism, while others highlight local wisdom, role modeling, or hidden curriculum mechanisms. Therefore, these findings are best understood as complementary evidence rather than as conflicting results.

Based on this synthesis, the relationship between habit formation and character development can be explained through three interrelated mechanisms. First, school routines give students repeated opportunities to practice particular behaviors, such as praying, queuing, performing duty shifts, and maintaining cleanliness. Habit research outside education describes the same mechanism: repetition in a stable context gradually shifts behavioral control from deliberate intention to contextual cueing (Wood & Neal, 2007), and the time this takes varies widely across individuals and behaviors (Lally et al., 2010). Second, teachers' example and social reinforcement from the school community help students grasp what those behaviors mean and what standard is expected. Third, consistent practice supported by the family environment may help students apply the values more independently across settings. Within this framework, internalization is indicated not by compliance alone but by consistent behavior across situations. These three mechanisms structure the analysis that follows.

Nevertheless, several limitations can be identified in this body of research. First, most studies examine habituation partially by focusing on a single program, such as a particular routine or uniform neatness, without examining habituation holistically as an integrated strategy embedded within the broader school culture. Second, the majority of studies remain descriptive and implementation-oriented, primarily documenting how programs are carried out without examining in depth the extent to which they produce tangible changes in students' character. This limitation has also been highlighted by a systematic literature review of character education strategies, which identified conceptual and operational challenges across different implementation contexts (Hadi et al., 2025). Third, empirical studies focusing on regular elementary schools in non-urban areas remain relatively limited, particularly schools whose resources and challenges differ from those of model schools or schools participating in the *Sekolah Penggerak* program.

Taken together, these studies leave a gap: the mechanisms linking positive habituation to character development have not been explained in an integrated way, particularly the relationship between school routines, the example set by the school community, and the consistent application of values in daily behavior. A contextual study is still needed to examine how several habituation practices operate together, which character values are reflected in them, and how consistency of implementation and family support relate to the application of positive habits outside school. This study addresses that gap by mapping those relationships in one school setting and by specifying what such data can and cannot establish. Theoretically, it offers an integrated account of interconnected habituation practices within a single elementary school rather than an analysis of separate programs; practically, it may inform principals, teachers, and policymakers designing habituation programs in regular elementary schools.

Accordingly, this study describes and analyzes the implementation of positive habituation as a strategy for developing student character at SD Negeri Sumber Asri, identifies the character values reflected in the habituation programs, and examines the factors that support and hinder their implementation.

2. Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine student character development through positive habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri. The school environment, habituation activities, and interactions between teachers and students served as the primary sources of data. The study was conducted at SD Negeri Sumber Asri in June 2026. Three informants were selected purposively, comprising one principal, one teacher, and one fifth-grade student aged 10 years. The informants were selected based on their relevance to the implementation and experience of positive habituation practices at the school. The principal provided information regarding school policies and habituation programs, the teacher described their implementation in daily learning and school activities, and the student shared personal experiences of participating in these practices. In the Results, accounts are attributed to individual informants using the codes P (principal), T (class teacher), and S (student), so that each statement can be traced to its source. Primary data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews, while secondary data were obtained from relevant school documents, including habituation programs, school regulations, activity schedules, school records, and documentation of student activities. Informants were recruited through the school after research permission had been granted by the principal. Inclusion required direct and continuing involvement in the school's habituation routines during the study period; members of the school community without such involvement were not approached. Because the study was designed as a single-site descriptive case study, one informant was selected to represent each role rather than recruiting until thematic saturation was reached, and no claim of saturation is made.

Data collection was conducted by the researcher during June 2026 through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review. Direct observations focused on positive habituation practices carried out as part of the school's daily routines, including the forms of activities, teacher and student involvement, consistency of implementation, student responses, and behaviors reflecting character values such as discipline, responsibility, independence, care, politeness, and respect for others. Semi-structured interviews explored the objectives and implementation of habituation practices, teacher role modeling, student responses, and perceived supporting and inhibiting factors. Core interview questions addressed the types of positive habits practiced at school, how teachers modeled and reinforced these habits, the students' experiences of participating in them, and the factors that supported or hindered their implementation. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher to preserve the informants' accounts for subsequent analysis. School documents were examined to complement and compare information obtained through observation and interviews. The use of these techniques is consistent with

qualitative research on character education through habituation at the elementary school level (Ulfatin, 2022).

Data collection and analysis were conducted iteratively. The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by observation and interview guides, field notes, and documentation records. Data analysis followed an interactive model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2013). The unit of analysis was the practice of positive habituation and the character values reflected in students' behavior, as documented through observations, interview transcripts, and school documents. During data condensation, the researcher reviewed the collected materials, identified meaningful segments relevant to the research questions, and assigned descriptive codes. Related codes were then grouped into categories and broader themes. For example, observations of students waiting for their turn could be coded as "queuing behavior" and categorized under "discipline and respect for others." This example illustrates the coding procedure rather than asserting a finding independent of the actual data. The resulting categories were organized thematically to identify patterns and compare evidence across data sources. Conclusion drawing and verification involved revisiting the data and examining whether the interpretations were supported by the available evidence. Divergent accounts and observations were retained for further examination rather than automatically excluded. To maintain analytical transparency, the researcher documented relevant field observations, coding decisions, and the development of categories and themes in research records. The researcher also considered how prior assumptions about character education might influence data interpretation and checked emerging interpretations against the original observations, transcripts, and documents.

Data trustworthiness was examined through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the principal, teacher, and student, while technique triangulation involved comparing observations, interview transcripts, and school documents concerning the same practices. Differences among informants or data sources were treated as potentially meaningful variations in perspective rather than as inconsistencies that had to be eliminated. When discrepancies arose, the researcher examined the relevant records and considered the informants' respective roles and experiences before developing an interpretation. Interpretations were retained only to the extent that they were supported by the available empirical evidence. The researcher maintained records of data collection and analytical decisions to support the traceability of the research process. These procedures were intended to strengthen the credibility and transparency of the findings while ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the school context and the evidence collected. Two procedures commonly used to strengthen qualitative trustworthiness were not applied: interpretations were not returned to the informants for member checking, and no peer debriefing with a second coder or an external colleague was conducted. Interpretive decisions were therefore examined only by the researcher against the original records, which limits the extent to which the interpretations presented here can be regarded as independently corroborated (Birt et al., 2016). The reporting of this study was checked against the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (Tong et al., 2007), and the items that could not be reported from the available records are identified among the study's limitations.

3. Results and Discussion

1. Forms and Implementation of Positive Habituation in Student Character Development

Student character development at SD Negeri Sumber Asri is addressed through positive habituation practices incorporated into the school's daily routines. The interview with the class teacher (T) indicates that these practices include the 5S program, comprising smiling, greeting,

acknowledging others, politeness, and courtesy; collective prayer before and after lessons; classroom duties; morning literacy; flag ceremonies; and Friday clean-up activities. These findings document the forms of habituation implemented at the school, rather than establish their causal effects on student character development. The practices are integrated into students' everyday school activities and are not limited to lessons specifically designed to address character values. This integration provides opportunities for students to encounter and practice expected behaviors in routine school settings. However, the extent to which these practices contribute to the internalization of character values cannot be determined solely from the presence of the activities; it requires consideration of students' observed behaviors, interview accounts, and the consistency with which the practices are implemented.

The activities cover several behavioral dimensions: the 5S program addresses courtesy and respect in social interaction, collective prayer addresses religious practice, morning literacy addresses learning readiness and reading habits, classroom duty and Friday clean-up address responsibility and environmental care, and flag ceremonies address orderliness and participation in collective activity, with nationalism as the wider aim (Prihatmojo et al., 2026). Each activity therefore carries a distinct emphasis while overlapping with the others.

Data collected from the student informant (S) provide additional insight into the forms of positive habits practiced at SD Negeri Sumber Asri. In the interview, S mentioned three activities carried out before class begins: praying together, reading a book, and singing the national anthem. This is reflected in the following interview excerpt.

"Before class, we are guided to pray together, read a book, and sing the national anthem."

The account identifies the routines as part of daily school experience and links them to religious values, reading habits, and patriotism. It confirms which activities take place; it does not show that they have produced internalization or behavioral change, which would require observational and documentary evidence.

The empirical evidence therefore identifies two related findings: the habituation practices are recognized by the student as part of the school's daily experience, and the student associates some of these practices with preparation for learning and positive behavior. These findings suggest that students' perspectives are relevant to understanding how school routines are experienced and interpreted by their participants. In character education, repeated opportunities to practice values in everyday situations are considered important because character involves more than the cognitive understanding of moral principles (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This literature emphasizes behavioral practice within character education, alongside other dimensions involved in character development. Viewed in relation to this perspective, the practices reported by the student provide a contextual example of how character-related activities are incorporated into school routines. Nevertheless, the available interview account does not, by itself, establish the extent to which these routines lead to the internalization of values or lasting behavioral changes. Such interpretations need to be assessed alongside observational evidence and other relevant data sources.

2. Planning of the Positive Habituation Program

Positive habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri is grounded in school-level planning. T explained that the habituation program is planned through teachers' meetings at the beginning of the academic year and incorporated into the principal's work program. The program is also included in the School Work Plan and the school's annual program.

Including habituation in school documents matters for continuity: it gives implementation an institutional basis rather than leaving it to individual teachers, which is consistent with the view that effective character education works through school culture rather than isolated classroom activities.

However, the inclusion of a program in planning documents does not in itself demonstrate that all habituation objectives have been achieved. Planning must be translated into consistent implementation, role modeling, monitoring, and evaluation. Interview data indicate that the school evaluates students through behavioral observations, records, and attitude assessments reported on student report cards. Although evaluation is discussed in greater detail in the following subsection, the existence of these mechanisms indicates that habituation extends beyond planning and implementation to include the assessment of students' character development.

3. Habituation in Daily Activities and School Routines

Habituation is implemented through activities that are repeatedly performed as part of everyday school life. T explained that students are accustomed to praying before learning, maintaining cleanliness, and respecting their peers during discussions. Certain activities are also conducted routinely each day, including morning prayer and 15 minutes of literacy before lessons begin. Habituation is therefore embedded in recurring moments, particularly at the beginning of lessons and during collective activities, a pattern also reported in other elementary schools (Marmoah & Poerwanti, 2022).

Repetition is an important element in habit formation because consistently performed behaviors provide students with opportunities to develop relatively stable patterns of action. In education, habituation does not simply involve repeating the same activity. It creates conditions that enable students to connect particular values with the actions they perform.

The implementation of these activities also demonstrates an integration of individual and social habituation. Prayer and morning literacy are conducted as shared routines before lessons, whereas maintaining cleanliness and respecting peers are reflected in students' everyday interactions. Classroom duties and Friday clean-up activities provide students with experiences of collaborative work and responsibility for their environment. S also named morning literacy and communal clean-up among the activities enjoyed, which suggests that these routines are not experienced only as requirements.

The school thus uses routine activities as spaces for nonacademic learning: discipline is practiced through orderly participation, responsibility through assigned duties, care through cleanliness activities, and courtesy through interaction with teachers and peers. Systematically implemented school-based programs have been associated with improvements in students' social-emotional competencies and behavior (Durlak et al., 2011). The case here differs in that the activities are embedded in ordinary routines and carry religious as well as social content.

4. Teacher Role Modeling in Habituation Practices

Positive habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri does not operate solely through instructions directed at students. T regards role modeling as an integral part of character development, stating that educators need to demonstrate disciplined and courteous behavior to students. This finding indicates that teachers are viewed not only as program implementers but also as behavioral models whose conduct students observe throughout school life.

The student's perspective reinforces the importance of teacher role modeling. S reported that teachers provide examples by arriving on time and communicating politely, indicating that teachers' behavior is recognized as something that can be emulated. In character development, role modeling is important because students interact with teachers repeatedly and have continuous opportunities to observe how values are translated into actual behavior.

Role modeling in moral education matters here because students learn not only from what teachers say but also from the conduct teachers display in educational interactions (Sanderse, 2013). At SD Negeri Sumber Asri, punctuality and courtesy in communication provide concrete

examples of the values expected to emerge in students, so that habituation is reinforced by the consistency between what is said and what is shown.

5. Analysis of Islamic Values in Habituation Practices

The Islamic dimension of habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri is reflected in collective prayer, greetings, courtesy, and respect for others. T identified religiosity and politeness as character values emphasized through these practices, a pairing also reported in other Indonesian schools (Tohirin et al., 2025). These findings indicate that religious and character education are interconnected through students' everyday activities. Collective prayer before and after lessons, for example, connects learning routines with religious awareness and moral responsibility. This interpretation aligns with QS. Al-Ahzab verse 70, which emphasizes truthful speech and conduct as morally valuable behaviors (Zain et al., 2024).

The 5S practice also reflects Islamic social ethics through greetings, courtesy, and respect. QS. An-Nisa verse 86 emphasizes responding to greetings with an equal or better greeting, providing a religious basis for interpreting greetings as a practice that supports respectful social relationships (Fauzi et al., 2025). Similarly, T reported encouraging students to respect their peers' opinions during discussions. This practice reflects the interpersonal dimension of Islamic morality, which encompasses not only the relationship between individuals and God but also relationships among people. Meanwhile, classroom duties and Friday clean-up activities can be interpreted in relation to responsibility, cleanliness, and environmental care. However, because the data do not establish that these activities were explicitly designed as religious programs, their connection to Islamic values remains an analytical interpretation rather than a claim about the school's formal program objectives.

These findings demonstrate that positive habituation is multidimensional because a single activity may reflect several character values. Collective prayer relates to religiosity and orderly routines, the 5S practice relates to courtesy and respect, while classroom duties and clean-up activities relate to responsibility and environmental awareness. The significance of these practices lies not merely in their repetition but also in the values they represent, the examples provided by teachers, and the opportunities they offer students to practice positive behavior. Accordingly, Islamic values provide an interpretive framework for understanding the religious and moral dimensions emerging from the habituation practices at SD Negeri Sumber Asri. Together, institutional planning, routine implementation, and teacher role modeling provide a contextual basis for examining the relationship between school habituation and character development, while recognizing that the extent of students' internalization of these values requires further empirical examination.

6. Character Values and the Roles of School Community Members in Positive Habituation

Positive habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri is directed toward several character values explicitly identified by teachers, namely discipline, responsibility, religiosity, environmental awareness, cooperation, and politeness. These values are not developed through isolated activities but are embedded in the school's daily routines, as character education research has also observed (Wulandari et al., 2023).

Discipline, Responsibility, and Religiosity

Discipline is reflected in the regularity with which students participate in school activities. T explained that morning prayer and literacy activities are conducted every day for 15 minutes before lessons begin. S, meanwhile, reported that these pre-learning activities help students become better prepared for lessons. These findings indicate that discipline in this context is not

limited to compliance with school rules but also involves students' ability to adjust to the rhythm of school activities.

Discipline is also closely related to responsibility. Classroom duties and cleanliness activities provide students with opportunities to carry out tasks concerning the condition of their shared environment. T identified responsibility as one of the core values promoted through the habituation program, and S named responsibility among the values learned through these activities. The relationship between discipline and responsibility can be seen in the expectation that students not only attend and participate in activities but also complete the duties assigned to them.

Religious values are primarily cultivated through collective prayer before and after lessons. T identified religiosity as one of the main focuses of character development at the school. S described collective prayer as part of the pre-learning routine, associating it with being ready to learn and behaving well. Religiosity within habituation is therefore not limited to ritual practice but is beginning to be connected by the student with a behavioral orientation, a link also noted in studies of religious habituation (Abeng et al., 2026).

From the perspective of Islamic education, the relationship between habituation and behavior is consistent with the concept of *akhlak*, which views behavior as an expression of internalized values. Education is not directed merely toward enabling students to understand religious values but also toward developing habits that reflect those values. Accordingly, routine prayer can be understood as part of creating a religious atmosphere, while consistency in completing responsibilities and following rules provides an opportunity to apply the value of responsibility in school life.

7. Politeness, Environmental Awareness, and Cooperation

Politeness is cultivated through the 5S program, comprising smiling, greeting, acknowledging others, politeness, and courtesy. This value is further reinforced through students' habit of respecting one another during discussions. S also reported having become more polite toward teachers and peers after participating in the habituation program, and accustomed to greeting teachers. These findings indicate a connection between the programs designed by the school and students' experiences in social interactions. Politeness is therefore not taught merely as a behavioral rule but practiced through students' everyday relationships with teachers and with one another.

Environmental awareness is developed through classroom duties, Friday clean-up activities, and communal work. T identified environmental awareness as one of the character values emphasized through the habituation program. S described communal clean-up as a preferred activity and reported practicing cleanliness at home as well. This finding indicates that environmental activities have two dimensions. First, they train students to take responsibility for shared spaces. Second, they provide opportunities for students to transfer habits developed at school into the family environment.

Cooperation emerges when habituation activities are carried out collectively. Classroom duties and communal clean-up activities require students not only to complete individual tasks but also to interact with their peers to achieve the desired condition of the shared environment. S stated that one reason for enjoying habituation activities is the opportunity to learn together with classmates.

Environmental awareness and cooperation are linked because a shared space cannot be maintained by individual awareness alone; cleanliness activities connect personal responsibility to a collective interest. Systematically designed school-based experiences have likewise been reported to support students' social skills, attitudes, and behavior (Nurfauziah et al., 2025).

8. The Roles of Teachers, Education Personnel, Parents, and the School Environment

Character development at SD Negeri Sumber Asri does not depend on student involvement alone. Teacher role modeling, already described above as a form of habituation practice, functions here at a wider level: it is part of the environment students observe daily, and it reinforces the values the school promotes through its routines.

Education personnel and other members of the school community belong to the same wider environment. T expected future habituation programs to become more structured and to involve the whole school. Where character values are enacted only in particular classrooms, students meet different behavioral standards elsewhere in the school.

Parental involvement represents another important element. T explained that parents support habituation by encouraging their children to practice discipline and politeness at home. S also reported applying positive habits acquired at school within the home, particularly by helping parents and maintaining cleanliness. School-to-home continuity of this kind has been documented elsewhere (Syarifuddin et al., 2024). Findings from these two perspectives indicate the possibility of continuity between values promoted at school and those reinforced within the family. Character development becomes stronger when behaviors cultivated at school receive reinforcement in the home environment (Darmawan & Wijayanti, 2026).

However, this continuity does not operate without challenges. T identified inconsistency among some students and influences from the environment outside school as barriers to implementing habituation practices. The school responds through guidance, individualized approaches, and collaboration with parents. This finding demonstrates that character habituation does not occur within an environment entirely controlled by the school. Students bring experiences from their families and social environments into school. Therefore, schools need to adopt adaptive approaches when responding to differences in individual habits.

9. Character Values, *Akhlak*, and the Perspective of Islamic Education

Classical Islamic ethics supplies a conceptual vocabulary for reading these findings rather than merely endorsing them. In the Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, al-Ghazālī defines khuluq as a settled disposition of the soul from which actions issue readily and without deliberation, and argues that such dispositions are acquired through riyāḍa, the deliberate training of the self by repeated practice until an act is performed without effort (Al-Ghazālī, 1995). Miskawayh likewise treats akhlāq as dispositions that are open to change precisely because they are formed by habit and discipline rather than fixed at birth (Miskawayh, 1968). This account runs parallel to the Aristotelian strand of contemporary character education, in which virtue is likewise treated as a disposition formed through practice rather than through instruction alone (Kristjánsson, 2015), and recent scholarship on Islamic education locates the convergence of religious and ethical formation at precisely this level of cultivated conduct (Sahin, 2018). Read through this framework, the routines documented at SD Negeri Sumber Asri are not religious ornamentation added to an otherwise secular character program; they are the mechanism through which a disposition is intended to be laid down, while role modeling supplies the observable standard against which the learner calibrates that practice (Sanderse, 2013). The framework also fixes the analytical limit of the present data: a disposition is identified by its stability across situations and over time, whereas this study observed practices within a single month and recorded the perceptions of three informants. What the evidence supports is the presence of the training practices, not the formation of the dispositions they are intended to produce.

Viewed as a whole, the values developed through habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri relate closely to the dimension of akhlak: discipline to self-control and the consistent fulfillment of obligations, responsibility to carrying out tasks and accepting their consequences, politeness to

the ethics of social interaction, and care and cooperation to relationships with other people and with the environment, while religious values supply the orientation of the whole.

This relationship indicates that character education and *akhlak* education do not necessarily need to be positioned as two separate processes. Within habituation practices, they can converge in students' concrete behaviors. Greetings and politeness, for example, constitute social practices while also representing aspects of *akhlak* toward others (Suherman et al., 2026). Collective prayer represents a religious practice that provides spiritual orientation within learning activities. Maintaining cleanliness and performing shared responsibilities constitute forms of responsible behavior with a social dimension.

This perspective is consistent with the objectives of Islamic education, which emphasize the development of conduct alongside religious knowledge. The two verses discussed earlier bear directly on the practices observed here: reciprocal greeting in QS. An-Nisa verse 86 (Sumarsono et al., 2025), and truthful speech in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 70, which together supply a normative basis for the school's emphasis on greetings, politeness, and communication ethics (Badri & Malik, 2024).

Positive habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri therefore connects individual, social, and religious dimensions of conduct. Teachers, other members of the school community, and parents provide the reinforcement that carries these values beyond single routines.

Table 1. Mapping character values and factors supporting habit formation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri.

Character Values	Daily Routines	Actors Identified by Informants	Empirical Indication (source)
Discipline	Morning prayer, reading, punctuality	Teachers, students, parents	Reported as more disciplined and punctual (T, S)
Responsibility	Class duty, cleaning duties	Teachers, students, parents	Responsibility cited as a value students have acquired (T)
Religiosity	Prayers before and after class	Teachers, students, parents	Prayer described as part of the daily routine before and after class (T, S)
Politeness	The 5S practice; respecting fellow students	Teachers, students, parents	Reported being more polite and accustomed to greeting others (S)
Environmental awareness	Class duty, Friday clean-up, community service	Teachers and students	Reported enjoying clean-up activities and practicing them at home (S)
Cooperation	Class duty and other group activities	Teachers, students, and the school community	Reported enjoying the activities because of learning together with classmates (S)

Source: Interviews with the principal (P), the class teacher (T), and one fifth-grade student (S) at SD Negeri Sumber Asri, June 2026, triangulated with field observations and school documents.

A single activity is associated with more than one character value: classroom duty relates to responsibility but also to cooperation and environmental care, while the 5S practice relates to politeness but also to patterns of respectful interaction. Habituation is therefore better read as an interconnected set of practices than as a series of single-purpose programs.

10. Evaluation, Supporting Factors, Challenges, and the Impact of Positive Habituation on Student Character

Program Evaluation, Supporting Factors, Challenges, and Sustainability Strategies

Program evaluation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri involves observing students' attitudes and reviewing teachers' records and attitude assessments in report cards to monitor their behavioral development. Such evaluation should extend beyond participation in collective prayer, literacy activities, classroom duties, and communal clean-up programs to examine how the associated character values are reflected in students' everyday behavior. This approach is consistent with habituation-based character education, which requires attention to students' behavioral manifestations rather than participation alone (Yunitasari et al., 2025).

The main supporting factors identified by teachers are the consistency of habituation activities, teacher role modeling, and parental support. Regular practices, including morning prayer and a 15-minute literacy session before lessons, provide repeated opportunities for students to engage in expected behaviors, while teachers' daily conduct and reinforcement at home support their continuity. These findings suggest that habituation is shaped not only by the activities selected but also by the consistency of implementation and reinforcement across school and family environments, consistent with research emphasizing the importance of systematic support for character development and social competencies (Manaf et al., 2026).

However, habituation has not progressed uniformly among students. T identified inconsistent participation and influences outside school as major challenges, highlighting the limitations of school-based efforts when positive habits are not reinforced across settings. In response, the school provides guidance and individualized support and collaborates with parents. T also proposed more systematic program planning, broader school-community involvement, character mentoring, and recognition of exemplary students to strengthen program sustainability. These initiatives may provide additional support and positive reinforcement, provided that recognition emphasizes the value of responsible behavior rather than merely the pursuit of rewards.

Taken together, the findings highlight the importance of aligning program evaluation with the intended character values. Beyond recording participation, teachers can examine indicators such as students' ability to act responsibly without constant reminders, maintain cleanliness independently, and communicate politely across different situations. Such indicators may help distinguish compliance with school routines from more consistent behavioral practice. Nevertheless, the present findings describe the school's evaluation practices and proposed strategies; they do not establish that these measures have produced sustained internalization of character values.

Changes in Student Behavior and the Application of Positive Habits Beyond School

T and S reported perceived positive changes in student behavior associated with the habituation practices at SD Negeri Sumber Asri. T described students as more disciplined, orderly, and respectful, while S identified punctuality, politeness toward teachers and peers, and the habit of greeting teachers as behavioral expressions associated with these practices. S also identified discipline, politeness, and responsibility as values learned through habituation. These accounts indicate that informants recognized both behavioral expressions and the values associated with daily school routines.

Another finding concerns the reported application of positive habits beyond school. S stated that some habits were applied at home, including helping parents and maintaining cleanliness. As summarized in Table 2, these findings encompass perceived behavioral changes, students' understanding of character values, and the reported transfer of positive habits into the family environment. Together, these accounts suggest that students' experiences of habituation are not necessarily confined to school activities, although the extent and consistency of their application at home remain unclear.

These findings must be interpreted as informants' perceptions and self-reported experiences rather than independently verified behavioral improvements. Because the study did not employ systematic before-and-after measurements or longitudinal observation, it cannot establish that habituation directly caused the reported changes. Instead, the findings provide a descriptive account of how the teacher and student informants perceive the relationship between school habituation, character values, and the application of positive habits in everyday life.

Table 2. Evaluation of implementation and changes in student behavior.

Aspect	Findings	Analysis
Evaluation	Attitude observations, teachers' notes, and attitude evaluations in report cards (T; school documents)	The evaluation focuses on students' behavioral development
Supporting factors	Routines, teachers' example, and parental support (T, S)	Habit formation is reinforced by the school and family environments
Obstacles	Inconsistency among some students and the influence of external factors (T)	The internalization of values has not yet taken place uniformly
Strategy	Guidance, a personalized approach, and cooperation with parents (T)	The school uses an approach that is both corrective and collaborative
Behavioral changes	More disciplined, orderly, polite, and respectful of others (T, S)	There are indications of changes in behavior as perceived by the informants
Habit Transfer	Helping parents and keeping the house clean (S)	Some of these values are beginning to be applied in settings outside of school
Program development	Character mentoring and awards for exemplary students (T)	Schools need more structured programs

Source: Interviews with the principal (P), the class teacher (T), and one fifth-grade student (S) at SD Negeri Sumber Asri, June 2026, triangulated with field observations and school documents.

The table indicates a sequence in which routines supply experience, teachers and parents supply reinforcement, and evaluation records progress, while reported practice at home suggests that some values extend beyond school. The obstacles reported by T indicate that this sequence is not uniform across students.

Internalization of Character Values and Their Relevance to the Objectives of Islamic Education

The findings can be read through the three mechanisms set out earlier. Collective prayer and morning literacy illustrate structured routine; the student's account of their purpose indicates an emerging grasp of what the routine is for; and the reported practice of some habits at home suggests limited extension beyond school. These are reported experiences rather than evidence

of sustained internalization, and inconsistent participation by some students indicates that the sequence is not uniform.

From the perspective of Islamic education, habituation is relevant not merely because it includes religious rituals, but because religious values can be connected with the development of social *akhlak*. Collective prayer provides a context for practicing religiosity, while the 5S program reflects courtesy and respect in social interactions. Similarly, classroom duties and communal clean-up activities provide opportunities to practice responsibility, cooperation, and environmental care. Students' reported application of cleanliness habits at home and assistance to their parents suggests that these values may extend into family life, a transfer also observed in other settings (Suhartono et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the extent to which such practices become stable behavioral dispositions requires further observation.

These findings connect the objectives of national education, which include faith, piety, noble character, competence, independence, and responsibility (Zulaiqah et al., 2026), with the emphasis of Islamic education on aligning knowledge and religious values with everyday conduct (Alinata et al., 2024). The key analytical point is that character habituation involves more than the repetition of activities: it also concerns students' understanding of the values being practiced and their application in social life. This process is not necessarily uniform across students and should not be assumed to occur solely through repeated participation.

Accordingly, schools should complement routine activities with teacher role modeling, opportunities for reflection, individualized guidance, and collaboration with families. Character mentoring and recognition of exemplary behavior, as proposed by teachers, may support these efforts when they reinforce responsible conduct rather than make rewards the primary goal. These strategies offer practical directions for strengthening habituation programs, although their effectiveness requires further empirical evaluation.

4. Conclusions

Positive habituation at SD Negeri Sumber Asri is implemented through greetings, collective prayer, morning literacy, queuing, classroom duty, and cleaning activities, and these routines carry the values of discipline, responsibility, religiosity, politeness, environmental awareness, and cooperation. Their implementation depends on the consistency of the activities, teachers' example, and parental support, while inconsistency among some students and influences from outside school act as constraints. The teacher and student informants reported perceived behavioral changes; these are perceptions, and the design does not establish a causal relationship. The conceptual contribution is to map how school routines, role modeling, and family reinforcement relate to the character values expressed in students' behavior, and to state the limit of what such data can show. Three limitations qualify these conclusions: the study covers a single school with one informant per role over one month; member checking and peer debriefing were not conducted, so the interpretations are not independently corroborated; and no longitudinal or behavioral measures were used. Future research should include more schools and informants, repeated observation over a longer period, independent verification of interpretations, and measures of character development alongside qualitative data.

5. CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Sirojuddin: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft. Tri Mulyanto: Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

6. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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8. Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. Interview transcripts and field notes are not publicly available because they contain information that could compromise the privacy of the informants, one of whom is a minor.

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10. Ethical Approval

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the principal of SD Negeri Sumber Asri. Informants are reported anonymously using role codes, and no information identifying the school's staff or students appears in this article. One informant was a ten-year-old student. [AUTHOR TO SUPPLY: state how consent for this student's participation was obtained — from a parent or guardian, from the school, or both — and whether the student's own assent was recorded before the interview.] [AUTHOR TO SUPPLY: state whether approval from an institutional ethics committee was sought and, if it was not, why it was not required.]

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