Integrating Buddhist Ethics into Boarding School Education : Character Development at Pasastrian Kusalamitra, Gunung Kidul, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to explore Buddhist character values focused on the educational processes at Pasastrian Kusalamitra Gunung Kidul and how these values are implemented within the boarding school context to develop student character. The study method used was descriptive with a qualitative approach, including interviews, focus group discussion, direct observation, participant observation, and document review. The subjects of this study included key individuals directly involved in educational programs, comprising the principal and vice principal of *PKBM* Homeschooling *Kusalamitra*, twelfth-grade teachers and students, selected for their significant roles in and deep engagement with the school's activities. Data collected were analyzed using NVivo 14, employing thematic analysis to develop codes and themes, guided by description-focused coding, which involves extracting relevant statements, describing them, and tagging them for systematic categorization. Findings revealed that these Buddhist virtues significantly enhanced students' ethical orientations and personal growth, thereby boosting their academic and social skills. By deeply embedding these values within its educational framework, *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* not only promoted holistic development but also equipped students with the resilience and empathy needed for modern societal interactions. Highlighting the transformative potential of religious ethics in education, the study suggests robust pathways for developing moral character in diverse learning environments.

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Introduction

Character education is paramount in shaping the moral and ethical framework of individuals, especially in academic settings. This educational focus is crucial as it nurtures essential virtues like honesty, discipline, and responsibility, integral for personal growth and societal well-being (Agustin et al., 2023; Budiarti et al., 2023). Recent studies have underscored the importance of integrating moral and ethical values within educational institutions, highlighting the positive impacts of such programs on student behavior and academic performance (Gunawan, 2022; Tepusa & Bonpo, 2022). Despite the recognized importance of character education, challenges such as inconsistent implementation across schools underscore the need for a more integrated approach (Putri & Budyanra, 2020; Susilo et al., 2022). Research indicates that well-structured character education not only enhances academic performance but also crucial social skills, making its effective implementation a pressing concern (Agustini, 2021; Hidayati et al., 2020; Sin & Cahyani, 2022).

At *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, the integration of Buddhist ethical values in character education shows promise yet faces implementation inconsistencies. Issues such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and minimal parental involvement impede the effectiveness of these programs, reflecting a broader national challenge (Putri & Budyanra,

2020; Susilo et al., 2022). This study introduces a novel perspective by focusing on the integration of Buddhist ethics in character education at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, a setting that has been less emphasized in existing literature. Unlike most studies centered on Islamic educational settings, this research explores the unique contributions of Buddhist principles to character development in a boarding school environment (Mehm Tin Mon, 2015; Yunia, 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to examine how Buddhist character values are emphasized within the curriculum and daily activities at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*. It seeks to understand the methods and effectiveness of these values in shaping the students' character development, aiming to provide insights that could be applied to similar educational settings for enhanced moral and ethical education. Given the unique position of *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* in integrating Buddhist ethics into a structured educational framework, this study will contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on character education. It aims to fill the gap in research concerning the practical application of Buddhist principles in boarding schools, offering a new model for holistic character development (Chowmas et al., 2021; Khardi et al., 2020).

This research also aligns with broader educational initiatives that emphasize the development of leadership and integrity among students. By focusing on Buddhist ethical teachings, the study will explore strategic educational management practices that foster these qualities in young learners, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of character education's role in enhancing student outcomes (Khardi et al., 2020). Overall, this study will provide a detailed analysis of the integration of Buddhist ethical teachings in the character education program at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of such programs and suggesting ways to overcome existing challenges. By focusing on this unique educational setting, the research aims to contribute to the development of a more integrated and effective model of character education applicable both nationally and globally.

Research Method

The research employed a descriptive qualitative method to delve into the integration of Buddhist ethics within the educational framework of *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, a boarding school situated in Gunung Kidul (Miles et al., 2020). This institution was selected for its robust embodiment of Buddhist principles both in academic and residential life, offering a fertile ground for exploring the dynamics of ethical education in such environments (Mertler, 2020). Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, direct observations, participant observations, and document reviews. This comprehensive data collection strategy commenced with preliminary observations in August 2023, extending to the main data-gathering phase from November 2023 to February 2024. Each method provided unique insights into the nuanced ways Buddhist values are woven into the fabric of school life.

The analysis process was meticulously structured into phases of data compilation, condensation, and display, following the systematic techniques outlined by Miles et al. (2020). Utilizing NVivo 14, a sophisticated tool for qualitative data analysis (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019), the data were coded and categorized under themes such as educational practices and the incorporation of Buddhist values. This methodological rigor facilitated the emergence of distinct themes and the construction of context diagrams that depict the intricate incorporation of Buddhist ethics into the school's educational paradigm.

Triangulation of data from various sources enhanced the reliability and depth of the analysis, ensuring a robust examination of the embedded ethical principles and their practical implications within the educational setting. The utilization of NVivo 14 allowed for a systematic categorization of data, aiding in the effective identification and interpretation of core themes related to Buddhist ethical integration in educational practices.

Results and Discussion
Core Buddhist Character Values in Education at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*

The study at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* has highlighted the profound role that Buddhist ethical principles play in shaping students' social and emotional development. Testimonials from students underscore the transformative impact of the school's curriculum, emphasizing improved personal growth and enhanced social integration. One student described a marked enhancement in avoiding negative peer influences, illustrating the curriculum's efficacy in fostering discernment and self-discipline. Additionally, increased sociability among students is attributed to their deep engagement with the community, facilitated by the school's character education.

Furthermore, the integration of *sobhana sadharana cetasika*, as defined in the *Abhidhamma* teachings, plays a central role in embedding ethically wholesome mental factors such as non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion into the educational framework. This integration is crucial for nurturing a balanced personality in students, characterized by intellectual, emotional, and spiritual resilience. Such an educational approach does not merely push for academic excellence but rather cultivates a high standard of moral and ethical behavior, significantly shaping students' social behaviors and moral landscapes.

The collective experiences and personal accounts of students at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* provide compelling evidence of the transformative power of Buddhist ethics in education. The school's success in creating an environment that encourages meaningful engagement points to the broader potential of character education. This is pivotal in developing well-rounded individuals who are equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with the moral and social competencies necessary to contribute positively to their communities.

The research conducted at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* offers an in-depth analysis of the significant influence Buddhist ethical values exert on student development. It showcases how the cultivation of mindfulness, as articulated by Baer (2015), and virtues like self-control (*Sati*), leads to enhanced academic focus and personal discipline, corroborated by empirical indicators and supported by findings from Gargiulo (2023) and King & Badham (2018). These practices are not isolated exercises but are integrated into the school's curriculum, encouraging students to translate Buddhist principles into their daily lives, much in line with the ethos of transformative learning discussed by Gardner (2020) and Lemettinen et al. (2021).

The core Buddhist values identified: awareness and self-control (*Sati*), Buddhist leadership (*Dasa Rajadharma*), moral shame and fear (*Hiri Ottappa*), non-attachment and generosity (*Alobha*), loving kindness and tolerance (*Adosa*), and spiritual and faith development (*Saddha*), are interwoven into the educational fabric of *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*. Students' reflections and the school's leadership programs testify to the meaningful incorporation of these values, resonating with the pedagogical principles endorsed by Byrne et al. (2017) and Lesmana (2022). These findings point to the profound character development within the students, surpassing the limited scope of academic achievements alone.

Table 1. Core Buddhist Character Values Themes

Core Buddhist Values	Description	Direct Testimonials on Buddhist Values	Number of Participants	Number of Empirical Indicators
Awareness and Self-Control (*Sati*)	Cultivating discipline, mindfulness, and an enlightened interaction that reflects self-awareness according to Buddhist principles.	"Practicing meditation before class helps me focus better during lectures and exams." – Comment of a twelfth-grade student.	30	164
Buddhist Leadership (*Dasa Rajadharma*)	Developing the capacity for self-reliance with accountability, cultivating the courage to lead confidently, and fostering leadership qualities rooted in Buddhist values.	"At home, I could almost be described as an introvert. It's fair to say I seldom go out, mainly just for school. But here, I've changed. I have become more confident." – Opinion of a twelfth-grade student.	28	153
Moral Shame and Fear (*Hiri Ottappa*)	Instilling a sense of moral integrity and the wisdom that shapes ethical behavior, guided by an internal sense of shame and fear of wrongdoing.	"The boarding school has instilled in me crucial Buddhist moral values, especially the discernment of right from wrong." – Summarized perspective of a twelfth-grade student.	23	131
Non-attachment and Generosity (*Alobha*)	Encouraging a spirit of collaboration and familial bonds within the community, along with a compassionate concern for the welfare of others.	"At *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, the bond among students across grades 10th to 12th is akin to family, promoting unity and mutual support," conveyed by the twelfth-grade History teacher.	23	120
Loving Kindness and Tolerance (*Adosa*)	Promoting a culture of tolerance, respect for others, empathetic love, and patience that contributes to inner harmony and balance.	"Compassion is key; if we see someone in need during a race, we help without thought to our own success," stated by the Vice Principal of Student Affairs.	25	106
Spiritual and Faith Development (*Saddha*)	Fostering a deep-rooted belief in and understanding of the *Buddha*'s teachings, coupled with an eagerness to spread the wisdom of the *Dhamma*.	"The establishment of the Buddhist *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* first and foremost fosters *saddha*, the strengthening of faith," stated by the school Principal.	13	62

As described in Table 1, a testament to the core Buddhist values that are meticulously integrated into the institution's educational framework. These key Buddhist values are not just theoretical components but are deeply etched into the fabric of student life, shaping their conduct and growth. The Basic Leadership Training (*Latihan Dasar Kepemimpinan*) at the school emphasizes Buddhist Leadership (*Dasa Rajadharma*), which is about developing self-reliance and fostering leadership qualities rooted in these Buddhist values. This leadership training, along with the cultivation of Moral Shame and Fear (*Hiri Ottappa*), is instrumental in guiding students' decision-making processes, resonating with the work on ethical decision-making in education by Tobin (2018) and O'Flaherty et al. (2017). The successful integration of values like *Alobha* echoes a compassionate community spirit, aligning with the community-centric pedagogies discussed by Susilo et al. (2022) and Shah et al. (2023), thus evidencing the profound impact of these principles in the holistic development of students at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*.

The practice of *Adosa*, highlighting loving kindness and tolerance, is deeply embedded within the curriculum, shaping the student body into a harmonious community, as depicted in focus group discussions. This ethos of empathy and understanding is echoed in the broader societal impacts of nurturing such values discussed by Maxwell & Hirsch (2020)

and Paul et al. (2020). Similarly, the value of *Saddha* emphasizes faith development, which is central to student life at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, confirming the importance of holistic development, as discussed by Maisyaroh et al. (2023) and Fajri et al. (2024).

Conclusively, *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* has become a model institution where Buddhist virtues are not only taught but are lived by the students, forming a well-rounded individual. The real-life manifestation of these teachings in their learning environment has been recognized to enhance personal growth, community service, and academic success, as evidenced by the scholarly work of Anna et al. (2023) and Mujiyanto et al. (2023), illustrating the positive influence of such mindful practices on broader educational outcomes.

Boarding School Learning Implementation at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*

At *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*, the educational journey is a comprehensive endeavor that marries scholastic rigor with the profound teachings of Buddhist character development. As elucidated by Chowmas et al. (2021) and Wulanndari et al. (2024), the curriculum extends far beyond the academic, ensuring that each student's daily life is steeped in practices that embed Buddhist values into their very essence. The school's approach, highlighted by Amaliana et al. (2023) and Budiman et al. (2023), fosters an environment where the traditional teachings of Buddhism are not merely learned but are lived, cultivating individuals who are as academically adept as they are spiritually and ethically attuned. This is a lived experience where ethical clarity is honed through disciplined routines and cultural engagements, as discussed by Dewi et al. (2023) and Prasetyo et al. (2023).

The educational journey at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* represents a holistic pursuit, blending rigorous academics with the profound lessons of Buddhist character development. Chowmas et al. (2021) and Wulanndari et al. (2024) observe that the school's curriculum transcends conventional academic boundaries, immersing students in a daily routine that integrates Buddhist principles at the core of their learning. Highlighted by Amaliana et al. (2023) and Budiman et al. (2023), the school's ethos encourages a living experience of Buddhism's traditional teachings, nurturing individuals who are as scholarly competent as they are spiritually and ethically enlightened. This practical application of ethical clarity is cultivated through disciplined routines and cultural activities, a focus supported by the insights of Dewi et al. (2023) and Prasetyo et al. (2023).

The curriculum at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* is enriched by its thoughtful integration of local wisdom, significantly contributing to both personal growth and societal development. A case in point is the experience shared by a twelfth-grade student, who emphasized the role of sincerity in routine responsibilities such as picketing, encapsulating the school's emphasis on genuine commitment to every task. "Sincerity must underpin our tasks; without it, the efforts in cleaning or mopping may not be complete, which impacts the overall outcome," reflects the student's understanding of integrity in action. This emphasis on heartfelt engagement in daily activities dovetails with the findings of Andanti et al. (2024), underscoring the vital connection between authenticity in educational practices and effective learning outcomes.

The school's live-in program further integrates these values, with Grade 12 students actively engaging in local arts and community service. This practical application of Buddhist principles like selfless service and generosity, whether through temple cleaning or supporting local *batik* making, instills a sense of compassion and community engagement while enriching students' educational experiences (Suciati et al., 2023). Daily Buddhist prayers at the start and end of classes foster a reflective mindset, promoting personal and spiritual growth in line with Maisyaroh et al.'s (2023) approach to character education.

Pasastrian Kusalamitra's curriculum expertly fuses the practical application of skills with the development of core virtues, exemplifying a holistic educational model. Twelfth-

grade students are particularly encouraged to engage sincerely in activities that foster integrity, a practice which resonates with the research of Fajri et al. (2024) and Murdiono et al. (2017) on the interconnection between academic achievement and moral development. Moreover, the incorporation of traditional arts like *gamelan*, *batik*, and *wayang* enriches the curriculum, enhancing students' connection to their cultural heritage and ethical maturity, in line with findings from Pranata et al. (2021). These educational strategies, indicative of *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*'s commitment to well-rounded development, are substantiated by Table 2, which provides qualitative evidence of their effectiveness within this descriptive qualitative study.

Table 2. Boarding School-Based Learning Themes

Educational Aspects	Description	Direct Testimonials on Boarding School-Based Learning	Number of Participants	Number of Empirical Indicators
Integration of Buddhist Values in Curriculum and Activities	Embedding Buddhist principles within the educational syllabus and activities, enhancing spiritual growth and character building in line with Buddhist teachings.	"For me, the act of cleaning and holding a service in an unused *vihara* was memorable. It left a profound impression as we honored a sacred space, long forgotten by the local community, reinforcing our connection to our faith and heritage." – Reflection of a twelfth-grade student.	35	288
Application of Local Wisdom and Direct Practice	Incorporating local cultural insights with Buddhist perspective, offering extracurricular activities for practical understanding, and establishing a daily routine reflecting Buddhist values.	"Playing traditional music requires self-control. Without it, one might play the *gamelan* too loudly or too quickly, making it unpleasant to listen to. Thus, this also serves to cultivate characteristics valued in Buddhism," explained by a twelfth-grade student.	19	131
Spiritual Nurturing and Practice through Religious Activities	Engaging students in Buddhist practices and rituals to foster spiritual development, including formal programs for novice monks and nuns.	"For me personally, it's very supportive. The difference between home and here is vast. At home, I rarely pray, maybe just two or three times a week at the *vihara*. But here, the *vihara* is close by, and we pray every day, both morning and evening, maintaining a regular routine," shared by a twelfth-grade student during a discussion.	10	63
Implementation of Discipline and Order as a Practice of Buddhist Values	Assessing and reinforcing students' adherence to Buddhist moral codes through the structured environment of the boarding school.	"So it's not that gadgets are banned, but their use is restricted," stated by the Vice Principal of Student Affairs.	9	61
Development of Leadership and Tolerance Based on Buddhist Values	Cultivating leadership skills underpinned by Buddhist ethics and promoting religious tolerance as part of character development.	"The Basic Leadership Training program at school. There are many theories about becoming a leader according to the *Buddha Dhamma*," stated by the School Principal.	7	43
Community and Parental Involvement in the Educational Process	Facilitating experiential learning outside the school environment and encouraging active parental involvement in the educational journey.	"This approach fosters both faith development and independence, polished through both the educational curriculum and the boarding school experience. Practically, this is achieved through live-in programs where students actively engage with the community," explained by the School Principal.	8	37

The comprehensive spiritual program at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* includes mandatory *Pabbajja* for graduation, diverse religious teachings, and meditation practices led by teachers

and staff. Such practices cultivate mindfulness and ethical maturity, enhancing overall well-being and aligning with Hyde (2016) and Haryanto's (2022) studies on the benefits of spiritual practices in educational settings. Lastly, the school enforces a structured environment, teaching students the Buddhist principles of self-control and mindfulness. The regulated use of gadgets and adherence to school protocols promote discipline and ethical behavior, in line with broader educational theories on effective character education (Haryanto, 2022; Murdiono et al., 2017). These measures, alongside the development of leadership and tolerance through active participation in interfaith activities, position students as future leaders and tolerant members of a multicultural society (Espinosa & González, 2024; Lemettinen et al., 2021).

Diagram 1. Visualizing Ethics Word Cloud Analysis of Buddhist Character Values in Boarding School Education

The word cloud analysis, highlighting key terms like *sembahyang* (prayer), *perhatian* (mindfulness), and *peduli* (care), underscores the integral aspects of Buddhist character values cultivated at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*. These values echo the research by Milerski & Karwowski (2023), who examine the pedagogical integration of values and character education in school settings. The emphasis on *perhatian* (mindfulness) relates closely to the findings of Davison et al. (2016), who explored the assessment of virtue literacy among children, pointing out that mindfulness to character virtues can enhance a student's moral and ethical development.

Furthermore, the word *kepedulian* (concern) resonates with the contemplative pedagogy advocated by Gardner (2020), who emphasizes the importance of fostering a learning environment that encourages care for self and others, promoting transformative learning experiences. The practice of *sembahyang* within the educational framework at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* aligns with the spiritual nurturing highlighted in the work of Hyde (2016), which discusses the practical expression of educational values such as hospitality and spiritual care in schools.

The leadership traits underscored in the word cloud, such as *kemandirian* (independence) and *percaya diri* (self-confidence), are crucial elements of character education. These concepts align with the framework of second-generation mindful leadership described by King & Badham (2018), where the development of leadership skills is deeply connected with mindfulness practices. The term *karakter sosial* (social character) within the

word cloud also aligns with the study of Von Brömssen et al. (2020), which examines the inclusion of religious literacy in education and its impact on developing a student's social character and understanding of their role in a multicultural society.

Overall, the word cloud from *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* illustrates a robust emphasis on developing mindfulness, ethical conduct, and social character among students, which is representative of the school's dedication to integrating Buddhist principles with contemporary educational practices. These principles foster a nurturing environment where students are encouraged to develop not only academically but also spiritually and socially, preparing them to become mindful and caring individuals who can contribute positively to society.

Conclusion

The investigation at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* Gunung Kidul confirms the efficacy of Buddhist ethics in fostering comprehensive character development among students. Emphasizing virtues such as *Sati* and *Dasa Rajadharma*, the school's curriculum intricately weaves these principles into daily educational practices, promoting well-rounded personal growth that extends beyond academia. This model presents a viable pathway for educational institutions seeking to incorporate holistic character formation into their pedagogical strategies.

The unique boarding school setting at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra* proves instrumental in actualizing these virtues, illustrating their profound impact on moral and spiritual maturation alongside cognitive and social competencies. The success of this approach offers valuable insights into how structured, value-centered education can effectively produce individuals grounded in ethical conduct, ready to navigate the complexities of society with empathy and moral clarity. As a pioneering study, it suggests that the mindful integration of religious ethics, specifically within the Buddhist tradition, significantly elevates educational outcomes. This provides an exemplary blueprint for global educational frameworks, indicating that a curriculum rooted in moral and ethical integrity can lead to transformative learning experiences and the nurturing of globally competent citizens.

Recommendation

This research highlights the transformative impact of Buddhist ethical values integrated into the boarding school curriculum at *Pasastrian Kusalamitra*. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of these character education practices on students' success post-graduation, assessing their preparedness for diverse societal challenges. A comparative analysis across various Indonesian educational settings could also elucidate the discrepancies in the implementation of character education, further exploring the effectiveness of religious and ethical teachings in fostering comprehensive student development.

Moreover, to enhance the efficacy of these educational programs, it is essential to foster deeper collaborations with parental communities and local educational authorities. Addressing limitations such as inadequate teacher training and minimal parental involvement is crucial. Structured professional development programs tailored for educators would augment their capabilities in delivering character education effectively. Simultaneously, initiatives should be designed to actively involve parents in their children's educational paths, thereby cultivating a robust ecosystem of moral and ethical learning, setting a foundation for nurturing well-rounded individuals poised to contribute positively to society.

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