

The Formation of Students' Religious Character Through the Living Qur'an at Budi Satrya Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era of rapid scientific and technological progress, the development of student morals and character often lags behind, leading to behaviors inconsistent with religious principles such as disrespect, poor ethics, and a lack of empathy. This study posits that education is crucial in countering this trend by fostering religious character through the implementation of the Living Qur'an concept. Focusing on Budi Satrya Junior High School, this qualitative case study research investigates the process of building students' religious character. It describes the understanding of teachers and students regarding the Living Qur'an, identifies the religious principles being taught, and analyzes the teachers' role. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the Living Qur'an is perceived not merely as a literacy program but as an effort to internalize Qur'anic values in daily life. Instilled practices include reading short surahs, memorizing Juz 'Amma, reciting prayers and shalawat, performing Dhuha and congregational Zuhur prayers, memorizing Asmaul Husna, and participating in the Iqra' extracurricular. Teachers play a critical role as role models, guides, and motivators. The program's implementation has effectively created positive changes, evidenced by increased discipline, improved morals, and a stronger religious culture. Thus, the Living Qur'an is concluded to be an effective strategy for forming students into faithful, pious, and noble individuals.

Keywords: Religious Character, Students, Living Qur'an

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an holds the position as the foundation and primary source in Islamic teachings. The belief of Muslims, which is also supported by scientific findings, recognizes the Qur'an as the holy scripture containing the revelations of God. A well-run educational mechanism will form noble morals, which in turn become the pillar in building student character. The most ideal educational model is one derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The reason is that the guidelines within these two sources serve as fundamental principles for realizing an educational system that is virtuous and character-oriented (Nasution, 2019). This situation aligns with QS. Al-Baqarah verse 2, which states:

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

Meaning: "This is the Book (the Qur'an) about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah." (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019)

In Tafsir Jalalain, it is explained that the phrase *zālikal-kitāb* (this Book) refers to the Book recited by the Prophet Muhammad. The statement *lā raiba fih* affirms that there is not the slightest doubt or uncertainty regarding the truth of the Qur'an as the word of God Almighty. Structurally, the negative phrase "there is no doubt" functions as the predicate for the subject "this Book," while the demonstrative word "this" is applied as a form of honorification. Furthermore, the word *hudan* (a guidance), which is the second predicate, carries the meaning of a guide for life *lil-muttaqin* (for those conscious of Allah). Those meant

by 'those conscious of Allah' are those who strive earnestly to attain piety by obeying Allah's commands and avoiding His prohibitions, to protect themselves from the punishment of the Hellfire (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuti, 1990).

In the contemporary era, the influence of globalization can be observed in children's development. If visualized, the graph of their moral, ethical, and spiritual education shows an alarming level. Many children exhibit a decline in manners, religious practice, and many even disregard prevailing norms in school and society. Therefore, training and strengthening a love for the Qur'an has become crucial so that children can be protected and consistently engaged in constructive activities, such as *mengaji* (Qur'an recitation), *tahsin* (recitation improvement), and *tahfizh* (memorization). In this context, the presence of the Living Qur'an concept emerges as an effective solution for intensively internalizing moral and ethical education in children's souls. This situation is an effort to revitalize the spirit of Islamic education to align with its legal provisions (Winasih & Munfarida, 2024).

One of the effective methods for shaping students' religious character is by implementing the Living Qur'an approach. This concept emphasizes that the Qur'an is not merely to be read but must also be practiced in daily life (Suriani et al., 2019). According to Bakar (2022), education that refers to the Qur'an aims to shape student character to be more ethical and moral in accordance with Islamic teachings. Through this program, students are expected to understand and practice the teachings of the Qur'an in their lives.

Although various studies on the Living Qur'an have been widely conducted, such as research by Alifah et al. (2025), which focused on the 'Wonogiri Mengaji' program as a form of Qur'anic literacy, and research by Hidayah et al. (2024), which described the routine practice of Qur'anic verses in daily life, a research gap can be identified. Previous studies tended to focus on the implementation and improvement of Qur'anic literacy skills. However, not many have specifically examined how the Living Qur'an approach functions as a primary strategy in holistically shaping students' religious character, encompassing aspects of behavior, worship, discipline, and social attitudes as the main outcome. This study is present to address this gap by focusing on the formation of religious character as the core objective of the Living Qur'an implementation.

In several educational institutions, the Living Qur'an has become a prominent approach in modern times (Suriani et al., 2019). One such institution is Budi Satrya Junior High School. This school strives to build the religious character of its students by integrating the principles of the Qur'an into both the teaching and learning mechanisms and into daily life within the school environment. The selection of Budi Satrya Junior High School as the research locus is based on the unique and comprehensive implementation of the Living Qur'an program at the school. Unlike most schools that may only implement one or two religious programs, Budi Satrya Junior High School has integrated the Living Qur'an concept into the entire school ecosystem through a series of structured and sustainable activities, such as the habituation of reading short surahs, *Dhuha* and congregational *Zuhr* prayers, to the memorization of *Asmaul Husna*. This uniqueness and early success in creating a tangible religious environment make it a rich and relevant case study to be researched.

In the context of education, teachers hold a key role in internalizing religious character in students, primarily through the exemplary behavior and conduct they demonstrate daily. This exemplification is manifested in the attitudes, actions, and patterns of interaction between teachers and students, which consistently prioritize Islamic principles, such as integrity, perseverance, and compassion. By becoming role models, teachers have great potential to encourage students to adopt and implement these noble principles in their everyday lives (Anggrenia et al., 2025). In line with this, Sumarni (2022) asserts that the method of teacher exemplification is a highly effective approach in forming students' religious character, considering that students naturally tend to emulate the behavior of adult figures they respect.

Based on the background and identification of the research gap above, the focus of this research is formulated into the following questions:

How is the understanding of the Living Qur'an among teachers and students at Budi Satrya Junior High School?

What religious principles are taught to students through the Living Qur'an program at Budi Satrya Junior High School?

What is the role of teachers in the process of shaping students' religious character through the Living Qur'an at Budi Satrya Junior High School?

What are the differences observed in students before and after the implementation of the Living Qur'an program at Budi Satrya Junior High School?

Explicitly, this study aims to:

Analyze and describe the understanding of teachers and students regarding the Living Qur'an at Budi Satrya Junior High School.

Identify and categorize the religious principles taught through the Living Qur'an program.

Analyze the strategic role of teachers as models, guides, and motivators in internalizing the values of the Living Qur'an to shape students' religious character.

Evaluate the impact of program implementation by elaborating on the significant changes that occurred in student character and the school environment before and after the Living Qur'an program was implemented.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining "The Formation of Students' Religious Character Through the Living Qur'an at Budi Satrya Junior High School."

Theoretical Study

Religious Character

Various studies on character education, the internalization of character principles, and its formation have been widely conducted, both those discussing character in general and those focusing on specific types such as patriotic, Islamic, and religious character. Research concerning religious character itself has been carried out using diverse approaches, one of which is a study conducted by Rahma Nurbaiti on the formation of students' religious character through routine religious activities (Nurbaiti et al., 2020).

In the context of education, religious character is cultivated in schools as a value closely related to the divine in a universal sense, manifested in an individual's mindset, speech, and actions that reflect divine principles. This character is essential for students in responding to the challenges of modern demands and moral decline. The presence of religious character is expected to shape students who are capable of behaving based on the ability to distinguish between right and wrong (*al-haqq* and *al-batil*) in accordance with Islamic teachings (Futra et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to Agus Wibowo's theory, religious character is interpreted as obedient behavior and disposition in carrying out the religious teachings one adheres to, accompanied by an attitude of tolerance towards the worship practices of followers of other religions, and the ability to live harmoniously with others. In other words, religious character is behavior and morals that are in harmony with the teachings instilled through educational mechanisms (Wibowo, 2012).

Religious character education is a process of internalizing religious principles to students with the aim of forming individuals who excel in faith, piety, and noble morals. This religious character functions as a core value that underlies all of an individual's behavioral patterns (Ma'zumi, 2020). Furthermore, religious character can be understood as a manifestation visible in a person's attitudes, mindset, speech, and actions, which reflects their level of spirituality. From an Islamic perspective, this character is closely related to the strength of belief and commitment in performing acts of worship, which in turn also encourages the development of mental health and prosocial behavior (Luthfiyah & Zafi, 2021). The identification of religious character can be observed from attitudes and actions that reflect awareness and compliance with religious guidance, both in the sphere of personal life and in social interactions (Joharsah & Muhlizar, 2023).

Living Qur'an

Terminologically, the science of Living Qur'an is a discipline within Qur'anic studies that focuses on how the Qur'an is realized in the real-life context of society. In other words, its object of study is the phenomenon or manifestation of the Qur'an, not its written text. Although the Qur'an remains the central focus, the approach shifts to its social manifestations, rather than the text itself. This science studies the practice of implementing the Qur'an in reality, not merely theories derived from interpretation. These manifestations can take the form of objects, actions, values, culture, traditions, or even societal preferences. Therefore, studying the Living Qur'an can be viewed as an effort to intensively understand a culture, practice, tradition, ritual, thought, or behavioral pattern in society that is underpinned by verses of the Qur'an. This discipline can also be interpreted as the scientific study of events or signs in the Qur'an that are related to human life. Thus, its function is to explore the sciences of the Qur'an that form the basis for various social symptoms and phenomena (Ubaydi, 2019).

In general, many verses in the Qur'an encompass principles of character education, including gratitude, wisdom, righteous deeds, respect, kindness, patience, humility, and self-control. This is exemplified in QS. Luqman [31]: 12-19. Every individual has a responsibility to ensure the well-being of their offspring and future generations. And the most important factor in saving them pertains to divinity, and correct and firm faith, as a foundation and guide in responding to life's challenges. The guidance of noble morals teaches various obligations, recommendations, and prohibitions that humans must obey to attain Allah's pleasure. Furthermore, moral guidance also teaches humans to be devoted and grateful to their parents, who guide them in this world by showing their affection and care, through selfless sacrifice. Being devoted, obedient, helpful, and striving to make one's parents happy are signs of gratitude. It is not fitting for a person to hurt their parents' feelings in the slightest, even if it is merely due to their increasing age. Even after they have passed away, we must not forget their merits and should seek forgiveness, goodness, and mercy from Allah for them (Hidayah et al., 2024).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design. The qualitative methodology was selected for its capacity to provide an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena, human behaviors, and the underlying meanings associated with the process of shaping students' religious character through Living Qur'an practices. The case study design was specifically chosen as it allows for an intensive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, focusing on the unique and comprehensive implementation of the Living Qur'an program at Budi Satrya Junior High School in Medan. The research was conducted during the 2023/2024 academic year. The location was selected through purposive sampling due to the school's well-established and structured program, making it an ideal case for this inquiry. Participants included the school principal, five Islamic Education teachers, two homeroom teachers, and fifteen students from various grade levels, who were selected to represent a range of experiences and engagement with the program. Data were collected through triangulation, which involved participant observation of Living Qur'an activities, in-depth semi-structured interviews with all participant groups, and a documentary study of relevant sources such as the school's curriculum, lesson plans, activity schedules, and student journals. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach following the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure the validity of the findings, techniques such as data triangulation and member checking were employed throughout the analysis process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

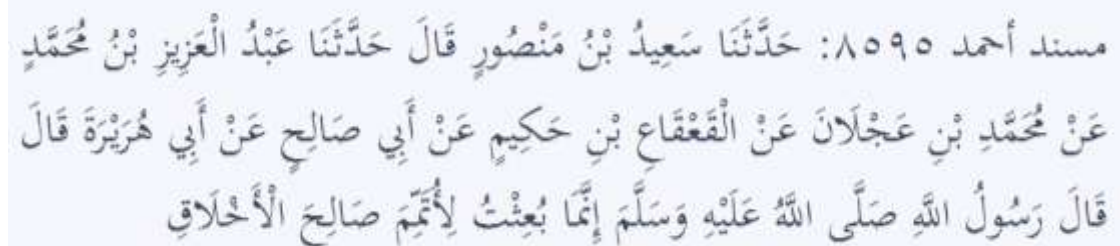
Findings

Mastery of Living Qur'an Among Teachers and Students at Budi Satrya Junior High School

The initial step taken by the researcher was to assess the extent of the teachers' and students' mastery of the Living Qur'an. Therefore, the researcher posed several questions and also observed the situation within the classroom to align student behavior with the standards of the Living Qur'an.

The researcher summarized the interview results from teachers and students regarding their mastery of the Living Qur'an. The opinion of a teacher, Mr. Mawar Dinur, S.Pd., on the Living Qur'an is as follows: "Living Qur'an is a program aimed at implementing the principles of the Qur'an, where students are required to understand and practice the principles within the Qur'an that prioritize civilized character and *akhlakul karimah* (noble morals)." (Interview, June 18, 2025).

The Living Qur'an is not merely a reading activity but encompasses the mastery, internalization, and practice of Qur'anic principles integrated with the formation of student character (Winasih & Munfarida, 2024). This situation supports the teacher's opinion that the Living Qur'an aims for students to understand and practice Qur'anic principles in a life characterized by *akhlakul karimah*, as previously explained in HR. Ahmad Number 8595:



مسند أحمد ٨٥٩٥: حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ مَنْصُورٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ
عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَجَلَانَ عَنْ الْقَعْقَاعِ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ
قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Meaning: "It has been narrated to us by Saeed bin Mansur: It has been narrated to us by Abdul Aziz, from Ibn Ajlan, from Al-Qa'qa', from Abu Shalih, from Abu Hurairah, that the Prophet shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam said: 'Indeed, I was sent only to perfect noble character.'" (HR. Ahmad, Number 8595) (Imam Ahmad, 2005).

Furthermore, a student's opinion regarding the Living Qur'an is as follows: "In my opinion, the Living Qur'an is like a program so we can be closer to the Qur'an. It's not just about reading, but also applying the content and teachings of the Qur'an in our daily lives. So it's not merely theoretical but is genuinely practiced." (Interview, June 18, 2025). This aligns with Harahap's opinion that contextual and interactive Qur'anic education strengthens students' religious literacy and helps internalize Qur'anic teachings into everyday behavior (Harahap, 2023). This situation supports the student's view that the Living Qur'an is about real-world application, not just theory.

Referring to the interview results with teachers and students, the researcher can conclude that their fundamental understanding of the Living Qur'an is essentially similar: it emphasizes the significance of implementing the teachings of the Qur'an in daily life, not being limited to just reading or theoretical understanding.

Students view the Living Qur'an as a program that helps them become more familiar with the Qur'an by implementing its content and teachings in real life. Meanwhile, teachers emphasize that the Living Qur'an is a program aimed at ensuring students not only understand but also practice the principles of the Qur'an, which focus on forming civilized attitudes and *akhlakul karimah* (noble morals).

Thus, the Living Qur'an can be understood as a program that emphasizes the instillation and application of Qur'anic principles to create individuals who are religious, possess noble morals, and are civilized in their daily lives.

Religious Principles Taught at SMP Budi Satrya

Referring to the results of observations and interviews conducted by the researcher at SMP Budi Satrya, the data shows that the religious principles taught at the school through several activities are as follows:

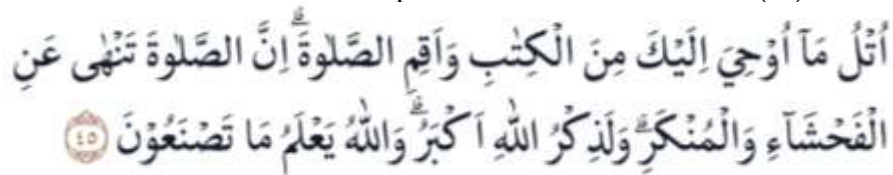
First, reciting short surahs before entering the classroom. All students and teachers at SMP Budi Satrya line up on the field every morning before entering their classes to routinely

recite short surahs. The surah recited is different each day and rotates. The students recite them together.

Second, reciting *shalawat* followed by prayers before and after learning in the classroom. After reciting the short surahs on the field, the students enter their classrooms, proceed to recite *shalawat*, and then the prayers before and after the lesson are performed collectively. Before leaving school, the students also recite the *doa kafaratul majelis* (prayer for the conclusion of a gathering).

Third, performing Dhuha and Zuhur prayers in congregation. The implementation of congregational Dhuha (optional) and Zuhur (obligatory) prayers at school is a form of routine practice of both obligatory and *Sunnah* worship performed together. All students are required to perform congregational prayers. This is supported by Abdurachman's research, which studied the impact of congregational prayer on students' character, concluding that the better students are at maintaining congregational prayer, the better the positive change in their character (Abdurachman et al., 2021).

This is in accordance with what is explained in QS. Al-'Ankabut (29) verse 45:



Meaning: "Recite, [O Muhammad], what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do." (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019)

In *Tafsir Jalalain*, it is explained that the command "utlu mā ūhiya ilaika minal-kitāb" means the command to recite the revelation that has been sent down, namely the Holy Qur'an. Furthermore, the command "wa aqimiṣ-ṣalāh" affirms the obligation to establish prayer, with the explanation that prayer effectively prevents the performer from immoral and evil deeds. In Islamic law, prayer should function as a defensive fortress against all forms of sin, provided it is performed with full sincerity. The phrase "wa laẓikrullāhi akbar" teaches that the remembrance of Allah (*dzikir*) holds greater virtue than all other forms of worship and acts of obedience. This verse concludes with the statement "wallāhu ya'lamu mā taṣna'ūn," which affirms that Allah is All-Knowing of all actions performed by humans, and He will give a just recompense for all those deeds (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuti, 1990).

This verse conveys the command revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad for Muslims to read, understand, and implement the Qur'an, coupled with the command to establish prayer. This is because prayer is a fundamental act of worship that can prevent immoral and evil deeds. According to *Tafsir Jalalain*, this verse emphasizes that the command to read the Qur'an must be accompanied by the consistent performance of prayer, as the two complement each other in forming noble character in accordance with Islamic teachings. This aligns with the religious principles applied at SMP Budi Satrya, where students are accustomed to performing congregational prayers and are reminded of the obligation of the five daily prayers as a form of implementing the Qur'an in their daily lives. Thus, this verse becomes an important foundation for shaping students' religious character, specifically in internalizing the awareness that prayer is not merely a ritual obligation but also a means of moral and spiritual development. The Dhuha prayer is performed at 10:00 AM Western Indonesia Time, and the Zuhur prayer is performed at 12:30 PM.

Fourth, reciting *Asmaul Husna* every Friday on the field. Every Friday, students and teachers gather on the field to recite *Asmaul Husna* in unison, followed by the recitation of short surahs.

Fifth, Iqra' Extracurricular every Saturday. The Iqra' Extracurricular activity is where students read the Qur'an under the direct guidance of teachers, focused on improving their ability to read the Qur'an properly and correctly. This program assists students who still have difficulty reading the Qur'an, while also deepening their understanding of *tajwid* (rules of

recitation) and *makhraj* (articulation points of letters). The Iqra' Extracurricular activity serves as a means to realize a Qur'anic culture within the school environment. This situation aligns with the opinion of Imamudin (2020) that a love for the Qur'an must first be cultivated in children before teaching them its verses. Because reading the Qur'an without love for the holy book will not yield any goodness.

Sixth, *Juz Amma Tahfizh* (Memorization) activity. In its implementation, the *Tahfizh* activity is carried out in a structured and sustainable manner. Students are guided by Islamic Education (PAI) teachers to memorize surahs from *Juz Amma*. This activity is usually conducted at the beginning of lesson hours. Each student is required to memorize *Juz Amma* and recite it to the PAI teacher. During each PAI session, the teacher allocates time for both instruction and recitation assessment; 2 hours for teaching and 1 hour for recitation. If the lesson time ends before all students have completed their recitation, it is continued during break time in the teachers' room.

This is as explained in *HR. Al-Bukhari*, Number 5027:

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

Meaning: "Uthman bin 'Affan (radhiyallahu 'anhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah (shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said, 'The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it.'" (HR. Al-Bukhari, Number 5027) (Imam Al-Bukhari, 2008)

Referring to the observation results above, it can be concluded that the instillation of religious principles at SMP Budi Satrya is carried out through various routine religious practices integrated into daily school activities. Religious values are embedded through routine activities such as: reciting short surahs before entering class, reciting *shalawat* followed by prayers before and after lessons in the classroom, then reciting the *doa kafaratul majelis* before going home; performing congregational Dhuha and Zuhur prayers; reciting *Asmaul Husna* every Friday; the Iqra' Extracurricular activity on Saturdays; and the *Juz Amma Tahfizh* activity. These activities demonstrate the school's efforts to build students' religious character through the routine practice of both obligatory and *Sunnah* worship, strengthening love for the Qur'an, togetherness, discipline, and devotion in worship. Therefore, the religious principles at SMP Budi Satrya are not only taught theoretically but are also practiced tangibly in the students' daily lives within the school environment.

The Teacher's Role in the Process of Forming Students' Religious Character through the Living Qur'an at SMP Budi Satrya

Referring to the results of the researcher's interview with a source, Mr. Mawar Dinur, S.Pd., as an Islamic Education (PAI) teacher at SMP Budi Satrya, the role of the teacher in the process of forming students' religious character through the Living Qur'an is highly important. He conveyed:

"The teacher has a primary role as a role model for students. In the Living Qur'an program, the teacher does not merely deliver material about the Qur'an but also becomes a real-life example in daily behavior. For instance, the teacher habituates reciting a prayer before starting a lesson, invites students to perform congregational prayer, and emphasizes the significance of noble morals in every school activity. As a motivator, the teacher's duty is to create a pleasant atmosphere so that students are encouraged and accustomed to implementing the teachings of the Qur'an in their daily lives. Thus, the teacher's role is not limited to delivering material theoretically but also encompasses active guidance to intensively internalize the principles of the Qur'an within the students." (Interview, June 18, 2025)

This view aligns with the research of Muhammad Fadlan Fadillah Arif et al. (2024), which states that exemplification is an effective method in shaping the religious character of students. Humans fundamentally learn by observing models, whether through the speech, behavior, or attitudes of others, before finally exploring, imitating, and practicing those principles in life. Teachers who demonstrate integrity, honesty, responsibility, and empathy in their concrete actions provide a tangible example that can be emulated by their students.

Referring to the interview results, the researcher can summarize that the teacher's role in forming students' religious character through the Living Qur'an at SMP Budi Satrya is absolutely central. Teachers do not only function as instructors who deliver Qur'anic material theoretically but also as role models, guides, and motivators for students. Teachers internalize religious principles through real-life exemplification, such as inviting students to perform congregational prayers, habituating the recitation of short surahs and *Asmaul Husna*, conducting *Tahfizh* for *Juz Amma*, and emphasizing the significance of noble morals in daily life. Therefore, teachers play a direct role in forming positive habits and helping students cultivate Qur'anic teachings so that religious principles are genuinely embedded within them.

Differences Before and After Implementing the Living Qur'an at SMP Budi Satrya

According to information from the principal and the Islamic Education (PAI) teacher, this Living Qur'an activity has been implemented since 2018 until the present. The following are the opinions from the principal and the PAI teacher regarding the changes before and after the implementation of the Living Qur'an at SMP Budi Satrya:

Principal's Opinion

According to the Principal, Mr. Ir. Herri Novandi Yoes, before the implementation of the Living Qur'an program, students still lacked awareness in reading and implementing the Qur'an. Religious activities at school tended to be merely formal routines, such as holding events on major Islamic holidays like the Prophet Muhammad's Mawlid, Muharram, Isra' Mi'raj, and the Holy Month of Ramadan, which were filled with sermons and religious competitions, but they had not left a lasting impression on the students' daily behavior. Many students were not accustomed to reflecting character in accordance with Islamic teachings; some were still less respectful towards teachers, and awareness to perform religious obligations needed improvement.

However, after the Living Qur'an program was implemented, significant positive changes were observed. Students have become more accustomed to reading the Qur'an, both at school and at home. Their religious character is also more visible, for instance, increased respect for teachers, discipline in following rules, and the growth of habits embodying noble morals, such as helping friends and guarding their speech. The principal affirmed that the Living Qur'an program has become an effective means of shaping a religious culture at the school.

Teacher's Opinion

According to the PAI teacher, Mr. Mawar Dinur, S.Pd., before the Living Qur'an was implemented, Qur'anic education focused more on the cognitive aspect. Meanwhile, the application of Qur'anic principles in daily life was not strongly emphasized. Consequently, students' mastery of the Qur'an tended to be theoretical and had not yet touched upon aspects of behavior and disposition. Student behaviors that did not reflect the Living Qur'an program prior to its implementation included shortcomings in performing worship, low ethics and morals towards teachers, using harsh words with peers, and minimal implementation of moral awareness.

After the introduction of the Living Qur'an program, the teacher noticed a tangible change in the students. They not only can read but are also learning to implement the substance of the Qur'an in their daily attitudes. For example, students have become accustomed to performing worship and implementing it in their daily lives, being moral, ethical, disciplined, and accustomed to not using harsh words with friends. The teacher also finds it easier to guide students because Qur'anic principles have begun to integrate into school activities, both inside and outside the classroom.

The researcher can summarize the interview results with the principal and teacher regarding the differences before and after the implementation of the Living Qur'an program at SMP Budi Satrya, concluding that it has had a major impact on the formation of students' religious character. Previously, students only learned the Qur'an for mastery, and religious routines typically went no further. However, after this program was implemented, students have become more capable of reading, understanding, and implementing the principles of the Qur'an in their daily lives. Furthermore, this program has also improved students' disciplined

attitudes, politeness, and ethics. Not only that, but good moral habits have also grown, and the religious culture in the school environment has become more vibrant. Therefore, the Living Qur'an has proven to be highly effective in shaping student character, both in worship, morals, and social interaction.

Discussion

Internalization of the Living Qur'an Concept

The findings show a strong alignment between teacher and student understanding of the Living Qur'an, both emphasizing practical application over theoretical knowledge. This shared perception is crucial for the program's success. The teacher's view of the program as a tool for building character is supported by Winasih & Munfarida (2024), who state that the Living Qur'an integrates Qur'anic principles with character formation. This objective finds its core in the Prophetic mission to perfect moral character, as narrated in the hadith: "Indeed, I was sent only to perfect noble character." (HR. Ahmad). The student's perspective, which highlights a personal journey to "be closer to the Qur'an" through practice, resonates with Harahap (2023), who argues that contextual and interactive Qur'anic education strengthens religious literacy and behavioral internalization.

Holistic Character Building through Religious Habituation

The variety of religious principles taught at the school reflects a holistic approach to character building. The practice of congregational prayer, for instance, is not just a ritual but a training ground for discipline and collective responsibility. This finding is reinforced by Abdurachman et al. (2021), whose research concluded that maintaining congregational prayer positively influences students' character. The philosophical foundation is strong, as Qur'an (Al-'Ankabut: 45) states that prayer prevents immorality and wrongdoing. The combination of recitation, memorization, and prayer creates a comprehensive ecosystem where religious values are constantly reinforced, moving beyond cognitive learning to experiential habituation.

The Central Role of the Teacher as a Living Model

The finding that teachers act as role models, guides, and motivators is critical. This aligns perfectly with the research of Arif et al. (2024), which states that exemplification is an effective method for shaping religious character. Students learn profoundly through observation, and a teacher who embodies the values they teach provides a tangible, credible model for emulation. Mr. Mawar Dinur's description of his role transcends the conventional "instructor" and enters the realm of a "moral mentor," which is essential for the internalization of values. This supports Sumarni's (2022) assertion that the exemplary method is highly effective, as students naturally tend to emulate respected adult figures.

The Program's Impact: From Theory to Lived Experience

The testimonies from the principal and teacher regarding the differences before and after implementation provide compelling evidence of the program's impact. The shift from a "formal routine" to a "vibrant religious culture" indicates a successful institutionalization of values. The reported changes—increased discipline, respect, and moral awareness—are key indicators of developed religious character. This demonstrates that the Living Qur'an program has effectively bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge of the Qur'an and its practical application in daily life, fulfilling its ultimate goal of shaping students who are not only knowledgeable but also faithful, pious, and of noble character.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the Living Qur'an program at Budi Satrya Junior High School plays a vital role in holistically shaping students' religious character by translating religious principles into daily routines that instill worship values through activities such as reciting short surahs, congregational prayers, and Qur'an memorization, while simultaneously fostering moral values like respect, empathy, and tolerance, with teachers serving as central figures and role models in this process. The program's success demonstrates that a holistic approach integrating religious literacy (tahsin, tahfizh) with character internalization through habitual practice is more effective in nurturing devout and noble individuals than a purely

cognitive or ceremonial approach, offering a valuable model for other Islamic educational institutions to strengthen their character-building curricula. For policymakers, it emphasizes the importance of providing schools with autonomy and resources to develop integrated, value-based programs. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that schools institutionalize the Living Qur'an program within the formal curriculum and strategic plan to ensure sustainability; teachers enhance their continuous role modeling and adopt more creative, interactive teaching methods to deepen students' engagement with Qur'anic values; and future researchers conduct quantitative and comparative studies to measure the program's impact and explore its broader applicability across different educational contexts.

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