

Fostering Courtesy Through Welcoming Programs: A Case Study in Islamic Education

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Abstract: Developing politeness in students is essential, as it plays a key role in their social interactions. Politeness is a fundamental social norm and has long been a valued cultural trait. To nurture this attitude, Al-Azhar Islamic Junior High School has implemented the welcoming student program. This research aims to explore how the program fosters polite behavior in students. Using a qualitative field study approach with descriptive-qualitative methods, researchers conducted direct observations. The findings indicate that the welcoming student program is effective and efficient in promoting polite behavior. This is evident from students' habits of speaking respectfully, acting courteously toward others, greeting and smiling at peers, shaking hands with those of the same gender, and clasping hands in greeting with the opposite gender. They are also accustomed to looking down and smiling politely when passing by others. **Keywords:** Politenes; Religious Program; Welcoming Student Program

Abstrak: Menumbuhkan sikap sopan santun peserta didik menjadi hal penting, karena menjadi hal utama bagi peserta didik dalam berintraksi sosial dalam kehidupannya. Sopan santun juga menjadi norma utama bagi masyarakat dan menjadi budaya luhur semenjak dulu. Untuk menumbuhkan sikap sopan santun SMP Islam Al-Azhar melakukan berbagai upaya salah satunya melalui program welcoming student. Maka penelitian ini bermaksud untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana program welcoming student dapat menumbuhkan sikap sopan santun pada peserta didik, untuk menggali hal tersebut peneliti melakukan penelitian secara lansung ke lapangan dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi lapangan dengan metode deskriptif-kualitatif. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian bahwa upaya penumbuhkan sikap sopan santun pada peserta didik terbiasa bersikap santun dengan berbahasa yang baik dan berperilaku baik dengan orang lain, dengan gejala peserta didik tidak malu untuk bermusafahah sambil mengucapkan salam dan tersenyum jika bertemu dengan sesama jenis dan mengatup tangan jika bertemu lain jenis. Selain itu peserta didik juga terbiasa menunduk tersenyum jika berpapasan dengan orang lain.

Kata Kunci: Program Keberagamaan; Sopan Santun; Welcoming Student

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INTRODUCTION

Politeness reflects noble character and an individual's personality, signaling that a person possesses commendable moral virtues (akhlaq al-karimah). Instilling politeness in students, particularly, is essential because social interactions require good manners, and within society, politeness and courtesy have long been upheld as norms and valued cultural traditions (Ahmad, 2022).

From an Islamic perspective, politeness is part of religiosity. This attitude belongs to the practice dimension in religion. Fundamentally, cultivating students' religiosity is a core focus of Islamic education. Other dimensions, such as belief, ritual worship, knowledge, and spiritual experience, are equally significant. However, the practice dimension serves as a measure of a person's religiosity, indicating the extent of their religious adherence, as seen in their actions. In Islamic psychology, the practice dimension is referred to as the moral dimension (Saleh, 2022).

The practice dimension demonstrates the impact of religious teachings on everyday behavior beyond ritual practices. It reflects how much an individual's actions are motivated by religious principles in social Life (Mathras et al., 2016) . The consequential dimension asserts that religious individuals will exhibit behaviors consistent with their faith teachings, illustrating how religious tenets influence daily actions. This dimension evaluates how individuals align their actions with religious commands, using religion as a guide in their daily lives (Senjaya, 2020).

The development of politeness as part of cultivating *akhlaq karimah* in students can be influenced by environmental factors. Schools, as a second environment for students, should foster a positive atmosphere that promotes all virtuous attitudes (Milah et al., 2024). Schools operating under an Integrated Islamic School system, where religious values are integrated into learning activities, playtime, interactions among students, teacher-student relationships, and the school environment, should implement efforts to nurture students' religiosity (Zuhri, 2014). Religiosity deepens when individuals internalize and reflect on religious teachings in their speech and daily actions (Kristiyowati & Afiqi, 2021).

When a child enters the phase of formal education at school, the influence of the school and the broader community begins to play a significant role in shaping the child's personality. During this phase, children adapt to different social situations and backgrounds, which may bring both positive and negative impacts. To optimize the moral development of children and ensure their wellbeing, education must include sufficient moral education that meets the child's needs. This can be achieved through direct classroom learning as well as various extracurricular programs (Ayu et al., 2020).

Education should aim to instill intellectual reasoning, foster attitudes through internalization, and encourage behavior that aligns with noble values. These values should manifest in interactions with God, oneself, others, and the surrounding environment. School education should not solely focus on academic achievements but also prioritize character building in students, such as politeness, honesty, responsibility, and other positive traits (Arifin & Sukandar, 2022).

SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung has a vision and mission centered on developing akhlaq al-karimah (noble character) among students, making moral education a core component of its learning process. One of the school's unique programs is the welcoming student initiative. This program has a profound impact on students, despite its seemingly simple nature. It fosters emotional connections between teachers and students, enhances motivation and happiness before lessons, and prepares students physically and mentally for learning. Due to these significant outcomes, the researcher is interested in exploring the welcoming student program and its effects, particularly in cultivating politeness among students.

Several prior studies have explored the cultivation of politeness in students. For instance, Aisya Ahmad's study titled "Developing Politeness Character: A Case Study on the Efforts of Islamic Cultural History Teachers in Madrasahs" (Ahmad, 2022). Another study by Felia Ayu Winanda, titled "Building Politeness Character Through School Culture in 5S Activities" (Winanda et al., 2024). Additionally, Fernanda Rahmatika Putra's research, "Implementing Politeness Character Education Through Akidah Akhlak Learning" (Putra et al., 2020), and Anita Prasetyo's study, "The Role of Teachers in Instilling Politeness in Students at School" (Prasetyo, 2022).

Compared to previous studies, this research offers a novel approach by focusing on the implementation of the "Welcoming Student" program, which integrates character education, politeness, and social interaction within the school environment. This study aims to provide a more systematic and integrated approach to fostering politeness through specific activities that focus on students' real-life experiences in interacting with their surroundings. This approach has not been widely explored in prior research, which typically focuses on cultural or general moral values without including dedicated programs to shape such character traits.

Most previous studies, such as those by Aisya Ahmad (2022), Felia Ayu Winanda (2024), Fernanda Rahmatika Putra (2020), and Anita Prasetyo (2022), primarily emphasize teachers' efforts or the application of politeness values

within specific learning contexts, whether through direct instruction or school culture. However, this research takes a more targeted and structured approach by focusing on the "Welcoming Student" program. This program not only involves social interactions but is also explicitly designed to cultivate politeness directly through activities that engage students in meaningful experiences.

As such, this study contributes new insights by introducing a more practical and experiential method for character development in students, offering a fresh perspective on how schools can effectively shape positive behaviors through structured and impactful programs.

RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this study is qualitative, employing field research with a descriptive-qualitative method. A qualitative approach is applied to explore the research object in its natural setting (Sugiyono, 2018). The research aims to explore and describe the implementation of the "Welcoming Student" program at SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung and its impact on fostering politeness among students. To achieve this, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2018).

Primary data in this study are collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews involve teachers who coordinate religious activities, while observations are conducted directly to examine the implementation of the "Welcoming Student" program and its influence on developing politeness in students. Secondary data are obtained from documentation, including work programs from the religious department that outline objectives, targets, and timelines for activities like the "Welcoming Student" program. Additional secondary data are sourced from literature relevant to this research. The collected data are analyzed using techniques of data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion drawing. This process ensures a comprehensive understanding of the program's execution and its contributions to character development.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

The Welcoming Student Program at SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Bandung

The "Welcoming Student" program is a distinctive initiative implemented across all schools under the Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School Foundation. This program aligns with the foundation's overarching vision and mission to cultivate noble character (akhlaq al-karimah). Emphasis on student manners is a hallmark of all Al-Azhar schools, making this program a benchmark for school quality. The "Welcoming Student" activity involves greeting students in the morning as

part of a strategic effort to foster a synergistic culture aimed at developing noble character among students. Additionally, this program reflects the foundation's commitment to excellent service, ensuring the best possible experience for students, parents, and the community. Since the program is mandatory for all Al-Azhar schools, SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung incorporates it into its educational process.

The "Welcoming Student" program is managed as part of the religious affairs department's work program at SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung. As such, the planning, implementation, and evaluation of this program fall under the responsibility of the religious department staff. However, the principal, teachers, other staff members, and school community members, including security personnel, share roles and responsibilities in carrying out the program.

The morning "Welcoming Student" program aims to instill discipline in students, encourage adherence to school regulations, provide a sense of care and comfort, and foster a culture of greeting. The program targets students to arrive at school punctually, maintain neat attire, and feel that their presence brings happiness to teachers, fostering a sense of joy and motivation before lessons begin. Furthermore, it aims to shape individuals who are confident and proactive in spreading greetings, smiles, and politeness to others. The culture of greeting (salam) is a hallmark of Al-Azhar students. They are expected to greet everyone they encounter, both within the school environment and in their daily lives within the community.

Implementation of the Welcoming Student Program at SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung

The "Welcoming Student" program at SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung is part of the teachers' work program; however, its planning and implementation are managed by the religious department staff. As previously mentioned, this program is part of the religious development effort, making it the responsibility of the religious department. The implementation of this program can be explained in three stages: planning, execution, and evaluation.

First, in the planning stage, the religious department staff, as the party responsible for this program, prepares a technical guide (juknis), which includes the duty schedule for teachers assigned to welcome students. The schedule is then socialized to the welcoming team, along with an explanation of the rules and tasks required during the welcoming activity. These tasks include inspecting the neatness of students' uniforms, offering greetings, and building emotional closeness by asking about the well-being of students who appear distressed. The staff also ensures that students are physically and mentally ready for learning and handles any situational issues as they arise.

Second, in the execution stage, the program involves the principal, scheduled teachers, and security personnel. It is carried out in the morning, from 6:00 AM to 7:00 AM, or thirty minutes before class begins, at the school lobby. The principal and three to four teachers line up to warmly welcome arriving students. Students greet the teachers and the principal, offer salutations, and engage in musafahah (handshaking or hand-kissing) according to established guidelines: handshaking with teachers of the same gender and clasping hands while giving salutations without physical contact with teachers of the opposite gender. During the welcoming activity, teachers observe the neatness and compliance of students' uniforms and assess their physical and mental readiness. Teachers also inquire about the well-being of students who arrive looking unhappy.

Third, in the evaluation stage, the program's implementation is reviewed by the school at the end of each semester through a work program evaluation meeting. In this meeting, all implemented programs are discussed concerning their execution and success. Observations and interviews indicate that the "Welcoming Student" program has been executed effectively and punctually, with the principal and duty teachers fulfilling their roles diligently.

Follow-up actions are based on the meeting outcomes. If a program is deemed to have run smoothly, it is continued without modification. The expected outcomes for students indicate success, as students become accustomed to arriving on time, wearing neat uniforms, and practicing greetings, smiles, and politeness as part of their personality. Consequently, students naturally exhibit these behaviors when interacting with teachers and others.

Discussion

Fostering polite attitudes in students can be achieved through various habituation methods, both structured and unstructured (Madani, 2021). This approach is based on the understanding that a child's character is shaped by what is taught and the methods or strategies used in their education (Kurniawan et al., 2019). Examples of structured habituation include activities in learning processes and specially scheduled programs (Hamidah & Kholifah, 2021). The "Welcoming Student" program is a structured approach, where its forms, steps, and strategies are specifically designed and implemented to cultivate polite attitudes as part of akhlaq al-karimah (noble character).

Politeness represents the goodness of a person's character. Typically, students' good character is reflected through their courtesy and politeness. This is because polite behavior includes refined speech and conduct that align with

established norms and local customs (Rahmat et al., 2023). The concept of politeness encompasses various social rules that evolve in society, serving as a foundation for building positive relationships and understanding in social interactions (Mu'anayah & Setiyoko, 2020). Politeness involves respectful and civilized daily behavior, as well as wisdom in speech (Muliardi, 2023). Thus, linguistic politeness is demonstrated in social interactions, while behavioral politeness is shown in attitudes towards various situations (Jdetawy & Hamzah, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, politeness is a respectful attitude in social interactions, including both language and behavior. The norms of politeness are relative, meaning what is considered polite in one time and place may differ from another. Indicators of politeness include: respecting elders, refraining from using foul, harsh, or arrogant language, avoiding spitting in inappropriate places, not interrupting conversations at inappropriate times, expressing gratitude after receiving assistance, practicing the 3S (greeting, smiling, and saying hello), asking for permission before entering someone's space or using their belongings, and treating others as one would like to be treated (Nazira et al., 2023). Polite behavior in students should inherently become their primary manner, both in pursuing knowledge (Ayu et al., 2020), and in daily life. Politeness can be cultivated through experience, education, and examples provided by parents, teachers, the community, and the surrounding environment. Therefore, character education in politeness at school requires the involvement and synergy of teachers by exemplifying noble behavior, offering positive encouragement, and habituating good conduct. Teachers have the primary responsibility of providing an optimal learning environment that supports both the academic and socio-emotional development of students (Garrote et al., 2020). Fostering politeness is crucial, as it serves as the foundation for proper manners and social interaction in students' lives. Furthermore, polite behavior reflects students' noble character and serves as an indicator of their good personality (Octaviasari et al., 2023)

At SMP Islam Al-Azhar, fostering polite behavior in students is implemented through strategies of modeling, habituation, and conditioning. Teachers exemplify politeness through actions such as offering greetings, smiles, and responding to students' greetings. Exemplary behavior observed in the students' environment, as well as polite conduct demonstrated by teachers, is a precise step (Annisa, 2019) and a moral obligation for educators (Djuwita, 2017). Modeling as an effective strategy in cultivating politeness is supported by Kurniawan's research, which emphasizes the teacher's role as an inspirer in instilling polite behavior. Additionally, teachers act as observers to monitor students' behavior. Teachers can reward students who successfully practice politeness by offering praise, while also providing constructive advice when students deviate from polite conduct (Pertiwi, 2020).

Previous explanations indicate that in the school environment, teachers are the main center that influences student behavior, both inside and outside the school. As a role model, teachers have the responsibility to show good attitudes and behaviors to their students (Putri et al., 2021) This exemplary process is something that the Prophet PBUH always taught, he used the exemplary method to teach his companions, so that he always prioritized noble behavior, gave wise advice, and taught manners and manners through real examples in daily Life (Mardalis, 2018).

Habituation serves as the next strategy for fostering polite behavior in students, requiring them to consistently practice greeting, smiling, and performing musafahah (handshaking) with everyone they encounter within the school environment. This practice is not limited to morning welcoming sessions but is encouraged whenever they meet someone, instilling a habit of respectful interaction. Additionally, to support the growth of polite behavior, teachers create a conducive environment that nurtures students' manners. This approach aligns with Amaruddin's view that moral values need to be continuously taught to children so that they can behave well and avoid actions that contradict prevailing norms (Amaruddin, 2016). Thus, modeling, habituation, and environmental conditioning are proven to be effective steps in shaping polite behavior in students (Nurjanah & Sholeh, 2020).

Muzakki's research highlights that fostering polite behavior in students can be achieved through consistent practices such as greeting others, praying reverently and orderly, speaking kindly, and behaving appropriately (Muzakki, 2020). These findings reinforce the idea that habituation is the most effective method for developing polite behavior in students. This is precisely the approach adopted by SMP Islam Al-Azhar 42 Summarecon Bandung through its Welcoming Student program. Furthermore, the interactions and education provided by teachers are critical factors influencing the development of students' polite behavior (Saputro et al., 2020)

Welcoming students will have implications for the formation of a civil school environment, students who have a polite attitude and with their religious character (Rosyadi et al., 2021). This program is also included in the school culture because it is included in routine activities carried out by students continuously. This school culture is the implementation of all the religious and psychological practices and experiences of students, both spiritual, social, emotional, and intellectual, which are absorbed by them while in the school environment. The manner in which they interact with teachers, employees and their fellow students from the beginning of greetings, greetings and smiles will be imprinted in their souls so that it is hoped that they will be carried over in their lives later when they live in a larger community, namely the community (Choli & Rifa'i, 2021). Therefore, Welcoming students as a strategy in realizing the 5S school culture (greetings, smiles, greetings, politeness and manners) has a positive impact on students, the implementation of this program makes students have a polite attitude. And this activity can also shape the character and life values of students with the example of the principal and the teacher about noble morals and discipline coming on time at school (Nurhayati, 2023).

Welcoming students has an impact on students' manners both in language and behavior, as it is known that there are two types of politeness, namely manners in language and in behaving (Ardiansyah & Yulya, 2022). he communication between teachers and students affects students' politeness in language, while the interaction where the teacher joins hands and greets students impacts their politeness in behavior. In addition to influencing students' behavior, the Welcoming Student program also fosters emotional closeness between teachers and students, as it involves small interactions where the teacher asks how the students are doing. Furthermore, this program educates students about the Islamic prohibition against touching those who are not mahram and encourages them to maintain boundaries between males and females, where they are allowed to touch only those of the same gender and not those of the opposite gender.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION Conclusion

The "Welcoming Student" program as an effort to form akhlak al-karimah in students is an appropriate and significant step. Although it may seem simple, this program has a profound impact on students. It encourages the development of courteous behavior, where students become accustomed to greeting and smiling when meeting teachers, peers, and elders. Moreover, this program also fosters happiness and motivation in students, creating emotional closeness between teachers and students, and enhancing students' discipline in arriving on time and adhering to the rules by dressing neatly and cleanly.

Furthermore, through this program, teachers can ensure students' physical and mental readiness before the learning process begins. If a teacher notices a student who seems mentally unprepared, such as with a gloomy expression, the teacher can follow up by asking and offering an opportunity for the student to express any concerns. The physical and mental readiness of students is crucial, as it directly affects their learning outcomes in class.

Implication

The implications of this research indicate that the "Welcoming Student" program can shape the attitudes of courtesy in students. Theoretically, this

research emphasizes the importance of integrating the values of politeness in education through social interactions. Practically, schools need to adopt and develop this program to habituate positive behaviors, enhance discipline, and strengthen emotional connections between teachers and students.

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