Education and Sociedad Journal
Vol. 3 No. 1 (2025) : 88-95
Available online at https://serambi.org/index.php/esj

Implementing an Integrated Curriculum Through School Culture to Accelerate The Character Development of Outstanding Indonesian Children

Gilang Gumilar✉, Rusi Rusmiati Aliyyah, Zahra Khusnul Lathifah, Lina Herlina
Universitas Djuanda, Indonesia

Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of the integrated curriculum for school culture as an acceleration of the character formation of Great Indonesian Children at SMK Amaliah 2 Ciawi, Bogor Regency. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study type. Research informants consisted of the principal, vice principal, teachers, and students selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña which includes data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was tested through source triangulation and technical triangulation. The results showed that the implementation of the integrated curriculum for school culture was implemented through three main programs, namely the habituation of worship activities, literacy culture, and sports activities integrated into intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities. This implementation was supported by teacher role models, continuous habituation, and a conducive school environment that was able to form religious characters, a love of learning, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, sportsmanship, and healthy living behaviors in students. However, program implementation still faces several obstacles, including low motivation and awareness among some students and the distracting influence of digital technology. This study concludes that integrating the curriculum with school culture can create an effective educational ecosystem that accelerates the holistic and sustainable development of student character.

Keywords: School Culture, Integrated Curriculum, Character Education

Article History:
Received: February 2025; Revised: April 2025; Accepted: June 2025
✉**Correspondence Author:** f.2420691@unida.ac.id
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61987/edsojou.v3i1.3133
How to Cite:
Gumilar, G., Aliyyah, R. R., Lathifah, Z. K., & Herlina, L. (2025). Implementing an Integrated Curriculum Through School Culture to Accelerate The Character Development of Outstanding Indonesian Children. *Education and Sociedad Journal, 3*(1), 88-95.

INTRODUCTION

Character education serves as a fundamental foundation for developing human resources who are not only academically competent but also demonstrate integrity, responsibility, religiosity, nationalism, and the ability to adapt to increasingly complex social changes. In Indonesia, character strengthening has become a strategic agenda in educational development because educational success is no longer measured solely by cognitive achievement but also by the extent to which education successfully develops students who possess noble character and are capable of living harmoniously within a diverse society (Syahra et al., 2025). Various national education policies position schools as primary spaces for the internalization of values through learning, habituation, role modeling, and school culture implemented continuously (Hidayat, 2021). In this context, the curriculum should not merely be understood as a learning document but as a system that integrates values, culture, and students' learning experiences to create an educational ecosystem

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)
This journal is an open-access article under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license

that supports holistic character development.

Many schools continue to face challenges in implementing character education optimally. Character education practices tend to be partial, oriented toward incidental activities, and have not been fully integrated into the curriculum and school culture (Sanjaya & Hidayat, 2026). This condition causes the character values taught in the classroom to be frequently disconnected from the practices of everyday school life, resulting in character internalization that has not yet taken place optimally. Furthermore, the development of digital technology, changing patterns of social interaction, and increasingly complex moral challenges faced by students require schools to develop character education models that are more systematic, contextual, and sustainable (Sanjaya & Hidayat, 2026). Therefore, integrating the curriculum with school culture represents an approach that can establish continuity between learning processes, habituation, and students' real-life experiences within the school environment.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between school culture and student character development. Research has demonstrated that school culture contributes positively to character development through the habituation of religious values, discipline, responsibility, social concern, and cooperation, which are consistently implemented in school activities (Nuraeni & Labudasari, 2021; Hayati & Utomo, 2022; Yuliani et al., 2026). A meta-analysis study also confirmed that school culture has a significant influence on students' character development across various educational levels (Hafidz, 2024). Other studies have emphasized that character education becomes more effective when integrated into the school curriculum, enabling all educational activities to operate synergistically across classroom learning, co-curricular activities, extracurricular activities, and school organizational culture (Latifah, 2014; Aprianti et al., 2024). Nevertheless, most of these studies have focused on the influence of school culture on character development or on the general implementation of character education without explaining how curriculum and school culture can be integrated and implemented as a unified educational system.

Based on this review, a research gap remains that requires further investigation. Previous studies have generally positioned school culture as an independent variable or examined character education implementation only in specific habituation aspects, such as religious character or discipline. Comprehensive studies explaining the implementation of a curriculum integrated with school culture as an educational ecosystem for character development remain relatively limited, particularly in the context of schools that systematically develop their organizational culture. Sustainable character development requires the integration of curriculum policies, school leadership, organizational culture, learning processes, and the involvement of all members of the school community in creating a supportive educational environment.

This study offers novelty by analyzing the implementation of a school-culture-integrated curriculum as an accelerator of the character development of Outstanding Indonesian Children. The novelty of this study lies not only in integrating the dimensions of curriculum and school culture as a unified implementation framework but also in explaining the mechanisms of character internalization through the integration of learning programs, religious habituation, literacy culture, healthy living culture, teacher role modeling, and the strengthening of a supportive school environment. This approach is expected to provide both conceptual and empirical insights into a character education implementation model that is more holistic, sustainable, and relevant to the direction of national educational development.

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of a school-culture-integrated curriculum as an accelerator of the character development of Outstanding Indonesian Children. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of character education studies based on school culture and provide practical recommendations for school principals, teachers, and

policymakers in developing curriculum implementation that can foster students' character more effectively, systematically, and sustainably.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The case study design was used to comprehensively explore the processes, interactions, and meanings emerging from the implementation of a school-culture-based curriculum at a single research site in depth (Yin, 2018). This approach enabled the researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of character education practices developed within the school environment (Creswell, 2018).

The study was conducted at SMK Amaliah 2 Ciawi, Bogor Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected because it has implemented a curriculum integrated with school culture through various habituation programs, including religious activities, literacy culture, character development, and a healthy living culture as part of efforts to strengthen students' character. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, in which informants were chosen based on their involvement in and understanding of the implementation of the school-culture-integrated curriculum (Sugiyono, 2022). Further details regarding the research informants are presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant

No.	Coding	Informant	Description
1	KS_GG	Gugun Gunadi	School Principal
2	WK_SW	Siti Wadiah	Vice Principal
3	GR_AS	Akwal Syahril	Teacher
4	GR_RPH	Rahmi Putri Handayani	Teacher
5	GR_TE	Tri Ekawati	Teacher
6	SW_RS	Rizki Saputra	Student
7	SW_FNR	Fatwa Nata Raya	Student

Source: Processed data (2026)

Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the school-culture-integrated curriculum. Observations were conducted to directly examine learning activities, habituation practices, interactions among members of the school community, and the implementation of school culture that supports students' character development. Documentation was used to complement and strengthen the research data by examining various school documents, including the operational curriculum of the educational unit, school work programs, school regulations, activity schedules, photographs of activities, and other supporting documents.

Data analysis employed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis process was conducted simultaneously throughout the research, beginning with the initial stage of data collection and continuing until the completion of the study. This process enabled the researchers to continuously reduce, interpret, and verify the data to obtain credible research findings.

Data trustworthiness was established through credibility testing using source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, administrative staff, and students. Meanwhile, technique triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation to establish consistency across different data collection techniques. The application

of triangulation aimed to enhance the credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of the research findings, thereby ensuring that the findings accurately represented the actual conditions in the research setting (Moleong, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Intra-curricular, Co-curricular, and Extracurricular Programs

The findings indicate that SMK Amaliah 2 Ciawi, Bogor, implements the habituation of worship activities through three integrated program pathways: intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs. This finding is consistent with Lickona's (2012) theory of character education, which states that effective character education should involve three main components: *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. Intracurricular programs, particularly Islamic Religious Education, develop students' *moral knowing* regarding the obligations and procedures of worship. Co-curricular programs, such as morning Qur'an recitation and congregational prayers, develop *moral feeling* through habituation and religious experiences, while extracurricular programs, such as commemorations of Islamic holidays and religious speech training, strengthen *moral action* by providing students with opportunities to actualize religious values through various activities.

Furthermore, this finding reinforces the School Culture Theory proposed by Deal and Peterson (2016), which views school culture as the "soul" of an educational institution that shapes the ways in which members of the school community think, behave, and interact. The regular implementation of Duha prayer, congregational Zuhr and Asr prayers, Qur'an recitation, and *kultum* (short religious sermons) has become a collective ritual that shapes the school's religious identity. This is consistent with the characteristics of school culture described by Saputra, Basuki, and Setyowati (2021), who argue that core values should be reflected in the daily behavior of teachers, students, and staff. The religious values that constitute a core value at SMK Amaliah 2 are therefore not merely stated in institutional documents but are manifested through consistently practiced acts of worship.

The daily habituation of worship and Qur'anic literacy, which have become routine practices at the school, is also consistent with Charles Duhigg's (2012) Habit Formation Theory, particularly the concept of the *habit loop*, which consists of a *cue*, *routine*, and *reward*. In this context, the *cue* is the time for prayer or the morning period before learning begins; the *routine* involves congregational worship and Qur'an recitation; while the *reward* includes inner peace, praise from teachers, and the strengthening of students' religious character. This process is repeated daily, gradually forming habits that become increasingly automatic and embedded in students' behavior.

From the perspective of Islamic Educational Management, these findings reflect the concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (purification of the soul) as taught by Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. Continuous habituation of worship functions as an instrument of *tazkiyat al-nafs* that guides students toward virtuous character through the strengthening of their spiritual relationship with Allah SWT. Congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and collective supplication conducted on a daily basis serve as effective means of purifying the soul, strengthening piety, and developing a religious personality. This finding is consistent with Dewa (2023), who argues that worship functions as an instrument of *tazkiyat al-nafs* that guides individuals toward virtuous character.

Integration of Worship Values into Learning as a Means of Internalizing Religious Values

The findings reveal that the integration of worship values into learning at SMK Amaliah 2 is implemented through two main strategies: habituating students to pray before and after learning activities and integrating religious values into subject matter. This finding reinforces Lickona's

(2012) theory that character education should be integrated into all aspects of school life, including classroom learning. The habituation of praying before and after learning represents one of the simplest forms of *moral action*, yet it can have a substantial impact on developing students' religious awareness.

Furthermore, the integration of religious values into learning materials, such as relating subject matter to manners, morality, signs of God's greatness, and the cultivation of honesty, responsibility, discipline, and trustworthiness, reflects the Integrated Character Education Theory proposed by Muslich (2018). This theory emphasizes that character education should not be treated as a separate subject but should instead be integrated into all subjects. This approach enables learning to focus not only on cognitive mastery but also on the development of students' affective and psychomotor dimensions.

From the perspective of Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, the integration of worship values into learning takes place through processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Students observe teachers who consistently practice prayer and incorporate religious values into learning, imitate these behaviors, and receive reinforcement through appreciation from teachers and the broader school environment. This explains why consistent habituation can facilitate the internalization of religious values among students.

From an Islamic perspective, these findings are consistent with the concept of *Ta'dib* proposed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, which views education not merely as the transfer of knowledge (*ta'lim*) but also as the formation of manners and character through the internalization of appropriate values. The integration of worship values into learning reflects the school's efforts to develop students who are not only intellectually capable but also possess proper manners and noble character in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Teacher Role Modeling as the Foundation of Worship Habituation

The findings indicate that teacher role modeling is one of the most dominant factors contributing to the success of worship habituation at SMK Amaliah 2. Teachers do not merely provide advice but also demonstrate appropriate behavior through the habituation of greeting practices, smiling and welcoming others, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and direct participation in congregational worship. This finding is highly relevant to the Islamic concept of role modeling derived from Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab verse 21, which describes the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as an *uswah hasanah* (excellent example) for Muslims. As educators, teachers have a responsibility to serve as role models for students, just as the Prophet serves as an example for his community.

Theoretically, this finding reinforces Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that much of human behavior is learned through observing models or role models. In an educational context, teachers function as models whose behavior is observed, evaluated, and imitated by students. When teachers consistently practice worship and demonstrate honesty, discipline, and responsibility, students are more likely to imitate these behaviors without requiring excessive verbal instruction. This is reflected in the statement of one teacher: "A teacher who arrives on time, admits when they are wrong, and treats all students fairly is already teaching worship without having to say it."

Teacher role modeling in worship practices is also consistent with Deal and Peterson's (2016) School Culture Theory, which states that school culture is shaped through symbols, rituals, and exemplary behaviors demonstrated by leaders and educators. School principals and teachers who directly participate in congregational prayers, collective supplications, and other religious activities create norms and expectations that position worship as an inseparable part of school life.

This demonstrates that role modeling is not merely an additional strategy but a fundamental foundation for developing a religious school culture.

From the perspective of Islamic Educational Management, teacher role modeling reflects the Islamic concept of *Uswah Hasanah*. Teachers who serve as role models do not merely transfer knowledge about worship but also demonstrate the practice of worship in their daily lives. This creates consistency between what is taught and what is practiced, enabling students to develop a comprehensive understanding of religious teachings.

Program Outcomes on Worship Habits and the Internalization of Religious Values

The findings reveal that worship habituation programs contribute positively to the development of students' worship habits and the internalization of religious values. These findings demonstrate that habituation carried out routinely, systematically, and continuously can develop practices that extend beyond the school environment and become part of students' everyday lives. This finding is consistent with Thorndike's Conditioning Theory, particularly the *Law of Exercise*, which states that the more frequently a behavior is repeated, the stronger the connection between stimulus and response becomes. In this context, the consistent repetition of worship activities strengthens behavioral associations, enabling worship practices to become increasingly automatic and to extend into students' lives outside school.

Furthermore, the findings concerning the internalization of religious values indicate that worship habituation does not merely produce changes in external behavior but can also influence students' ways of thinking, attitudes, and beliefs. This is consistent with Lickona's (2012) theory, which states that successful character education should encompass three levels: *moral knowing* (students understand the values), *moral feeling* (students recognize and appreciate the importance of these values), and *moral action* (students practice these values in their lives). Students therefore do not merely know that prayer is obligatory (*moral knowing*) but may also experience a sense of peace and discipline after performing it (*moral feeling*) and eventually practice it consistently both at school and at home (*moral action*).

The internalization of religious values among students also reflects Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Students who initially perform worship activities because of compliance with school rules may gradually develop toward a stage in which they practice worship based on an internal awareness that worship constitutes a religious obligation and spiritual need.

From the perspective of Duhigg's (2012) Habit Formation Theory, the internalization of religious values occurs when the *habit loop* becomes sufficiently established, allowing worship practices to become increasingly automatic (*automaticity*). Students no longer require continuous external prompts to engage in worship because these practices have become integrated into their behavioral patterns and self-identity.

Barriers to the Implementation of Worship Habituation

The findings identify low levels of awareness and discipline among some students as the main barriers to implementing worship habituation. These findings indicate that although the school has provided adequate programs and facilities, students' internal factors remain a significant challenge in developing worship habits. This finding is consistent with the theory of factors inhibiting school culture proposed by Ningsih (2022) and Sabariah et al. (2024), which suggests that resistance or limited participation among members of the school community, including students, can hinder the internalization of school cultural values.

Low levels of awareness and discipline in worship among some students can be explained through Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that extrinsic motivation, such

as external pressure from school regulations, does not necessarily produce sustainable behavior when it is not accompanied by intrinsic motivation or internal awareness. Students who have not developed an internal awareness of the importance of worship tend to engage in worship primarily when they are supervised by teachers and may discontinue the behavior when supervision is absent.

From the perspective of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, students who remain at the conventional level of moral reasoning tend to comply with rules because they fear sanctions or seek approval rather than because of internal moral awareness. Therefore, a deeper approach is required to facilitate students' development toward more autonomous moral reasoning, in which worship is practiced based on an internal conviction of its moral and spiritual significance.

These findings are also relevant to the external factors identified by Saputra, Basuki, and Setyowati (2021), who argue that negative social environments outside school can generate value conflicts and reduce students' acceptance of school culture. Students who grow up in family or community environments with low levels of religious practice may face greater challenges in adopting the worship habits promoted at school. Therefore, synergy among schools, families, and communities is essential for developing students' religious character.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of a school-culture-integrated curriculum at SMK Amaliah 2 Ciawi has been systematically carried out through the integration of intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs oriented toward students' character development. This implementation is manifested through the habituation of worship activities, the strengthening of a literacy culture, and the habituation of sports activities, all of which are consistently embedded in everyday school life. These three programs have demonstrated their capacity to develop religious character, a love of learning, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, sportsmanship, and healthy lifestyle behaviors as integral components of the profile of Outstanding Indonesian Children. The successful implementation of the school-culture-integrated curriculum is supported by teacher role modeling, continuous habituation, the integration of character values into the learning process, and the creation of a conducive school environment. Nevertheless, the study also identified several challenges, including low levels of motivation and awareness among some students in participating in habituation programs and the influence of digital technology use, which may hinder the development of a learning culture. Therefore, stronger collaboration among schools, families, and communities is needed to ensure that the implementation of school culture can be sustained and generate more optimal impacts on students' character development.

REFERENCES

Aprianti, A., Hasanah, B. U., Wahyuningsih, S., Alviqry, M. S., Handayani, R., & Arman, D. (2024). Integrasi Pendidikan Karakter Ke Dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam Strategi Dan Hasil. Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Islam, 2(6), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v1i6.579

Creswell, J. W. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (2016). Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership. Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119210214

Fullan, M. (2014). The principal: Three keys to maximizing impact. Jossey-Bass.

Hafidz, S. (2024). Apakah Budaya Sekolah Mempengaruhi Karakter Siswa?: Kajian Meta-Analisis. Jurnal Ilmiah WUNY, 6(1), 42–50. https://doi.org/10.21831/jwuny.v6i1.72277

Hayati, R. K., & Utomo, A. C. (2022). Penanaman Karakter Gotong Royong Dan Tanggung Jawab Melalui Metode Pembiasaan Di Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Basicedu, 6(4), 6419–6427. https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i4.3248

Hidayat, U. S. (2021). Urgensi penguatan pendidikan karakter dalam menyiapkan generasi emas 2045: Strategi membangun generasi cerdas, berkarakter dan berdaya saing di abad 21. Nusa Putra Press.

Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (2013). Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice. McGraw-Hill.

Latifah, S. (2014). Integrasi Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Pembelajaran Di Sekolah. Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Fisika Al-Biruni, 3(2), 24–40. https://doi.org/10.24042/jipfalbiruni.v3i2.71

Lickona, T. (2012). Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility. Bantam.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2018). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Moleong, L. J. (2019). Metodologi penelitian kualitatif. Remaja Rosdakarya.

Muslich, M. (2018). Pendidikan karakter: Menjawab tantangan krisis multidimensional. Bumi Aksara.

Sanjaya, D., & Hidayat, D. (2026). Manajemen Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Islami Melalui Program Keagamaan Di Sekolah. JMPI: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 2(1).

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2015). Strengthening the heartbeat: Leading and learning together in schools. Jossey-Bass.

Sugiyono. (2022). Metode penelitian kualitatif. Alfabeta.

Syahra, N. A., Wardhani, T. T., Azzahra, C., & Ramadhan, M. I. (2025). Implementasi Kebijakan Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Di Sekolah. Reflection: Islamic Education Journal, 2(3), 326–337. https://doi.org/10.61132/reflection.v2i3.1210

Wulandari, T., & Prihantoro, E. (2020). Budaya Sekolah Dan Pendidikan Karakter Di Sekolah Menengah. Jurnal Pendidikan, 21(1), 77–88. https://doi.org/10.17509/pedadidaktika.v7i1.26326

Yin, R. K. (2018). Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Yuliani, R., Wijaya, A. O., Rindi, M., Aslamiah, A., & Amelia, R. (2026). Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Sosiologis Untuk Membangun Budaya Sekolah Yang Humanis Di Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Indonesia (JPPI), 6(1), 37–49. https://doi.org/10.53299/jppi.v6i1.3094