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Implementation of the 3S Culture (Smile, Greetings, Greetings) in Junior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Background: School culture plays a crucial role in strengthening students' character, particularly through the implementation of the 3S culture (Smile, Greetings, and Address), which emphasises politeness and positive communication. **Objective:** This study aims to analyse the implementation of the 3S culture, the roles of school members, supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on students' character and the overall school climate. **Method:** The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using observation and interviews to obtain in-depth and contextual data. **Results:** The findings reveal that the 3S culture has been implemented through daily habituation and consistent teacher role-modelling, which have contributed to improvements in students' discipline, respect, and harmonious interpersonal relationships within the school environment. However, the implementation has not been fully optimal due to inconsistent student participation and insufficient continuous supervision. **Conclusion:** The 3S culture demonstrates a positive influence in shaping students' character and fostering a conducive learning environment. **Originality/Value:** This study offers empirical novelty in the field of school culture management and student character education by revealing the operational dynamics of daily habituation, teacher role-modeling, and the systemic challenges of inconsistent supervisory monitoring concerning the cultivation of politeness, discipline, and harmonious relational school climates within the context of the 3S culture (Smile, Greetings, and Address) at the junior secondary school level, an area that has remained insufficiently documented. These findings enrich empirical evidence and serve as a strategic reference for establishing habituation-based character development frameworks and refining institutional school-climate supervision policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education is a fundamental pillar of the educational system that aims to develop students' personalities holistically, encompassing not only intellectual but also moral, ethical, and social dimensions (Lickona, 2012). In the modern educational paradigm, the success of education is no longer measured solely by academic achievement but also by students' ability to internalise and actualise values of goodness in their daily behaviour (Nopita & Saputra, 2025). Therefore, character education needs to be implemented systematically through learning activities, habit formation, and role modelling within the school environment (Ranam et al., 2021). Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a strategic role in creating an ecosystem that reinforces positive values, enabling students not only to understand character concepts cognitively but also to apply them in real life consistently (Syahra et al., 2025).

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Strengthening character education in schools can be achieved through various systematic and sustainable approaches (Hartati et al., 2025). One approach considered effective is fostering a positive school culture (Sulaeman et al., 2024). School culture is not merely understood as symbols or routines, but as a system of values that lives and evolves through the daily interactions of school members (Ulya & Marzuki, 2024). These values shape collective behaviour patterns that influence how students think, behave, and act. Schools with a positive culture tend to create a conducive, safe, and comfortable learning environment, allowing students to develop not only academically but also socially and emotionally (Putri, 2025).

One form of school culture that is simple yet has a broad impact on character development is the 3S culture, namely Smile, Greetings, and Address (Indrianingrum et al., 2024). This culture emphasises the importance of social interaction grounded in friendliness, politeness, and respect for others. Through the habituation of 3S behaviours, students are trained to develop essential social skills, such as positive communication, empathy, and the ability to build harmonious interpersonal relationships (Nurhaliza, 2024). Simple practices such as smiling, greeting, and addressing others carry deep meaning in fostering a healthy social climate within the school environment, as they promote mutual respect and strengthen social bonds among school members (Fadillah, 2026).

However, in practice, implementing the 3S culture does not always run optimally or consistently across all school environments (Harmuli et al., 2025). Various challenges often arise, both internal and external. From the students' perspective, there is still a lack of awareness and consistency in applying these habits in daily life (Ernawati et al., 2025). From an institutional perspective, limitations in supervision, insufficient continuous reinforcement, and inconsistent role modelling by some school members also affect the effectiveness of implementation (Asti, 2026). In addition, differences in students' social, cultural, and individual backgrounds influence the level of acceptance and internalisation of 3S values.

The success of implementing the 3S culture depends heavily on the active involvement of all school members in practising and maintaining these values. The principal plays an important role as a leader who determines policies and directs the development of school culture (Jannah et al., 2025). Teachers serve as primary role models who directly demonstrate appropriate behaviour in every interaction within the school environment (Judrah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, students are the main actors who practice and sustain this culture in their daily lives (Kartika & Arifudin, 2021). In addition, educational staff contribute to creating a consistent and supportive environment that fosters a positive culture. Strong synergy among all these elements is a key factor in ensuring the sustainable implementation of the 3S culture.

Several previous studies have shown that school culture significantly influences students' character development and the quality of the learning climate (Istiqomah et al., 2022; Anuli & Djafri, 2025; Saputra et al., 2021). A positive school culture has been proven to enhance discipline, responsibility, and the quality of social interactions among school members (Warni, 2025; Nasution et al., 2025). However, studies that specifically examine the comprehensive implementation of the 3S culture remain relatively limited, particularly those that explore in depth the implementation process, the roles of school members, supporting and inhibiting factors, and their impact on character formation and the school climate. This limitation underscores the need for more in-depth, context-specific empirical research.

This study has a strong urgency to address the gap in empirical research on the implementation of habituation-based school culture. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the 3S culture at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat, covering key aspects such as the implementation process, the involvement of all school members, the identification of supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on students' character and the overall school climate. Therefore, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the 3S culture and to contribute, both theoretically to the development of character education studies and practically to schools, to building a sustainable, positive culture.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the 3S culture (Smile, Greetings, and Address) within its natural context in the school environment. The descriptive design enables the researcher to systematically describe the implementation process of the 3S culture, interactions among school members, and the dynamics that occur during its implementation without manipulating the studied conditions. Thus, this study seeks to generate a comprehensive understanding of the realities occurring in the field.

2.2 Research Subjects

The subjects of this study include all school members involved in implementing the 3S culture at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement and knowledge of the implementation of the 3S culture. These informants include the school principal, teachers, students, and educational staff. The principal was selected due to their role in policy-making; teachers as implementers and role models in applying the culture; students as the primary actors who practice the culture; and educational staff as contributors to creating a supportive school environment. This selection aims to obtain diverse, in-depth data from multiple perspectives.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through several techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine the behaviour and interactions of school members as they implemented the 3S culture within the school environment, both inside and outside the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the implementation of the 3S culture. Documentation was used to complement the data, including school records, activity programs, photographs, and other relevant documents related to the implementation of the 3S culture. The use of multiple techniques aims to enhance data validity through source and method triangulation.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study employs an interactive model comprising three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects, focuses on, and simplifies the raw data obtained from the field. The next stage is data display, which involves organising the data into a systematic descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding and analysis. The final stage is conclusion drawing, which involves interpreting the data and identifying patterns, relationships, and research findings. The analysis process is conducted iteratively and continuously until valid and reliable conclusions are achieved.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Based on observations and interviews, the implementation of the 3S culture has become part of daily habituation at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat. Students are accustomed to greeting teachers upon entering the school environment, addressing their peers, and demonstrating friendliness through smiling. Teachers and the principal also serve as role models by consistently applying the 3S culture in their interactions.

However, the intensity and consistency of 3S implementation still vary. Some students practice it spontaneously, while others do so only when supervision is present. This indicates that the internalisation of values has not yet been evenly achieved among all students.

Table 1. Results of the Implementation of the 3S Culture at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat

No	Aspect Examined	Key Findings	Field Indicators
1	Implementation of 3S Culture	The 3S culture has been applied as daily habituation	Students greet upon arrival, address teachers and peers, and show friendliness
2	Role of Teachers	Teachers act as primary role models	Teachers actively greet students and demonstrate friendly behavior
3	Role of the Principal	The principal supports through policies	Existence of guidance and programs promoting the 3S culture
4	Role of Students	Students as main actors	Some students are consistent, others are situational
5	Supporting Factors	School environment and policies	Socialization, supervision by duty teachers, and a conducive school culture
6	Inhibiting Factors	Consistency and understanding	Students lack consistency, supervision is not yet optimal
7	Impact on Character	Improvement in social attitudes	Students become more polite and respectful toward teachers and peers
8	Impact on School Climate	More conducive environment	School atmosphere becomes more friendly, comfortable, and harmonious

The findings indicate that the implementation of the 3S culture at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat has been integrated into the daily activities of school members. Behaviors such as smiling, greeting, and addressing others appropriately are visibly practiced, particularly when students enter the school environment and interact with teachers and peers. This finding suggests that the 3S culture has reached the habituation stage, although deeper internalization has not yet been achieved consistently among all students.

Teachers' role as role models is a decisive factor in the successful implementation of the 3S culture. Teachers who consistently demonstrate 3S behaviors in their daily interactions can positively influence students' attitudes and behaviors. Such role modeling not only reinforces students' understanding of the values underlying the 3S culture but also encourages the development of more natural and sustainable habits. In addition, the principal contributes by establishing policies and reinforcing programs that support the continuity of the 3S culture within the school environment. However, the findings also reveal differences in students' consistency in practicing the 3S culture. Some students demonstrate these behaviors spontaneously, whereas others remain dependent on particular situations, such as the presence of teacher supervision. This condition indicates that the process of value internalization remains uneven and requires continuous reinforcement.

The main supporting factors in implementing the 3S culture include strong institutional commitment, program socialization, and a conducive school environment. Supervision by duty teachers also helps maintain the continuity of these practices, particularly during key periods such as student arrival. Conversely, the main inhibiting factors include inconsistent implementation, suboptimal supervision, and differences in students' understanding of the importance of the 3S culture. In terms of its impact, the implementation of the 3S culture contributes positively to students' character development, particularly in politeness, respect, and social interaction skills. Furthermore, the culture contributes to the creation of a more conducive school climate, as reflected in greater comfort, harmony, and improved relationships among members of the school community.

The findings indicate that the 3S culture has strong potential as a habituation-based strategy for character development because its values are practiced through students' daily interactions rather than delivered solely through formal instruction. The repeated practice of smiling, greeting, and addressing others appropriately provides students with concrete opportunities to develop politeness, respect, friendliness, empathy, and positive social interaction skills. The involvement of teachers and the principal as role models further strengthens this process, as students are exposed to consistent examples of the behaviors expected within the school community. In this sense, the effectiveness of the 3S culture depends not only on students' willingness to practice the behaviors but also on the extent to which the entire school environment consistently reinforces them. A supportive school climate can transform individual practices into shared social norms, allowing the 3S culture to contribute not only to individual character development but also to more harmonious relationships and a more conducive learning environment.

However, the variation in students' consistency demonstrates that behavioral habituation does not automatically result in the internalization of character values. Students who practice the 3S behaviors only when supervision is present may indicate that the behaviors remain externally regulated rather than becoming part of their personal dispositions. Therefore, achieving optimal and sustainable outcomes requires continuous reinforcement through consistent implementation, positive role modeling, effective supervision, meaningful socialization, and regular program evaluation. Schools also need to ensure that the 3S culture is applied consistently across different situations and by all members of the school community, rather than being limited to particular times or formal activities. Such consistency is essential for gradually shifting the 3S culture from an externally monitored routine into an internally motivated pattern of behavior. Ultimately, the sustainability of the 3S culture depends on the integration of habituation, exemplary behavior, supervision, and reflection, enabling students to internalize its underlying values and demonstrate them naturally and consistently in their interactions both within and beyond the school environment.

3.2 Discussion

The implementation of the 3S culture (Smile, Greetings, and Address) at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat demonstrates that student character development can be effectively fostered through simple, habituation-based strategies integrated into daily school life. This approach positions social interaction as the primary medium for value internalisation, enabling students not only to understand concepts but also to practice them directly. From a character education perspective, this strategy aligns with Thomas Lickona's view that character is formed through the processes of knowing, feeling, and acting, which occur repeatedly and consistently within a social environment (Lickona, 2013).

Based on observations and interviews, the implementation of the 3S culture has become part of daily habituation at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat. Students are accustomed to greeting teachers upon entering the school environment,

addressing their peers, and demonstrating friendliness through smiling. Teachers and the principal also model 3S by consistently practising it in their interactions. However, the intensity and consistency of implementation still vary. Some students exhibit these behaviours spontaneously, while others do so only under supervision, indicating that value internalisation has not yet been fully achieved among all students.

3.2.1 Implementation of the 3S Culture as Character Habituation

The implementation of the 3S culture at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat is carried out through habituation embedded in daily school activities, such as student arrival, classroom interactions, and activities outside formal learning. Students are gradually accustomed to greeting teachers and peers, offering salutations, and demonstrating friendliness through smiling. This process indicates that character formation is not instantaneous but occurs through repeated behaviours that eventually become ingrained habits. In educational psychology, this habituation reflects an effective form of conditioning that shapes positive social behaviour.

Furthermore, the habituation of the 3S culture reflects a contextual learning approach, in which character values are taught through real experiences rather than mere theoretical explanations. When students actively engage in 3S practices, they learn the social meaning behind each action, such as respecting others and building positive communication. This strengthens the internalisation process, ensuring that behaviours are not merely mechanical but are understood and meaningful. Previous studies support this finding, showing that consistent habituation of simple behaviours can enhance students' social skills, empathy, and self-awareness (Rubab et al., 2024; Dubey, 2024).

3.2.2 The Role of School Members in Strengthening the 3S Culture

The success of implementing the 3S culture depends heavily on the active involvement of all school members as part of a unified social system. The principal plays a key role in formulating policies, setting program direction, and ensuring that the 3S culture becomes part of the school's vision. This highlights the importance of leadership in building a strong organizational culture. Without structural support from leadership, habituation programs tend to be inconsistent and less effective.

Teachers occupy a strategic position as primary agents in the internalisation process because they interact daily with students. Teachers who consistently demonstrate smiling, greeting, and addressing behaviours provide concrete models for students to emulate. This aligns with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasises that individuals learn through observation and imitation of significant others (Rumjaun & Narod, 2025). When teachers consistently display positive behaviour, students are more likely to adopt it as part of their social learning process.

In addition, educational staff reinforce the 3S culture through daily interactions with students. Consistency among all school members in applying shared values creates a stable social environment that supports character formation. Previous research indicates that a strong school culture emerges when all organisational elements share commitment and collectively implement values (Teasley, 2017; Carpenter, 2015).

3.2.3 Supporting Factors in the Implementation of the 3S Culture

The findings reveal several factors that support the successful implementation of the 3S culture at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat. One key factor is school leadership's commitment to establishing the 3S culture as part of a structured habituation program. This commitment is reflected in school policies, teacher guidance, and the integration of 3S into routine activities. Such structural support serves as a critical foundation for program sustainability.

Another important factor is systematic socialisation provided to students from the outset. This helps students understand the purpose, benefits, and importance of the 3S culture in daily life. A conducive school environment also reinforces implementation by creating positive social pressure that encourages students to follow established norms (Sher & Inamullah, 2025).

Teacher supervision, particularly through duty systems, helps maintain consistency, especially during key moments such as student arrival. At the initial stage, supervision acts as external control to shape behaviour, which is expected to transform into internal awareness gradually. This aligns with character education theory, emphasising the integration of regulation, habituation, and supportive environments in achieving lasting behavioural change.

3.2.4 Challenges in Implementing the 3S Culture

Despite its implementation, several challenges affect the effectiveness of the 3S culture. A primary issue is the inconsistency among students in practising 3S behaviours. Some students display these behaviours only in specific

situations, such as when supervised by teachers, suggesting that value internalisation remains at the level of external compliance.

Another significant challenge is the inconsistency in teacher role modelling. In character education, role modelling is a critical factor in successful value internalisation (Munif, 2025). When teachers demonstrate inconsistent behaviour, students may become confused about the values they are expected to adopt (Mintrop, 2012), thereby reducing the effectiveness of habituation programs.

Additionally, the lack of continuous reinforcement presents a challenge in maintaining consistency. Without regular evaluation and reinforcement, the 3S culture risks becoming a mere formality rather than a meaningful practice. Differences in students' backgrounds also influence their acceptance and internalisation of 3S values, highlighting the need for adaptive and sustainable strategies.

3.2.5 Impact of the 3S Culture on School Climate

The implementation of the 3S culture has a significant impact on students' character development, particularly in terms of politeness, respect, and social interaction skills. Students become more accustomed to behaving kindly and respectfully in various situations, demonstrating that simple habituation can meaningfully contribute to social character development.

From the perspective of school climate, the 3S culture fosters a more positive and conducive environment. Relationships between teachers and students become closer and more harmonious, enhancing feelings of safety and comfort within the school (Calp, 2020). This condition positively influences students' learning motivation, as they feel valued and accepted within their social environment.

These findings are consistent with school climate theory, which suggests that a positive social environment contributes to learning success (Wang & Degol, 2016). Healthy and respectful interactions can reduce conflict and increase student engagement, indicating that the 3S culture influences not only character development but also the overall quality of the learning process.

3.2.6 Strengthening and Sustaining the 3S Culture

To ensure the sustainability of the 3S culture, systematic and continuous reinforcement is essential. One important step is integrating the 3S culture into all school activities, both academic and non-academic. This integration ensures that the culture is embedded within the school system rather than remaining a separate initiative.

Enhancing role modelling from teachers and educational staff is also crucial for maintaining consistency (Yurkofsky, 2022). Regular evaluation should be conducted to identify challenges and formulate more effective improvement strategies. This evaluation can involve observation, reflection, and feedback from school members.

Providing rewards to students who consistently practice the 3S culture can be an effective reinforcement strategy. According to reinforcement theory, rewarded behaviours are more likely to be repeated and become habitual (Vlaev & Dolan, 2015). Therefore, appropriate reinforcement can help ensure that the 3S culture becomes an integral part of the character of all school members, rather than merely a formal routine.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study indicate that implementing the 3S culture (Smile, Greetings, and Address) can be an effective strategy for strengthening character education through habituation in the school environment. These findings affirm that character formation does not always require complex programs but can begin with simple practices carried out consistently and integrated into daily activities. In practice, schools need to optimise leadership roles, strengthen teacher role modelling, and create a supportive environment to ensure that 3S values are effectively internalised. In addition, schools should reinforce implementation through regular evaluation, positive reinforcement, and integration of the 3S culture into school policies and curricula. In this way, the 3S culture moves beyond a ceremonial activity and evolves into a value system that continuously shapes students' behaviour and character.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of character education, particularly those based on school culture. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on school culture implementation by offering a comprehensive analysis of the 3S culture, including its implementation process, the roles of school members, supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on student character and school climate. Practically, this

study can serve as a reference for schools in designing and developing simple yet impactful positive culture programs. Moreover, it offers contextual contributions by presenting empirical evidence from a junior high school setting, which can inform future research on habituation-based character-building strategies relevant to real-world educational contexts.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study employs a descriptive qualitative approach focused on a single site, SMP Negeri Nuba Arat, making the findings contextual and not broadly generalizable to schools with different characteristics. Second, data collection relying on observation, interviews, and documentation is influenced by informant subjectivity and researcher interpretation, which may introduce potential bias despite the use of triangulation. Third, the study does not quantitatively measure character development, so the impact of the 3S culture is primarily described based on observed phenomena and perceptions. Fourth, time constraints limited the ability to conduct longitudinal observations, meaning that long-term behavioural changes could not be fully captured.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Based on these limitations, future studies are recommended to adopt more comprehensive and diverse research designs. Future research may apply a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to more objectively measure the impact of the 3S culture on student character development. Studies can also be conducted across different educational levels and school types to obtain broader insights and enable generalization of findings. Longitudinal studies are highly recommended to examine the consistency and sustainability of 3S value internalization over time. Additionally, future research may explore innovative strategies for strengthening school culture, such as integrating with the curriculum, using technology, or involving parents, to develop more effective, adaptive, and sustainable models of 3S culture implementation.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the 3S culture (Smile, Greetings, and Address) at SMP Negeri Nuba Arat demonstrates that student character development can be effectively achieved through the habituation of simple behaviours integrated into daily school activities. This culture is practised through routine interactions among students, teachers, and other school members, creating a natural, continuous process of value internalisation. The findings indicate that the 3S culture contributes to the development of politeness, respect, and students' social interaction skills.

The success of the 3S culture implementation is strongly influenced by the involvement of all school members, particularly the principal as a policymaker and teachers as primary role models in daily behaviour. Supporting factors such as school commitment, a conducive environment, and supervision further strengthen its implementation. However, several challenges remain, including inconsistent behaviour among some students and a lack of optimal role modelling and continuous reinforcement, leading to uneven value internalisation.

Overall, the 3S culture provides a positive contribution to character development and the creation of a conducive, harmonious, and humanistic school climate. To achieve more optimal and sustainable outcomes, reinforcement is needed through comprehensive program integration, enhanced role modelling, and consistent evaluation. With these efforts, the 3S culture has the potential to become a strong school culture with long-term impacts on students' character development.

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Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Oris Yohanes: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Methodology. Nurfadilah: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis. Theresia Astita Bura: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing. Oris Kornelis: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing. Amelya Citra: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The author declares that artificial intelligence (Quillbot) was used solely as a supporting tool for language editing, sentence structuring, and improving clarity. All scientific content, including the research idea, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions, is entirely the result of the author's own work. The author takes full responsibility for the content and accuracy of the information presented in this article. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJCES GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research, whether financial or non-financial, that could influence the results or interpretation of the study.

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