

Building Students' Social Caring Character Through an Attitude of Belonging

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ABSTRACT

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Education has an important role in building the socially caring character of students. The sense of belonging has a strategic role in developing it. This study aims to determine the influence of a sense of belonging on students' social concern character. The research subjects were 225 students, chosen randomly from two high schools in Kediri Regency and Malang Regency, East Java. Data were collected through the school climate scale and social concern scale. Analysis was conducted using simple regression techniques. The analysis shows that there is an influence of school climate on students' socially caring character ($R = 413$ $p < 0.010$). Sense of belonging is the most dominant indicator influencing students' social awareness ($\beta = .201 < .010$). The results of this study suggest that building students' social awareness can be done by instilling a sense of belonging in students.

Keywords: School Climate; Sense of Belonging; Character Education

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan mempunyai peranan penting dalam membangun karakter peduli sosial peserta didik. Sikap rasa memiliki memiliki peran strategis dalam mengembangkannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh rasa memiliki terhadap karakter kepedulian sosial siswa. Subjek penelitian berjumlah 225 siswa yang dipilih secara acak dari dua SMA di Kabupaten Kediri, Jawa Timur dan Kabupaten Malang, Jawa Timur. Data dikumpulkan melalui skala iklim sekolah dan skala kepedulian sosial. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik regresi sederhana. Hasil analisis menunjukkan terdapat pengaruh iklim sekolah terhadap karakter peduli sosial siswa ($R = 413$ $p < 0,010$). Rasa memiliki merupakan indikator yang paling dominan mempengaruhi kepedulian sosial siswa ($\beta = .201 < .010$). Hasil penelitian ini mempunyai implikasi bahwa membangun kepedulian sosial siswa dapat dilakukan dengan menanamkan rasa memiliki pada diri siswa.

Kata-kata Kunci: Iklim Sekolah; Rasa Memiliki; Pendidikan Karakter

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an intentional endeavor by students to discover the ultimate truth, with a keen and fact-based perspective. Additionally, education can be a means of resolving a number of societal issues. Thus, education needs to be able to respond to difficulties and resolve societal issues. The goal of Indonesian national education is to

form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also sensitive to their social surroundings (Arif et.al., 2021). The value of humanity, which encompasses socially conscious attitudes, is one of the key principles in education. This social caring attitude is a naturally occurring pattern of behavior connected to how one reacts to circumstances or occurrences in their environment. People in society can interact with one another to develop this socially caring character. It is not just about verbal exchanges or social connections; it also entails taking practical steps to assist others (Octaviani et.al., 2022).

The Indonesian Ministry of National Education has initiated various educational materials aimed at developing students' character, including social awareness (Nasional, 2011). The goal of this character education is to provide children a basic understanding of ethical principles so they can live up to them on a daily basis (Farid dan Aziz, 2023). However, the advancement of technology and the internet in this globalized day has changed the way the younger generation thinks and behaves, which has resulted in a decline in attitudes toward social care. The fast growth of social media and technology has caused a 40% fall in young people's views about social care over the past ten years, according to a study from Boton University (Khaerunnisa & Muqowim, 2020). Other research has also shown that social care attitudes are beginning to erode, as seen by the social contexts in which indifference, egoism, and a lack of empathy for others are observed (Muhamadi & Hasanah, 2019).

Evidence from the field indicates that many students would rather take pictures or videos of someone in trouble than provide them with immediate help (Arif et.al., 2021). This illustrates a decline in attitudes about social care, which requires greater focus in the field of education. Given the significance of this social care mindset, students' social care character needs to be further developed because a lack of character can lead to a disregard for other people and a focus on one's own interests. As one of the educational establishments, madrasah plays a significant role in helping students develop socially conscious personalities both at home and in the community. As a learning environment, madrasah has a great deal of potential to inculcate humanitarian principles that students can use in their daily lives (Insan Muhammadiyah, 2015).

Several studies show that the decline in socially caring character in students is not only caused by social factors, but also internal factors such as lack of attention and affection from parents, as well as the influence of a less supportive environment (Nuwa, 2020). Furthermore, one of the factors contributing to students' poor social care character is a lack of motivation (Sari et.al., 2019). Additionally contributing to this fall in socially caring character is madrasahs' propensity to prioritize cognitive rather than emotional development, particularly when it comes to fostering socially caring character (Elmubarak, 2009). Education must consider the development of affective components

linked to the construction of students' character, such as attitudes of social concern, in addition to cognitive characteristics (Mashito et.al., 2023).

To overcome this problem, various efforts need to be made, one of which is by increasing cooperation between madrasas and parents in forming students' socially caring character. A study by Nurhayati and Ali Harianto (2022) proves this by saying that good cooperation between madrasas and parents can develop students' socially caring character. Giving alms is a habit that can be used to develop a socially conscious personality. Several studies have demonstrated that the practice of almsgiving can increase a person's sense of social concern, which will then influence their social behavior (Yuniar, 2021).

The article aims to examine the role of school climate in developing social awareness among students. It manages to describe school climate and students' social awareness, which are then categorized into three levels, namely high, medium, and low. In addition, this article also aims to analyze the influence of school climate on students' social awareness by using simultaneous and partial regression analysis. This study is also expected to shed more light on the elements that affect students' social awareness and the actions madrasas can take to help students become more socially conscious personalities.

It is projected that the approach used in this study will positively impact the school environment and aid in the development of students' socially conscious personalities. Creating a generation of young people who are not only academically gifted but also empathetic and concerned about the social circumstances in their environment is crucial. Therefore, education not only produces intelligent people but also people with a strong sense of social responsibility.

2. METHODS

A quantitative approach was adopted for this study in order to test theories, uncover facts, link variables, and offer statistical descriptions. It was correlational research which aims to test the influence of school climate on social concern. School climate variables were simultaneously and partially tested, and the data was analyzed using statistics and presented as numerical values.

The research subjects consisted of 225 students (35 males and 190 females), who were randomly selected from two high schools in Kediri Regency and Malang Regency, East Java. The research subjects came from three grade levels, grade X (61 students), grade XI (107 students), and grade XII (57 students), with ages ranging from 15 to 18 years. Before being involved in the research, students were given information and asked to state their willingness.

The data were collected through two measurement scales: the school climate scales and the social concern scales. The school climate scale consists of 22 items covering five dimensions, namely relationships between students, relationships between

students and educators, educational climate, sense of belonging, interpersonal justice. This scale has been employed in various studies and has good reliability (Grazia & Molinari, 2021). The social concern scale consists of 16 items that reveal two dimensions, namely prosocial activities and prosocial feelings (Luengo Kanacri et al., 2021). These two scales were chosen because of their relevance and reliability to the research subjects. Data were collected using a questionnaire with a Likert scale consisting of five options, namely very often, often, sometimes, rarely, and never (Widoyoko, 2016).

Data analysis was carried out using two techniques, descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to categorize the influence of school climate on social concern into three categories: high, medium, and low, based on the calculation of the mean value and standard deviation. While inferential analysis used simultaneous and partial regression to test the influence of school climate on social concern.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Social Care

Character is a universal value or action that exists within every individual, including relationships with God, others and the environment. This character appears in attitudes, words, feelings and actions that are in line with religious teachings and customs. Social concern, on the other hand, is a person's attitude to care and help others experiencing difficulties. This social concern needs education and training rather than merely showing up (Ningsi & Aziza, 2020).

Prabowo (2018) argues that social concern is a feeling that drives someone to get involved and help others in facing difficulties. Allowing people to express themselves, taking criticism, helping each other, being tolerant, taking social action, and being morally upright are some indicators of social concern. Additionally, social interactions, consideration for others, and peacemaking initiatives can foster this social concern (Samrin, 2016).

Social care can be observed in various environments. In the family, which is the smallest social environment, family members care for each other. Here, a person first learns how to interact with others and develops social feelings. In society, especially in villages that still hold on to customs, social concern is observed in the form of mutual cooperation, such as helping to build a house without reward. In schools, where students learn, they also develop their social, emotional, cultural, and moral concerns towards others (Aditia et.al., 2016).

Social awareness in students is not an innate trait, but rather something that can be influenced by experience and learning. Three models that can be used to develop social awareness include observing and imitating the attitudes of people close to them or those

they idolize, obtaining information about social conditions, and understanding the logical consequences that will arise after carrying out social actions (Ardiyanti, 2019).

b. Sense Of Belonging

Sense of Belonging is one of the important dimensions in school climate that influences students' socially caring character. School climate encompasses the atmosphere created by various school activities and reflects the goals, values, norms, relationships between individuals or groups, and the teaching and organization of the school. To assess the quality of school climate, experts have put forward several concepts, such as engagement, empowerment, and autonomy, which also take into account the physical and social emotional environment of the school (Ramberg, 2021). There are four main categories used to measure school climate, consisting of teaching and learning process, safety, interpersonal relationships, and institutional environment (Cohen et al., 2009).

Karaman and Cirak mention that sense of belonging is a social aspect that is reflected in togetherness, solidarity, sharing, friendship, and participation in groups (Karaman & Cirak, 2017). Likewise, Wood and White explain that sense of belonging is an emotional bond that connects individuals to their social and material environment (Wood & White, 2011). Indicators of a sense of belonging in students can be observed from the contribution, involvement, and pride of students towards the school, as well as the harmony of student character with the school environment (Goodenow, 1993). This sense of belonging develops in students' social lives, along with their integration into the social environment.

According to Lestari & Dewi (2020), students' sense of belonging is related to feeling accepted, supported, and respected by their school environment. Anderson-Butcher and Conroy (2002) state that commitment, involvement, and connectedness are important aspects of belonging. In addition, factors such as social networks, affirmation, and demographics also influence the development of students' sense of belonging (O'Meara et al., 2017).

c. Normality Test of Distribution

The results of normality test showed a significance value (p) of 200, which means that the data obtained has a normal distribution, because the significance value is greater than 0.05. It indicates that the data do not show significant deviations from the normal distribution. Further details regarding the results of this normality test are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Normality test of distribution

N		School Climate	
N		225	225
Normal Parameters ^{a, b}	Mean	.0000000	
	Std. Deviation	7.76064192	
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.035	
	Positive	.034	
	Negative	-.035	
Test Statistic		.035	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 ^{c, d}	

d. Linearity test of relationship

The results of the linearity test show that the significance value of the relationship between school climate and social concern is 0.270, which is greater than 0.05. It indicates a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Therefore, data analysis using parametric statistics can be carried out. Further information can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Linearity test results of the relationship

			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Care * School Climate	Between Groups	(Combined)	7727.510	77	100.357	1.729	.002
		Linearity	2767.248	1	2767.248	47.685	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	4960.262	76	65.267	1.125	.270
	Within Groups		8530.712	147	58.032		
	Total		16258.222	224			

e. Descriptive analysis results

By calculating the mean and standard deviation values, descriptive analysis was performed to classify school climate and social concern into three categories: high, medium, and low. The results showed that for school climate, 43 students (19.1%) were in the high category, 146 students (64.9%) were in the medium category, and 36 students (16.0%) were in the low category. Meanwhile, for social concern, 43 students (19.1%) were in the high category, 163 students (72.4%) were in the medium category, and 19 students (8.4%) were in the low category. The following table 3 presents more detailed data.

Table 3. Categorization of school climate and social care

No	Category	Criteria	School Climate		Social Care	
			F	%	F	%
1	High	More than mean + SD	43	19,1%	43	19,1%
2	Medium	Between Mean + SD and Mean - SD	146	64,9%	163	72,4%

3	Low	Less than Mean -SD	36	16,0%	19	8,4%
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f. Regression Analysis Results

The simultaneous regression analysis reveals that school climate has a significant influence on students' social awareness, with $R = 0.413$ and $R^2 = 0.170$ ($p < 0.010$). It means that school climate can explain about 17% of the variation in students' social awareness. These results indicates that school climate plays a major role in predicting students' levels of social awareness. Further analysis through partial regression revealed that the sense of belonging dimension was the most dominant factor influencing students' social awareness. On the other hand, the other four dimensions of school climate did not show a significant influence on students' social awareness. The detailed information about this can be seen in Tabel 4.

Table 4. Partial regression test

No	Class activity indicators	β	P	Information
1.	Student relations	.100	.203	Not significant
2.	Student-teacher relations	.131	.142	Not significant
3.	Educational climate	.022	.816	Not significant
4.	Sense of belonging	.201	.012*	significant
5.	Interpersonal justice	.089	.240	Not significant

Table 4 shows the results of a more in-depth partial regression analysis, which confirms that sense of belonging is a major factor in influencing students' social awareness. The beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.201$, $p < 0.010$) shows that the sense of belonging has a very significant influence on students' social concern. In other words, a school climate that encourages students' emotional bonds with their school, teachers, and friends is critical in shaping their social character. Therefore, a sense of belonging not only strengthens emotional ties with the surrounding environment, but also increases students' social awareness.

According to [Zhao et.al. \(2012\)](#), a sense of belonging reflects a person's emotional attachment to a particular object, in this case the school and its community. Thus, a sense of belonging creates positive interactions between individuals and the surrounding environment, which in turn supports the development of students' social character. In [Taisuke Togari's perspective \(2011\)](#), a sense of belonging can be built through the quality of relationships between students and teachers, friends, and the school environment, which greatly influences the formation of students' social character. Therefore, a sense of belonging is very important in encouraging students to actively participate in social life at school, including helping friends who are struggling.

The goal of education is wide-ranging and includes the development of students' physical attributes, intelligence, skills, and attitudes. Thus, high-quality education is

essential to achieving these objectives and advancing national values by producing morally upright human resources. According to [Sahroni \(2017\)](#), Quality education does not only focus on academic aspects, but also builds students' character, especially in social aspects. It is in line with a study by [Ilhan \(2007\)](#) demonstrating how children may benefit greatly from a positive and conducive school climate in both their academic performance and the development of their social attitudes.

A safe, cozy, respectful, optimistic, and open atmosphere are hallmarks of a positive school climate, which significantly impacts students' social attitudes. It is in resonance with a study from [Dodent et.al. \(2022\)](#), revealing that a supportive school environment can increase students' social awareness of others. In this regard, students' sense of belonging in the school environment is crucial in motivating them to show concern and assist those in need. Likewise, [Sisly Duri Afryana \(2018\)](#) also emphasize that a sense of belonging is an important factor in the formation of students' identity, which will encourage them to participate more in social life and interact with their friends.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that efforts to develop students' social awareness, especially at the high school level, concentrate more on forming a sense of belonging among students. [Setyowati and Fauziah \(2019\)](#) claim that a sense of belonging is a basic psychological need that needs to be fulfilled, because it can have a positive impact on the development of students' character. Similarly, explains that a sense of belonging can encourage students to participate more actively in learning and reduce negative behavior at school. By creating a positive school environment and fostering a strong sense of belonging, schools can better foster students' social awareness.

In summary, the results of this study confirm that a sense of belonging is an important factor in shaping students' socially caring character. This study provides an understanding that a school climate that supports a sense of belonging can increase students' social awareness, which is crucial for the formation of their character in the future. In addition to emphasizing academics, education must also focus on helping children build their social character so they become compassionate adults.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of school climate on students' social caring character. The results of the study indicate that school climate, especially the sense of belonging dimension, has a significant influence on the development of students' social awareness. Using a quantitative approach and correlational methods, data were collected from 225 students in two high schools in East Java through a questionnaire measuring school climate and social concern. Regression analysis showed that 17% of the variation in students' social concern could be explained by school climate, and sense of belonging was the dominant factor influencing social concern character. The main point of this discussion is that a sense of belonging, created through students' relationships with their

school environment and friends, plays an important role in increasing social awareness. This study makes a significant contribution to the field of character education, particularly in the endeavor to develop students' socially aware attitudes. These findings suggest that school climates that foster a sense of belonging are important because they can help students develop their character. Future research can further examine other factors that influence the development of students' social caring character in various educational contexts.

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