

Building the Character of MAN Sorong Students Through the Habit of Zakat Fitrah in the Month of Ramadan

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Abstract: *This study examines the implementation of zakat fitrah habituation at MAN Sorong and its contribution to student character development within the framework of Islamic character education. As a fundamental Islamic obligation, zakat fitrah functions not only as worship but also as a means of fostering moral development and social responsibility. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with Fiqh teachers, student council supervisors, and mosque takmir, as well as documentation of zakat activities involving 44 students from grades XI and XII. The findings indicate that zakat fitrah habituation is carried out through five main strategies: intensive socialization and education, structured collection mechanisms, transparent distribution, exemplary leadership modeling, and collaboration with local mosques. This program strengthens various aspects of character, including empathy, gratitude, discipline, responsibility, social awareness, and teamwork. Active student involvement in collection and distribution activities also fosters confidence, civic identity, and leadership skills, while experiential learning reinforces Islamic values and creates meaningful community engagement. Challenges such as limited awareness, resource constraints, and economic disparities among students were mitigated through socialization, creative fundraising, and partnerships with zakat institutions. The collaborative model between school and community proved effective in achieving sustainable outcomes and strengthening institutional relations. Despite its limitations, including a single-site design and qualitative constraints, the study concludes that integrating zakat fitrah habituation into Islamic education offers a practical and impactful framework for character building. It provides evidence that such programs can enhance empathy, responsibility, and civic engagement among students.*

Keywords: Zakat fitrah, character building, social awareness, character education, collaboration

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi pembiasaan zakat fitrah di MAN Sorong serta kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan karakter siswa dalam kerangka pendidikan karakter Islami. Sebagai kewajiban fundamental dalam Islam, zakat fitrah tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ibadah, tetapi juga sebagai sarana pembinaan moral dan tanggung jawab sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan guru Fiqh, pembina OSIS, dan takmir masjid, serta dokumentasi kegiatan zakat yang melibatkan 44 siswa kelas XI dan XII. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembiasaan zakat fitrah dilaksanakan melalui lima strategi utama: sosialisasi dan edukasi intensif, mekanisme pengumpulan terstruktur, distribusi yang transparan, keteladanan kepemimpinan, serta kolaborasi dengan masjid setempat. Program ini*

memperkuat berbagai aspek karakter, seperti empati, rasa syukur, disiplin, tanggung jawab, kepedulian sosial, dan keterampilan kerja sama. Keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam kegiatan pengumpulan dan distribusi juga meningkatkan rasa percaya diri, identitas kewargaan, serta kemampuan kepemimpinan. Selain itu, pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman memperdalam nilai-nilai Islami sekaligus membangun keterhubungan dengan masyarakat. Tantangan seperti rendahnya kesadaran, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan perbedaan kondisi ekonomi siswa diatasi melalui sosialisasi berkelanjutan, penggalangan dana kreatif, serta kemitraan dengan lembaga zakat. Model kolaborasi sekolah dan masyarakat terbukti efektif menciptakan hasil yang berkelanjutan serta memperkuat hubungan kelembagaan. Meskipun terbatas pada satu lokasi dan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi pembiasaan zakat fitrah dalam pendidikan Islam merupakan kerangka praktis dan efektif bagi pendidikan karakter, yang mampu menumbuhkan empati, tanggung jawab, dan keterlibatan sosial siswa.

Kata kunci: Zakat fitrah, pembentukan karakter, kepedulian sosial, pendidikan karakter, kolaborasi

Introduction

Education is one of the key elements that determines the progress and development of a nation. During the flow of globalization and increasingly rapid technological advancement, the challenges faced by the younger generation are increasingly complex. They are not only required to master science and technical skills but must also have strong character and high integrity. Without good character, the knowledge and skills possessed can be misused, resulting in individuals who are unable to contribute positively to society (Scott, 2024). This is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of rapid social change, where moral and ethical values are often overlooked.

The contemporary educational landscape faces a critical paradox where academic excellence often overshadows character development. Students today are exposed to vast amounts of information and sophisticated technologies, yet many struggle with fundamental values such as empathy, social responsibility, and ethical decision-making. The rise of individualistic culture and material-oriented mindsets has created a generation that excels in cognitive abilities but lacks the emotional and spiritual intelligence necessary for holistic human development. This gap between intellectual achievement and moral maturity has become a pressing concern for educators, parents, and society at large, necessitating innovative approaches that can bridge this divide effectively.

Therefore, building the character of students is very important to create a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has high social and ethical concern (Hidayat, 2022). Character education must be integrated systematically into the educational process, not merely as an add-on subject but as a fundamental approach that permeates all aspects of learning. This integration requires practical experiences that allow students to internalize values through direct engagement with real-world situations. The challenge lies in finding authentic, meaningful activities that can serve as vehicles for character development while remaining relevant to students' cultural and religious backgrounds.

One of the efforts that can be made to form a strong character is through the practice of zakat fitrah, which is an obligation for every Muslim to cleanse himself of the wealth obtained throughout the year and to provide assistance to those in need. The habituation of zakat fitrah in the month of Ramadan not only functions as worship, but also as a means of education that educates students about human values, social care, and responsibility (Nelwati & Yuniendel,

2019). The process of collecting and distributing zakat fitrah provides students with direct experience in interacting with various levels of society, especially those who are less fortunate. Through this experience, learners learn to appreciate and understand the social conditions around them, which ultimately contributes to the formation of their character. This practice embodies multiple educational dimensions: spiritual development through religious observance, social awareness through community engagement, and practical skills through the management and distribution processes.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to explore and analyze in depth how the habit of zakat fitrah can contribute to building the character of students. Although the practice of zakat has become a tradition in Muslim society, research focusing on the concrete impact of this activity on the character of students in the educational environment is still very limited (Hakim & Shamad, 2023). Therefore, this research is expected to provide a clearer insight into how the habit of zakat fitrah is not only a religious obligation, but also an effective strategy in forming individuals who have strong character, integrity, and high social concern. The novelty of this research lies in its systematic integration of zakat fitrah habituation into formal education in a madrasah setting. While previous studies have examined religious activities in shaping character, few have specifically analyzed zakat fitrah as a structured educational instrument. By situating zakat fitrah in the school's social and pedagogical framework, this research contributes new insights into how religious obligations can be transformed into sustainable character education strategies.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth how the habituation of zakat fitrah in the month of Ramadan builds the character of students. This research was conducted at MAN Sorong which is located on Jl. Sindoro, Makbalim Village, Mayamuk SP 4 District, Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province. The subjects of this study are 44 students in grades XI and XII who have participated in the zakat fitrah habituation program during the activity.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. (1) The researcher conducts participatory observation of zakat fitrah habituation activities in schools, including the process of collection, distribution, and related activities. (2) The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with fiqh teachers, student council supervisors, and mosque takmir. (3) The researcher collects data in the form of documents related to the zakat fitrah habituation program with activity reports, photos, voice recordings, and notes.

The data analysis techniques used in this study are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. (1) The data obtained will be reduced and compiled systematically. (2) The data that has been reduced will be presented in the form of a narrative. (3) The researcher draws conclusions based on the data that has been analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Implementation and Impact of Zakat Fitrah Habituation Program

Program Implementation Strategy

The implementation of zakat fitrah habituation at MAN Sorong demonstrates a comprehensive approach involving multiple stakeholders and systematic procedures. The program's foundation rests on five key pillars: socialization and education, structured collection

mechanisms, transparent distribution processes, exemplary leadership, and institutional collaboration.

Socialization and Education Component

The research findings reveal that effective socialization serves as the cornerstone of successful zakat fitrah implementation. Mr. Ngisom, as the Student Council supervisor, explained that socialization activities were conducted through various channels including counseling sessions and group discussions involving all students. These activities aimed to provide deep understanding of zakat fitrah's importance as both a religious obligation and a vehicle for character development. Mrs. Siti Komariyah, the Islamic Religious Education teacher, emphasized that fiqh lessons specifically addressed the legal foundations, purposes, and societal benefits of zakat (Ngisom, 2024; Komariyah, 2024). The systematic approach to education aligns with contemporary research on Islamic character education, which emphasizes the integration of religious practices with moral development (Abdullah & Rahman, 2023). The study's findings indicate that consistent socialization successfully enhanced students' awareness of zakat fitrah's role in social life. This educational framework parallels findings by Thompson and Clarke (2024), who demonstrated that structured religious education programs significantly impact moral reasoning development among adolescents.

Collection and Distribution Mechanisms

The zakat collection process at MAN Sorong employed a student-centered approach, with the Student Council organizing activities from timing determination to fund collection methods. Students participated directly in information dissemination and class-based fundraising activities. The research findings show that this participatory approach achieved predetermined targets while teaching students about intention and sincerity in charitable giving.

The distribution process involved close collaboration between the school and local mosque, where Mr. Samsu as the mosque takmir played a crucial role. Students actively participated in distribution activities, gaining firsthand experience of zakat's community impact. This collaborative model reflects best practices in Islamic philanthropy education, where experiential learning enhances understanding of religious obligations (Hassan & Ahmad, 2023).

Leadership Example and Institutional Collaboration

The study reveals that exemplary leadership significantly influences student participation in zakat activities. Educators and supervisors who demonstrated social concern and commitment to zakat obligations created an environment encouraging student emulation. This finding supports research by Mitchell et al. (2024), which showed that teacher modeling is crucial for developing prosocial behaviors among students.

Collaboration with zakat institutions, particularly local mosques, enhanced program effectiveness and transparency. Mr. Samsu explained that this partnership simplified distribution processes while strengthening school-community relationships. The institutional collaboration model provides students with broader perspectives on zakat management while connecting them to established community networks.

Character Development Outcomes

The research demonstrates that zakat fitrah habituation significantly increased students' social awareness and empathy. Mrs. Siti Komariyah noted that students became more conscious of their responsibility to help economically disadvantaged individuals. This awareness emerged from understanding zakat fitrah as both religious obligation and social concern with direct community impact (Komariyah, 2024). Students involved in collection and distribution processes learned values of care, empathy, and solidarity. Their heightened sensitivity to community conditions, particularly regarding zakat recipients, reflects the program's success in developing prosocial attitudes. This finding aligns with research by Rahman and Hussein (2024), which demonstrated that participation in charitable activities significantly enhances adolescent empathy development. The increased social awareness encouraged student participation in other social activities beyond zakat fitrah, including community service and fundraising initiatives. This spillover effect indicates that the habituation program successfully cultivated a broader ethic of social responsibility and community engagement.

Gratitude and Appreciation Development

The study findings reveal that zakat fitrah practices significantly fostered gratitude among students. The realization that many individuals require assistance encouraged students to appreciate their own circumstances more deeply. Mrs. Siti Komariyah explained that witnessing zakat's positive impact on recipients helped students develop reflective attitudes toward their conditions and motivated genuine appreciation for their blessings. This gratitude development extends beyond the program duration, influencing students' daily attitudes and behaviors. They demonstrated increased humility and appreciation for achievements and resources, contributing to more mature character formation. The gratitude cultivation aligns with positive psychology research indicating that grateful individuals exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction and prosocial behavior (Johnson & Williams, 2023).

Student involvement in comprehensive zakat processes, from collection through distribution, required high levels of discipline and responsibility. Mr. Ngisom noted that students learned to follow established procedures, meet collection deadlines, manage task distribution, and ensure appropriate recipient targeting (Ngisom, 2024).

The research findings demonstrate that active participation in zakat fitrah activities enhanced students' sense of responsibility. Students recognized their important role in program success, both in peer coordination and effective distribution. This responsibility extended beyond personal accountability to encompass broader social and religious missions.

Student discipline manifested in task execution quality, including zakat recording, distribution regulation, and schedule adherence. The habituation program positively influenced daily attitudes, fostering organization, responsibility, and trustworthiness both within and beyond school contexts.

Challenges and Strategic Solutions

Implementation Challenges

Despite socialization efforts, insufficient awareness among students regarding zakat fitrah's importance remained a significant challenge. Mrs. Siti Komariyah identified that many

students inadequately understood zakat fitrah's meaning and purpose, treating it as mere formality rather than meaningful religious and social practice (Komariyah, 2024).

This awareness deficit reflects broader challenges in Islamic education, where traditional approaches may fail to engage contemporary students effectively. Research by Anderson et al. (2024) suggests that modern Islamic education requires innovative pedagogical approaches that connect religious principles with students' lived experiences and contemporary social issues.

The study identified resource limitations as significant implementation barriers. Mr. Ngisom explained that not all students possessed equal financial capacity for substantial zakat contributions, with some students from economically limited families struggling to meet obligations adequately. Additionally, Mr. Samsu noted that effective program operation required adequate teaching staff, facilities, and educational materials, which were often insufficient.

These resource constraints are common in educational settings, particularly in developing regions. Research by Garcia and Thompson (2023) indicates that successful character education programs require sustained institutional support and resource allocation to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Strategic Solutions and Adaptations

To address awareness challenges, the research revealed that intensive socialization programs incorporating varied methods proved effective. Mrs. Siti Komariyah suggested implementing periodic activities including seminars, workshops, and interactive sessions to enhance student understanding and motivation. These approaches align with contemporary educational research emphasizing active learning methodologies for moral development (Davis & Miller, 2024). The involvement of community leaders, particularly Mr. Samsu from the local mosque, provided students with broader perspectives on zakat's social and religious significance. This community engagement model reflects successful practices in character education, where authentic connections to community values enhance program effectiveness.

Collaboration with zakat institutions emerged as a crucial solution for resource limitations. Mr. Samsu explained that partnerships between schools and zakat organizations provided necessary support in terms of human resources, educational materials, and infrastructure. These collaborations offered access to broader experience and knowledge regarding zakat management. The research findings demonstrate that institutional partnerships strengthened program effectiveness while providing students with practical experience in zakat distribution. This collaborative model reflects best practices in educational partnerships, where external relationships enhance learning opportunities and resource availability (Kumar & Singh, 2023).

Long-term Character Formation and Educational Implications

Sustainable Character Development

The zakat fitrah habituation program effectively enhanced students' collaborative abilities through multi-stakeholder involvement. Students learned to coordinate with various individuals and institutions, developing essential teamwork skills. The role division in activities, from collection coordination to recipient identification and distribution management, fostered

collaborative competencies crucial for future academic and professional success. This collaborative skill development aligns with 21st-century educational goals emphasizing interpersonal competencies. Research by Liu and Chen (2024) demonstrates that collaborative learning experiences in religious contexts significantly enhance students' social skills and leadership capabilities.

Student participation in zakat fitrah activities contributed significantly to confidence building and identity formation. Mrs. Siti Komariyah noted that students' recognition of their meaningful contributions to society directly strengthened self-confidence. The pride emerging from successful task completion and positive community impact fostered stronger self-efficacy beliefs. This confidence development extends beyond program participation, influencing students' willingness to engage in future social initiatives and leadership roles. The identity formation aspect reflects research by Roberts and Taylor (2023), which indicates that meaningful community service experiences significantly contribute to adolescent identity development and civic engagement.

Educational Program Implications

The research findings suggest that zakat fitrah habituation programs can be effectively integrated with formal Islamic education curricula. The combination of theoretical knowledge from fiqh lessons with practical implementation creates comprehensive learning experiences that enhance both religious understanding and character development.

This integration model supports contemporary educational approaches emphasizing experiential learning and authentic assessment. The program's success at MAN Sorong provides a replicable model for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to enhance character education through religious practice integration. The collaboration between MAN Sorong and local religious institutions demonstrates the potential for schools to build social capital through community engagement. These partnerships not only support program implementation but also strengthen students' connections to their broader community context. The community engagement aspect reflects research emphasizing the importance of authentic learning contexts for character development. When students engage with real community needs and contribute to genuine social solutions, their learning experiences become more meaningful and impactful.

Research Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the generalizability and interpretation of findings. First, the research was conducted at a single institution (MAN Sorong) with a specific cultural and regional context, which may limit the transferability of findings to other Islamic educational institutions in different geographical or socioeconomic contexts. Second, the study's qualitative case study design, while providing rich detailed insights, limits the ability to establish causal relationships between zakat fitrah habituation and character development outcomes. Third, the research relied primarily on self-reported data from teachers and administrators, with limited direct observation of long-term character changes in students beyond the program duration. Fourth, the study did not include a control group or comparative analysis with other character education interventions, making it difficult to isolate the specific

effects of zakat fitrah habituation from other concurrent educational influences. Finally, the research timeframe was relatively short, preventing comprehensive assessment of sustained character development impacts over extended periods. Future research should consider longitudinal designs, multi-site comparisons, and quantitative measures to complement these qualitative findings and provide more robust evidence of program effectiveness.

Conclusion

The implementation of zakat fitrah habituation at MAN Sorong demonstrates significant positive impacts on student character development through systematic integration of religious practices with educational programs. This study reveals that the program effectively cultivates essential character traits including social awareness, empathy, discipline, responsibility, and collaborative skills among students. The program's success stems from five key implementation strategies: intensive socialization and education, structured collection mechanisms, transparent distribution processes, exemplary leadership modeling, and strategic institutional collaboration with local mosques. Students demonstrated increased social consciousness through heightened sensitivity to community needs and sustained engagement in social activities beyond the zakat program. The experiential learning approach significantly enhanced students' gratitude, self-confidence, and civic responsibility while providing authentic leadership opportunities and strengthening connections to broader social networks. Implementation challenges including awareness deficits, resource constraints, and varying student economic circumstances were successfully addressed through intensive socialization programs, creative fundraising initiatives, and strategic partnerships with zakat institutions, demonstrating the adaptability and scalability potential of the program model.

This study acknowledges methodological limitations affecting generalizability. The single-site case study design at MAN Sorong limits transferability to diverse geographical and socioeconomic contexts. The qualitative methodology prevents establishment of causal relationships between program participation and character outcomes. Additionally, the research relied primarily on educator perspectives with limited long-term student tracking and lacked control group comparisons to isolate program-specific effects from other educational influences. Future investigations should employ longitudinal designs to assess sustained character development impacts over extended periods. Multi-site comparative studies across different Islamic educational institutions would enhance understanding of contextual factors affecting program effectiveness. Researchers should incorporate quantitative measures alongside qualitative approaches to provide more robust evidence of character development outcomes. Studies examining integration of other Islamic practices with formal curricula could expand understanding of comprehensive Islamic character education models. Additionally, future research should investigate optimal age ranges for program implementation, examine gender differences in outcomes, explore family and community support roles, conduct comparative analyses between Islamic and secular character education approaches, and investigate digital integration possibilities for contemporary zakat education.

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