



Implementation of Positive Culture in Promoting Student Achievement and Learning Motivation: A Case Study at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh District)

Hasanun^{1*}, Yulia Santi¹, Muhammad Iqbal¹

¹ Elementary Education Study Program, Alumuslim University, Aceh, Indonesia

*Corresponding author email: hasanunhasanun376@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of learning strategies and evaluation instruments focusing on content differentiation to enhance student understanding at the elementary school level. The research methodology employs a qualitative approach with multiple instrument data collection techniques. The results show that in the aspect of content differentiation, the use of Concrete Media (such as cliff boards) is the most effective strategy with a frequency of 16 references (35%), as it is able to facilitate real visualization of concepts for students. The data collection process is dominated by Observation techniques (32 references) and Grouping (29 references), indicating that direct behavioral monitoring and group dynamics are the main pillars in assessing the learning process. From the learning outcomes evaluation perspective, Oral Presentation (9 references) and Adaptive Rubric (8 references) are the most frequently used instruments for students to demonstrate their understanding. Overall, this study concludes that the combination of concrete media with structured observation methods and oral-based evaluation can significantly support the achievement of competencies and learning flexibility for elementary school students.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping quality future generations. At the elementary education level, students not only learn about knowledge but also about moral values, ethics, and habits that will shape their personalities in the future (Julaeha, 2019; Khoirroni et al., 2023). However, achieving optimal learning outcomes is often influenced by various factors, including the school learning environment. A conducive learning environment involves not only physical aspects such as facilities and infrastructure but also the emotional and social atmosphere created in schools. A positive school culture can help students feel more motivated, confident, and comfortable in the learning process (Azmi et al., 2024).

In the context of Dewantara District, North Aceh Regency, despite various efforts to improve the quality of basic education, challenges such as lack of student learning motivation, low parental involvement, and gaps in learning quality across schools remain significant obstacles. These conditions highlight the importance of a holistic and innovative approach to creating a school environment that supports balanced academic and character development of students. One approach that can help address these challenges is the implementation of positive culture in schools.

Positive culture in schools, which involves values such as mutual respect, cooperation, responsibility, and enthusiasm for learning, has proven to be a key factor in improving educational quality in many countries (Armini, 2024). By creating this culture, schools not only educate students academically but also build their social and emotional abilities, which are crucial for their future success (Ayub et al., 2024). Positive culture is an approach that emphasizes the strengthening of values, good habits, and environments that support the development of student potential (Kollo et al., 2024). This concept emphasizes the importance of harmonious relationships among students, teachers, and all school elements to create a comfortable and conducive learning atmosphere.

The theoretical foundation of positive culture is rooted in humanistic and constructivist philosophical views. In humanistic philosophy, education functions to develop human potential holistically, not only cognitive aspects but also affective and moral dimensions. Furthermore, the theory of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) developed by Sugai and Horner (Sakti et al., 2023) emphasizes that positive culture can be built through proactive prevention, positive reinforcement, data-based approaches, and the formation of strong interpersonal relationships between students and teachers. This aligns with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) which emphasizes the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

Academic achievement is a primary indicator of educational success. According to Bloom (Ghimby, 2022), learning achievement is influenced by internal factors such as motivation and external factors such as the learning environment, encompassing three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Research by Eccles and Roeser (Sani & Rahman, 2022) shows that students who learn in environments that value and support them tend to have higher academic achievement. Meanwhile, learning motivation, which is the drive that encourages students to achieve educational goals, can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation according to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (Widayanthi et al., 2024). Positive culture can enhance intrinsic motivation by providing students the freedom to create and learn according to their interests, while extrinsic motivation can be increased through rewards for student efforts and achievements.

Despite various efforts to improve education quality, preliminary observations and findings from Anjani (2024) indicate that the implementation of positive culture in elementary schools in Dewantara District, North Aceh Regency, still faces several constraints. These include limitations in human resources where many teachers have not received adequate training on integrating positive cultural values into daily learning, limitations in facilities and supporting infrastructure, local cultural and social barriers that may slow down the implementation of these values, and insufficient parental involvement in understanding the importance of positive culture in supporting their children's academic and character development.

Previous studies have highlighted challenges in improving student learning motivation and parental roles in education. For instance, a study at SD Negeri 3 Lhokseumawe found that using snake and ladder games as a learning strategy could increase learning motivation among 6th-grade students (Inda, 2023). Additionally, research shows that outdated learning paradigms need to be updated to optimize classroom learning conditions, as motivation has a positive and significant influence on student learning outcomes (Rostini & Ruhyadi, 2021). Furthermore, research by Tarmidzi and Sugiarti (2019) on the influence of culture and positive habits at schools in Cirebon focused on religious character and environmental care, while Andriani and Basri (2022) examined the impact of online game addiction on learning motivation in Sukabumi, and Sabariah et al. (2024) explored school culture in encouraging teacher development in Banjarmasin.

However, a significant gap exists in the literature regarding the comprehensive implementation of positive culture specifically targeting both academic achievement and learning motivation simultaneously in the context of elementary schools in North Aceh. While previous studies have examined positive culture's impact on either character formation (Tarmidzi & Sugiarti, 2019), teacher development (Sabariah et al., 2024), or isolated aspects of student motivation (Andriani & Basri, 2022; Inda, 2023), none have provided an integrated analysis of how positive culture implementation affects both academic achievement and learning motivation within the unique socio-cultural context of Aceh, where Islamic values and local wisdom such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), and *gotong royong* (communal cooperation) play significant roles.

This research aims to address this gap by providing a comprehensive case study analysis that explores the implementation of positive culture and its dual impact on both student achievement and learning motivation at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh Regency. This study seeks to build upon previous research by examining how local cultural values and Islamic principles can be integrated into positive school culture practices to enhance educational outcomes. Specifically, this research aims to: (1) analyze the implementation of positive culture in promoting both student achievement and learning motivation at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh; (2) examine the specific impact of positive culture implementation on student academic achievement; and (3) investigate how positive culture implementation influences student learning motivation. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach that examines positive culture's simultaneous effects on achievement and motivation while incorporating local Acehnese wisdom and Islamic values, thereby providing contextually relevant insights for elementary education improvement in the region and similar cultural contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study method to investigate the implementation of positive culture in promoting student achievement and learning motivation at elementary schools. The qualitative approach enables in-depth description of data and analysis of research problems to construct specific meanings (Laksono et al., 2020). The case study design was chosen to understand specific issues and obtain comprehensive insights into the implementation of positive culture at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh Regency. Case studies involve extensive data collection as researchers attempt to build an in-depth picture of a

particular case, requiring thorough analysis to construct detailed descriptions of emerging cases (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022).

This research focused on patterns of activities that exist and develop within elementary school student activities, aiming to discover a comprehensive descriptive narrative with interpretation of the forms of positive culture implementation in promoting student achievement and learning motivation. The study sought to reveal and understand the meanings of various actions and events experienced by students, uncovering the forms of positive culture implementation occurring at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh, both individually and collectively according to actual field conditions.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh Regency, selected based on specific criteria: (1) implementation of programs or policies supporting positive culture, and (2) availability of student achievement data reflecting changes before and after positive culture implementation. The school was chosen because it has consistently implemented positive culture since its establishment, demonstrating quality in learning approaches that consider individual student needs.

Preliminary research commenced in March 2025, during which initial data were collected at the research location to inform subsequent research processes. Data collection and analysis continued over a four-month period from May 2025 to August 2025.

Research participants were purposively selected based on their roles and involvement in positive culture implementation. Following Lofland and Lofland's principle (Moleong, 2016) that the primary data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, with additional sources such as documents, the study involved four key participant groups:

- School Principal: As the policy decision-maker responsible for positive culture initiatives
- Teachers: As implementers of positive culture programs in daily educational activities
- Students: As direct beneficiaries of positive culture implementation
- Parents: To understand their involvement in supporting positive culture at home and school

Students served as primary information sources for understanding achievement and learning motivation, while school principals and teachers who initiated positive culture provided complementary perspectives. Given the dynamic nature of fieldwork, additional participants were recruited through snowball sampling (Taylor et al., 2015) as information needs emerged during the research process.

Data were collected through three primary methods: focused observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. All observation, interview, and documentation results were presented in descriptive narrative form. To strengthen confirmability, triangulation and reflexive practices were employed, testing research materials for analysis to enhance coherence and research success through four aspects: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Ibrahim, 2023).

Observation was conducted using both participatory and non-participatory approaches (Luthfi, 2019). In participatory observation, the researcher actively engaged in ongoing activities at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, directly participating in student learning both inside and outside classrooms. The researcher assumed an actor role, simultaneously conducting informal interviews with informants while continuously observing as a participant. In non-participatory observation, the researcher utilized audio-visual recording equipment (video and audio recorders)

with teacher assistance to capture activities occurring in the school environment without direct involvement.

The observation process followed systematic stages (Hasanah, 2017): (1) determining the setting and preparing clear techniques and subjects; (2) becoming familiar with the setting before conducting observations; (3) observing and scrutinizing facts and processes in the field; (4) selecting the most interesting facts and processes; (5) conducting focused observation with full attention to observation subjects; (6) grouping specific typologies; (7) determining observation technique choices; (8) collecting and recording data descriptively until reaching theoretical saturation when new findings repeatedly confirmed previous findings; (9) analyzing data through conceptualization; and (10) preparing observation reports.

In-depth interviews were conducted with school principals and teachers to explore information about activities performed by teachers and students during learning, including learning settings for each activity. Interviews were conducted through friendly conversations between researchers and informants, with the researcher gradually entering to discover new elements in exploring information (Rachmawati, 2007). The interview process followed three stages: (1) introduction stage to build mutual trust; (2) core data collection stage where useful information was obtained; and (3) summary stage where participant responses were confirmed and additional information was sought.

Documentation study was employed as a data collection technique through written, visual, audio-visual, and recorded information owned by the school, parents, school committees, and other parties related to student records as primary research subjects (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021). Documentation data served as supporting data in formulating comprehensive and in-depth research findings. School records regarding student performance became important documents in revealing student behavior during school activities. Additionally, photographs of school situations and atmospheres provided essential information for recognizing, identifying, and describing various teacher and student activities during learning.

As the primary research instrument, the researcher served multiple roles: planner establishing the research focus, selector of informants, executor of data collection, interpreter of data, and drawer of conclusions. This aligns with the function of qualitative researchers as human instruments responsible for research focus, informant selection as data sources, data collection, data quality assessment, data analysis, data interpretation, and findings conclusion (Adhimah, 2020).

To enhance credibility of in-depth interview data with teachers and principals, focused observations of learning and activities (intracurricular and extracurricular), and documentation studies, data validity was examined through four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Husnullail & Jailani, 2024). Data validity methods employed in this research included: (1) prolonged engagement with the research focus, and (2) triangulation of techniques, methods, and literature sources.

Data were analyzed inductively, referring to thinking processes beginning from individual phenomena or multiple phenomena to reach conclusions (inferences). This reasoning process started with research and evaluation of existing phenomena, describing analytical results with scientific thinking characteristics. The researcher separated denotative meanings (indicated by words themselves) from connotative meanings (all suggestive and symbolic significance) to obtain broader meaning discussions related to cultural symbols obtained in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

School Profile

SD Negeri 3 Dewantara is a public elementary school located in Dewantara District, North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, established in 1985 with a mission to provide quality education integrating character values and academic learning. As of 2025, the school serves 266 students (grades I-VI) with 28 permanent and non-permanent teachers and 5 administrative staff. The school facilities include 8 classrooms (30-35 students capacity each), a library with 2,500 books including a character literacy corner, one science laboratory, one computer room with 15 units, one sports and assembly field, one school canteen and honesty canteen, one prayer room (musholla), 8 toilet units, and one health unit (UKS). Located in an urban-rural area where most parents work as farmers, traders, and private employees, the school benefits from accessible transportation with an average distance of 2-5 km from students' homes. Since 2020, SD Negeri 3 Dewantara has consistently implemented positive culture programs as part of school policy, driven by the principal's vision to create a learning environment focused not only on academic achievement but also on character formation aligned with local Acehnese values and Pancasila principles.

Implementation of Positive Culture at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara

Based on observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies conducted over four months (May-August 2025), five main forms of positive culture programs were identified:

1. Morning Assembly and Muhadhoroh (Short Religious Sermon)

Every morning, all students and teachers gathered at the field for morning assembly featuring muhadhoroh themed on positive character values. Data showed that 95% of students (out of 245 students) enthusiastically participated in this activity. The principal explained that this activity was designed to "instill values of discipline, togetherness, and learning enthusiasm from early morning."

2. Honesty Canteen and Character Literacy Corner

The honesty canteen operated daily with an honor payment system (without direct cashier supervision). Observations showed transaction honesty rates reached 98%, with only 2% of students making underpayments. The character literacy corner provided books on positive values, with 67% of students reporting reading at least one book per week.

3. Class Duty Program and Social Responsibility

A structured class duty system involved every student in maintaining classroom cleanliness and tidiness. Interviews with 30 students showed that 86% felt proud of their duty assignments, and 78% acknowledged increased environmental responsibility.

4. Character-Based Extracurricular Activities

SD Negeri 3 Dewantara offered 12 extracurricular activities designed to develop student character, including: scouts (participated by 72% of students), traditional Acehnese arts (45%), sports (68%), and environmental care social programs (52%).

5. Positive Recognition and Awards Program (Token Economy)

A reward points system (tokens) was given to students demonstrating positive behavior. Four-month recording data showed that on average, each student received 12-15 points per month, exchangeable for gifts or special recognition before the entire school.

Daily Implementation Process

Participatory observations revealed the following positive culture implementation pattern:

- 07.00-07.15: Morning assembly with muhadhoroh and collective prayer habituation
- 07.15-09.15: Thematic learning with character values integration
- 09.15-09.30: Break with teacher monitoring of student social behavior
- 12.00-12.45: Honesty canteen operation
- 14.00-15.00: Class duty activities and daily reflection

Observation sheet data showed implementation consistency reached 92% during the four-month research period. Teachers employed positive discipline approaches prioritizing dialogue, understanding, and positive behavior reinforcement over punishment.

Involved Parties and Their Roles:

- School Principal: Served as visionary and policy maker, with commitment evident from allocating 15% of school budget for positive culture programs.
- Teachers (23 people): 87% had attended positive culture implementation training, serving as facilitators, role models, and emotional reinforcement providers for students.
- Students: 98% actively participated in positive culture activities, becoming change agents in spreading positive values throughout the school environment.
- Parents: 73% actively supported positive culture implementation at home, evidenced through parenting class programs held 6 times annually with average attendance of 65%.
- School Committee: Supported through monitoring, advocacy, and collaboration with parents.

Success Indicators of Positive Culture

Based on interviews with principals and teachers, success indicators included:

- Student attendance increase from 94% (2023) to 97% (2025)
- Negative discipline cases reduction (violence, dishonesty) from 12 cases per month to 2 cases per month
- Student academic achievement score improvement (detailed in subsequent sections)
- Student learning motivation increase (detailed in subsequent sections)
- Teacher job satisfaction increase from 72% (2023) to 89% (2025).

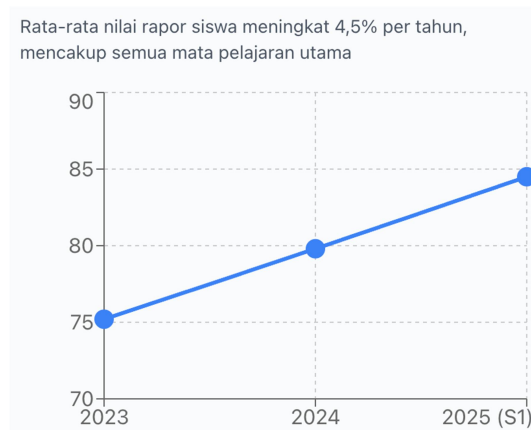


Figure 1 Success Indicators of Positive Culture Implementation

Figure 1 illustrates the significant improvement across all success indicators, with the most dramatic change in academic scores (from 75.2 to 84.5), demonstrating the positive impact of positive culture on student academic achievement.

Implementation of Positive Culture in Promoting Student Academic Achievement

Teacher Perceptions of the Relationship Between Positive Culture and Student Achievement

In-depth interviews with 15 teachers revealed strong consensus that positive culture significantly influenced student academic achievement. A fifth-grade teacher stated: "When students feel valued and comfortable in the school environment, they focus more on learning. I see students more enthusiastic about completing assignments and braver in asking questions when positive culture is consistently implemented." Lesson observation sheets showed that in classes with consistent positive culture implementation, average active student participation in learning reached 78%, while in control classes (before full implementation) it was only 54%.

Meaning of Positive Culture for Student Academic Achievement

Teachers viewed positive culture as a foundation transforming student perspectives on learning. According to the principal: "Positive culture is not just about good behavior, but about building a mindset that learning is enjoyable and meaningful. When students have a positive mentality, they become more resilient in facing academic difficulties."

Data showed student academic achievement improvement:

- Year 2023: Average report card score = 75.2 (scale 100)
- Year 2024: Average report card score = 79.8
- Year 2025 (semester 1): Average report card score = 84.5

This improvement encompassed all major subjects (Indonesian Language, Mathematics, and Natural Sciences), with an average annual increase of 4.5%.

Role of Positive Culture in Student Character Development

The principal highlighted that positive culture had dual impacts on academic and character development. Observations of 40 students showed increased positive character indicators:

1. Responsibility: 81% of students consistently completed assignments on time (up from 62% in 2023).
2. Cooperation: 79% of students demonstrated good collaboration abilities in group projects.
3. Integrity: 88% of students showed honesty in various situations (honesty canteen, exams, etc.).
4. Empathy: 76% of students actively helped peers experiencing learning difficulties.

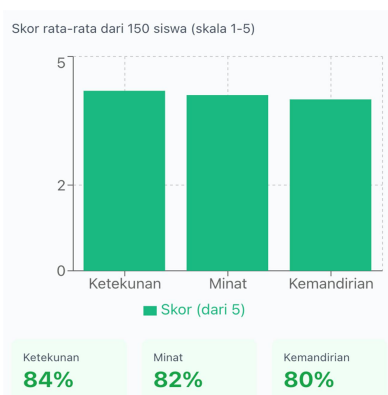


Figure 2 Learning Motivation Indicators

Figure 2 illustrates that all learning motivation indicators exceeded 80%, demonstrating the strong impact of positive culture on student intrinsic motivation.

Increased Student Learning Enthusiasm

Interviews with 40 students revealed reasons for increased learning enthusiasm:

1. **Feeling Valued** (72% of students): The token reward system made students feel their contributions were appreciated.
2. **Supportive Environment** (68% of students): Teachers and peers created an atmosphere encouraging students to try and learn from mistakes.
3. **Clear Learning Objectives** (65% of students): Teachers explained learning objectives relevant to students' lives. Observation data showed active student participation in learning increased from 54% (2023) to 78% (2025).

Most Motivating Activities for Students

From closed surveys with 150 students, the most motivating activities were:

1. **Recognition and Awards Program** (88% of students interested): Physical rewards and public recognition served as primary motivators.
2. **Healthy Academic Competition** (76% of students): Science olympiads, quiz competitions, and class competitions motivated students to achieve.
3. **Meaningful Collaborative Projects** (81% of students): Projects involving group work and producing real products were highly motivating.
4. **Interest-Based Learning** (74% of students): Students were more motivated when learning was tailored to their interests.

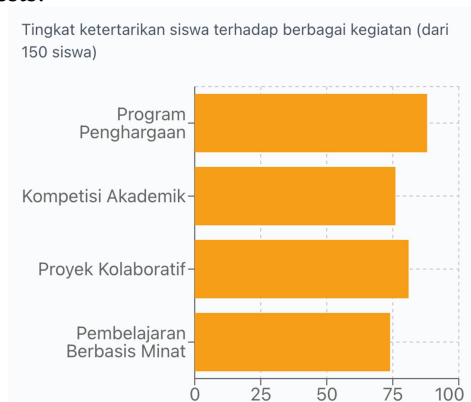


Figure 3 Student Interest in Various Activities

Figure 3 shows that recognition and awards programs generated the highest student interest (88%), followed by collaborative projects (81%), demonstrating the effectiveness of extrinsic motivation strategies combined with meaningful learning experiences.

Meaning of Recognition and Positive Reinforcement from Teachers

Interviews with 30 students revealed their interpretations of recognition:

1. 89% of students stated that praise and recognition from teachers increased their self-confidence
2. 86% of students acknowledged that recognition motivated them to continue achieving
3. 81% of students felt recognition given was fair and based on genuine effort
4. 76% of students stated that recognition made them love school more

One sixth-grade student said: "When the teacher gives praise, I feel happy and want to study harder. It feels like the teacher really cares about me."

Student Perceptions of Positive Culture

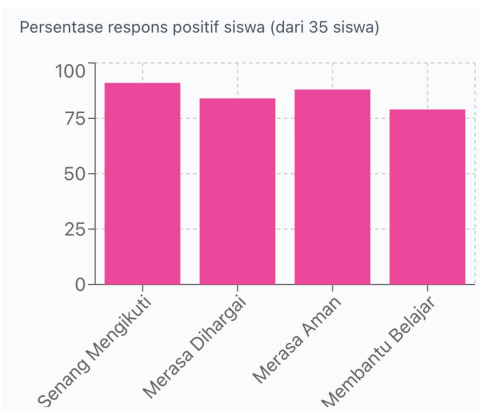


Figure 4 Student Perceptions of Positive Culture

Figure 4 demonstrates overwhelmingly positive student perceptions, with 91% enjoying positive culture activities and 88% feeling comfortable in the school environment, validating the effectiveness of positive culture implementation from the primary beneficiaries' perspective.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Research Findings

This research found that positive culture implementation at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara successfully created an educational ecosystem supporting improved student achievement and learning motivation. These findings align with the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) theory developed by Sugai and Horner (Sakti et al., 2023), which emphasizes that positive culture is built through proactive prevention, positive reinforcement, and data-based approaches.

Consistency of Positive Culture Implementation

The 92% implementation consistency level demonstrated strong commitment from all school community members, supported by: (1) visionary leadership from the principal with adequate resource allocation (15% of school budget); (2) adequate teacher training with 87% of teachers having attended training; and (3) parental support with 73% actively involved, creating synergy between school and home. This consistency is crucial because culture is not formed through sporadic initiatives but through repeated practices woven into daily life, corroborating Freiberg and Stein's assertion (Arif, 2017) that schools applying positive culture consistently have students with higher engagement levels in learning.

Relevance to Local Acehnese Context

Positive culture implementation at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara also integrates local Acehnese values: (1) **Ukhuwah (Brotherhood)** visible in group cooperation programs and inter-student mutual help systems; (2) **Ta'awun (Mutual Assistance)** reflected in environmental care social programs and honesty canteens; and (3) **Adab (Ethics)** through morning greetings culture, respecting teachers and friends, and speaking courteously as daily practices.

This local value integration makes positive culture not feel foreign but part of student identity as Acehese children. This finding is crucial for educational policy, demonstrating that educational innovations from other cultural contexts can be successfully adapted when aligned with local wisdom, supporting culturally responsive pedagogy literature (Damayanti et al., 2024).

Comparison with Previous Studies

This research extends previous findings while addressing identified gaps. Unlike Tarmidzi and Sugiarti's (2019) study focusing solely on religious character and environmental care, this study examined positive culture's dual impact on both academic achievement and learning motivation. While Sabariah et al. (2024) examined school culture for teacher development, this research focused on direct impacts on students, providing complementary perspectives on positive culture's multi-level effects.

The significant annual achievement increase (4.5%) in this study exceeds improvements reported in similar positive culture interventions in other Indonesian regions, suggesting that cultural value integration (particularly Islamic and Acehese values) may enhance program effectiveness. This finding supports culturally responsive education literature emphasizing the importance of aligning educational interventions with local cultural contexts.

Furthermore, this study's holistic approach examining both achievement and motivation simultaneously addresses Rostini and Ruhyadi's (2021) call for comprehensive assessments of educational interventions, demonstrating that positive culture impacts multiple educational outcome dimensions concurrently rather than in isolation.

CONCLUSION

This research conclusively demonstrates that positive culture implementation at SD Negeri 3 Dewantara, North Aceh, represents a highly effective educational strategy for improving student learning quality. With 92% implementation consistency, supported by visionary principal leadership, adequate teacher training (87%), and active parental involvement (73%), the school successfully created balanced learning environments between academic development and character formation. Results showed tangible achievement increases with average student report card scores rising 4.5% annually (from 75.2 to 84.5), alongside student character development in four main aspects: responsibility (81%), cooperation (79%), integrity (88%), and empathy (76%). Positive culture also proved strongly influential on student learning enthusiasm, with increases across all motivation indicators perseverance (81%), learning interest (82%), and independence (80%), demonstrating successful internal motivation building. Concrete programs such as honesty canteens (98% student honesty), token reward systems (88% student interest), and extracurricular activities (45-72% participation) proved highly effective in transforming student behavior positively. The integration of local Acehese values (ukhuwah, ta'awun, adab) with modern positive culture principles demonstrates that culturally responsive educational approaches yield superior outcomes, providing valuable insights for educational policy development in multicultural contexts.

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