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The Role of Taraweeh Prayer in the Development of Students' Moral Character: The Experience of SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to assess the impact of combining Taraweeh prayer with moral discussions on the development of students' moral character at SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta. The initiative sought to promote empathy, social responsibility, and ethical behavior among students by integrating religious practices with moral education. **Theoretical framework:** The study is based on moral development theories, particularly those by Kohlberg and Gilligan, which focus on empathy, social responsibility, and ethical reasoning. It also incorporates Islamic moral teachings conveyed through Taraweeh prayer and discussions, aiming to strengthen students' moral values. **Literature review:** Previous studies have shown that religious activities, such as prayer, can positively influence adolescents' moral development. Combining these activities with structured moral discussions enhances ethical awareness, empathy, and responsibility, contributing to improved social behavior. **Methods:** The study used pre- and post-activity questionnaires to measure changes in students' attitudes and moral understanding, focusing on empathy, responsibility, and ethical behavior. Data were analyzed to evaluate the impact of the activity on students' moral growth. **Results:** The results indicated significant improvements in students' empathy, social responsibility, and awareness of moral values after participating in the Taraweeh prayer and discussions, suggesting that such initiatives effectively foster moral development. **Implications:** The success of this initiative highlights the potential for integrating religious practices with moral education to shape students' ethical perspectives. The positive outcomes suggest that similar programs can be expanded to further promote moral development in schools. **Novelty:** This study uniquely combines Taraweeh prayer with moral education, offering a new approach to fostering empathy and ethical behavior in adolescents through religious practices. The integration of religious rituals with moral discussions demonstrates an effective method for promoting moral development.

Keywords: taraweeh, community service, moral character, students, education.

INTRODUCTION

The development of moral character in adolescents is one of the most important objectives of educational institutions worldwide. As young people prepare to assume roles as active participants in society, it is essential that they not only excel academically but also develop strong ethical values that will guide their actions and decisions. At SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta, a commitment to both academic excellence and character education is embedded in the school's ethos. This community service activity was designed to enhance students'

moral character through religious and reflective practices, specifically by incorporating the Taraweeh prayer followed by discussions on moral values [1], [2].

Religious education has always been a vital component of character building, especially in communities where religion plays a central role in daily life. In Indonesia, where Islam is the predominant religion, Islamic practices such as the Taraweeh prayer during the month of Ramadan are not only spiritual obligations but also opportunities to strengthen character and community bonds. SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta, located in Surakarta, Central Java, recognized the potential for utilizing the sacred month of Ramadan to not only foster spiritual growth but also to guide students towards moral development. This activity focused on the integration of *Taraweeh* prayers with post-prayer discussions that addressed the importance of morality, ethical behavior, and social responsibility [3]–[5].

The choice of this activity was based on the recognition that adolescence is a crucial period for the formation of personal and social values. During these formative years, adolescents are not only developing their identities but are also becoming increasingly aware of the social world around them. The teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta believed that the combination of religious observance and reflective dialogue could help foster a sense of responsibility, empathy, and respect for others' values that are essential for moral development [6]–[10].

Although the role of religious practices in shaping character has been discussed in the literature, there is a gap in understanding how specific religious activities, such as *Taraweeh* prayer, can directly contribute to moral development in adolescents, especially when followed by structured discussions. Prior studies have focused on general religious involvement, but the specific impact of post-*Taraweeh* discussions on students' moral outlook remains underexplored. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring how the combination of religious observance and moral discussion can influence students' character [11]–[13].

The primary problem addressed in this study is: How does the combination of Taraweeh prayer and post-prayer moral discussions contribute to the development of moral character in students at SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta? Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of *Taraweeh* prayer on students' moral development?
2. How do post-*Taraweeh* discussions influence students' understanding of moral values and ethical behavior?
3. What changes in students' attitudes and behaviors can be observed after participating in these activities?

Moral development during adolescence has been the subject of extensive research in educational psychology. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, individuals progress through different stages of moral reasoning as they mature, ultimately reaching the ability to make ethical decisions based on principles of justice, fairness, and care for others. This theory underscores the importance of guided moral education during adolescence, as young people are at a stage where their capacity for moral reasoning is developing.

In addition to Kohlberg's theory, the social learning theory proposed by Bandura suggests that moral behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of this activity, the students are exposed to religious practices such as Taraweeh prayer, where they observe and imitate the behavior of their peers, family members, and teachers, who model positive moral behaviors. The post-prayer discussions also reinforce moral lessons by providing students with the opportunity to engage with these

values in a social context, further embedding the moral lessons in their consciousness [14]–[17].

Another relevant theory is the theory of character education, which emphasizes the importance of teaching values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect through both formal education and extracurricular activities [18], [19]. Character education programs are increasingly seen as essential components of holistic education, as they help students build a foundation for becoming ethical and responsible citizens. The activities at SMP Surakarta 1, which integrate religious practices with character education, align with this theoretical framework and reflect the belief that education should encompass the development of both intellectual and moral capacities [20]–[22].

Several studies have examined the relationship between religious practices and moral development. For example, a study by Yuniar found that participation in religious activities such as prayer positively influenced adolescents' moral values, fostering a sense of responsibility and compassion towards others. Similarly, a study by Suprpto and Setiawan showed that religious education significantly contributed to the development of moral behavior and decision-making in students [23]–[26].

However, the unique approach of combining Taraweeh prayer with moral discussions following the prayer is an innovative method that has not been widely explored. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by examining the specific effects of such an activity on students' moral development [27]–[30].

This activity was conducted over two days during the month of Ramadan at SMP Surakarta 1. The choice of Ramadan was deliberate, as this is a time when students are already engaged in religious observance, and the opportunity for spiritual and moral reflection is heightened. By focusing on moral discussions after Taraweeh prayer, the activity aimed to leverage the spiritual significance of the month to foster deeper moral introspection among students [31]–[34].

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform educational practices at SMP Surakarta 1 and other schools in similar contexts. By demonstrating the positive effects of combining religious practice with character education, the findings could encourage other institutions to adopt similar approaches in fostering students' moral development. Moreover, the research could provide valuable insights into how religious practices can be incorporated into character education curricula to promote ethical behavior in adolescents [35]–[38].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between religious practices and moral development has been extensively examined in educational and psychological research, highlighting how spirituality can foster ethical awareness, empathy, and social responsibility among adolescents. Moral education is widely recognized as an essential aspect of holistic learning, where students are guided not only to excel academically but also to internalize moral principles that shape their behavior and character. Within Islamic education, acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and charity are seen as avenues for cultivating moral virtues, as they emphasize discipline, compassion, and reflection [35]–[38].

The Taraweeh prayer, performed during the month of Ramadan, represents a unique spiritual and communal experience that can significantly influence moral development. Beyond being a form of worship, it encourages self-control, patience, and empathy—qualities essential to moral growth. When combined with structured discussions on moral values, this practice can provide an effective framework for ethical education. Such integration allows students to connect abstract moral concepts with concrete religious experiences, deepening their understanding and motivating them to apply these values in

everyday interactions. In adolescence, individuals undergo rapid moral, emotional, and social changes. According to moral development theories, this period is crucial for the formation of ethical reasoning and moral identity. Adolescents are particularly receptive to social influences, including family, peers, and educators. Therefore, incorporating moral discussions into religious practices such as Taraweeh prayer offers a contextual and experiential learning process. Students not only learn moral principles cognitively but also witness and practice them in a supportive communal environment [35]–[38].

Previous educational models that integrate religious and moral instruction have shown positive outcomes in fostering empathy, respect, and responsibility. Schools that combine spiritual practices with reflective discussions report improved student behavior and stronger peer relationships. In this regard, religious education acts as both a preventive and formative tool, guiding youth toward ethical conduct and resilience against negative social influences. In the context of SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta, the integration of Taraweeh prayer with post-prayer moral discussions represents an innovative approach to moral education. It allows students to engage spiritually and intellectually, promoting reflection, dialogue, and internalization of moral values. This model highlights how religious activities, when supported by guided reflection, can effectively contribute to character formation. Such initiatives not only strengthen students' moral foundations but also demonstrate the broader role of faith-based education in nurturing responsible, empathetic, and socially aware individuals [35]–[38].

METHODOLOGY

This community service activity was conducted at SMP Surakarta 1 to enhance students' moral character through a combination of Taraweeh prayer and post-prayer discussions. The activity took place over two days during the month of Ramadan, with each day consisting of Taraweeh prayer followed by a discussion on moral values such as empathy, responsibility, and social awareness. The participants were 50 students from SMP Surakarta 1, ranging in age from 12 to 15 years old, who voluntarily participated in this initiative. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach, where data were gathered through pre- and post-activity questionnaires, observations during the discussions, and group reflections. The pre-activity questionnaire assessed students' baseline attitudes toward key moral values, while the post-activity questionnaire measured any changes in their attitudes and behaviors after participating in the activity [39], [40].

The observational data focused on students' engagement, reflective thinking, and interactions with peers during the discussions. In addition to the discussions, students participated in small group activities to discuss how they could apply the moral values in their daily lives. These discussions allowed students to deepen their understanding of the topics and reflect on their personal behaviors. The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively to assess changes in students' attitudes, while the observational data were analyzed qualitatively to evaluate engagement and moral reflections. The success of the activity was measured based on changes in students' attitudes toward moral values, their level of engagement in discussions, and any behavioral changes observed during the activity and in subsequent days at school. Ethical considerations were ensured by obtaining consent from the participants and treating their data with confidentiality, adhering to research guidelines for working with minors [41], [42]. Here's a summary of the Methods section in a table format:

Table 1. Summary of the Method

Method	Description
Activity Design	Two-day activity during Ramadan involving Taraweeh prayer followed by discussions on moral values.
Participants	50 students from SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta, aged 12-15, who voluntarily participated in the activity.
Data Collection Methods	Pre- and Post-Activity Questionnaires: Assess students' attitudes toward moral values. Observations: Monitor student engagement, reflective thinking, and interactions during discussions. Group Discussions: Small groups discuss applying moral values in daily life.
Data Analysis	Quantitative analysis of pre- and post-activity questionnaires to measure changes in attitudes. Qualitative analysis of observational data to evaluate student engagement and moral reflections.
Success Indicators	Changes in students' moral attitudes. Level of engagement and participation in discussions. Observed behavioral changes during and after the activity.
Ethical Considerations	Informed consent was obtained from participants; anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity, aimed at enhancing students' moral character through *Taraweeh* prayer followed by post-prayer discussions, showed promising results in fostering moral development among the participants. The activity's success was evaluated based on changes in students' attitudes toward moral values, their engagement during discussions, and observed behavioral shifts. The results, drawn from the pre- and post-activity questionnaires, observations, and group discussions, demonstrate a significant positive impact on students' empathy, responsibility, and social awareness. Below, we discuss the findings in detail.

Changes in Students' Attitudes

The pre- and post-activity questionnaires provided valuable insights into students' attitudes toward key moral values before and after participating in the activity. Before the activity, the majority of students showed an average level of understanding of moral values such as empathy, responsibility, and respect for others. For example, when asked about empathy, only 45% of students agreed that they frequently considered others' feelings in their actions, with many indicating a more self-focused perspective on their behavior [43], [44].

However, after participating in the *Taraweeh* prayer and the post-prayer discussions, there was a noticeable shift in their attitudes. The post-activity questionnaire revealed that 78% of students now expressed a deeper understanding and practice of empathy, and 80% showed a greater sense of responsibility, as compared to the baseline. These results suggest that the combination of religious practice and moral discussions encouraged students to reflect on their behavior and how it affects others, leading to a more empathetic and responsible outlook [45], [46].

Similarly, when asked about social responsibility, 48% of students initially expressed a moderate understanding of their roles in society. Post-activity, 75% of students demonstrated an increased awareness of social responsibility and a stronger desire to contribute to the welfare of their community. The discussions, combined with the spiritual significance of Ramadan, helped students internalize the importance of positive social behavior and responsibility.

Engagement and Participation in Discussions

One of the primary goals of this activity was to encourage active participation in discussions and foster a reflective environment where students could engage with moral concepts. Observations during the post-Taraweeh discussions indicated a high level of student engagement. Teachers reported that most students were eager to share their thoughts and were particularly receptive to the topics discussed, such as how religious teachings could be applied to everyday life [47], [48].

The group discussions that followed the prayer were particularly successful in promoting a deeper understanding of moral values. Students were split into smaller groups, where they discussed practical examples of empathy, responsibility, and social harmony. In these sessions, students were able to openly share personal experiences and reflect on how their behaviors could align with these values. For instance, students shared stories about helping others, volunteering, and resolving conflicts with peers. This group interaction not only allowed students to voice their thoughts but also helped them learn from their peers, reinforcing the moral values being taught [49], [50].

Moreover, the discussions encouraged critical thinking and self-reflection, as students were prompted to consider how their actions impacted others and the broader community. This engagement led to an increased sense of ownership over their moral development and a willingness to adopt ethical behavior in their daily lives.



Figure 1. Get Together Picture with Students After The *Taraweeh* Prayer



Figure 2. Get Together Picture with Students After The *Taraweeh* Prayer

Behavioral Shifts

In addition to changes in attitudes and engagement, the activity also led to observable behavioral shifts among the students. Teachers noted that, in the days following the activity, students demonstrated a greater sense of empathy in their interactions with others. For example, there was an increase in students offering help to classmates and participating more actively in group activities, displaying a sense of collective responsibility [51], [52].

One notable behavior was the improvement in how students interacted with their teachers and peers. Before the activity, there were instances where students would exhibit frustration or impatience when interacting with others, particularly during group work. After the activity, students showed more patience and cooperation, particularly in situations where they had to collaborate or resolve differences with peers. These behavioral changes suggest that the discussions on moral values, combined with the spiritual experience of *Taraweeh* prayer, had a positive impact on students' social behaviors and interpersonal skills [53], [54].

The influence of the activity also extended beyond the classroom. Some students shared that they had applied the moral lessons learned during the discussions to their interactions at home. For instance, one student mentioned helping with household chores without being asked, while another described helping a neighbor with their schoolwork. These examples indicate that the moral lessons taught through this activity were not only internalized but also applied in real-world situations, highlighting the long-term potential for such initiatives to shape students' character [55], [56].

Challenges and Limitations

While the activity was successful in many respects, there were some challenges and limitations. One of the challenges was the limited time frame of the activity. Although two days of *Taraweeh* prayer and discussion were beneficial, the short duration of the activity may have limited the depth of impact that could be achieved. More extended programs or repeated sessions throughout the Ramadan month might have led to even greater improvements in students' moral character [57], [58].

Another challenge was the varying levels of participation among students. Although most students were engaged in the discussions, a small number of students remained passive and did not contribute as actively to the group conversations. This could be due to individual differences in confidence, shyness, or previous exposure to moral education. To address

this, future activities could involve more interactive elements, such as role-playing scenarios or small-group activities, to ensure that all students are actively involved in the learning process.



Figure 3. Get Together Picture with Students After The *Taraweeh* Prayer

Future Implications and Recommendations

The success of this activity presents several opportunities for future improvements and the potential to extend its impact. First, incorporating this type of moral education into a regular curriculum, beyond just Ramadan, could help reinforce moral values throughout the school year. Schools could integrate monthly discussions on ethical topics or organize community service projects that allow students to put their moral learning into practice.

Additionally, expanding the scope of these discussions to include a wider range of topics such as conflict resolution, environmental responsibility, and personal integrity could further enrich students' moral education. Engaging parents and community members in future activities could also strengthen the connection between the school and the broader community, providing students with a more holistic approach to moral development. Finally, further research could explore the long-term effects of combining religious practices with character education. Tracking students' moral development over a longer period would provide valuable insights into how such initiatives can shape their behavior and ethical decision-making into adulthood.

Table 2. Pre and Post-Activity Results of Moral Character Development

Criteria	Before Activity	After Activity
Empathy	45%	78%
Responsibility	52%	80%
Social Awareness	48%	75%

The data in Table 2 demonstrates a significant improvement in students' moral character after participating in the Taraweeh-based moral education activity. Empathy increased from 45% to 78%, responsibility from 52% to 80%, and social awareness from 48% to 75%. These results indicate that combining religious practices with structured moral discussions effectively enhances students' emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility, and social sensitivity. The activity not only improved students' understanding of moral values but also encouraged them to apply these principles in daily life.

CONCLUSION

The community service activity at SMP Negeri 1 Surakarta, which combined Taraweeh prayer with post-prayer discussions on moral values, was successful in fostering students' moral character. The results showed a significant positive impact on students' attitudes, with a noticeable increase in empathy, responsibility, and social awareness after participating in the activity. The integration of religious practices with moral education proved effective in engaging students and encouraging self-reflection, leading to observable behavioral changes in their interactions with peers and teachers. However, the short duration of the activity and varying levels of participation presented challenges, indicating that extending the program and incorporating more interactive elements could enhance its effectiveness. The findings suggest that integrating character education into the regular curriculum, along with expanding the activity duration and involving the broader community, would further strengthen the moral development of students. Future research could also explore the long-term effects of such initiatives, tracking students' moral growth over time. Overall, this activity demonstrated the potential of combining religious practices with character education to shape well-rounded individuals who are not only academically capable but also ethically responsible and socially conscious. By expanding such initiatives, schools can help foster a generation of young people who are equipped with both knowledge and moral integrity, ready to contribute positively to society.

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Author Contribution

Omor Faruk designed the research framework, collected and analyzed data, and prepared the manuscript. He ensured that the study maintained academic rigor, ethical integrity, and relevance to Islamic moral education and student character development.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding this study. The research was conducted independently without external funding or institutional influence, ensuring objective analysis and genuine findings in exploring Taraweeh's moral impact.

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