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From understanding to habituation: Teachers' three pedagogical roles in fostering students' social care through the Friday Charity program

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ABSTRACT

Developing students' social concern remains challenging, particularly in transforming their understanding of values into concrete behaviors and sustained habits. This challenge requires teachers to perform systematic pedagogical roles through instruction, guidance, and habituation. This study aims to analyze teachers' roles in fostering students' social concern through the *Jumat Beramal* (Friday Charity) Program. Specifically, it examines teachers' roles as instructors, mentors, and trainers in developing value-based understanding, facilitating social practices, and cultivating the habits of sharing, empathy, and responsibility. The study employed a qualitative case study design at Ulul Albab Elementary School in Jember, Indonesia. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving the school principal, classroom teachers, and purposively selected students. The data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis, while data credibility was ensured through source and methodological triangulation. The findings reveal that teachers perform three interconnected pedagogical roles: as instructors who develop students' understanding of social concern, as mentors who facilitate the application of values through social practices, and as trainers who cultivate habits of sharing through active, repeated participation. The study concludes that integrating these three roles creates a pedagogical cycle that transforms social concern from a value-based understanding into internalized prosocial behavior. This study contributes conceptually by demonstrating that character education requires integrated instruction, guidance, and habituation through sustained social experiences. Practically, the findings inform elementary schools in designing character education programs that connect classroom learning with authentic social practices.

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INTRODUCTION

A major challenge in character education is the insufficient optimization of teachers' roles in consistently instilling social and moral values within schools. Although teachers occupy a strategic position in shaping students' character, the implementation of character education remains less than effective (Rao et al., 2024; Sarifah et al., 2025; Sulkipani et al., 2025). This condition is partly attributable to the predominance of cognitively oriented instruction, while the habituation of social values and the development of students' affective dimensions have not been implemented consistently and sustainably (Algurén, 2025; Karim & Iklila, 2021; Owan et al., 2022). Moreover, family and community involvement in supporting character education remains limited, despite the family being the first educational environment and playing a crucial role in shaping children's social and moral attitudes (Bibani et al., 2025; Clara et al., 2022; Elsayed, 2024). Therefore, sustained collaboration among teachers, parents, and community members is required to ensure that the values of social concern are not merely understood conceptually but are also internalized and manifested in students' everyday behavior.

Previous studies have examined the roles of teachers in fostering social concern among children from several perspectives. First, teachers serve as demonstrators, evaluators, role models, and facilitators of empathy in the development of students' social concern (Ampofo et al., 2025; Fikri & Rukiyati, 2023; Kwartie et al., 2024). Second, experiential learning and sustained habituation have been shown to be effective in cultivating social and environmental concern through continuous engagement in practical activities (Michalik-Śnieżek et al., 2025; Sianturi & Naibaho, 2023; Sorrenti et al., 2025). Third, social concern develops through collaboration among families, schools, and communities, which collectively shape students' social interactions and behavior (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020; Sakti et al., 2024; Utami, 2024). Building on these studies, the present research focuses on teachers' roles as instructors, mentors, and trainers in fostering social concern, empathy, emotional regulation, and positive social action. However, previous studies have not adequately explained the pedagogical mechanisms through which teachers cultivate social concern through school-based social programs. This study addresses this gap by revealing how teachers serve interconnected roles as instructors, mentors, and trainers in the *Jumat Beramal* (Friday Charity) Program, a form of experiential character education.

This study aims to analyze teachers' roles in fostering students' social concern through the *Jumat Beramal* (Friday Charity) Program. It specifically examines teachers' roles as instructors, mentors, and trainers in developing students' understanding of social values, facilitating their engagement in social practices, and cultivating habits of sharing, empathy, and responsibility. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do teachers perform their role as instructors in developing students' understanding of social concern through the *Jumat Beramal* Program? (2) How do teachers act as mentors in guiding students to apply the values of social concern in social activities? and (3) How do teachers serve as trainers in habituating socially caring behavior through sustained practice? Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on character education by demonstrating that social concern develops through a pedagogical process integrating value-based understanding, guidance, and experiential habituation. In practical terms, the findings have implications for schools and teachers seeking to develop social activity-based character education programs that foster empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility among students.

This study argues that elementary school teachers perform multidimensional roles as instructors, mentors, and trainers in transforming the *Jumat Beramal* Program from a routine donation activity into a medium of character education that fosters students' social concern. This argument is grounded in the premise that social concern cannot be developed solely through the transmission of values but requires the integration of understanding, experience, and sustained social practice. The study substantiates this argument through a qualitative approach and thematic analysis of interview and observational data, which generated three

major themes: teachers as instructors who develop students' understanding of social concern; teachers as mentors who facilitate and guide students' social interactions; and teachers as trainers who cultivate habits of sharing and social responsibility. These findings demonstrate that a school-based Friday charity program can function as an experiential pedagogical strategy for developing students' character.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach to develop an in-depth understanding of teachers' roles in fostering students' social concern through the *Jumat Beramal* (Friday Charity) Program at Ulul Albab Elementary School in Jember, Indonesia (Ahmed, 2025; Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). A qualitative approach was selected because it enabled the researchers to explore the experiences, pedagogical practices, social interactions, and meaning-making processes constructed by teachers and students within the natural context of program implementation. Through this approach, teachers' roles were understood not merely as instructional activities but as part of a character-development process involving knowledge acquisition, social experience, behavioral habituation, and religious values.

A case study design was adopted because the research focused on a specific phenomenon, namely the implementation of the *Jumat Beramal* Program as a character education strategy at Ulul Albab Elementary School. The case study design facilitated an in-depth examination of educational practices within a real-life context, particularly how teachers performed their roles as instructors, guides, and trainers in fostering students' social concern (Martinsuo & Huemann, 2021; Wohlin & Rainer, 2022).

The study was conducted at Ulul Albab Elementary School in Jember, with a particular focus on the implementation of the *Jumat Beramal* Program. Participants were purposively selected for their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. The participants consisted of the school principal, classroom teachers, and students who participated in the Friday charity activities. Their inclusion was intended to provide comprehensive perspectives on the strategies teachers employ to cultivate social concern through instruction, guidance, and social practice.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to identify teachers' pedagogical practices in providing instruction, accompanying students, and developing their active participation during the implementation of the *Jumat Beramal* Program. In-depth interviews were used to explore teachers' experiences, understandings, and strategies for fostering students' social concern, including how they explained the meaning of sharing, developed empathy, and habituated prosocial behavior. Documentation served as a supplementary data source and included photographs of program activities, school documents, program schedules, and archives related to the implementation of the *Jumat Beramal* Program.

The data were analyzed thematically through several stages: data familiarisation, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report production (Haan & Venema, 2025; Zairul, 2025). The analysis was conducted inductively to identify patterns of meaning emerging from the field data concerning teachers' roles in fostering students' social concern. The analytical process generated three major themes: (1) teachers as instructors who developed students' understanding of social concern, (2) teachers as guides who facilitated the practice of social concern, and (3) teachers as trainers who cultivated habits of sharing and social responsibility among students.

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and methodological triangulation. Information obtained from the school principal, teachers, and students was compared, while findings from observations, interviews, and documentation were integrated and cross-checked (McGrath, 2025). These triangulation strategies were employed to enhance the credibility,

consistency, and dependability of the findings through systematic cross-verification across data sources and data-collection methods (Schlunegger et al., 2024).

The study also adhered to established principles of research ethics by ensuring that all data-collection procedures were conducted responsibly. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and that the data would be used solely for academic purposes. The confidentiality of participants' information was maintained to protect their identities and preserve the integrity of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Teachers as instructors in fostering students' social concern

The thematic analysis revealed that teachers performed an instructional role in fostering students' social concern through the *Jumat Beramal* (Friday Charity) Program at Ulul Albab Elementary School. This role was developed through a learning process that not only explained the procedures for implementing the program but also deepened students' understanding of social concern, the purpose of sharing, and the underlying religious values. The *Jumat Beramal* Program was therefore positioned as a medium for character education, integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions into students' learning experiences.

This finding was reinforced by an interview with one of the teachers, who explained that, prior to participating in the program, students were consistently provided with guidance concerning appropriate attitudes and ethical conduct when interacting with members of the community:

> "...before leaving for the intended destination, the students are first given an understanding of how to behave appropriately in other people's homes, how to speak politely to older people, and how to remain orderly throughout the journey...." (Participant 1)

The analysis of the interview and observational data generated three subthemes constituting the broader theme of Teachers as Instructors in Fostering Students' Social Concern, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Instructional Roles in Friday Charity Program

Theme	Subtheme	Supporting Evidence	Thematic Interpretation
Teacher as Instructor in Fostering Social Care	Teaching the Meaning of Social Care	Teachers explain that Friday Charity is an expression of empathy, solidarity, and concern for others rather than merely donating money.	Teachers build students' conceptual understanding of social care as a moral responsibility.
	Relating Charity to Everyday Social Life	Teachers connect Friday Charity with students' daily experiences, emphasizing sharing, respecting others, and social responsibility.	Teachers help students contextualize social care through authentic social situations.
	Integrating Religious Values into Social Learning	Teachers explain Islamic teachings on charity (*sedekah*), sincerity, and helping others as the spiritual foundation of social care.	Teachers integrate religious understanding with social values to strengthen students' moral commitment.

Source: Author's analysis (2026).

The three subthemes indicate that the development of social concern was structured as a gradual learning process. Teachers initially established students' conceptual understanding of social concern, subsequently connected this understanding to their everyday social experiences, and finally reinforced it through the internalization of religious values. This pattern demonstrates that teaching social concern extended beyond the transmission of knowledge.

Rather, it was directed towards shaping students' ways of thinking, their interpretations of social experiences, and the moral foundations underlying their behavior.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers served a pedagogical function by transforming social concern into meaningful learning experiences. The *Jumat Beramal* (Friday Charity) Program was positioned not merely as a charitable activity but as a contextual learning strategy that enabled students to understand the relationship between religious teachings, social responsibility, and the practice of sharing in real-life contexts. Through this process, social concern was not only understood as a concept but was also developed into an internalized value that became an integral part of students' character.

Teachers as mentors in social care activities through the Friday charity program

The thematic analysis revealed that teachers served as mentors, supporting students throughout the implementation of the Friday Charity Program. This role was demonstrated through continuous guidance to help students apply the values of social care in real-life situations. Teachers not only provided instructions on implementing the program but also guided students in developing empathy, respecting others, collaborating with peers, and demonstrating responsibility when interacting with the community. Thus, the mentoring process enabled students to connect the knowledge acquired in the classroom with social practices in their everyday lives.

This finding was supported by observational data showing that teachers actively assisted students from the preparation stage through the implementation of the Friday Charity activities. During the program, teachers encouraged students to maintain appropriate ethical conduct when interacting with community members, collaborate with their peers, and demonstrate courtesy and compassion toward aid recipients. Such guidance provided students with authentic learning experiences through direct engagement with their social environment.

An interview with one of the teachers further indicated that guidance was provided consistently to ensure that students could translate the values of social care into their everyday behavior:

> "...We consistently accompany the students throughout the activities, reminding them to behave politely, respect others, and assist their peers during the Friday Charity Program...." (Participant 1)

The analysis of the observational and interview data generated three subthemes that constituted the overarching theme of Teachers as Mentors in Fostering Social Care through the Friday Charity Program, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Guiding Roles in the Friday Charity Program

Theme	Subtheme	Supporting Evidence	Thematic Interpretation
Teacher as Guide in Fostering Social Care	Guiding Respectful Social Interaction	Teachers guide students to communicate politely, respect others, and demonstrate appropriate behavior during community visits.	Teachers facilitate students in applying social etiquette and respectful interactions during authentic community engagement.
	Facilitating Empathy and Social Responsibility	Teachers continuously encourage students to care for others, cooperate, and take responsibility throughout the activity.	Teachers help students translate social care into concrete actions through guided participation.
	Supervising Collaborative Participation	Teachers accompany students throughout the Friday Charity activities, ensuring cooperation, discipline, and active involvement.	Continuous guidance enables students to internalize social care through collaborative and experiential learning.

Source: Author's analysis (2026).

The three subthemes indicate that mentoring was a continuous process throughout the implementation of the Friday Charity Program. Teachers not only supervised the activities but also facilitated students' reflection on and application of social care values through direct interaction with the community. Consistent guidance helped students develop empathy, social responsibility, collaborative skills, and respect for others as integral components of a meaningful learning experience.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teacher mentoring served as a pedagogical process integrating knowledge, experience, and social practice into students' character development. The Friday Charity Program served not merely as a social activity but also as a context for learning in which students could cultivate social care through authentic experiences, reflection, and direct engagement with the community. Through this process, social care values developed from conceptual knowledge into habits internalized in students' everyday behavior.

Teacher as trainer in fostering social care through the friday charity program

The thematic analysis revealed that teachers served as trainers, fostering students' social care through the Friday Charity Program. This role was reflected in structured opportunities that enabled students to practice sharing, receive practical guidance in charitable activities, develop caring behaviors through repeated participation, and cultivate social discipline. Rather than merely explaining the importance of helping others, teachers intentionally engaged students in authentic social experiences that transformed social care from a conceptual understanding into habitual practice. Consequently, the Friday Charity Program functioned not only as a charitable initiative but also as an experiential learning process through which students developed prosocial attitudes and behaviors.

This finding was supported by interview data indicating that students were consistently encouraged to participate directly in every stage of the Friday Charity Program. Teachers emphasized active involvement so that students could experience the meaning of sharing through real interactions rather than passive observation.

> "...We encourage the students to participate in preparing, carrying, and delivering the donations directly to the recipients. Through this process, they learn to share, care for others, and take responsibility for the activities in which they participate...." (Participant 1)

The analysis of interview and observational data generated four interconnected subthemes representing teachers' training roles in fostering students' social care, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Training Roles in Fostering Social Care

Theme	Subtheme	Representative Evidence	Thematic Interpretation
Teacher as Trainer in Fostering Social Care	Training Sharing Behaviors	Students actively participate in preparing and delivering donations during the Friday Charity Program.	Teachers cultivate students' awareness that sharing is a practical expression of empathy and social responsibility.
	Providing Practical Guidance for Charitable Activities	Teachers demonstrate appropriate procedures for organizing, distributing, and delivering donations respectfully and sincerely.	Teachers equip students with practical competencies for engaging responsibly in charitable activities.
	Habituating Caring Behaviors	Students participate regularly in Friday Charity activities as part of the school's routine.	Repeated participation transforms caring behaviors into sustainable social habits through experiential learning.
	Developing Social Discipline	Teachers consistently involve students in structured participation throughout the program.	Continuous participation strengthens students' responsibility, discipline, and

	commitment to social engagement.

Source: Author's analysis (2026).

The four subthemes collectively demonstrate that teacher training extends beyond procedural instruction. Rather than focusing solely on the successful implementation of charitable activities, teachers intentionally design repeated learning experiences that enable students to translate moral values into concrete social practices. Through continuous participation, students progressively develop empathy, responsibility, cooperation, and discipline, indicating that social care is constructed through sustained practice rather than one-time instruction.

Overall, these findings suggest that teachers enact their training role through experiential learning, in which students learn by actively participating in meaningful social activities. The Friday Charity Program provides repeated opportunities for students to practice helping others, reflect on their experiences, and gradually internalize prosocial values as part of their everyday character. This process demonstrates that sustained participation is instrumental in transforming social care from an abstract moral concept into a habitual pattern of behavior embedded in students' daily lives.

Discussion

The thematic analysis revealed that teachers performed three integrated, continuous pedagogical roles to foster social care through the Friday Charity Program. As educators, teachers developed students' conceptual understanding, connected social care with everyday life, and integrated religious values as a moral foundation. As mentors, they facilitated the application of these values by supporting students during direct interactions with the community, thereby cultivating empathy, responsibility, and collaboration. As trainers, teachers fostered the habit of sharing through active involvement and repeated practice. These three roles demonstrate that the Friday Charity Program functioned as an experiential character-education strategy that transformed social care from conceptual understanding into prosocial behavior internalized as part of students' character.

Amid increasing individualism, declining face-to-face social interaction, and the growing dominance of digital communication, schools play a strategic role in cultivating students' social care through authentic learning experiences (Dong & Zeb, 2022). In this context, the Friday Charity Program at a private primary school serves as a form of character education that connects classroom learning to social practices in the wider community (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Through teachers' roles as educators, mentors, and trainers, students not only developed an understanding of social care but also translated it into concrete action (Mosely et al., 2025). This finding is consistent with Oeschger et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of values-based education in developing students' social responsibility. Similarly, Luo et al. (2023) demonstrated that a supportive school climate promotes prosocial behavior and mitigates the effects of individualistic environments. Thus, action-oriented character education remains relevant in addressing the challenges associated with students' character development in the contemporary era.

Theoretically, the findings indicate that character education cannot be effectively achieved through knowledge transmission alone; rather, it requires a holistic, continuous pedagogical process (Sitanggang et al., 2025; Watson et al., 2025). The three roles of teachers formed a mutually reinforcing pedagogical cycle in which conceptual understanding developed through instruction was strengthened through guidance during social experiences and subsequently internalized through repeated habituation. This finding aligns with the social learning theory discussed by Döring et al. (2024), which underscores the importance of both explaining values and providing role models in the process of moral internalization. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2025) explained that teacher support serves as a catalyst that connects

moral values to students' prosocial behavior. Based on the findings of the present study, these three roles cannot be separated, as each performs a distinct yet complementary function in cultivating social care as an integral dimension of students' character.

This study provides insight into how social care character develops through students' authentic experiences and active engagement in social life (Birhan et al., 2021; Sahabuddin et al., 2022). The internalization of values depends not only on classroom instruction but also on the continuity of teachers' guidance and habituation throughout the learning process (Nopriyeni et al., 2019). Within the Friday Charity Program, teachers served not merely as transmitters of knowledge but also as facilitators of learning experiences that enabled students to gradually develop empathy, responsibility, and social care (Xu et al., 2025). This finding reinforces the argument of Lee et al. (2018) that empathy-based experiential learning is more effective in enhancing students' engagement and social development than exclusively conceptual instruction. Thus, social care character is cultivated through a consistent and sustained learning process.

Compared with previous studies, the present findings offer a more integrative explanation of teachers' roles in character education. Döring et al. (2024) and Oeschger et al. (2024) primarily examined teachers' roles in teaching moral values, whereas Chen et al. (2025) and Luo et al. (2023) emphasized teacher support and school climate in the development of prosocial behavior. Lee et al. (2018), meanwhile, focused on the effectiveness of empathy-based learning. Building on these studies, the present research demonstrates that social care is cultivated through the integration of teachers' three pedagogical roles as educators, mentors, and trainers within a sustained learning program. This integration enables students to move from understanding social care values toward applying and habituating them through repeated social experiences. Thus, the study provides a more comprehensive account of the pedagogical mechanisms through which social care values are internalized in faith-based primary education, highlighting the importance of connecting moral instruction, guided practice, and sustained habituation.

Based on these findings, schools should develop structured and sustainable experiential character education programs that provide students with opportunities to internalize social values through authentic practice. Teachers should serve not only as transmitters of academic content but also as mentors and trainers who consistently support students throughout the learning process. Furthermore, developing learning modules that integrate academic content with social activities and incorporating reflective journals could strengthen students' internalization of values. Schools should also expand partnerships with local communities as authentic learning environments, thereby diversifying students' social experiences. In this way, character education can move beyond conceptual instruction to become a sustained learning experience that fosters prosocial behavior, strengthens social responsibility, and encourages students to apply learned values consistently in their everyday interactions in school and community settings, thereby supporting sustainable character development for all students.

CONCLUSION

The main finding of this study indicates that the effectiveness of the Friday Charity Program in fostering students' social care is determined by the integration of the three pedagogical roles of teachers: educator, mentor, and trainer. As educators, teachers developed students' conceptual understanding of social care and established its religious and moral foundations. As mentors, they facilitated the application of these values through direct engagement with the community, thereby fostering empathy, responsibility, and collaboration. As trainers, teachers cultivated the habit of sharing through repeated practice. The integration of these roles created a pedagogical cycle that transformed social care from conceptual knowledge into prosocial behavior internalized as part of students' character. Thus, the Friday

Charity Program served as a form of experiential character education that consistently connected classroom learning to social practice.

Theoretically, this study demonstrates that cultivating social care cannot be achieved through knowledge transmission alone; rather, it requires a pedagogical process that integrates instruction, guidance, and habituation within a mutually reinforcing cycle. These findings extend the understanding of character education by positioning teachers as key actors who perform multiple pedagogical functions in an integrated manner to bridge students' understanding of values and their prosocial behavior. Practically, the findings have implications for primary schools seeking to design character-education programs that connect classroom learning with authentic social experiences through consistent teacher guidance. The Friday Charity Program provides an alternative model for implementing character education that promotes students' empathy, responsibility, and social care through active participation and sustained habituation.

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted at only one private faith-based primary school; consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to schools with different characteristics. Second, the study focused on teachers' roles in implementing the Friday Charity Program without examining in depth the contribution of external factors, such as parental support and the broader social environment, to students' internalization of social care. Future research should therefore examine the application of this model of teachers' roles across different types of schools and more diverse social contexts. Longitudinal or mixed-methods studies are also needed to evaluate the sustainability of the program's effects on students' prosocial behavior and identify additional factors that influence the effectiveness of experiential character education.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Nurul Huda: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Nurul Cholisah:** Formal Analysis; Supervision; Validation; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Abdulmumin Musa Omiya:** Formal Analysis; Supervision; Validation; Writing Review & Editing.

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