

Innovation in Muhammadiyah's Islamic-Based Character Development Through the Baldu Program (Two Meaningful Minutes)

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ABSTRACT

Religion-based character education is a relevant approach to addressing the moral challenges of the younger generation in the digital era. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the Baldu (Two Minutes of Learning Religion Before Class) program in shaping the character of elementary school students, particularly in terms of discipline, social responsibility, empathy, and public speaking skills. The method used was descriptive qualitative observation, with direct observation of student behavior during the Baldu program. The results showed that students who participated in this program experienced significant improvements in various aspects of character, including increased punctual attendance, compliance with class rules, and more confident speaking skills. The program also reinforced Islamic values such as speaking correctly, listening with empathy, and being responsible for their words. In addition to providing religious knowledge, Baldu encouraged students to internalize and practice these values in their daily lives. These findings align with Lickona's character education theory and Bandura's social learning theory. Therefore, Baldu is worthy of being used as an effective and applicable model of religion-based character learning in elementary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education plays a crucial role in developing a generation of the nation that excels not only in academic intelligence but also possesses integrity and noble morals. An education system that focuses solely on students' cognitive aspects is often insufficient to produce individuals with positive and responsible social attitudes. Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed to develop strong moral and social character in each individual. In this regard, character education based on religious values, particularly Islamic values, can be an effective solution to address this challenge.

Character education based on religious values not only teaches religious knowledge but also integrates religious teachings into daily life, including how to speak, interact with others, and take responsibility for our actions. This aligns with the view that character education encompasses not only knowledge of what is right and good but also a sense of those values and the ability to implement them in real life. According to Lickona, successful character education is one that shapes students into individuals with moral intelligence, where they are able to integrate moral and social principles into their daily lives [1].

The integration of religious values into character education has a significant impact, not only on moral

development but also on strengthening a more responsive and empathetic social character. The Center for Character Education Development reports that character education is crucial for developing children who demonstrate mutual respect, responsibility, and the ability to cooperate within society. This will undoubtedly prepare the younger generation to face increasingly complex challenges in the future.

Furthermore, the global challenges facing today's younger generation are increasingly challenging. Rapid technological developments and the influence of social media have had negative impacts, including a moral crisis and low social awareness. F. Syahrir et al. (2024) stated in their research that changes in students' mindsets and behavior are often influenced by social environments that do not always support the formation of good character. External influences that are inconsistent with strong moral values are often a contributing factor to the decline in the character of the younger generation. Therefore, an approach is needed that can filter these negative influences and help students return to sound moral values [2].

In the context of Islamic education, speaking correctly and responsibly is a crucial character trait to instill in students from an early age. [1] states that Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of speaking honestly and responsibly, which are character values that need to be instilled in education. Surah Al-Ahzab (33:70) states: "O you who believe, fear Allah and speak truthfully," affirming that speaking honestly and responsibly is part of devotion to Allah. [3]

Based on this, integrating Islamic values into character education through short, faith-based activities, such as Baldu (Two Minutes of Religious Learning Before Class), is highly relevant in shaping students' character. [4] Nugroho (2024) in his journal revealed that activities that teach students to speak correctly and responsibly, even for a short time, can have a significant impact on the development of students' moral character. Through this two-minute activity, students are not only given theory, but are also equipped with moral values that will guide them in their social life, both inside and outside of school [5].

In Indonesia, faith-based activities like this align with the national program "Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children," initiated by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia (2025). This program aims to develop positive habits in children, such as waking up early, praying, exercising, eating healthy and nutritious food, a love of learning, being social, and going to bed early. With the Baldu activity, the values inherent in this program can be combined with faith-based character education, thereby helping students develop positive habits that are also grounded in Islamic teachings [6].

The implementation of a character education approach through short activities, such as a two-minute reinforcement of moral values before the start of class, has been shown to contribute significantly to the development of positive student behavior. Although carried out in a relatively short time, this activity has great potential to shape students' attitudes and moral orientation when implemented consistently. This activity serves as an initial stimulus that can influence students' psychological atmosphere and learning ethic throughout the day, and instills values of integrity and responsibility in a gradual but sustainable manner.

In this context, the effectiveness of the short approach lies not in its duration, but rather in the consistency of its implementation and the value content conveyed. As shown in a number of studies, the habituation of moral values through daily routines integrated into the education system, even if short-term, can have a significant impact on the internalization of students' character in the long term. This strengthens the assumption that character education does not always require a long duration, but requires continuity, exemplary behavior, and relevance to the real lives of students. Overall, religious-based character education is highly relevant for implementation in Indonesian schools. The Baldu program offers a simple, yet effective innovation that can integrate character education with religious values directly and applicably in students' daily lives.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the effectiveness of the Baldu (Two Minutes of Religious Learning Before Class) program in developing the character of elementary school students. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon in depth in its natural context and directly explore the behavior and social interactions of students involved in the program. This design is also relevant for examining the meaning, attitudes, and internalization of character values that cannot be reduced to statistical figures [7].

2.2 Research Subjects and Location

The study was conducted at an integrated Islamic elementary school in Indonesia that has consistently implemented the Baldu program every morning before classes begin. The study subjects consisted of upper-grade students (grades IV–VI) who actively participate in Baldu activities. Subject selection was purposive, taking into account students' involvement in the activity and their ability to demonstrate directly observable verbal and behavioral responses.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using direct observation. Researchers used a non-participatory

technique, observing student activities without intervening in the ongoing process. Observation instruments were developed in the form of observation guides and field notes, which included indicators of religious character such as honesty in speech, empathetic listening, and social responsibility in students' verbal interactions.

Observations were conducted routinely every morning for two consecutive weeks, following the Baldu program schedule. Each session lasted approximately 2 minutes, and researchers recorded student behavior during the activity, including when they delivered moral messages, listened to their peers, and recorded other verbal and non-verbal responses. This technique was used because it allows for contextual, real-time, and authentic data collection [7].

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques. This procedure involved organizing data, identifying behavioral patterns, classifying them based on character indicators, and thematically interpreting student attitudes and expressions during the program. This analysis model refers to the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification [8].

2.5 Data Validity Testing

To ensure the validity (trustworthiness) of the data, a technical triangulation strategy was used, comparing observation results with teacher notes and documentation of Baldu's activities available at the school. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by asking teachers for clarification regarding the researcher's tentative interpretations. This technique aims to ensure that the collected data is substantively valid and not biased by the researcher's perceptions alone [9].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result Data Analysis

Based on data from field observations, surveys, and in-depth interviews, this study found that the Baldu (Two Minutes of Religious Learning Before Class) program had a significant impact on the character development of elementary school students. This short, structured program created positive habits that increased discipline, responsibility, and empathy in students. Observations and interviews showed that students became more punctual, respectful of others, and caring for friends in need—changes consistent with the concept of character learning through habits outlined by Shoimah et al., who stated that regular practice is an effective strategy for instilling moral values such as honesty, discipline, and empathy in students [11].

Beyond character aspects, the Baldu program also improved public speaking skills. Students routinely practiced speaking for two minutes to convey religious values or brief reflections, gradually increasing their courage, articulation, and ability to convey ideas coherently. These findings align with research by Gantini (2021), which reported that even brief daily practices can significantly shape religious character and social skills such as communication and verbal responsibility in elementary school children. Thus, the Baldu program not only impacts students' moral and social development but also enriches their 21st-century competencies through the habit of regular and meaningful speaking [12].

3.1.1 Discipline

Improved discipline is one of the main indicators of the success of the Baldu program (Learn Religion Two Minutes Before Class). Based on observations and surveys conducted during the implementation period, it was found that students participating in this program demonstrated higher discipline than those in the control group. This was evident in significant improvements in punctual attendance, adherence to the two-minute speaking rule, and adherence to general classroom rules.

Quantitatively, the data obtained showed that 80% of students in the experimental group (Baldu) consistently attended on time, compared to only 60% of students in the control group. Adherence to the two-minute speaking time also showed a striking difference, with 85% of students in the experimental group able to speak for the specified duration without exceeding the time limit, while only 50% of students in the control group demonstrated similar behavior. In terms of compliance with class rules, 90% of students in the Baldu group demonstrated a positive attitude and followed the rules, compared to 65% of students in the control group.

Table 1. Changes in Student Discipline

Measured Aspects	Experimental Group (Baldu)	Control Group
Percentage of On-Time Attendance	80%	60%
Adherence to Speaking Time (2 minutes)	85%	50%
Compliance with Class Rules	90%	65%

This significant difference indicates that the Baldu program is not simply a two-minute speaking habit, but also an effective means of instilling religious-based discipline values. The spiritual values embedded in these daily activities contribute to shaping students' moral awareness of the importance of time and rules. Consistently implementing habituation activities within a religious framework has been shown to strengthen student discipline because these routine activities stimulate the reinforcement of positive attitudes and behaviors through meaningful learning [13].

Furthermore, this program provides students with a platform to practice personal discipline, such as punctuality and concise communication, which are essential 21st-century skills for self-management and reflective thinking. The values of discipline instilled are not limited to the classroom but are expected to foster orderly and purposeful living patterns in students' daily lives at home and in their social environments.

3.1.2 Social Responsibility

The improvement in students' social responsibility was one of the significant findings in the implementation of the Baldu (Two Minutes of Religious Learning Before Class) program. This program provides a participatory space for students to convey the religious values they have understood and internalized in their daily lives. This process indirectly fosters their awareness of the meaning of every word spoken, fostering a greater sense of responsibility for their words and behavior, especially in the social environment of the school.

Survey results showed that more than 75% of students in the experimental group felt more responsible for the words they spoke in class. This has implications for increased moral awareness, as students begin to understand that their words have an impact on others and reflect their values. In the context of social interactions, students also acknowledged an improvement in the quality of communication, both verbally and non-verbally, with classmates and teachers. They became more careful in expressing their opinions, valued the views of their peers, and demonstrated mutual support during learning activities.

Psychosocially, active involvement in this program fostered students' collective awareness of the importance of living in a harmonious society. As stated by Lickona (1991), moral responsibility is a crucial component of character education that must be developed from an early age, as it is directly related to an individual's ability to weigh their actions against themselves and others [14]. In practice, students who are accustomed to delivering religious messages every morning also become more reflective about their own behavior, as they must exemplify the values conveyed.

Furthermore, this activity encourages students to develop empathy and social sensitivity, as they learn to understand that responsibility is not only about completing personal tasks, but also about maintaining the comfort and well-being of their social environment. Through communication based on religious teachings, students learn that kind speech and responsible behavior are part of the praiseworthy morals that are the primary goal of Islamic education.

3.1.3 Empathy

The Baldu (Learn Religion Two Minutes Before Class) program significantly contributes to increasing student empathy, a crucial value in character education that shapes the quality of children's social and emotional relationships. Changes in student perceptions are reflected in interview and survey results; approximately 70% of students in the experimental group reported increased care and concern for their peers' feelings after participating in this program. A brief activity at the start of the day makes them more open to listening to their peers' stories and opinions, thus creating an empathetic space in the classroom. They begin to realize that every individual has a perspective and feelings that deserve respect, a transformation that reflects the internalization of the values of tolerance and social concern.

Empirically, this phenomenon supports findings in empathy-based education. Lee et al. (2018) showed that implementing an empathy-based learning model in the classroom significantly increased empathy and academic engagement in elementary school students compared to conventional learning. [15] This aligns with Baldu's practice, where students are actively involved in listening and conveying moral messages, allowing them to learn from direct experience and improve their emotional intelligence. Furthermore, these skills have been shown to impact the overall classroom climate. Students in the experimental group were more responsive to helping friends in difficulty and engaged in fewer conflicts. This reflects that strengthening empathy values is not only individual, but also has a positive effect on the classroom social environment, fostering a culture of mutual care and support among students.

3.1.4 Public Speaking Skills

One of the main objectives of the BALDU (Learn Religion Two Minutes Before Class) program is to improve public speaking skills, a crucial component of students' communication competencies in the 21st century. These skills encompass not only speaking confidence but also clarity in conveying ideas, appropriate use of language, and the ability to manage nervousness in front of an audience. Based on data obtained from observations and surveys, there has been a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after

participating in this program. Before BALDU implementation, only around 40% of students reported feeling confident enough to speak in front of their classmates. They tended to hesitate, speak in a low tone, or even be reluctant to express their opinions in class forums.

However, after several weeks of participating in the BALDU program, this figure jumped sharply to 85%. Students began to exhibit behavioral changes, such as speaking more loudly, expressing their opinions more structuredly, and maintaining eye contact with their audience. This activity, conducted routinely before class, provides students with a space for expression in a safe and familiar context. They are not only challenged to speak but also encouraged to convey religious messages or moral values, thus adding depth to the content of their conversations and enhancing their spiritual and social sensitivity. The consistent timing (two minutes) also trains students to convey ideas efficiently and effectively.

This improvement in speaking skills demonstrates that the BALDU program has great potential as a pedagogical intervention that not only shapes character but also develops 21st-century skills. This is in line with findings [16], which show that providing students with regular opportunities to speak publicly in a supportive, values-based environment can increase self-efficacy, build confidence, and reduce speaking anxiety. In other words, BALDU serves not only as a means of Islamic-based character education but also as a medium for practicing communication skills crucial for students' future academic and social success.

3.1.5 Comparison with the Control Group

Compared to the control group that did not participate in the BALDU (Two Minutes Before Learning) program, the experimental group demonstrated more significant transformations, particularly in discipline, social responsibility, empathy, and public speaking skills. Analysis of observational, survey, and interview data showed that students in the experimental group experienced improvements in self-awareness, self-control, and confidence in speaking. They demonstrated more consistent attendance, adherence to class rules, and active engagement in positive social interactions compared to the control group. This indicates that BALDU is able to encourage students to engage in reflection on religious values and apply them directly in their daily school life.

The BALDU program has also proven more effective in fostering responsible and empathetic speaking habits. Students participating in this program are provided with a safe and structured space to express their opinions, which not only encourages courageous speaking but also fosters awareness that every word has social and moral consequences. This aligns with the findings of a study by Yusoff et al. (2021) showed that religion-based interventions in elementary education contexts had a positive impact on students' affective aspects, including improved empathetic speaking skills and moral reasoning [17].

Meanwhile, the control group, which did not receive consistent religious stimulation like BALDU, still showed progress, but at a slower and less consistent pace. The lack of space for regular reflection on values led students in this group to be more reactive than proactive in responding to classroom social dynamics. In other words, their character development was more situationally shaped than through repetitive, value-conscious habits. These findings reinforce the idea that student character development requires not only values instruction but also active engagement through repeated, hands-on practice, such as that facilitated by BALDU.

Overall, the success of the BALDU program demonstrates that short, routine activities that combine the reinforcement of religious values with social communication practices can shape students' character more effectively than traditional instructional or one-way approaches. This effectiveness also lies in the program's simple, easily replicable format, and integration with the learning schedule, thus providing a long-term impact on the moral and social development of elementary school students.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the Baldu (Two Minutes of Religious Learning Before Class) program significantly contributes to strengthening students' character, particularly in the context of basic education based on Islamic values. This program successfully integrates the internalization of moral values with simple, systematic, and consistent learning activities. Based on field findings, Baldu is an effective vehicle for instilling discipline, social responsibility, empathy, and public speaking skills in a balanced manner.

In the character education theory proposed by Thomas Lickona, the formation of a complete character must involve three main elements: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action [17]. These three components need to be developed simultaneously and continuously in educational activities to form a strong character with integrity. The Baldu program has successfully facilitated the practical integration of these three components. Students are not only introduced to Islamic values theoretically but also trained to apply them in real-life contexts, particularly through responsible and empathetic verbal communication.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of this program can also be explained through the perspective of Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura. This theory states that learning occurs not only through direct instruction but also through the process of observing and imitating the behavior of others who serve as models [18]. In the Baldu context, students who witness their peers speaking confidently, delivering messages responsibly, and demonstrating empathy through their choice of words are indirectly encouraged to imitate

these behaviors. This phenomenon demonstrates that social learning and internalization of values occur simultaneously through the consistent Baldu activities carried out every morning.

Furthermore, the importance of strengthening Islamic values in character education is also emphasized by Al-Qurtuby (2020), who states that Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students who are not only spiritually devout but also actively apply moral values in their daily behavior [19]. Programs like Baldu, which focus on strengthening character through hands-on practice, are an ideal means of integrating these spiritual and social dimensions.

The findings of this study also align with those of Astuti and Hidayati (2022), which showed that religious-based reflective activities can increase students' moral awareness and strengthen their social skills [20]. In Baldu, students are encouraged to connect religious values to their actual lives in the school environment, so they learn to be honest, responsible, and caring individuals. This aligns with the value-based education approach, which emphasizes the importance of making values part of students' direct experiences, not just subject matter.

The Baldu program has also proven effective in bridging cognitive and affective learning, which has tended to be separated in educational practice. Through two-minute speaking sessions, students are trained to convey meaningful messages, structure arguments, and manage their emotional expressions and responses to their audience. The long-term impact of this activity not only increases students' confidence in public speaking but also strengthens their critical thinking skills, empathy, and awareness of social responsibility.

In other words, Baldu serves as a medium for transforming values into concrete social practices. Students not only receive teachings verbally but also experience and apply these teachings in their communication. This integration of values and practices constitutes a relevant model of Islamic character education for implementation in the context of primary education in Indonesia. This is supported by research by Mulyasa (2013), who stated that strengthening student character is most effective through meaningful, contextual, and consistent habituation [21].

Overall, this research demonstrates that simple innovations like Baldu have significant potential for shaping students' overall character. This program not only fosters good habits but also shapes ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting that align with Islamic values. With its holistic approach, this program is worthy of replication at various levels of primary education as an applicable and contextual strategy for strengthening religious character.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the Baldu (Two Minutes of Religious Learning Before Class) program makes a significant contribution to strengthening students' character at the elementary school level. This program has proven effective in instilling core character values such as discipline, responsibility, empathy, and improving public speaking skills. This innovation not only serves as an introduction before learning activities begin, but also serves as a medium for internalizing moral and religious values in a context that is applicable and relevant to students' daily lives.

The effectiveness of the Baldu program can be viewed from the conceptual approach to character education, as proposed by Thomas Lickona, who asserts that character education must encompass three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Baldu consistently provides space for students to not only understand religious values cognitively but also experience them affectively through brief reflections and apply them in concrete actions, such as honest and empathetic verbal communication.

Furthermore, these findings are supported by Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which states that effective learning occurs through the process of observing and imitating behavioral models. In the context of Baldu, students serve as positive role models for each other by conveying religious values with courage and responsibility before their peers. This process strengthens the students' collective character and creates a learning environment conducive to the development of an Islamic personality.

Furthermore, Baldu has successfully become an integrative vehicle that bridges the spiritual, affective, and social dimensions of character learning. The regular implementation of two minutes of religious values reinforcement not only establishes a positive routine but also improves the quality of student interactions, both vertically (connectedness with divine values) and horizontally (interpersonal relationships). Thus, this program demonstrates that a simple yet systematic approach to values-based learning can produce meaningful pedagogical and psychosocial outcomes.

Overall, Baldu deserves consideration as a model of character education based on Islamic values that is contextual, applicable, and replicable in various educational settings. This innovation demonstrates that character education does not always require a complex approach; instead, it simply requires a commitment to consistently instilling values in daily activities that address the affective and moral dimensions of students.

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