

## Cultivating Religious Attitudes Among Fifth-Grade Students through Inspirational Stories in Indonesian Language Learning

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the cultivation of religious attitudes among fifth-grade students through inspirational stories in Indonesian language learning at MIS Al-Islam Bengkulu. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The participants consisted of a fifth-grade teacher and selected students chosen through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings showed that the cultivation of religious attitudes was carried out through three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. During the planning stage, the teacher integrated religious values into lesson plans and selected inspirational stories containing Islamic messages and moral lessons. During implementation, students participated in reading, discussion, and reflection activities that encouraged them to understand and practice religious values in their daily lives. Evaluation was conducted through observation of students' attitudes and learning participation. The findings indicate that inspirational stories are effective in fostering religious attitudes because they present values in a meaningful and contextual manner. The stories helped students develop attitudes such as honesty, gratitude, responsibility, respect for others, and obedience to religious teachings.



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### Introduction

Character education has become one of the primary concerns in the Indonesian education system in recent years. Educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' intellectual abilities but also to nurture positive attitudes, ethical behavior, and strong moral

values. The success of education is increasingly viewed from a broader perspective that includes students' character development alongside academic achievement. Schools are responsible for preparing students to become knowledgeable individuals who are also able to demonstrate integrity, responsibility, empathy, and respect in their daily lives. This expectation reflects the growing awareness that cognitive competence alone is insufficient to address the social and moral challenges encountered in modern society.

Religious attitude is one of the essential character values that should be cultivated from an early age. Religious attitude refers to a person's awareness, understanding, appreciation, and implementation of religious teachings in everyday life. The manifestation of religious attitude can be observed through various behaviors, including honesty, gratitude, discipline, responsibility, respect for others, obedience to moral principles, and commitment to worship practices in accordance with religious teachings (Ramayulis, 2021). Religious attitude serves as an important foundation for personal development because it influences the way individuals think, make decisions, and interact with other people. Students who possess strong religious attitudes are expected to demonstrate positive behavior both inside and outside the classroom.

Elementary school is a critical period in the process of character formation. Children at this stage experience rapid cognitive, emotional, and social development that significantly influences their future personalities. Habits and values acquired during childhood often become deeply rooted and continue to shape behavior throughout adolescence and adulthood. Educational experiences provided during elementary school can contribute greatly to the formation of students' attitudes toward themselves, other people, and their environment. Teachers and schools play a crucial role in creating learning environments that encourage students to internalize positive values and apply them consistently in their daily activities. Religious attitudes require continuous guidance and reinforcement because character development is a long-term process that involves understanding, practice, and habituation (Aminah et al., 2022).

The importance of religious attitude is closely connected to the objectives of Islamic education. Islamic education aims to develop individuals who possess faith, piety, noble character, and social responsibility. The concept of *akhlakul karimah* occupies a central position within Islamic teachings because moral excellence is considered an essential characteristic of a good Muslim. Religious attitudes in Islam encompass the relationship between human beings and Allah as well as relationships among fellow human beings and the natural environment. Positive behaviors such as performing prayers regularly, speaking honestly, respecting parents and teachers, helping those in need, expressing gratitude, maintaining discipline, and fulfilling responsibilities represent practical manifestations of Islamic values in everyday life (Nata, 2022). These values contribute to the development of individuals who are capable of balancing spiritual awareness with social responsibility.

The significance of religious attitudes is also emphasized in the Qur'an and various Islamic teachings that encourage believers to uphold righteousness and maintain good conduct in all aspects of life. Religious commitment is not limited to ritual worship activities but extends to ethical behavior, social interactions, and personal accountability. Students who understand religious teachings comprehensively are expected to translate those teachings into actions that reflect kindness, honesty, and compassion. Religious attitude therefore functions as a guiding principle that helps students distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior while facing different situations and challenges.

Despite the recognized importance of religious attitudes, educational practice still encounters various challenges in fostering these values among students. Rapid technological development, increasing exposure to social media, and changes in social environments have influenced students' behavior and value systems. Several studies have reported that some students continue to demonstrate low levels of discipline, responsibility, and commitment to religious values in their daily activities. Instances of dishonesty, disregard for school regulations, limited participation in religious activities, and insufficient awareness of moral obligations remain evident in some educational settings (Ernawanto et al., 2022; Irsan et al.,

2023). These conditions indicate that character education requires more effective and engaging approaches that can help students understand and internalize religious values meaningfully.

Preliminary observations conducted at MIS Al-Islam Bengkulu revealed similar conditions. Many students demonstrated positive attitudes, including participation in religious activities, respectful behavior toward teachers, and cooperation with peers. Several students still required guidance to consistently practice religious values during learning activities and social interactions. Differences in students' attitudes suggested the need for learning strategies that could strengthen their understanding and application of religious values in everyday situations. Educational activities that provide concrete examples and opportunities for reflection may contribute significantly to this objective.

Learning activities offer an important avenue for integrating character education into students' daily experiences. Character values can be embedded within various subjects rather than being taught exclusively through religious education classes. Indonesian language learning provides considerable opportunities for character development because it involves reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities that expose students to diverse experiences, perspectives, and moral lessons. Students can encounter examples of positive behavior through texts, discussions, and reflective activities that encourage them to think critically about values and human conduct. Learning experiences become more meaningful when students are able to connect the content of lessons with situations they encounter in their own lives (Onde et al., 2020).

One instructional material that has considerable potential for character education is the inspirational story. Inspirational stories present narratives about individuals who face challenges, overcome difficulties, and demonstrate admirable values through their actions. Such stories often contain lessons related to honesty, perseverance, patience, gratitude, responsibility, courage, and concern for others. Students can learn from the experiences of story characters and reflect on how similar values can be applied in their own lives. The narrative format makes learning more engaging because stories naturally attract students' attention and stimulate emotional involvement. Emotional engagement plays an important role in helping students understand and internalize values more deeply than through direct instruction alone (Aini et al., 2024).

The use of inspirational stories in Indonesian language learning aligns with the educational objective of developing both literacy skills and character values. Reading activities allow students to identify moral messages embedded within narratives, while discussion and reflection activities encourage them to analyze the relevance of those messages to real-life situations. Students are not only expected to understand the content of the stories but also to evaluate the behaviors of characters and consider the consequences of their actions. This process supports the development of moral reasoning and value awareness, which are essential components of character formation.

Several previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of story-based learning on students' character development. Aini et al. (2024) found that narrative learning contributed to students' understanding of moral values and encouraged positive behavioral change. Widiono et al. (2025) reported that literacy activities based on inspirational stories enhanced students' moral awareness and promoted constructive behavior. Onde et al. (2020) emphasized that stories provide meaningful emotional experiences that facilitate the internalization of values among learners. Akbar et al. (2025) explained that reflective discussions conducted after reading stories help students connect moral lessons with personal experiences, making character education more relevant and effective. These findings suggest that inspirational stories can function as valuable learning resources for fostering positive attitudes and behavior.

Research focusing specifically on the cultivation of religious attitudes through inspirational stories in Indonesian language learning within Islamic elementary schools remains relatively limited. Existing studies often discuss character education in a general

context or focus primarily on literacy development without examining the systematic process through which religious attitudes are nurtured in classroom settings. Limited attention has been given to how teachers plan learning activities, implement instructional strategies, and evaluate students' religious attitude development through the use of inspirational stories. A more comprehensive understanding of these aspects is necessary to support the effective integration of character education into classroom practice.

This study was conducted to address that gap by examining the cultivation of religious attitudes among fifth-grade students through inspirational stories in Indonesian language learning at MIS Al-Islam Bengkulu. The study focuses on three main aspects: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Findings from this research are expected to contribute to the development of character-based learning practices and provide insights for teachers, schools, and researchers regarding effective strategies for integrating religious values into Indonesian language instruction. The results may also serve as a reference for future efforts to strengthen character education within Islamic elementary school contexts.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to describe the cultivation of religious attitudes among fifth-grade students through inspirational stories in Indonesian language learning. The study was conducted at MIS Al-Islam Bengkulu.

The participants consisted of a fifth-grade teacher and several fifth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. The participants were chosen because they were directly involved in learning activities related to the development of religious attitudes.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to examine learning activities and students' behavior during classroom instruction. Interviews were carried out with teachers and students to obtain information regarding their experiences and perceptions of the learning process. Documentation in the form of lesson plans, photographs, and learning materials was used to support the research findings.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument. Supporting instruments included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation records. The study focused on several indicators of religious attitudes, including honesty, gratitude, responsibility, respect for others, and obedience to religious teachings.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Planning the Cultivation of Religious Attitudes through Inspirational Stories

The findings revealed that the cultivation of religious attitudes was systematically integrated into the planning stage of Indonesian language learning. The teacher prepared lesson plans that combined academic objectives with character development goals, particularly those related to religious values. This integration demonstrated an understanding that character education should not be implemented as a separate program but should become an inseparable part of the teaching and learning process. Learning activities were designed not only to improve students' language competencies but also to encourage the development of positive attitudes and behaviors that reflect Islamic values.

Religious attitudes were explicitly included in the learning objectives. Students were expected to understand the content and structure of inspirational stories while simultaneously developing attitudes such as honesty, gratitude, responsibility, discipline, respect, and obedience to religious teachings. These values were selected because they represent important dimensions of Islamic character and correspond to the developmental characteristics of elementary school students. The inclusion of religious attitudes in the lesson objectives indicates that the teacher viewed character development as an educational outcome that should be achieved alongside cognitive learning outcomes.

The selection of instructional materials constituted another important aspect of the planning process. The teacher carefully chose inspirational stories that contained moral messages and Islamic values relevant to students' daily experiences. Stories focusing on honesty, helping others, respecting parents, perseverance in overcoming difficulties, and gratitude toward Allah were frequently utilized during learning activities. The use of such stories allowed students to encounter concrete examples of positive behavior through narrative situations that were familiar and understandable. Students were able to observe how characters faced challenges, made decisions, and demonstrated commendable attitudes, thereby providing meaningful illustrations of religious values in practice.

The planning process also involved designing learning activities that encouraged active student engagement. Reading activities were combined with questioning, group discussions, presentations, and reflection sessions. This approach provided opportunities for students to interact with the learning material and construct their understanding of the values presented in the stories. Character education becomes more effective when students actively participate in exploring and interpreting values rather than merely receiving explanations from the teacher. Active involvement allows students to internalize values through personal experience and social interaction.

Assessment procedures were similarly designed to support the cultivation of religious attitudes. Evaluation focused not only on students' comprehension of story content but also on their participation, responses during discussions, and demonstration of positive behavior throughout the learning process. Such planning reflects a holistic approach to education in which cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions are developed simultaneously.

These findings support the view of Azizah and Probosiwi (2023), who argued that narrative texts provide effective opportunities for integrating character education into classroom learning. Inspirational stories contain moral messages that can facilitate students' understanding of values within meaningful contexts. Similar conclusions were reached by Aini et al. (2024), who found that story-based learning enables students to understand moral values more effectively because the messages are presented through concrete situations rather than abstract explanations.

The planning process observed in this study also aligns with the principles of Islamic education, which emphasize the integration of knowledge and character formation. Educational activities are expected to contribute not only to intellectual development but also to the cultivation of *akhlaqul karimah* or noble character. Learning therefore functions as a medium for strengthening students' faith, moral awareness, and social responsibility while simultaneously improving academic competence (Ramayulis, 2021). The findings indicate that careful lesson planning plays a crucial role in ensuring that religious values are systematically embedded within classroom instruction.

## **2. Implementation of Learning in Cultivating Religious Attitudes**

The implementation stage demonstrated how inspirational stories were utilized as an instructional medium to cultivate religious attitudes among fifth-grade students. Learning activities followed a structured sequence consisting of introductory activities, core activities, and closing activities. Each stage contributed to the process of helping students understand, reflect upon, and apply religious values in their daily lives.

The introductory activities focused on activating students' prior knowledge and connecting the lesson content with their personal experiences. The teacher encouraged students to share examples of positive behavior they had practiced at home or school, such as helping parents, telling the truth, performing prayers, or showing respect toward teachers and friends. This strategy created meaningful connections between students' lived experiences and the learning material. Students became more engaged because the discussion related directly to situations they encountered in everyday life.

Core learning activities centered on reading and analyzing inspirational stories. Students read stories individually and collaboratively before identifying the positive values demonstrated by the characters. Classroom observations showed that students actively

participated in discussions and were able to recognize religious values embedded within the narratives. Values frequently identified by students included honesty, patience, gratitude, responsibility, perseverance, compassion, and respect for others. Students demonstrated an ability to explain why certain actions performed by story characters were considered good examples of religious behavior.

Discussion activities played a particularly important role in facilitating value internalization. Students exchanged opinions regarding the actions of characters and evaluated the consequences of different behaviors. The discussion process encouraged students to think critically about moral issues rather than simply accepting information passively. Students learned to justify their opinions using examples from the stories and their own experiences. Such activities contributed to the development of moral reasoning, which is an essential component of character formation.

The findings indicate that collaborative discussion created opportunities for students to learn from one another. Different perspectives emerged during classroom conversations, allowing students to consider various interpretations of the values presented in the stories. Social interaction helped strengthen students' understanding because learning occurred through dialogue and shared reflection. Constructivist learning theory suggests that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction with others and engagement with meaningful experiences. The classroom activities observed in this study reflected these principles by positioning students as active participants in the learning process.

Reflection activities constituted another significant element of the implementation process. Students were encouraged to relate the messages contained in the stories to their personal experiences and daily behavior. Many students shared examples of helping friends, obeying parents, speaking honestly, and expressing gratitude for blessings received from Allah. Reflection enabled students to move beyond basic comprehension of the narrative and consider how the values could be applied in real-life situations. Personal reflection also fostered self-awareness and encouraged students to evaluate their own attitudes and behaviors.

Teacher role modeling emerged as an important factor supporting the cultivation of religious attitudes. Throughout the learning process, the teacher consistently demonstrated respectful communication, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and care for students. Classroom observations showed that students paid close attention to the teacher's behavior and often imitated positive actions demonstrated during learning activities. The effectiveness of character education is strongly influenced by the consistency between what teachers teach and what they practice in everyday interactions.

The significance of teacher role modeling is consistent with the findings of Silalahi et al. (2024), who emphasized that students learn values not only through instruction but also through observing the behavior of significant adults in their environment. Positive examples provided by teachers strengthen the credibility of character education messages and facilitate the internalization of values among learners.

The findings further demonstrate that inspirational stories created meaningful learning experiences that supported the development of religious attitudes. Students acquired knowledge about moral values through reading, deepened their understanding through discussion, strengthened personal awareness through reflection, and observed practical examples through teacher role modeling. Learning activities therefore addressed cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects simultaneously. Similar results were reported by Widiono et al. (2025), who found that inspirational stories contribute to the development of moral awareness and encourage positive behavioral changes among students.

The implementation observed in this study also reflects key principles of Islamic educational theory. Character formation is believed to occur through habituation, exemplary conduct, meaningful experiences, and continuous guidance. Learning activities involving inspirational stories provided opportunities for students to experience these processes within a supportive educational environment. Religious values were not merely introduced as theoretical concepts but were presented as practical guidelines that could be implemented

in everyday life.

### 3. Evaluation of Religious Attitudes

The evaluation process focused on assessing students' religious attitudes and monitoring their behavioral development throughout the learning activities. Assessment was conducted continuously through classroom observations, participation records, student reflections, and responses during discussions. The teacher applied an authentic assessment approach that emphasized observable attitudes and behaviors rather than relying solely on written examinations. This approach enabled the teacher to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' character development because religious attitudes are more accurately reflected through daily actions and interactions than through cognitive assessments alone.

The evaluation results indicated positive developments in several aspects of students' religious attitudes. Students demonstrated greater responsibility in completing assignments and participating in group activities. Respectful communication toward teachers and classmates became more apparent during classroom interactions, while confidence in expressing opinions related to moral values and religious practices also improved. These findings suggest that learning activities based on inspirational stories contributed to strengthening students' awareness and appreciation of religious values. Positive behavioral changes observed during the learning process indicate that students were not only able to understand the values presented in the stories but were also beginning to apply them in classroom situations.

Student participation during discussions provided additional evidence of attitude development. Many students became more willing to share personal experiences and discuss issues related to honesty, gratitude, responsibility, and respect. Active involvement in discussions reflected students' growing confidence and willingness to engage with moral and religious topics. Participation in these activities is an important indicator of character development because it demonstrates that students are not merely receiving information but are actively reflecting on and responding to the values being discussed. The opportunity to exchange ideas with peers also helped students develop a deeper understanding of religious values through social interaction and collaborative learning.

Reflection activities generated valuable information regarding students' internalization of religious attitudes. Many students were able to explain the moral lessons contained in the inspirational stories and describe how they intended to apply those values in their daily lives. Students frequently expressed their desire to become more honest, responsible, respectful, and grateful in their interactions with parents, teachers, friends, and other members of the community. Such responses indicate that inspirational stories encouraged self-awareness and self-evaluation, both of which are important elements in the process of character formation. Reflection enabled students to connect classroom learning with personal experiences, making the values more meaningful and relevant to their everyday lives.

Several supporting factors contributed to the successful cultivation of religious attitudes during the learning process. Teacher commitment emerged as one of the most influential factors because character education requires consistency, patience, and continuous reinforcement. The availability of learning materials containing relevant moral messages also supported students' understanding of religious values. School culture played an equally important role in strengthening character development. Routine religious activities conducted within the school environment provided opportunities for students to practice the values introduced during classroom instruction. The combination of classroom learning and school-based religious activities created a supportive environment for character formation.

The findings also revealed several challenges in the implementation of religious attitude cultivation. Differences in students' family backgrounds influenced the extent to which religious values were reinforced outside the school environment. Some students received strong support and guidance from their families, while others had fewer opportunities to practice religious teachings consistently at home. Differences in students' levels of

understanding and personal maturity also required teachers to adapt instructional strategies to accommodate individual needs and learning characteristics.

Limited instructional time presented another challenge during the implementation process. Meaningful discussions and reflection activities often required considerable time to allow students to explore values in depth and relate them to real-life experiences. Time constraints occasionally restricted opportunities for extended dialogue and individualized guidance. Character education is a gradual and continuous process that cannot be achieved through a single lesson or short-term intervention. Continuous reinforcement and repeated exposure to positive values are necessary to support long-term behavioral development.

These findings support previous studies emphasizing that character education requires collaboration among schools, families, and communities (Irsan et al., 2023). Religious attitudes cannot be cultivated effectively through classroom instruction alone because students' behavior is influenced by multiple social environments. Consistent reinforcement across different settings is essential to ensure that values learned at school become integrated into students' daily habits and behavior. Character education therefore should be viewed as a shared responsibility among various stakeholders involved in children's development.

The evaluation results suggest that character education should focus not only on immediate learning outcomes but also on gradual behavioral changes that occur over time. Positive developments observed among students indicate that inspirational stories can serve as an effective medium for cultivating religious attitudes. The integration of careful planning, active learning activities, reflection, teacher role modeling, and continuous evaluation created favorable conditions for students to understand, appreciate, and practice religious values in their daily lives.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that inspirational stories represent a valuable educational resource for fostering religious attitudes among elementary school students. Learning activities based on inspirational narratives enabled students to understand religious values cognitively, appreciate them emotionally, and implement them behaviorally. The integration of religious values into Indonesian language learning contributed to the development of students' moral awareness and encouraged the practice of positive behavior both inside and outside the classroom.

## Conclusion

The study found that the cultivation of religious attitudes among fifth-grade students at MIS Al-Islam Bengkulu was implemented through planning, implementation, and evaluation stages integrated into Indonesian language learning. Inspirational stories provided meaningful examples that helped students understand and practice religious values such as honesty, gratitude, responsibility, respect for others, and obedience to religious teachings. Reading, discussion, reflection activities, and teacher role modeling contributed to the development of students' religious attitudes. The findings indicate that inspirational stories can serve as an effective medium for integrating character education and Islamic values into elementary school learning.

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