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## Influence of The Social Environment on Development of Students' Morals and Characters: Future Issues and Challenges

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### Abstract

The principal pursuit of Islamic Education is to produce exceptional and faithful Muslims. Nevertheless, today's mass media often demonstrates various issues involving teenagers and school students in social issues that harm society, which is worrisome. The social environment's influence significantly impacts the younger generation, especially teenagers and students. Education is the ground of individual development and advancement and the primary platform for shaping the personality of noble morals. Morality and character are paramount in Islam and are the essence of understanding and practising Islamic teachings. Therefore, several social environment factors influence the development of students' morals, self-identity and personality. Social environment factors can nurture and decide students' morals if students can adapt well. Hence, this article intended to discuss the social environment that affects and influences the formation of students' morals and the issues and challenges faced. This study employed the literature review methodology by analysing and discussing the content of the text thematically to identify the elements that impact the development of morals and the issues and challenges to form the student's self-identity. Ultimately, this article concluded that the social environment was identified as having a substantial impact on developing students' morals consisting of parents, peers, teachers, schools, residential settings and the mass media. One must prioritise the roles and responsibilities of parties related to each other to determine student morals. This article is relevant for teachers, parents, schools and interconnected parties to apply good values so that the country can produce a young generation with noble character and deliver awareness to avoid misconduct among this young generation to form individuals who are positive-thinkers for their future well-being.

**Keywords:** Social Environment, Dakwah, Islamic Morals, Islamic Education

### Introduction

Education is one of the mechanisms to communicate the Islamic religion and the *dakwah* process to the community towards goodness. Education based on Quranic values has

delivered a civil, moral generation competent in eclectic worldly sciences (Anggraheni & Astuti, 2020). In Islam, the definition of education is exhaustive and integrated, encompassing the whole way of human life that incorporates aspects such as faith - the central pillar of Islam, sharia (law), worship, morals, science and technology, sociology, and economics. It encompasses life in this world and the hereafter in one complete discipline. (Ali & Ab. Razak, 2012; Zakaria et al., 2012; Rosnani, 2015).

In addition to the education system that constitutes the character and self-identity of students, the social environment's help and support can also boost students to achieve success in the world and the hereafter and avoid social issues (Muhamad et al., 2012). Meanwhile, Kamarudin (2015) commented that formal or informal education primarily impacts the formation of morals and character. The support of the social climate always influences the formation of morals and personalities of students. Therefore, students need to be given appropriate education to establish great morals and become future human capital for the country.

Nonetheless, social issues among students are alarming. Various parties are worried about the issues because, in the long term, it will harm future generations. When moral values are declining, it yields social problems. The system will produce students with a powerful vision and self-identity through comprehensive education, including considering the social environment factors. Hence, the social climate is imperative that needs to be paid attention to in the process of forming a student's self-identity. Ultimately, this article endeavoured to discuss the social environment for the development of morals and personality of students as well as the future issues and challenges faced.

### **Education and Morals**

Education plays a vital role in maintaining the well-being of individual and community life. Education generally means preserving and growing human beings from physical, mental, language, behavioural, social and religious facets. Attas (1980) highlighted that education is a process of inculcating manners into a person. Jasmi and Tamuri (2007) maintained that education is a process of nurturing and educating, defending, training, purifying, controlling passions, following the leader's instructions, leading, adding, gathering, enhancing, constituting obedience to Allah S.W.T, forming decency, polite and civilised attitude, attending rules, replacing, and eliminating reprehensible traits to praiseworthy conditions, developing a learning attitude in addition to getting used to the process of teaching and learning something new.

Busyairi (1997), explained in the context of personality, education determines the personality of a Muslim. According to Ghazali, education is a measure to eliminate bad character and instil good character. Zantany (1984), also underlined, *tarbiyyah ruhiyyah* (spiritual) is part of an important aspect of Islamic education alongside *tarbiyyah jismiyyah* (physical), *tarbiyyah 'aqliyyah* (intellectual), *tarbiyyah wijdaniyyah* (emotional), *tarbiyyah khuluqiyyah* (moral) and *tarbiyyah ijtimaiyyah* (social). Ulwan (2000), also submitted that personality consists of beliefs, worship, morals and appearance.

In the Islamic religion, education aspires to form a well-rounded human being, that is, a human being with intellectual and spiritual intelligence (Arifin, 2014). In addition to morals as an indicator in the personal formation of noble morals, it also relates to worship. Allah SWT said in the Qur'an in Surah Az-Zaariyat verse 56:

*"I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me."*

From the objective element, education in Islam desires to foster good human beings with exemplary morals, to generate balanced human capital, and to form and develop outstanding morals and identity sourced from Al-Quran and As-Sunnah.

Based on the views of leading scholars, one can conclude that personality reflects character, behaviour or morals from the formation of human psychology that makes up a person's personality or morals, which one can reckon through four leading elements: belief, worship, morals and appearance that distinguishes one person from another.

### **Methodology**

Research methodology is a critical element in research high quality results from the analysis that uses the suitable research methodology. The study's results also depend on the methodology of the analysis. Data collection in this research employed a qualitative study designed based on a literature review. Creswell (2005) maintained that qualitative research could help researchers comprehend the process and forms of practice more deeply.

A literature review is attended by reading several books, journals, and other publications related to the research topic, to produce a piece of writing related to a specific topic or issue (Marzali, 2016). In this study, the researchers collected primary and secondary sources from written materials such as books, articles, journals and theses. The researchers made a text content analysis from the following document sources related to the social environment factors, the formation of morals, issues and challenges associated with the development of morals and the students' personalities. The researchers operated a semantic analysis to identify the elements of the social environment than were arranged according to the themes discussed. The researchers employed this approach to discover data based on writing and written documentation. Data collection from primary sources and analysis of text content from documents can provide applicable information to the issues and problems studied.

### **Issues of Student Social Problems**

The declining morals happening now among students, whether at the school level or Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), prompts various speculations and questions to the public. One of the valuable assets and driving agents of the country's progress in the future is the youth, which is entirely made up of students. It establishes that the role and contribution of students are expected to ensure the country's steady development. Nonetheless, the question of moral decay is becoming more prevalent from time to time. The teenage social issue is often discussed nowadays and is becoming increasingly worrying.

This social issue leads to discipline problems in schools that interfere with the establishment of sound morals and character of students (Azyyati, 2017). Othman et al., (2015) stated that the moral decay and social issues that are getting worse among school students in Malaysia deliver an impact and effect on the effectiveness of the education system in fostering a young generation that has good manners, morals and holds and appreciates good values in everyday life. The issue of moral decay must be related to forces such as oneself, family, peers, western power, surrounding society, and mass media (Ibrahim et al., 2012; Zainudin & Norazmah, 2011; Norina et al., 2013). This problem is also a result of the present Modernisation and cultural shock that has impacted the youth, which harms

individuals and concerns family institutions, society and the country (Zainudin & Norazmah, 2011).

The issue of the moral decay of students implies a substantial threat to achieving the progress and growth of the country. Jaafar and Tamuri (2013), asserted that the failure of an institution, Organisation, nation, country or Civilisation is caused by the individual personality factor that has been tarnished. Finally, various crises arise due to disobedience to religious teachings, such as social problems and crime among teenagers (Azizan & Yusoff, 2017).

In Malaysia, teenagers' social problems show increase almost every year. Among the issues are adultery, baby dumping, free mixing, rape and drug abuse. For drug abuse in 2017, 25,992 people in Malaysia were reported to involve. Eighteen thousand four hundred forty new cases of drug abuse and 7,484 repeated cases of people involved with drugs were recorded. Of that number, 24,926 were male addicts, while 996 were female addicts. Addicts from the Malays were the most significant at 20,956, and the rest were from Chinese, Indian and other *bumiputra* ethnicities. Most of those involved were young people aged 13-39 years, and the leading contributing factor was the influence of 16,209 peers (national anti-drug agency, 2018).

While for teenage pregnancies out of wedlock, the ministry of health Malaysia reported 3,938 cases in 2016 and 3,694 cases in 2017. There was a slight decrease in 2018, with 2,873 cases reported (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2019). The same situation occurs as per the data recorded in the student personality system (SSDM) as it shows 238,790 cases which is five per cent in 2018, increased to 304,578 cases which are 6.4 per cent in 2019. For example, criminal behaviour in 2018 recorded 9,516 cases grew in 2019 to 11,648 cases (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Globalisation has seriously impacted moral and ethical life in society. The influence and impact rendered by mixed forces through the medium of information communication technology also have a great impact on society, especially among teenagers who are students. Muslim school students are also experiencing social issues. Accordingly, a favourable social environment needs to be given attention in forming a student's self-identity before the situation worsens, accumulates and triggers social issues. Actions and emphasis on the question of noble values in the education system in Malaysia need to be underscored to produce balanced students from various facets.

### **Social Environmental Factors**

The influence of the social environment powerfully shapes student behaviour. Several factors impact students' morals and behaviour; among them are the student's environment, namely the school environment, teachers, parents, peers, society and the mass media. A good atmosphere in the formation of an individual's identity is critical. All of these factors strongly influence the formation of the students' self-identity. Following are some factors that affect students' morals and behavior

### **School and Teacher Environmental Factors**

Sang (2013) elaborated that a school climate that is conducive and equipped with advanced teaching and learning facilities will raise the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of students to a higher level. Rudasil et al (2017) stated that environmental factors and a conducive school atmosphere greatly influence the formation and establishment of a positive school climate. School climate can portray the social interactions, relationships, values, and beliefs held by students, teachers, administrators, and staff. In



addition, western researchers also concluded that the school atmosphere is essential in shaping positive behaviour and dramatically impacts the success of students and schools (Freiberg, 1999; Lauren et al., 2017). School conditions are also the essence of a school. The influence of the environment is a fundamental element in the formation of character, way of thinking, attitude and development of school students (Muhamad, 2015; Ahmad & Abdullah, 2017).

Furthermore, a teacher acts as an advisor, consultant, motivator, and specialist expert and oversees student discipline (Azman et al., 2007). According to Don (2005); Som and Ali (2016); Shafiq & Noraini (2018), underlined that teachers or educators play the role of implementing agents and groups that play an important position in executing the curriculum and educating students' personalities. Teachers need to have high skills in teaching methods, master the content of knowledge in the subjects taught, be skilled in applying the theory of human growth and development and be helpful counsellors to students. Teachers and schools are agents of transformation and mould individual potential comprehensively and integrated.

Abdul Muhsien (2014) established that the practice of teacher-student relationships in the establishment of morals was at a moderate level. Most study participants admitted that the teacher-student relationship was already practised, but it happened informally based on the concerns of a GPI. Therefore, it will become more meaningful if efforts towards empowering the formation of morals in schools take a more holistic approach by strengthening aspects of the teacher's role and relationship with students. Further, the conclusions of a study by Makhsin (2012), indicated that the school environment retains a strong influence on forming a person with noble morals.

Besides, Jasmi et al (2007) stated that teachers are a critical element in education and greatly influence the effectiveness of education. The personality and teaching practices of teachers have a significant influence on the mind and souls of students. They will perceive and follow the teacher's behaviour, reactions and words at this young age. The teacher's attitude and appearance will impact students more strongly than others. It is possible as students to spend a lot of time with the teacher. Hence, teachers should improve themselves first before improving their students. Based on the statements and results of the study, it is clear that teachers and schools are the most critical influence in the development of students from a physical, intellectual, emotional and social point of view.

### **Parental Factors**

Initiatives to produce quality people are closely related to how education is acquired. Therefore, a pleasant family climate plays an essential role in influencing the success of children together with eminent personalities. The family institution is imperative in shaping children's characters in terms of faith, morals, academics and morals of a person himself.

Parents play an indispensable role in shaping children's education and forming the foundations of a child's self-development. In religion, parents are responsible for instilling religious values at an early stage. As the hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Imam al-Muslim translated to

*"No baby is born unless it is born in a state of fitrah (pure from any sin), so it is the two parents who will shape the child either a Jew, a Christian or a Magian."*

According to Shaari (2009), parents should have suited educational guidance and knowledge so that the children under their care and custody receive proper guidance and

education. Tan et al (2013) also stated that the process of teenage moral education that takes place through parental education has an impact on the lives of teenagers. In addition, parents need to monitor their adolescent children, especially their peers. The significance of parenting behaviour in the family also needs to be given serious attention in developing and forming a teenager's identity and personality (Abd Halim, 2017). While according to Abdullah (2000), he underlined that the individuals who most deeply influence children's personalities are parents.

Parents are the most efficacious community in building children's morals to behave well and are responsible for establishing their children's personalities and abilities. Arshat et al (2002) reported that parents must set an example in relationships and be good role models for children. This is in line with the opinion of Sulaiman (2011), which noted that parents need to guide children and be role models for children.

### ***The Peer Factor***

According to Abdul Latif (2009), peers refer to the same group of children or teenagers, often having the same age range, gender or socioeconomic status and sharing similar interests. Peers are where they express their troubles and substitute parents at school. The influence of peers is the most potent basis in helping self-development and changing the values and attitudes of teenagers when the power of parents and family decreases in the early stages of adolescence (Salleh, 2015).

Ulwan (2000) explained that the religion of one's friend impacts a person. Thus, it is crucial to know who is one's friend. It conforms with the words of The Prophet Muhammad PBUH, narrated by Bukhari and Muslim

*A person's religion lies in his friends, so be careful who you are friends with (al-Bukhari: 1332)*

Ulwan (2004), also stated that if one befriends lame and corrupt companions, they will follow and be affected by damaging behaviour. According to Abd Rahim (2006), teenagers adapt to the factors of the family environment, social environment and culture that will shape the development of their behaviour. Therefore, students who come from families with family relationship crises can have an impact on the formation of their morals. While Yahya et al (2010) recommended that parents always note who their children's friends are because they are a substantial contributor to the increase in delinquent behaviour of children.

In addition, Kasht (1985) mentioned that socialisation, like friend mannerisms, will bring people closer to Allah SWT if carried out in the manner ordered by sharia. Hall (2008) remarked that among the methods to monitor children are to know who they are friends with, observe the children's activities, see where they are and be selective in choosing their friends.

### ***Mass Media Factors***

Suria (2012) explained that the media plays a pertinent role, starting from adding knowledge and forming attitudes, perceptions, and trust values. The mass media deliver a lot of transition and information to the community, especially regarding current affairs and foreign and domestic news. In addition, the media is also beneficial to the development of education today. However, at the same time, mass media may also contribute towards adverse outcomes. The study conducted by Tamuri & Ismail (2009) on Form 4 students, discovered

that high exposure to the media hurt the religious beliefs of teenagers. Wan Norina et al. (2013) stated that one of the reasons for the moral decay of today's youth is the result of mass media exposure and programs observed in the country. In the context of *dakwah*, Abd Hamid (2016) noted that media activists should also play the task of delivering *dakwah*. They should utilise media channels to invite people to believe in Allah SWT and introduce the characteristics of Islamic teachings to the community. The media should play a role in applying Islamic or moral values to educate the community so that they also appreciate these values.

### **Community Environmental Factors**

Environmental factors have a significant relationship with student achievement. Che Hassan et al (2017) reported that environmental factors influence students' personalities. The transformed structure of society causes today's students to live and mix with a more diverse community. Therefore, environmental support among students is crucial because it produces students who have balanced academically, emotionally and morally. Individuals around them influence students to shape their lives in the future (Yusof, 2010).

Yahya et al (2010) documented that the local community needs to work together in the moral maturation of teenagers, and the local community are to be mindful of all potentially harmful behaviour teenagers commit. One must be frank, warn and complain about them to the responsible party if the delinquent behaviour of teenagers transpires and guide them in carrying out their responsibilities as students.

In addition, close relationships with neighbours are necessary and are emphasised by most societies and religions. Relationships in the neighbourhood can train individuals to help and foster good values in a broader context. Noble value is exemplary behaviour between human relationships that includes religious, social, and neighbourhood aspects to form a united society (Abdul Samad, 2010).

### **The Challenge of Moral Formation**

Shaping the morals and character of students nowadays is taxing. This is due to factors that affect it from various angles. Among those elements are how parents are raised, domestic disorder, the management of the school environment, the influence of information technology that is readily available today and the impact of a student's living circumstances.

Several social investigations analysed the causes of social issues among teenagers are closely related to the factors of the broken family system, the failure of the family to educate children's beliefs and morals, and the neglect of parents in the role of providing religious education at home (Ismail, 2005; Che Hasniza & Fatimah, 2011). Hence, the key challenge for parents is to provide proper religious education. Sulaiman (2011) stated that one needs to teach kindness to one's children and family. One must too educate them. It means that parents must train their children and need to be role models for them. While, Samsuddin & Sawari (2005) asserted that parents have a great responsibility in disciplining and educating children. Parents play a critical role in educating and shaping children's beliefs so that they become valuable people in this world and the hereafter.

Parents should be exposed to parenting education. Parenting education lets parents master the right ways and methods to enlighten their children. Education as early as birth and continuing until the child matures will produce skilled individuals with good personalities. Children should realise that they must maintain a robust relationship with their parents to communicate and constantly interact positively to improve their personalities (Othman &



Khairollah, 2013). According to the Islamic view, parents play an essential role and are responsible for educating their children, especially in religious, moral and physical education.

Further, Lee & Kim (2017) found that more parental control is required to educate their children well. Parents who do not emphasise or pay attention to their children lead to moral decay. Parents must also monitor their children's movements in every association with their friends. Peer influence is decisive in adolescent development. It is possible as most of their time is spent with friends compared to when they are with their parents, thus causing them to be easily influenced by activities and behaviour driven by their peers.

In addition, the principal challenge for teachers and school administrators is to be sensitive to the distinct appreciation of Islamic morals of each student. Therefore, complete and exhaustive moral education is vital to overcome the diversity of differences of each student, and this needs to be paid attention to by all parties (Sarimah et al., 2011). The study by Jusoh & Sharif (2018), concluded that implementing educational programs with spiritual development requires a solid organisation to achieve the objective of spiritual growth to form students' character. While, Surat & Rahman (2022) claimed that the support of the social environment with the active involvement of students in co-curriculum has an impact on students' soft skills, the development of holistic human capital and adaptation in learning. The school also needs to organise a spiritual program, such as religious activities, to enhance students' personalities (Safura et al., 2019).

Likewise, the challenge in dealing with the influence of the mass media on teenagers is undeniable. Teenagers tend to do things they have heard or seen in mass media because they desire to try. Mass media is a necessity for humans today, especially students, thus creating the development of the internet, which has become a new socialisation agent for humans. However, failure to control it will cause the issue of addiction in the mass media, primarily the internet. It harms students negatively, such as cyberbullying, sexting, pornography, and physical and mental health (Kalaisilven & Sukimi, 2019). Meanwhile, Jamilin et al (2011) commented that media exposure can easily influence the culture and thinking of all levels of society, especially today's teenagers. The mass media can control students' morals, leading to addiction to mass media, such as addiction to online video games, and even worse, causing depression, self-harm and death due to mass media.

## **Conclusion**

Human value is determined by moral position: the higher the moral, the higher the human worth and dignity. The implementation and formation of morals through education, formally or informally, hence, is a shared responsibility. Ergo, the current education system requires support from all parties in shaping the morals and character of students. Thus, it is suitable for every responsible party in society to play an essential role in developing student morals. The influence of the social environment plays a critical role in contributing towards the formation of students' morals. In line with the development of the modern world today, many challenges have implications in their lives, including sociological and psychological aspects. This situation holds a comprehensive impact on the lives of students. The cooperation of all parties, especially parents, is key in dealing with the challenges faced by students. Environmental support includes humanitarian elements, such as teacher support, parental support, peer support and community support, and non-humanitarian factors, such as the influence of various types of media influencing and affecting student behaviour. A person will become good if he appreciates morals in his life, and a favourable climate impacts the student

in shaping his personality. Therefore, praiseworthy and noble morals can have an excellent and positive effect on students facing issues and challenges.

This study has contributed a valuable finding regarding the students' moral development. The application of moral values is fundamental to the formation of a noble personality. The existing education system needs support from all parties involved in adolescent moral education. It is natural for everyone in the community to play an essential role in the development of adolescent morals. Environmental support encompasses humanitarian elements, such as support from teachers, parents, peers, and the community, as well as nonhuman components, such as the influence of various types of media that one receives during their life processes that impact student morale and personality. This also indicates that developing students' potential is not only in the context of schooling; it needs to be done holistically by all parties involved through various social learning approaches. Students need all the support and motivation resources of parents, teachers, classmates, and the community to help promote their soft skills. A person will change for the better if he or she recognises noble morals because noble morals produce a positive impression on daily life. Getting a quality education is a dynamic concept that influences the positive behaviour of a student as a whole.

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