



Strengthening Students' Soft Skills and Moral Character Through Islamic-Based Educational Seminars

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Abstract: *This community service program aimed to strengthen students' soft skills and moral character through Islamic-based educational seminars at SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat. The activity addressed students' limited understanding of self-development, future planning, discipline, and social responsibility in the digital era. The program employed interactive seminar methods, Islamic motivational approaches, discussions, and self-reflection assignments. Seminar materials included self-potential recognition, soft skill development, future planning, and moral character building. The results showed increased student participation and improved understanding of communication skills, discipline, responsibility, and positive moral values. Students were also able to identify their potential and formulate future goals and self-development plans. Overall, the activity contributed to strengthening students' character, social awareness, and readiness to face future challenges in the school and pesantren environment.*

Abstrak: *Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat soft skill dan akhlak siswa melalui seminar edukatif berbasis Islami di SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat. Kegiatan ini dilatarbelakangi oleh masih rendahnya pemahaman siswa mengenai pengembangan diri, perencanaan masa depan, kedisiplinan, dan tanggung jawab sosial di era digital. Metode yang digunakan meliputi seminar interaktif, pendekatan motivasi Islami, diskusi, dan refleksi diri melalui lembar tugas peserta. Materi seminar mencakup pengenalan potensi diri, pengembangan soft skill, perencanaan masa depan, serta penguatan akhlak dan karakter positif. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan partisipasi peserta serta pemahaman mengenai komunikasi, disiplin, tanggung jawab, dan nilai-nilai akhlak dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Peserta juga mampu mengenali potensi diri dan menyusun tujuan serta langkah pengembangan masa depan. Secara umum, kegiatan ini berkontribusi dalam penguatan karakter, kepedulian sosial, dan kesiapan siswa menghadapi tantangan masa depan di lingkungan sekolah dan pesantren.*



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Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the digital era has significantly influenced the lives of young people, including students in school and pesantren environments. In addition to academic competence, students are currently required to possess non-technical abilities or soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, self-management, leadership, and problem-solving skills, to adapt effectively to social and professional challenges. Soft skills are increasingly recognized as essential competencies that support personal development, employability, and social interaction in the twenty-first century.¹ Therefore, strengthening students' soft skills has become an important aspect of educational development, particularly for adolescents who are preparing to face future social and professional environments.

Alongside technological advancement, the digital era also presents various moral and social challenges for adolescents. The widespread use of social media and digital platforms has influenced students' behavior, communication patterns, discipline, and social interaction. Excessive and uncontrolled digital exposure may reduce interpersonal communication, social awareness, and learning motivation among students.² This condition indicates that young people require educational guidance and character development programs that can help them utilize technology wisely while maintaining positive moral values and social responsibility.

In Islamic educational environments, moral education (*akhlak*) plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and behavior. Islamic moral education emphasizes not only cognitive development but also the cultivation of discipline, responsibility, respect, empathy, and social awareness in daily life. Halstead argues that Islamic education provides a distinctive framework for moral education by integrating spiritual, ethical, and social values into students' daily practices.³ Therefore, strengthening moral character among students is essential to support the formation of responsible and socially aware young generations.

SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat, as a school environment closely connected with pesantren culture, faces challenges related to students' understanding of self-development, future planning, discipline, and social responsibility. Based on preliminary observations conducted during community service activities, several students demonstrated limited awareness regarding personal potential, future goals, and the importance of positive character development. In addition, some students still required motivation to improve communication skills, discipline, and responsible behavior in both academic and social contexts. Similar findings were reported by Yahya and Mappalotteng, who stated that

¹ Chiara Succi dan Magali Canovi, "Soft Skills to Enhance Graduate Employability: Comparing Students and Employers' Perceptions," *Studies in Higher Education* 45, no. 9 (2020): 1834–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1585420>.

² Nilot Pramudita et al., "Dampak Penggunaan Media Sosial terhadap Tingkat Perilaku Kenakalan Remaja di Era Digital Saat Ini," *Dialogika: Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi dan Sosialisasi* 1, no. 3 (July 2025): 231–44, <https://doi.org/10.62383/dialogika.v1i3.533>.

³ J. Mark Halstead, "Islamic Values: A Distinctive Framework for Moral Education?" *Journal of Moral Education* 36, no. 3 (September 2007): 283–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240701643056>.

limited understanding of self-development among students may negatively affect their learning motivation and future readiness.⁴

To address these challenges, this community service program implemented Islamic-based educational seminars aimed at strengthening students' soft skills and moral character. Educational seminars were selected because interactive learning approaches can improve students' participation, self-awareness, and understanding of social values.⁵ The seminars combined motivational approaches, discussions, and self-reflection activities to encourage students to recognize their personal potential, formulate future goals, and develop positive character traits grounded in Islamic values.

Previous studies have shown that educational and motivational programs contribute positively to students' character formation and social-emotional development. Succi and Canovi explain that participatory learning activities effectively enhance students' interpersonal and communication skills.⁶ Furthermore, Berkowitz and Bier emphasize that structured character education programs can improve students' discipline, responsibility, and decision-making abilities.⁷ In the context of Islamic education, integrating religious values into learning activities can strengthen moral awareness and positive behavior among adolescents.⁸

The uniqueness of this program lies in the integration of Islamic motivational approaches, reflective learning, and soft skill development within a pesantren-based school environment. This integrated approach was designed to strengthen not only students' interpersonal competencies but also their moral and social awareness simultaneously.

Based on these considerations, this community service activity aimed to strengthen students' soft skills and moral character through Islamic-based educational seminars at SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat. The program focused on improving students' understanding of communication skills, discipline, self-development, and future planning while fostering positive moral values and social awareness in the school and pesantren environment.

Method

⁴ Muhammad Yahya dan Abdul Muis Mappalotteng, "Pengembangan Model Pembelajaran Soft Skill Pada Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan," *UNM of Journal Technological and Vocational* 9, no. 2 (2025): 128–37, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26858/ujtv.v9i2.6883>.

⁵ Eny Chusnawati Octavia, Suriswo, and Tity Kusrina, "Pengaruh Lingkungan Belajar Kolaboratif, Pembelajaran Interaktif, Dan Ketersediaan Fasilitas Belajar Di Sekolah Terhadap Peningkatan Prestasi Belajar Peserta Didik Kelas V SD Negeri 02 Kebagusan," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 2 (2025): 321–35.

⁶ Succi dan Canovi, "Soft Skills to Enhance Graduate Employability."

⁷ Marvin W. Berkowitz dan Melinda C. Bier, "Research-Based Character Education," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 591, no. 1 (2004): 72–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260082>.

⁸ Rahma Ayu Wisiyanti, "Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam di Era Globalisasi," *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1965–74, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v5i1.1139>.

This community service activity employed an educational seminar approach integrated with Islamic motivational strategies to strengthen students' soft skills and moral character at SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat. Educational seminars were selected as the primary method because interactive learning activities are considered effective in increasing students' participation, self-awareness, communication skills, and character development. According to Prince, active learning methods encourage students to become more involved in the learning process through discussion, interaction, and reflection activities.⁹ Furthermore, participatory educational approaches can improve students' interpersonal competence and social engagement.¹⁰

The activity was conducted at SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat on May 18-19, 2026, involving 324 students as the primary participants. The selection of participants was based on the need to strengthen students' self-development awareness, future planning, discipline, and social responsibility in the school and pesantren environment. Adolescents in the digital era require continuous character reinforcement and social-emotional support to adapt positively to technological and social changes.¹¹

The implementation of the community service program consisted of three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the preparation stage, the community service team coordinated with the school and pesantren authorities regarding technical arrangements, participant involvement, and activity schedules. Seminar materials and reflective assignment sheets were also developed to support students' self-reflection and personal development processes. The materials focused on self-potential recognition, future planning, soft skill development, and strengthening moral values and discipline. Reflective learning methods are considered effective in helping students recognize personal strengths, evaluate behavior, and improve self-awareness.¹²

The implementation stage was conducted through interactive seminars, motivational sessions, group discussions, question-and-answer activities, and self-reflection exercises. The seminar materials covered four major topics: recognizing personal potential, future planning, the importance of soft skills, and strengthening moral character and discipline among students. Interactive learning methods were used to encourage active participation and improve students' communication and social interaction skills. Succi and Canovi explain that participatory learning approaches significantly contribute to the development of students' soft skills, particularly communication, teamwork, and self-management abilities.¹³

The evaluation stage aimed to measure the effectiveness of the program and students' participation during the activity. Evaluation techniques included direct

⁹ Michael Prince, "Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research," *Journal of Engineering Education* 93, no. 3 (2004): 223-31, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00809.x>.

¹⁰ Succi dan Canovi, "Soft Skills to Enhance Graduate Employability."

¹¹ Alfin Ma'ruf, Delima Mardani Putri, and Imraatun Hania, "Urgensi Pendidikan Karakter Bagi Remaja Di Era Digital," *SOSIOSAINS: Jurnal Sosial dan Sains* 1, no. 9 (2021): 1101-11.

¹² Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (Basic Books, 2017).

¹³ Succi dan Canovi, "Soft Skills to Enhance Graduate Employability."

observation, reflective assignment sheets, participation monitoring, and discussion sessions. Observation was conducted to assess students' discipline, communication skills, participation levels, and social interaction during the seminar. Reflective assignments were used to evaluate students' understanding of self-development, future goals, and positive character formation. In addition, group discussions were conducted to identify students' responses and perceptions regarding the implementation of the seminar activities.

The success indicators of this community service program included increased understanding of soft skills, improved discipline and social responsibility, active participation during seminar activities, and students' ability to formulate future goals and self-development plans. The effectiveness of the program was analyzed descriptively based on participants' responses, observational findings, and reflective assignments. Educational seminar approaches combined with motivational and reflective strategies are considered capable of supporting students' character formation and strengthening social-emotional competencies in educational environments.¹⁴

Result and Discussion

Implementation of the Activity

The community service program was conducted through an Islamic-based educational seminar at SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat. The activity involved 324 students who participated actively in seminar sessions, discussions, motivational activities, and self-reflection exercises. The seminar aimed to strengthen students' soft skills and moral character through interactive and participatory learning approaches.

The seminar process began with the presentation of materials related to self-potential recognition, future planning, soft skill development, and strengthening moral values and discipline among students. The facilitators delivered the materials interactively through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and motivational approaches to encourage students' participation and engagement during the activity. Interactive educational methods are considered effective in increasing students' motivation, communication skills, and learning participation.¹⁵

During the implementation, students demonstrated high enthusiasm throughout the seminar activities. Students actively participated in discussions, responded to facilitators' questions, and completed reflective assignments provided during the seminar. The relevance of the seminar materials to students' daily experiences and future aspirations contributed to the high level of participation observed during the activity.

¹⁴ Berkowitz dan Bier, "Research-Based Character Education."

¹⁵ Octavia dkk., "Pengaruh Lingkungan Belajar Kolaboratif, Pembelajaran Interaktif, Dan Ketersediaan Fasilitas Belajar Di Sekolah Terhadap Peningkatan Prestasi Belajar Peserta Didik Kelas V SD Negeri 02 Kebagusan."



Figure 1. Implementation of the Islamic-Based Educational Seminar



Figure 2. Students' Participation in Discussion and Reflection Activities

Community Service Outcomes

Improvement of Students' Soft Skills

The seminar activities contributed positively to improving students' understanding of soft skills, particularly communication, discipline, and responsibility. Students became more confident in expressing opinions, participating in discussions, and interacting with facilitators and peers during seminar sessions. Communication competence is recognized as an important soft skill that supports interpersonal interaction, collaboration, and self-development.¹⁶

In terms of discipline, students demonstrated improved awareness regarding time management, compliance with school regulations, and consistency in carrying out academic and religious responsibilities. The seminar also strengthened students' sense of responsibility, reflected in their seriousness in participating in all seminar activities and completing reflective assignments independently.

Strengthening Students' Moral Character

The educational seminar also contributed to strengthening students' moral character (akhlak) in the school and pesantren environment. Students gained a better understanding of respectful behavior toward teachers, peers, and society as part of Islamic moral values.

¹⁶ Marcel M. Robles, "Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace," *Business Communication Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2012): 453–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569912460400>.

Furthermore, students demonstrated improved awareness regarding discipline in worship practices and positive daily behavior. Character education based on Islamic values has been shown to improve students' discipline, responsibility, and social awareness.¹⁷ Students also showed greater concern for social interaction, cooperation, and mutual respect during group discussions and collaborative activities.

The seminar additionally promoted students' social awareness and empathy. Participants understood the importance of helping others, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and respecting social differences in daily life. These findings indicate that educational seminars contribute not only to students' cognitive understanding but also to their moral and social development.

Future Planning and Self-Development

The seminar activities supported students in identifying future aspirations and developing self-improvement plans. Through reflective assignments, students were encouraged to recognize their personal potential, formulate educational and career goals, and identify concrete steps toward achieving those goals.

Most students were able to describe their future aspirations and understood the importance of discipline, continuous learning, and self-development in achieving success. Reflective learning activities are effective in improving students' self-awareness, future orientation, and personal responsibility.¹⁸ These findings suggest that Islamic-based educational seminars can support students in building positive motivation and readiness for future challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this community service activity indicate that Islamic-based educational seminars effectively strengthened students' soft skills and moral character. The increased participation and communication abilities demonstrated by students during seminar activities suggest that interactive educational approaches can improve students' interpersonal competence and social engagement. This finding is consistent with Succi and Canovi, who explain that participatory learning activities contribute significantly to the development of communication skills, teamwork, and self-management among students.¹⁹

The effectiveness of the seminar can also be explained through the concept of active learning. Prince states that active learning approaches encourage students to become actively involved in discussions, reflection, and collaborative activities, leading to improved understanding and participation.²⁰ In this activity, students were not only passive listeners but also active participants in discussions and self-reflection exercises. This participatory process supported students' confidence, communication skills, and critical thinking abilities.

The use of reflective assignments during the seminar also contributed to students'

¹⁷ Wisiyanti, "Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam di Era Globalisasi."

¹⁸ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*.

¹⁹ Succi dan Canovi, "Soft Skills to Enhance Graduate Employability."

²⁰ Prince, "Does Active Learning Work?"

self-awareness and future planning. Reflective learning methods allow students to evaluate their experiences, identify personal strengths, and formulate future goals more effectively. Reflective learning activities are considered effective in enhancing students' critical thinking, self-awareness, and independent learning abilities. Reflection-based educational approaches also support students in developing long-term personal and academic goals.²¹ Schön explains that reflective learning supports the development of self-awareness and decision-making skills through continuous reflection on individual experiences.²² In this activity, reflective assignments helped students recognize their aspirations and formulate concrete steps for self-development.

In terms of character formation, the findings demonstrate that Islamic-based educational approaches positively influence students' moral development and discipline. Character education integrated with Islamic values can strengthen students' responsibility, social awareness, and positive behavior in daily life.²³ Halstead also emphasizes that Islamic education provides a moral framework that integrates ethical, spiritual, and social values into students' behavior and daily interactions.²⁴

The seminar activities also strengthened students' social-emotional skills, including empathy, cooperation, self-control, and social awareness. According to the OECD, social-emotional skills are essential competencies that support students' academic achievement, mental well-being, and social adaptation in the twenty-first century.²⁵ Through discussion activities, group interaction, and motivational sessions, students developed stronger interpersonal relationships and social awareness during the seminar.

Recent studies emphasize that social-emotional learning contributes significantly to students' self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are essential for supporting students' academic achievement and social adaptation in the digital era.²⁶

Furthermore, the Islamic motivational approach used during the seminar positively influenced students' learning motivation and future orientation. Motivation based on religious and moral values encourages students to develop discipline, responsibility, and self-confidence as part of personal and spiritual growth. Previous studies have shown that value-based motivational approaches can strengthen students' engagement and positive behavior in educational settings.²⁷

Overall, the results indicate that Islamic-based educational seminars can serve as an effective strategy for strengthening students' soft skills, moral character, and social-

²¹ Nurhidayah Yaakop dkk., "How Reflective Enhance Education Learning," *CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS* 23, no. 1 (2022): 1667–73, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.22.1.169>.

²² Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*.

²³ Berkowitz dan Bier, "Research-Based Character Education."

²⁴ Halstead, "Islamic Values."

²⁵ OECD, *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, Education at a Glance (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>.

²⁶ OECD, *Beyond Academic Learning: First Results from the Survey of Social and Emotional Skills 2019* (OECD, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1787/92a11084-en>.

²⁷ Taufik dan Amaluddin, "Peran Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Era Digital," *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences, And Education (JHUSE)* 1, no. 4 (2025): 24–35.

emotional skills in school and pesantren environments. The integration of interactive learning, reflective activities, and Islamic motivational approaches contributed positively to students' personal development, social awareness, and readiness to face future challenges in the digital era. To strengthen the presentation of the community service outcomes, the article was supported by evaluation tables, participation data, diagrams, and activity documentation. These visual components were used to provide clearer descriptions of students' participation levels, learning outcomes, and the effectiveness of the educational seminar activities.

Table 1. Evaluation Results of the Educational Seminar Activities

No.	Evaluation Indicators	Assessment Method	Evaluation Results	Category
1	Understanding of soft skills	Observation and discussion	Most students were able to explain the importance of communication, discipline, and responsibility	Good
2	Self-potential recognition	Reflective assignment sheet	Students were able to identify their interests, talents, and future aspirations	Good
3	Understanding of future planning	Seminar assignment sheet	Students were able to formulate simple steps to achieve their future goals	Good
4	Improvement of students' discipline	Observation during activities	Students participated in the seminar in an orderly and punctual manner	Good
5	Strengthening moral character and politeness	Behavioral observation	Students demonstrated respectful attitudes during seminar activities	Very Good
6	Participation in discussion sessions	Participation observation	Students actively asked and answered questions during discussions	Good
7	Enthusiasm during seminar activities	Direct observation	Students showed high attention and engagement throughout the seminar	Very Good

Table 2. Students' Participation Level During the Seminar

No.	Forms of Student Participation	Number of Active Participants	Percentage
1	Attending the seminar until completion	324 students	100%
2	Actively asking questions during discussions	207 students	64%
3	Answering facilitators' questions	240 students	74%
4	Completing reflective assignment sheets	324 students	100%
5	Presenting future goals and development plans	272 students	84%
6	Participating in group discussions	256 students	79%

Table 1 presents the results of students' evaluations related to their understanding of soft skills, self-development, discipline, and moral character after participating in the seminar activities. The evaluation was conducted through observation, discussions, and reflective assignment sheets completed by participants.

Table 2 illustrates the level of students' participation throughout the seminar activities, including discussion involvement, question-and-answer participation, reflective assignments, and future planning exercises. The participation data indicate that

most students actively engaged in the seminar sessions.

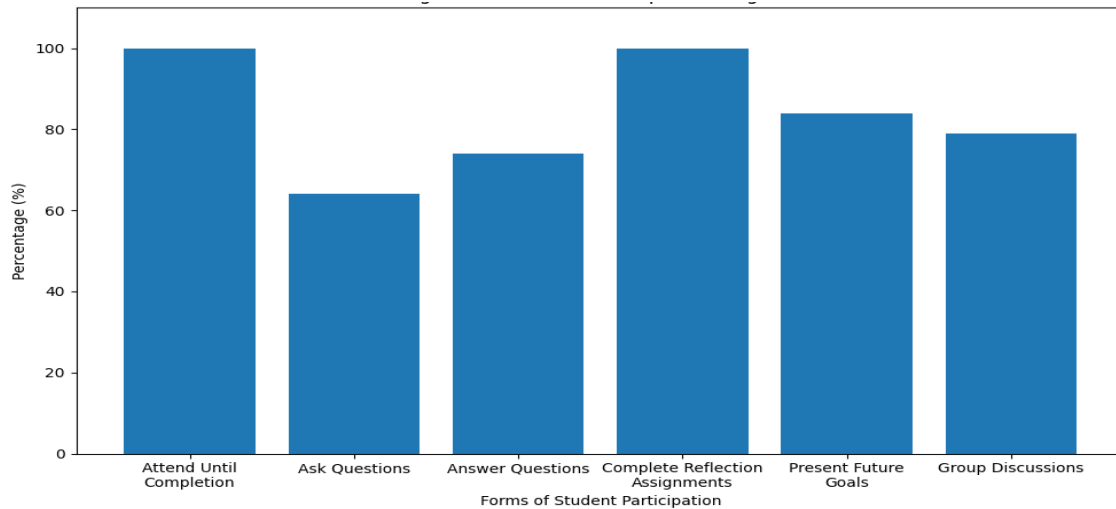


Figure 3. Students’ Participation Diagram

The participation diagram visually demonstrates the percentage of students involved in various seminar activities. The findings indicate a high level of participation and enthusiasm among participants throughout the implementation of the program.

The successful implementation of the community service program was supported by several factors, including strong cooperation from the school and pesantren authorities, high student enthusiasm, and the relevance of the seminar materials to students’ daily experiences and future needs. These supporting factors contributed positively to students’ engagement and participation during the activity.

However, several challenges were also identified during the implementation process. Limited time allocation reduced the opportunity for deeper discussion and reflection sessions, while differences in students’ levels of understanding influenced the effectiveness of material delivery. Despite these challenges, the seminar activities were generally conducted effectively and achieved the intended objectives of strengthening students’ soft skills and moral character.

Conclusion

The Islamic-based educational seminar conducted at SMPN 2 Sunan Drajat successfully improved students’ understanding of soft skills, particularly communication skills, discipline, and responsibility, which are essential competencies for personal and social development in the digital era. The activity also contributed positively to strengthening students’ moral character through the cultivation of respectful attitudes, discipline in worship practices, and increased social awareness within the school and pesantren environment. In addition, the implementation of interactive seminar methods, active learning approaches, and reflective learning activities effectively increased students’ participation, self-awareness, and motivation in identifying personal potential and planning future goals. The program was supported by strong cooperation from the

school and pesantren authorities, students' enthusiasm, and the relevance of seminar materials to students' daily experiences and future needs. However, limited implementation time and differences in students' levels of understanding became challenges during the activity. Overall, this community service program demonstrated that Islamic-based educational seminars can serve as an effective strategy for strengthening students' soft skills, character formation, and social-emotional skills. Future programs are recommended to provide continuous mentoring and broader character development activities to achieve more sustainable educational impacts.

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