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DEVELOPING AKHLAKUL KARIMAH THROUGH RELIGIOUS HABITUATION: A MODEL FROM MTs NURUL HUDA MANDIANGIN, SAROLANGUN, JAMBI

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of religious habituation as a core strategy for developing Akhlakul Karimah (noble character) among students, in response to growing concerns about declining discipline and moral awareness in Islamic schools. Grounded in al-Akhlaq lil Banin by Shaykh Umar bin Ahmad Baraja, the research examines how daily spiritual routines, such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and dhikr, are integrated with active teacher supervision and parental involvement. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis, and were interpreted through thematic analysis. The study reveals that structured religious practices, when consistently reinforced by teachers and supported by families, nurture moral values such as religiosity, empathy, responsibility, and self-discipline. However, challenges persist, particularly uneven parental engagement and inconsistent student behavior. Theoretically, this research expands the discourse on Islamic moral education by situating religious habituation within a collaborative framework involving educators and parents. Practically, it offers an adaptive model that can be replicated in similar Islamic educational settings. The study concludes that collaborative religious habituation is a powerful instrument for holistic moral and spiritual character formation among students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic junior high schools).

Keywords: *Religious Habituation; Akhlakul Karimah; Islamic Moral Education; Teacher Role; Parental Involvement*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi pembiasaan keagamaan sebagai strategi inti dalam membentuk Akhlakul Karimah (akhlak mulia) pada peserta didik, sebagai respons terhadap meningkatnya kekhawatiran atas menurunnya kedisiplinan dan kesadaran moral di sekolah-sekolah Islam. Berlandaskan kitab al-Akhlaq lil Banin karya Syekh Umar bin Ahmad Baraja, penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana rutinitas spiritual harian—seperti salat berjemaah, tadarus Al-Qur'an, dan zikir—diintegrasikan dengan pengawasan aktif guru serta keterlibatan orang tua. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif berdesain studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian diinterpretasikan melalui analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik keagamaan yang terstruktur, apabila diperkuat secara konsisten oleh guru dan didukung oleh keluarga, mampu menumbuhkan nilai-nilai moral seperti religiusitas, empati, tanggung jawab, dan disiplin diri. Meskipun demikian, sejumlah tantangan masih ditemukan, terutama keterlibatan orang tua yang belum merata dan inkonsistensi perilaku peserta didik. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas diskursus pendidikan akhlak Islam dengan menempatkan pembiasaan keagamaan dalam kerangka kolaboratif yang melibatkan pendidik dan orang

tua. Secara praktis, penelitian ini menawarkan model adaptif yang dapat direplikasi pada lingkungan pendidikan Islam serupa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembiasaan keagamaan yang kolaboratif merupakan instrumen yang efektif bagi pembentukan karakter moral dan spiritual secara holistik pada peserta didik di Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

Kata Kunci: *Pembiasaan Keagamaan; Akhlakul Karimah; Pendidikan Akhlak Islam; Peran Guru; Keterlibatan Orang Tua*

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the moral education of students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah faces increasingly complex challenges. Issues such as declining discipline, weakened moral integrity, and unstable spiritual development among students have become prevalent concerns, and recent studies in Indonesian madrasahs identify social media exposure, negative peer influence, and weak parental supervision as factors that hinder students' moral formation.[1] Observations at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin, Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province, reveal several behavioral issues: tardiness, inconsistency in attending congregational prayers, and varying levels of understanding of Islamic values.

These phenomena indicate that the internalization of Islamic principles into students' daily behavior remains limited. Therefore, a more strategic, sustainable, and contextual approach to character education in Islamic schools is urgently needed. Comparable studies in other Indonesian madrasahs have shown that structured religious habituation strengthens students' discipline, religious character, and tolerance.[2]

Nevertheless, many existing approaches remain generic and fail to capture the specific dynamics of daily spiritual practices within the context of Islamic elementary and secondary education. Consequently, there exists a research gap, particularly in qualitative studies that explore the mechanisms, barriers, and contextual strategies of religious habituation for character formation in madrasah environments.

[1] Nur Ali and Salman Al Farisi, "Upaya Orang Tua dalam Membentuk Akhlak Anak di MAN 1 Tebo," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 11, no. 3 (2026): 433–50, https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v11i03.55549; Muhammad Hakim and Makmur Syukri, "Teacher Personality Competence in Islamic Moral Education: A Role-Modeling and Character Development Approach," *Journal of Education Research* 7, no. 3 (2026): 2398–409, https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v7i3.4187.

[2] Alvia Amalani Mujaroh Putri and Zudan Rosyidi, "Pembentukan Karakter Religius dan Toleransi Siswa Madrasah Ibtidaiyah melalui Pembiasaan di Madrasah," *Rabbani: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 1 (2024): 58–68, https://doi.org/10.19105/rjpai.v5i1.11727; M. Aditya Tri Putra and Laily Masruroh, "Strengthening Students' Discipline through Religious Programs at MAN 1 Jombang," *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 11, no. 1 (2026): 115–44, https://doi.org/10.15642/joies.2026.11.1.115-144.

This study is conceptually rooted in *al-Akhlaq lil Banin* by Shaykh Umar bin Ahmad Baraja, which emphasizes daily routine and exemplary conduct as essential foundations for moral development.[3] In Baraja's view, moral education is not limited to cognitive instruction but must involve habitual practice, emotional cultivation, and behavioral reinforcement. Thus, spiritual routines and exemplary modeling become indispensable components in character formation.

Several previous studies have suggested the need to evaluate the effectiveness of religious habituation as a core method for fostering *Akhlakul Karimah* in Islamic schools. However, few have integrated daily religious practices with the dual involvement of teachers and parents within a comprehensive framework. This research seeks to fill that gap by focusing on MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin as a model case.

Based on preliminary understanding, this study aims to answer two key research questions:

1. How do daily religious activities, such as congregational prayers, Dhuha prayers, Qur'anic recitation (*tilawah*), and *tahlil*, contribute to the development of *Akhlakul Karimah* among students?
2. What challenges emerge in this process, and what contextual strategies can be designed to optimize religious habituation as a core strategy in moral education?

To address these questions, this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design and thematic analysis. Data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews with the school principal, Islamic education (PAI) teachers, homeroom teachers, and students from grades VII and VIII, as well as documentation such as program plans, photos, and activity records.

MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin was selected purposively because of its strong emphasis on Islamic values both in curriculum and practice. The semi-structured interview format provided flexibility to explore emerging themes related to character formation, ritual consistency, and stakeholder involvement.

Data analysis was conducted inductively through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Relevant information was categorized and synthesized to allow for thematic interpretation.

The contributions of this study are threefold:

1. Theoretical contribution: it enriches the discourse on Islamic moral education by integrating religious habituation, teacher modeling, and family involvement.

[3] Umar bin Ahmad Baraja, *al-Akhlaq lil Banin* (Surabaya: Maktabah Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Nabhan wa Auladuh, n.d.).

2. Practical contribution: it offers an applicable framework for school leaders and teachers to design character education programs based on daily spiritual activities.
3. Social contribution: it strengthens the role of Islamic educational institutions in nurturing a generation that is religious, ethical, disciplined, and socially responsible.

Overall, this research underscores the strategic importance of a contextual and sustainable Islamic moral education approach rooted in faith-based habituation and collaborative practice within Madrasah Tsanawiyah settings.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Akhlakul Karimah in Islamic Education

The term *Akhlakul Karimah*, often translated as "noble character" or "virtuous morals," occupies a central position in Islamic education. It reflects the moral dimension of *iman* (faith) and *amal saleh* (righteous deeds). According to al-Ghazali, *akhlaq* is the inner disposition (*malakah*) from which good deeds naturally emanate without compulsion.[4] This definition underscores the transformative goal of Islamic education: not merely transmitting knowledge but shaping moral personality.

Ibn Miskawayh, in *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, defines moral education as a process of aligning the soul with rational and divine guidance, producing balance (*tawazun*) between intellect, desire, and anger.[5] This classical view aligns with contemporary pedagogical theories, such as Lickona's character education model, which emphasizes the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.[6]

From an Islamic perspective, *Akhlakul Karimah* is inseparable from *iman* and *taqwa*. Quraish Shihab asserts that noble character is the concrete manifestation of faith, as reflected in the Prophet Muhammad's hadith: "I was sent only to perfect noble character."[7] Therefore, Islamic education cannot be separated from moral formation, since morality is the ultimate expression of religious consciousness.

Religious Habituation as a Pedagogical Strategy

Religious habituation (*ta'dib al-diniyah*) refers to the systematic practice of repetitive spiritual behaviors to internalize Islamic values. Baraja's *al-Akhlaq lil Banin* presents routine acts of worship and daily manners, such as prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, remembrance of God, and

[4] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2018).

[5] Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character (Tahdhib al-Akhlaq)*, trans. Constantine K. Zurayk (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1968).

[6] Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

[7] M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan, 2019).

mutual greetings, as the foundation of a disciplined moral life.[8] When reinforced consistently, such practices cultivate virtues like humility, patience, and sincerity (*ikhlas*).

Hurlock notes that habituation is a psychological process that converts external behaviors into internalized habits through repetition and reinforcement.[9] This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling, principles that resonate with the Islamic notion of *uswah hasanah* (good example).[10]

In the context of Islamic education, Haq and Abu show, drawing on al-Ghazali, that habituation gradually moves students from *takalluf* (effortful compliance) toward *malakah* (a settled disposition); habituation should therefore not merely focus on ritual compliance but on the development of awareness and sincerity in worship.[11] The combination of routine behavior and reflective understanding (*tadabbur*) creates holistic moral awareness.

The Role of Teachers in Moral Formation

Teachers (*asatidz*) occupy a pivotal position in the moral development of students. According to al-Ghazali, educators are inheritors of the prophetic mission (*waratsat al-anbiya'*), responsible for shaping both intellect and character.[12] Similarly, Nata emphasizes that the teacher's personal example is more influential than verbal instruction.[13]

Lickona supports this by identifying modeling as one of the core principles of effective character education. He argues that students internalize values not through instruction alone but through witnessing authentic moral behavior in adults.[14] In Islamic pedagogy, this principle is reinforced through *keteladanan* (exemplary behavior), as found in Surah al-Ahzab [33]: 21: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for those who hope for Allah and the Last Day."

A study by Hakim and Syukri in a madrasah setting demonstrates that teachers' personality competence, expressed in politeness, patience, discipline, and consistency, shapes students' habits of polite behavior, discipline, and religious participation.[15]

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[8] Baraja, *al-Akhlaq lil Banin*.

[9] Elizabeth B. Hurlock, *Developmental Psychology: A Life-Span Approach*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980).

[10] Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986).

[11] Khusnamelda Fairushofiddina Haq and Abu Darda Abu, "Implementasi Metode Habituasi Perspektif Al Ghazali dalam Membentuk Karakter Religius di MI Nurussalam," *Joyful Learning Journal* 15, no. 2 (2026): 629–38, https://doi.org/10.15294/jlj.v15i2.46482.

[12] al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.

[13] Abuddin Nata, *Metodologi Studi Islam* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2019).

[14] Thomas Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

[15] Hakim and Syukri, "Teacher Personality Competence."

Parental Involvement and Moral Development

The family is the primary institution of character formation. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explains that children's moral development is shaped by interconnected environments: family, school, and community.[16] In Islamic tradition, this concept corresponds with *tarbiyah bil usrah* (education through the family), emphasizing shared responsibility for moral upbringing.

According to al-Abrasyi, the success of Islamic moral education in schools depends heavily on the harmony between school instruction and parental reinforcement at home.[17] When parents fail to provide consistent moral modeling, school-based character programs tend to lose effectiveness.

Empirical research by Khoiriyah, Mizani, and Daryono at MAN 1 Ngawi found that parental support significantly influences students' religious morals, with emotional intelligence mediating this relationship.[18] In Jambi Province itself, Ali and Al Farisi found that parents at MAN 1 Tebo shape their children's character through role modeling, good habits, advice, and supervision, while negative peer influence, social media, and limited parental time act as inhibiting factors.[19] The relationship is not automatic, however: Kibtiyah et al. found that, across 23 madrasah ibtidaiyah in Jombang, neither school–parent collaboration nor the family environment had a significant effect on students' character education.[20]

Theoretical Integration: Religious Habituation within the Framework of Islamic Character Education

The integration of religious habituation within the framework of Islamic character education requires combining classical Islamic ethics with modern pedagogical models. The synthesis of theories can be outlined as follows:

1) Al-Ghazali's moral psychology emphasizes the purification of the heart (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and the internalization of virtues through consistent spiritual practice.
2) Lickona's character education model focuses on the triadic process of moral knowing, feeling, and doing.

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[16] Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Systems Theory," in *Six Theories of Child Development: Revised Formulations and Current Issues*, ed. Ross Vasta (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1992), 187–249.

[17] Muhammad 'Athiyyah al-Abrasyi, *Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 2015).

[18] Ni'amatul Khoiriyah, Zeni Murtafiati Mizani, and Rihab Wit Daryono, "The Influence of Islamic Learning and Parental Support on Students' Religious Moral through Emotional Intelligence," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 1 (2023): 75–93, https://doi.org/10.21093/sajie.v6i1.8403.

[19] Ali and Al Farisi, "Upaya Orang Tua."

[20] Asriana Kibtiyah et al., "The Impact of School-Parent Collaboration and Family Environment on Character Education of Students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Mudarrisa: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 2 (2025): 161–80, https://doi.org/10.18326/mudarrisa.v17i2.4070.

3) Bandura's social learning theory highlights the importance of modeling and observational learning.
4) Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory recognizes the interplay between school, family, and community as an integrated system of moral influence.

This multi-theoretical framework forms the conceptual foundation of the present study. Religious habituation at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin is examined not only as ritual behavior but as a pedagogical system that links cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of student morality.

Review of Previous Studies

Several studies have addressed the importance of religious habituation in Islamic schools. Putra and Masruroh found that nine structured religious programs at MAN 1 Jombang strengthened students' discipline through a process of internalization, visible in punctuality, consistency in worship, and self-responsibility.[21] Similarly, Hafidurrahman, Dannur, and Fauzan argue, on the basis of a literature review, that Islamic religious education which cultivates self-control (*mujahadah al-nafs*) can help prevent bullying among students.[22]

Putri and Rosyidi likewise demonstrated that habituation practices in a madrasah ibtidaiyah in Sidoarjo, including the reading of classical texts on manners and Friday congregational prayer, build students' religious character and tolerance.[23] Haq and Abu reported comparable results at MI Nurussalam Ngawi, while also noting that weak family supervision and gadget use hinder the process.[24] These findings confirm that spiritual routines play a critical role in shaping ethical behavior.

However, prior research often neglected the contextual dimension, specifically how the consistency of teacher modeling and parental reinforcement affects outcomes. This gap is addressed in the current study through an in-depth case analysis of MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin, compared with other madrasahs in Sarolangun and Jambi Province.

Conceptual Model of the Study

Based on the synthesis of theoretical and empirical literature, this study constructs a conceptual model with three interrelated components:

1) Input: daily religious activities (congregational prayer, Dhuha, Qur'anic recitation, and dhikr).
2) Process: reinforcement through teacher modeling, supervision, and parental collaboration.

[21] Putra and Masruroh, "Strengthening Students' Discipline."
[22] Moh Hafidurrahman, Moh Dannur, and Fauzan, "Strengthening Students' Self-Control through Islamic Religious Education Learning in Preventing Bullying," *Al-Riwayah: Jurnal Kependidikan* 15, no. 2 (2023): 316–29, https://doi.org/10.47945/al-riwayah.v15i2.1245.
[23] Putri and Rosyidi, "Pembentukan Karakter Religius."
[24] Haq and Abu, "Implementasi Metode Habituasi."

3) Output: the development of *Akhlakul Karimah* values, namely discipline, honesty, respect, empathy, and religious commitment.

This model aligns with the Islamic educational philosophy of *ta'dib*, the cultivation of a balanced individual who integrates faith, knowledge, and action.[25]

In summary, the literature establishes that *Akhlakul Karimah* development through religious habituation is an integrative process combining ritual practice, emotional awareness, and social engagement. The teacher's role as a moral model, parental involvement, and institutional consistency form the core determinants of success. Hence, this research adopts a comprehensive theoretical foundation derived from classical Islamic ethics (al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh), modern educational psychology (Lickona, Bandura, Bronfenbrenner), and contemporary Islamic pedagogy (Nata, Baraja, al-Abrasyi). This synthesis ensures that the study is grounded in both Islamic authenticity and modern scientific rigor.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design with a case study approach, intended to capture the real-life implementation of *Akhlakul Karimah* development through religious habituation at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin, Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore social, spiritual, and behavioral phenomena in their natural context.[26]

The case study method was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of a bounded system within a specific educational setting.[27] In this study, the "bounded system" is defined as the religious activities, school culture, and interaction patterns among teachers, students, and parents at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin. The study also includes comparative observations from other madrasahs in Jambi Province, namely MTs Negeri Sarolangun and MTs Al-Falah Batang Asai, to strengthen analytical depth and contextual understanding.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin, an Islamic junior high school located in Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected due to its strong reputation for implementing religious-based programs and its alignment

[25] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1980).

[26] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

[27] Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995); Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018).

with the madrasah's vision: "To nurture students who are faithful, knowledgeable, and of noble character."

The school integrates formal Islamic subjects (Aqidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Qur'an Hadith, and Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam) with daily religious practices. These include Dhuha prayers, congregational Dzuhur prayers, Qur'anic recitation (*tilawah*), *tahlil*, and weekly *Yasinan* (collective recitation of Surah Yasin). This environment provided a rich setting for observing the process of character formation through religious habituation.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in implementing and experiencing religious habituation programs. The participants included:

a. 1 school principal, as the policy decision-maker and religious program initiator;
b. 3 Islamic education (PAI) teachers, who act as program coordinators and moral exemplars;
c. 4 homeroom teachers, responsible for student behavioral supervision;
d. 10 students from Grades VII and VIII, representing both genders and diverse backgrounds; and
e. 5 parents, to capture the perspective of family involvement.

This composition provided a comprehensive understanding of institutional, pedagogical, and familial perspectives in shaping *Akhlakul Karimah*.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered through triangulation of methods, namely observation, interviews, and document analysis, to ensure credibility and validity.[28]

a. Observation. Direct non-participant observation was conducted for four weeks. The researcher observed prayer routines, Qur'anic recitations, *tahlil*, and moral guidance sessions. Field notes were taken to record behavior patterns, interaction dynamics, and students' participation levels.
b. Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, students, and parents. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of religious habituation, challenges faced, and their understanding of *Akhlakul Karimah*. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

[28] Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

c. Documentation. School documents such as program schedules, curriculum plans, photos, attendance logs, and evaluation forms were analyzed to verify and support observational and interview data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed Miles and Huberman's model, which includes three stages:[29]

a. Data reduction: organizing and summarizing data into relevant categories related to religious habituation, teacher modeling, parental involvement, and student moral behavior.
b. Data display: arranging information systematically through matrices and thematic charts for pattern identification.
c. Conclusion drawing and verification: deriving themes and interpretations grounded in the data.

The analysis was conducted inductively to allow patterns, meanings, and relationships to emerge naturally. Additionally, thematic coding was applied following Braun and Clarke's framework, which involves six steps: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.[30]

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba were applied:[31]

a. Credibility: achieved through prolonged engagement, triangulation of data sources, and member checking.
b. Transferability: ensured by providing thick descriptions of the context, participants, and activities.
c. Dependability: secured through systematic documentation of research procedures and coding consistency.
d. Confirmability: maintained by cross-verifying data with institutional documents and participant validation.

The researcher also practiced reflexivity, maintaining awareness of personal biases and assumptions throughout the study.

[29] Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994).

[30] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

[31] Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical standards in qualitative inquiry. All participants were informed of the research objectives and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including the parents of underage students. Confidentiality was guaranteed by anonymizing names and data identifiers. The researcher also ensured that observations during religious activities were conducted respectfully, without interfering with students' worship or school routines.

Data Interpretation Framework

The interpretation of data was guided by a conceptual framework integrating Islamic moral philosophy and modern educational theory. The analysis focused on identifying:

a. the manifestations of religious habituation in daily school life;
b. the correlation between spiritual routines and behavioral changes;
c. the interaction between teacher modeling, student response, and parental reinforcement; and
d. the emergent values of *Akhlakul Karimah* as internalized behaviors.

This analytical orientation allowed the researcher to interpret religious habituation not merely as ritual compliance, but as a dynamic process of moral internalization.

Comparative Contextualization

To enhance validity and analytical generalization, the study incorporated brief comparisons with other madrasahs in Jambi Province, namely MTs Negeri Sarolangun and MTs Al-Falah Batang Asai. Data from these schools were collected through short interviews and document reviews, primarily to contextualize differences in program consistency, teacher involvement, and parental collaboration. The comparative analysis provided a broader understanding of how regional socio-religious environments influence the success of *Akhlakul Karimah* development programs.

In essence, this qualitative case study combines rich empirical observation, participant perspectives, and theoretical grounding to construct an in-depth understanding of moral education through religious habituation. By integrating observation, interviews, and document analysis within a triangulated design, the study ensures both analytical depth and contextual validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Religious Habituation at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin

Field observations reveal that MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin has systematically integrated religious habituation into the school's daily routine. Activities such as encouragement of the night

prayer (*tahajjud*), Dhuha prayer, Qur'anic recitation (*tilawah*), congregational Dzuhur prayer, *tahlil*, and *Yasinan* every Friday are institutionalized as part of the moral development framework.

The school environment reinforces these routines through visual and auditory cues: Islamic calligraphy in classrooms, Qur'anic verses displayed on notice boards, and regular moral reminders broadcast via loudspeakers. Teachers and homeroom mentors supervise these activities to ensure participation and discipline.

According to the principal, this consistent pattern of daily spiritual engagement is designed to "make faith a lived practice rather than a theoretical subject." The goal is to transform religious knowledge into character through repetitive, meaningful experiences.

This finding aligns with the argument of al-Ghazali, who emphasized that consistent moral training (*riyadhah al-nafs*) through daily practices gradually strengthens the soul's disposition toward virtue.[32] Similarly, Baraja's *al-Akhlaq lil Banin* treats habitual worship and good manners as both spiritual exercise and behavioral conditioning in moral education.[33]

Student Behavioral Transformation

Interviews with teachers and students indicated observable moral and behavioral improvements among participants over time. Teachers noted decreases in tardiness and absenteeism, greater respect toward peers and teachers, and improved cooperation during group tasks. Students also reported internal changes, expressing greater comfort in worship and increased awareness of moral responsibility. One student commented:

> *"At first, I felt lazy to join the Dhuha prayer, but now I feel uneasy when I miss it. It's like my day is incomplete."*

This self-awareness represents what Lickona terms the shift from external regulation to internalized moral commitment.[34] Scholarship on moral and character education likewise regards this internalization process as central to effective moral education, as it signifies autonomous value acceptance.[35]

Quantitatively, school attendance records show a 15% increase in punctuality within one academic year, and disciplinary cases decreased by 25%. These behavioral improvements confirm Bandura's concept of social learning: consistent modeling and reinforcement lead to observable behavioral change.[36] The habitual interaction between teachers and students within a religious framework creates a micro-environment conducive to value internalization.

[32] al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.
[33] Baraja, *al-Akhlaq lil Banin*.
[34] Lickona, *Educating for Character*.
[35] Larry Nucci, Darcia Narvaez, and Tobias Krettenauer, eds., *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014).
[36] Bandura, *Social Foundations*.

The Role of Teachers as Moral Models

The teachers at MTs Nurul Huda function not only as instructors but as *murabbi*, spiritual mentors guiding behavior through personal example. Observations revealed that teachers actively join congregational prayers, recite the Qur'an with students, and initiate dhikr together. According to the vice principal, "the key is not only instructing but showing students what sincerity looks like."

This reflects Ibn Khaldun's assertion that the most effective form of instruction is imitation (*taqlid al-uswah*), where students emulate the conduct of those they respect.[37] Likewise, Nata and Tilaar emphasize the teacher's role as an ethical exemplar in moral pedagogy.[38] At MTs Nurul Huda, teachers' consistent participation in spiritual activities has built relational trust, leading students to follow their example voluntarily rather than out of coercion. This aligns with Korthagen, who observed that teacher authenticity fosters deep learning by enabling congruence between verbal instruction and personal conduct.[39]

Parental Involvement and Home Reinforcement

Although school-based habituation programs were strong, findings indicated uneven levels of parental involvement. Some parents consistently supported school activities by encouraging prayer routines at home, while others were less engaged due to occupational demands. A teacher noted:

> *"Students whose parents attend* pengajian *or join religious meetings tend to maintain their discipline. But when parents are passive, the progress slows."*

This echoes Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that student behavior develops through the mutual interaction of microsystems: home, school, and community.[40] Khoiriyah, Mizani, and Daryono similarly found that parental support significantly predicts students' religious morals.[41] Conversely, al-Abrasyi warned that when school and family messages diverge, moral education becomes fragmented.[42]

At MTs Nurul Huda, collaboration between teachers and parents is facilitated through monthly *majlis taklim* sessions and home visits. However, attendance records show only 60% parental participation, revealing an area for improvement. The comparative observation at MTs Negeri Sarolangun, where parental engagement is integrated into the school reward system,

[37] Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 2015).

[38] Nata, *Metodologi Studi Islam*; H. A. R. Tilaar, *Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia dalam Era Globalisasi* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2012).

[39] Fred A. J. Korthagen, "How Teacher Education Can Make a Difference," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 36, no. 4 (2010): 407–23.

[40] Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Systems Theory."

[41] Khoiriyah, Mizani, and Daryono, "Influence of Islamic Learning."

[42] al-Abrasyi, *Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar*.

showed more consistent behavioral outcomes. This suggests that institutionalized family collaboration can enhance the sustainability of moral programs.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its success, several challenges were identified:

1) Inconsistent participation: a minority of students treated religious routines as obligations rather than inner commitments.
2) Limited parental follow-up: as noted, many parents lacked time or resources to reinforce school values at home.
3) Curricular overload: teachers reported difficulty balancing religious habituation with academic requirements due to tight schedules.
4) Motivational fatigue: some students displayed reduced enthusiasm in long-term routines, reflecting what Ryan and Deci describe as amotivation when extrinsic rewards diminish.[43]

To mitigate these issues, the school introduced short motivational sessions, reflection activities (*muhasabah*), and peer mentoring, emphasizing the meaning rather than the form of religious practice. These strategies are consistent with Lickona's principle of integrating cognitive reflection into character education to sustain long-term moral engagement.[44]

Comparative Findings: Other Madrasahs in Jambi

When compared with MTs Negeri Sarolangun and MTs Al-Falah Batang Asai, the research found similar religious habituation patterns but differing degrees of institutional consistency:

a. MTs Negeri Sarolangun maintained more formal structures, integrating religious activities within class schedules. However, its approach was more teacher-centered and less participatory.
b. MTs Al-Falah Batang Asai, being a rural boarding-oriented madrasah, showed stronger familial religious influence but limited program documentation.

MTs Nurul Huda's model stood out for its balanced integration of structure and spontaneity, combining scheduled worship with emotional engagement and teacher modeling. This resonates with Quraish Shihab, who emphasizes that faith-based education must balance ritual performance with moral consciousness.[45] Furthermore, Putra and Masruroh identified

[43] Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68–78, https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68.

[44] Lickona, *Character Matters*.

[45] Shihab, *Wawasan al-Qur'an*.

institutional commitment and teacher modeling as the key supporting factors that sustain religious programs in madrasahs.[46]

Emerging Themes

Through thematic analysis, four dominant themes emerged:

a. Internalization of spiritual discipline: students progressively integrated prayer, Qur'an recitation, and reflection into daily behavior.
b. Teacher as the central moral axis: teacher conduct served as the primary catalyst for moral change.
c. Partial parental support: family collaboration influenced long-term behavioral stability.
d. Institutional faith ecology: the school's atmosphere, architecture, and routines reinforced moral identity.

These themes demonstrate that *Akhlakul Karimah* formation is not a linear process but a holistic ecosystem where faith, knowledge, and practice interact continuously.

Theoretical Interpretation

The findings can be interpreted through the lens of multiple frameworks:

a. Al-Ghazali's theory of soul training (*riyadhah al-nafs*): regular worship strengthens moral willpower, transforming habits into virtues.
b. Bandura's social learning theory: moral behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement.
c. Lickona's moral development model: character grows through the integration of moral cognition, emotion, and action.
d. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory: character education thrives when family, school, and community environments are synergistic.

By merging these perspectives, the study supports the conclusion that religious habituation acts as both an educational method and a social structure for moral growth.

Pedagogical Implications

The results have significant implications for Islamic pedagogy:

a. Curriculum integration: religious habituation should not be treated as extracurricular but as a formalized component of the curriculum.
b. Teacher professional development: training programs should focus on *akhlaq*-based pedagogy emphasizing authenticity, empathy, and example.
c. Parent–school partnerships: institutions should design structured mechanisms for consistent parental participation.

[46] Putra and Masruroh, "Strengthening Students' Discipline."

d. Evaluation of moral progress: assessment tools should move beyond attendance and performance, incorporating reflective and behavioral indicators.

These recommendations align with al-Attas and with recent proposals for an integrated Tawhidic pedagogy, both of which advocate a holistic educational paradigm that unites intellect (*'aql*), spirit (*ruh*), and conduct (*'amal*).[47]

Synthesis and Reflection

Overall, the study demonstrates that moral education through religious habituation at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin successfully cultivates *Akhlakul Karimah* when supported by consistent teacher modeling, partial parental collaboration, and a faith-centered institutional culture. While the approach is contextually specific, its principles of habitual worship, moral reflection, and collaborative mentorship can be adapted to other Islamic educational settings.

This aligns with Lickona and al-Attas, both of whom highlight that authentic character formation arises when education nurtures the unity of belief, knowledge, and moral action.[48] Thus, the study provides a replicable model for contemporary Islamic schools seeking to harmonize spirituality and pedagogy within an increasingly secularized educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of *Akhlakul Karimah* development through religious activities at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin, Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province, represents an effective and sustainable model of Islamic moral education in the digital era. The continuous integration of Dhuha prayers, Qur'an recitation, congregational worship, *Yasinan*, and moral reflection activities creates a structured environment where values are not only taught but experienced, practiced, and internalized. The success of this model is driven by three interconnected pillars: teacher authenticity and modeling, through which teachers function as living examples of Islamic ethics; student habituation and reflective participation, which transform external routines into internal commitments; and a supportive institutional culture that fosters consistency and moral awareness through symbols, rituals, and communication patterns.

The findings confirm that moral education in Islamic schools must transcend formal instruction and become a habitual system, a daily practice that unites knowledge (*'ilm*), faith (*iman*), and behavior (*'amal*). As al-Ghazali emphasized, the purification of the soul is achieved not through theoretical discussion but through disciplined moral action.[49] Theoretically, this

[47] al-Attas, *Concept of Education in Islam*; Jobeda Khanom, Md. Tarequl Islam, and Fahmi Arfan, "Integrating Classical Islamic Pedagogy with Contemporary Educational Theories: A Pathway to Holistic Learning," *Ishraqi* 24, no. 2 (2025): 429–40, https://journals2.ums.ac.id/ishraqi/article/view/15411.

[48] Lickona, *Educating for Character*; al-Attas, *Concept of Education in Islam*.

[49] al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.

research contributes to Islamic character education by integrating classical spiritual frameworks with contemporary learning theories: it supports al-Attas's concept of education as *ta'dib*, aligns with Lickona's model of moral knowing, feeling, and action, and reinforces Bandura's social learning perspective that moral transformation occurs through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within a communal structure.

Practically, policymakers should institutionalize religious habituation as a core curricular component rather than an extracurricular activity; teachers should receive structured training in *akhlaq*-centered pedagogy focusing on mentorship, sincerity (*ikhlas*), and moral embodiment; home–school collaboration should be strengthened through structured parent forums and regular moral reflection sessions; and assessment tools should measure behavioral consistency, ethical reflection, and community participation rather than mere attendance. The Nurul Huda model can be adapted to other madrasahs with contextual modification to match local socio-religious environments.

This study is confined to one institutional context, which may limit generalizability, and its quantitative indicators of moral development were limited to attendance and behavior logs. Future research should employ longitudinal mixed-method approaches to measure deeper internalization of values, explore the role of digital media in supporting moral habituation programs, and conduct comparative analyses across Islamic schools and provinces. Ultimately, the religious habituation model at MTs Nurul Huda Mandiangin shows that moral education rooted in sincerity, repetition, and authentic relationships can shape enduring moral identities, reaffirming al-Attas's view that the essence of education is the instilling of *adab* in the self.[50]

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[50] al-Attas, *Concept of Education in Islam*.

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