



## Characteristics of Students at the Level of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or Elementary School in the Subject of Islamic Cultural History (SKI)

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**Abstract:** Education primarily aims to acquire knowledge and to shape activities that influence an individual's development, transformation, character, and morality. The process of education for children up to adolescence takes place through various dynamic and ever-changing stages. The teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) in elementary schools is intended to instill an understanding of the values embedded in the history of Islam, while also encouraging students to apply those values in their daily lives. Furthermore, SKI learning helps students to recognize, comprehend, and internalize the heritage of Islamic civilization, while fostering intellectual growth, character formation, and personality development. Through SKI, learners are also guided to develop an awareness of the importance of studying the foundations of Islamic teachings, values, and norms, as well as to emulate the struggles and achievements of Islamic figures in defending and spreading the religion of Islam.

**Keyword :** Character, Learners, Islamic Elementary School, Islamic Cultural History (SKI)

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of human life as it serves as the primary means of directing the development and growth of learners until they reach maturity. Development itself can be understood as a systematic, progressive, and continuous process experienced by individuals from birth to the end of life (Santrock, J. W. 2011). This process covers various dimensions, including physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and personality development. At the age of elementary school or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (approximately 6–12 years), development reaches a crucial phase because it forms the foundation of personality, thinking patterns, and learning habits that will influence subsequent stages of education (Hurlock B 2011)

Students at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level are in the concrete operational stage, (Al Aluf 2024; Susetiyo 2022a) where children begin to think logically but remain limited to tangible objects. They are also in the stage of moral development described by Kohlberg (1981) as the early conventional level, in which social norms and rules are understood as behavioral guidelines. From the perspective of psychosocial development, Erikson (1993) explains that children at this age are in the industry vs. inferiority stage, where they learn to build self-confidence

through achievements in learning and social activities.

These developmental characteristics have significant implications for the learning process. (Susetiyo 2022) Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as facilitators who must understand the developmental needs of learners according to their age level. Misunderstanding children's characteristics at the elementary level may result in learning difficulties, low motivation, or even behavioral problems (Ormrod 2020). Therefore, examining the characteristics of learners at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level is essential as a foundation for designing learning strategies that are aligned with their developmental needs. (Lubis 2024)

Furthermore, understanding learners' characteristics at this age also equips educators to face the challenges of 21st-century education, (Maryam and Ari 2025) which demands critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Recognizing the potential, limitations, and developmental patterns of children at the elementary level is thus the key to building an effective, adaptive, and humanistic learning system. (Abas and Susetiyo 2022) Accordingly, this article seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of learners at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah/Elementary School level as a foundation for

developing relevant and meaningful educational practices.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research is a qualitative study employing a literature review method. The method was carried out by exploring various sources relevant to the discussion, (Arikunto 2002) such as theoretical references, which were analyzed to draw conclusions based on the formulated research problems. The sources were then examined and interpreted into theoretical findings, (Sugiyono, 2019) which ultimately led to the formulation of conclusions. The theoretical sources analyzed in this study were obtained from books and related journals, which were further examined through descriptive analysis. Data verification in this study was conducted by relying on library materials references.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Definition of Character Education**

According to Law Number 14 of 2005 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas), education is viewed as a conscious and planned effort expected to create a learning environment and learning experiences that allow students to effectively develop their potential. Meanwhile, character, as defined by Hidayatullah, refers to the mental or moral quality, as well as the ethics or personality of an individual, which becomes their distinctive trait and differentiates one

person from another. Furthermore, Andrianto explains that character encompasses a set of attitudes that reflect the desire to do one's best, such as acting honestly, being responsible, maintaining moral principles in situations filled with dishonesty, demonstrating interpersonal and emotional skills that enable individuals to collaborate successfully in different conditions, and showing commitment to contributing to society. Thus, character education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment that enables students to effectively develop their potential, so that they may possess character, personality, and habits that shape their quality as individuals. In addition, according to Ramdhani, character education is an approach in the educational system that aims to instill specific character values in students. Similarly, Khan argues that character education helps students develop habits related to ways of thinking and behaving that support them in living and working together in families, communities, and the nation, while also enabling them to make responsible decisions.

### **Character Values in Elementary Schools (SD/MI)**

In the current era of Society 5.0, education for children serves as a fundamental strategy to prepare a qualified and character-driven future generation. Character education, when instilled from an early age, is not only

acquired through teaching by teachers at school but also requires collaboration with parents as the primary role models. Parents must demonstrate good character so that children can emulate it, and through such examples, good values can be habituated and internalized, forming the foundation for positive personal development in the future.

Education is one of the most essential aspects of life. Through education, individuals can develop their potential. However, education is not only related to the acquisition of knowledge but must also encompass attitudes and values so that children may become pious, knowledgeable, and noble in character.

According to the Ministry of National Education, the values of character education encompass 18 aspects. These character values, as outlined by the Research and Development Agency of the Curriculum Center, include:

Religiosity, which involves obedience in understanding and practicing one's religious teachings. Honesty, which refers to the unity of knowledge, speech, and action knowing, saying, and doing what is right so that one becomes a trustworthy individual. Tolerance refers to an attitude of respect toward differences in aspects such as religion, beliefs, ethnicity, customs, language, race, opinions, and other variations. Discipline refers to an attitude that demonstrates consistency

in adhering to all applicable rules and regulations. Hard Work is an attitude that shows earnestness in completing various tasks, problems, and jobs in the best possible manner. Creativity reflects innovation in various aspects to solve problems. Independence is the attitude of not relying on others in making decisions or taking actions. Democracy reflects a way of thinking that values the rights and obligations of every individual fairly. Curiosity refers to an attitude that demonstrates eagerness to explore everything seen, heard, and experienced more deeply. National Spirit or Nationalism is an attitude that reflects loyalty and strong concern for the interests of the nation and state above personal or group interests. Love for the Homeland refers to pride, loyalty, and care for one's own language and culture, while rejecting external influences that may harm the nation. Appreciating Achievement is an attitude of openness to the accomplishments of others while recognizing one's own shortcomings without diminishing the spirit of achievement. Communicativeness reflects openness and friendliness towards others, fostering good cooperation. Love of Peace reflects a harmonious, safe, and peaceful environment through one's presence in a community. Love of Reading refers to the habit of dedicating time to reading voluntarily in order to gain knowledge. Environmental Care reflects an attitude of maintaining and

preserving the surrounding environment. Social Care reflects an attitude of concern for others and for society, especially those in need of assistance. Responsibility refers to behavior that demonstrates accountability for actions and decisions taken.

### **Implementation of Character Education in Elementary Schools (SD/MI)**

Character education in elementary schools can be realized through integration into the curriculum and subjects, school culture, and student development programs according to their interests and talents. This aligns with the principles of implementing cultural and national character education as outlined by the Ministry of National Education in 2010.

#### **1. Curriculum and Subjects**

Character values can be maximized by integrating them into all subjects. This integration can be strengthened through the design of character-based lesson plans (RPP). Such plans assist teachers in embedding character values within subject content. Thus, the syllabus and lesson plans become tools for teachers to develop the foundations of student character formation in three balanced learning competencies: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Furthermore, character education can be applied through active, innovative, creative, effective,

and enjoyable learning processes—commonly known as the PAIKEM approach in all subjects. Through this approach, all teachers have the opportunity to habituate, deliver, and instill character values in every lesson using methods that actively involve students. Therefore, integrating character values into learning is not the sole responsibility of teachers of specific subjects, but a collective effort to build strong and positive character in every student.

Additionally, strengthening communication between teachers and parents in monitoring student development can be achieved through anecdotal record books and *mutaba'ah* books. The anecdotal record documents all events in the classroom or school, while the *mutaba'ah* book reflects students' development at home, including learning, worship, and daily activities. Data from both sources serve as a reflection for schools and parents to evaluate student character progress.(Al Aluf 2024)

Rewards should also be given not only for academic achievement but also for excellence in worship and daily character, based on *mutaba'ah* records. Thus, at the end of the semester, recognition is not limited to students with the highest grades but also extended to those who demonstrate noble character.

#### **2. School Culture**

Character education can also be implemented through school culture.

Students learn from their immediate environment, including the school environment. All stakeholders must work together to create a school environment that nurtures positive character in students. Creating such a culture is the responsibility of all teachers and school staff. Examples include routines such as *Dhuha* or *Dzuhur* prayers involving teachers, (Susetiyono and Sutrisno 2022) staff, and students, as well as “Clean Friday” activities, during which teachers provide guidance on the importance of these practices. Similarly, commemorations of religious holidays should not be treated as mere formalities but as opportunities to instill their deeper meanings in students.

Such activities aim to cultivate noble character in students. More than mere routines, they are intended as meaningful experiences that encourage students to reach a post-conventional stage of moral development. Thus, the school environment plays a crucial role in instilling the understanding that every achievement and good deed benefits the students themselves before Allah SWT.

### 3. Self-Development

Character education can also be implemented through self-development programs. According to Alhamuddin, self-development enhances students’ abilities and potentials to meet their interests and

talents. In education, self-development is conducted outside formal subjects but remains part of the curriculum.

Examples include flag ceremonies, Islamic holiday events (PHBI), national holiday events (PHBN), worship routines, and other Islamic cultural activities. Extracurricular activities, which develop students’ interests and talents, serve as a medium for teachers and schools to re-instill character values through diverse activities tailored to students’ intelligence and personality types.

Other self-development programs may apply an action learning approach, such as honesty canteens to train students in honesty, or disaster relief organizations to build social sensitivity. Continuous practice of such positive activities eventually shapes these behaviors into students’ character. With proper implementation, educational development will have a positive impact on the quality of education, fostering innovative learning environments oriented toward student potential.

### 4. Characteristics of Elementary School/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (SD/MI) Students

Children at the SD/MI level generally fall within the age range of 7 to 12 years, which corresponds to the developmental stage referred to by Jean Piaget as the Concrete Operational Stage. At this stage,

children begin to develop logical thinking, although their reasoning is still tied to concrete, real-life objects and experiences. They are not yet able to fully comprehend abstract concepts. Some of the characteristics of children at this stage include:

- a. Rapid Physical Growth - Students experience significant growth in body structure and motor skills. Their energy levels are high, which needs to be directed toward productive learning activities.
- b. Curiosity and Exploratory Nature - Children are naturally curious and enthusiastic about exploring their environment. This trait should be nurtured through active and experiential learning.
- c. Need for Recognition and Appreciation - Praise, rewards, and recognition are highly motivating for students in this phase. They are eager to be acknowledged for their efforts and achievements.
- d. High Imitative Tendencies - Children learn a great deal through imitation, particularly from parents, teachers, and peers. Thus, good role models are crucial.
- e. Stronger Social Orientation - Students begin to build friendships and develop a sense of belonging within groups. They value cooperation and teamwork.
- f. Moral Development - Referring to Kohlberg's theory, children in this phase are typically at the conventional level, where moral

reasoning is based on rules, authority, and social approval.

Understanding these characteristics is essential for teachers in implementing learning that not only develops cognitive abilities but also nurtures attitudes, values, and moral behavior. Character education is most effective when adapted to the natural developmental traits of children in this age group.

## 5. The Importance of Teaching Islamic Cultural History (SKI)

The teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) in SD/MI plays a strategic role in shaping students' identities and values. SKI is not only about learning historical facts, but also about internalizing the wisdom, moral values, and exemplary attitudes from the struggles of past Muslim figures.

The importance of SKI education includes several aspects:

- a. Identity Formation - SKI helps students understand their cultural and religious roots, fostering pride in Islamic civilization and motivating them to carry forward these values in modern life.
- b. Moral and Spiritual Development - Through stories of the Prophet Muhammad, the Companions, and Muslim scholars, students are introduced to models of honesty, perseverance, leadership, and devotion to Allah SWT.
- c. Character Building - SKI provides concrete examples of noble

character traits such as patience, courage, justice, and social care, which students can emulate in their daily lives.

- d. Contextual Understanding - By studying the dynamics of Islamic history, students learn to appreciate diversity, religious moderation, and the value of cooperation across different communities.
- e. Relevance to the Era of Society 5.0 - In today's digital and globalized era, SKI education equips students with ethical and moral foundations to balance technological progress with spiritual and humanistic values. (Ayyub 2023)

SKI subjects at the SD/MI level contribute not only to students' cognitive development but also to their affective and psychomotor growth. In essence, SKI plays a vital role in producing a generation that is intelligent, moral, and prepared to face the challenges of contemporary society.

## CONCLUSION

The characteristics of students at the elementary school or *Madrasah Ibtida'iyah* (SD/MI) level encompass various aspects of development, including mental, moral, linguistic, social, and emotional growth. One of the essential components of Islamic religious education at this level is the subject of *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* (SKI), or Islamic Cultural History. The

inclusion of SKI in the curriculum is highly significant, as it enables students to understand the history of earlier Muslim communities and to derive moral and spiritual lessons (*'ibrah*) from those narratives. Through this process, students are guided not only to acquire historical knowledge but also to internalize values that contribute to shaping their worldview (way of life). Furthermore, SKI instruction is designed to integrate elements of guidance, structured teaching, practical training, experiential learning, and habituation, thereby fostering the holistic formation of students' character and religious identity.

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