

The Implementation of Religious Activities in Shaping Students' Discipline and Akhlakul Karimah at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the need to better understand how religious activities contribute to students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah* in Islamic secondary education. It aims to examine the forms of religious activities implemented at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru and explain how these activities contribute to students' disciplinary and moral development. The study employed a qualitative case study design. Participants comprised the principal, teachers responsible for religious activities, and selected students, recruited through purposive sampling. Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis with source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that Qur'anic *tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, greeting and handshaking practices, and other religious routines were systematically integrated into the madrasah's daily activities. These practices contributed to improved punctuality, orderly participation, responsibility, self-control, respect, and polite social interaction. The findings further demonstrate that their formative effects depended not on ritual participation alone but on four interconnected mechanisms: habituation, teacher role modeling, continuous supervision, and corrective guidance. The study concludes that institutionalized religious activities can function as an effective pedagogical mechanism for developing discipline and *akhlakul karimah* when consistently practiced and supported by teachers. The study contributes a process-oriented understanding of religious character formation and recommends longitudinal, comparative, and mixed-method research to examine sustainability and broader contextual influences.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and systematic process aimed not only at developing students' intellectual competencies but also at cultivating their character, attitudes, and moral conduct. In Indonesia, this broader orientation is explicitly reflected in the national education system, which positions faith, piety, knowledge, competence, creativity, independence, and responsibility as integral dimensions of educational development (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). Accordingly, educational success should not be assessed solely through academic achievement but also through

students' capacity to internalize and demonstrate desirable values in their everyday behavior. This concern has become increasingly important as contemporary educational environments face changing social conditions and technological developments that may challenge students' self-control, responsibility, discipline, and social behavior. Within Islamic educational institutions, therefore, character formation requires approaches that connect religious knowledge with repeated and meaningful behavioral practice.

Discipline represents one of the fundamental character dimensions that education seeks to develop. It encompasses punctuality, obedience to institutional regulations, responsibility, self-control, and consistency in fulfilling obligations. Discipline cannot be effectively established through rules and verbal instruction alone; it requires habituation, exemplary conduct, supervision, and a supportive educational environment (Wuryandani et al., 2014). In Islamic education, this objective is closely connected with the cultivation of *akhlakul karimah*, namely commendable conduct that reflects Islamic values in relationships with God, other people, and the surrounding environment. The development of *akhlakul karimah* similarly requires continuous guidance, habituation, exemplary behavior, and opportunities to practice religious values in everyday life (Maulidya et al., 2023). Thus, religious education becomes more meaningful when Islamic values are transformed from conceptual knowledge into observable patterns of behavior.

Recent scholarship increasingly supports the role of religious habituation in this process. Laelasari (2022), for example, found that habituation to congregational prayer was associated with students' disciplinary behavior, suggesting that repeated religious practices can establish behavioral routines that encourage punctuality and compliance. Similarly, Fajrussalam et al. (2022) reported that consistent participation in congregational prayer contributed to students' discipline and sense of responsibility. Ahsani et al. (2022) further demonstrated that religious school culture could strengthen discipline when religious and disciplinary values were systematically incorporated into daily educational programs and supported by positive examples from teachers. These findings indicate that religious activities should not be viewed merely as ritual practices but also as pedagogical mechanisms through which desirable behavioral patterns can be repeatedly practiced and gradually internalized.

The importance of systematic implementation is also emphasized by subsequent studies. Zein and Nugraha (2022) found that the use of congregational prayer for disciplinary character formation required teacher motivation, direct modeling, and continuous guidance. Fakhrurozi et al. (2023) similarly highlighted religious habituation as a practical mechanism for translating religious values into students' everyday conduct. In addition, Haidir et al. (2023) demonstrated that students' religious discipline is influenced by both Islamic Religious Education and religious culture in school and family environments, indicating that character formation is embedded within a broader educational context rather than being produced by classroom instruction alone. More recent evidence reinforces this argument. Dian et al. (2025) showed that systematic habituation combined with teacher exemplarity and student participation can strengthen religious discipline and socio-religious attitudes, while Rosadi et al. (2025) found that school culture significantly predicted students' discipline and religious character, with discipline functioning as an important behavioral pathway through which cultural values were translated into consistent moral conduct.

These findings are particularly relevant to the current Indonesian policy context. The 2025 Joint Circular Letter issued by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasizes the strengthening of religious, moral, disciplined, orderly, and independent character through habituation within educational

institutions (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education et al., 2025). Accordingly, schools and madrasahs are encouraged to create routines that enable students to repeatedly practice positive values. Religious activities such as Qur'anic *tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, *kultum*, greeting others, handshaking with teachers, and other Islamic practices can provide concrete contexts for such habituation. Nasrudin et al. (2023) similarly argued that religious extracurricular activities can strengthen students' religious character by providing opportunities for the consistent practice of religious values.

Nevertheless, the existence of religious programs does not automatically produce disciplined and morally upright students. The central issue is not simply whether religious activities are available but how consistently and meaningfully they are implemented, supervised, modeled, and evaluated. Recent research illustrates this complexity. Harfi et al. (2025), for instance, found that discipline culture in an Islamic school was reinforced through written rules, advice, and sanctions and subsequently contributed to students' religious character. Similarly, Chadijah et al. (2025) found that character education in an Islamic junior high school was embedded through school culture, religious routines, teacher practices, and institutional mechanisms that reinforced religiosity, honesty, tolerance, and discipline. Hadi and Prayogi (2025) further emphasized that the management of Islamic school culture requires the systematic integration of Islamic values into daily institutional practices. These studies suggest that the effectiveness of religious activities depends substantially on institutional consistency, teacher exemplarity, behavioral regulation, and the broader culture of the educational institution.

The available literature, however, leaves an important contextual and explanatory gap. Several studies have concentrated on particular religious practices, such as congregational prayer or Qur'anic activities, while others have examined religious character or discipline as relatively separate outcomes. Quantitative research has also provided evidence of relationships between school culture, discipline, and religious character, but offers less detailed explanation of how students experience and internalize religious routines in their everyday lives. Rosadi et al. (2025), for example, demonstrated statistically that discipline mediates the relationship between school culture and religious character in Indonesian Islamic junior high schools, thereby identifying discipline as an important behavioral pathway. However, the qualitative processes through which multiple religious activities become daily disciplinary and moral practices remain insufficiently explored. This gap is particularly significant in madrasahs, where religious activities are embedded within the institutional culture and are expected to shape both students' religious commitment and everyday conduct.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the implementation of religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The study is grounded conceptually in the understanding that character is strengthened through repeated practice, social modeling, and the internalization of values within a supportive environment. From this perspective, religious activities constitute not merely ritual obligations but also structured opportunities for students to practice punctuality, responsibility, respect, self-control, and other dimensions of *akhlakul karimah*. The preliminary condition at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru demonstrates the relevance of this issue. Although the madrasah has routinely implemented Qur'anic recitation before lessons, collective prayer, congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, *kultum*, Islamic commemorations, greeting and handshaking practices, several students have still been observed arriving late, participating less orderly in religious activities, failing to fully comply with school regulations, and displaying behavior that does not consistently reflect *akhlakul karimah*.

(Researcher's preliminary observation, May 2026). This discrepancy between the intended function of religious habituation and the observed behavioral reality provides a meaningful empirical basis for further investigation.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its examination of how multiple religious activities are implemented as an integrated process of discipline and *akhlakul karimah* formation within a junior secondary madrasah context. Rather than focusing on a single religious practice, the study considers Qur'anic *tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, greetings, handshaking, *kultum*, and other religious routines as interconnected components of character formation. It further examines the role of habituation, teacher modeling, supervision, and continuous guidance in translating religious practices into students' everyday conduct. This approach complements previous findings concerning religious habituation, school culture, and discipline by providing a contextual explanation of the mechanisms through which religious activities may influence students' behavior.

Accordingly, this study focuses on the implementation of religious activities in shaping students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah* at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru. Specifically, it seeks to describe the forms of religious activities implemented to foster students' discipline and to examine how these activities contribute to the development of *akhlakul karimah* through habituation, teacher exemplarity, supervision, and continuous guidance.

METHODS

1. Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach. Qualitative research seeks to develop an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of phenomena experienced by research participants within a particular case bounded by time, place, activities, or specific subjects. Such phenomena are examined through descriptive accounts expressed in words and language within a natural and context-specific setting (Moleong, 2018). The case study approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of phenomena occurring in real-world settings and to identify the facts, meanings, interactions, and processes associated with the implementation of religious activities in a madrasah (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was conducted at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, located in Jerowaru Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Data collection was conducted from May to July 2026. The research site was purposively selected because the madrasah actively implements various religious activities on a routine basis and provides a religiously oriented educational environment that is relevant to the focus of this study.

2. Research Participants and Focus

The participants consisted of the principal, teachers responsible for religious activities, and students of MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru. Participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge, direct involvement, and experience in implementing religious activities at the madrasah. Purposive selection was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to identify participants who possess relevant information and can provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Wijaya et al., 2025).

The focus of the study was the implementation of religious activities in fostering students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah*. Specifically, the study examined the forms of religious activities implemented at the madrasah and their contribution to students' behavioral development in both the school environment and their daily lives.

3. Data Collection

Data were collected through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observations were conducted to examine the implementation of religious activities and students' participation and behavior during these activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers responsible for religious activities, and selected students to obtain detailed information regarding the implementation, objectives, habituation processes, and perceived outcomes of religious activities.

Documentation was used to complement the observational and interview data. Documentary materials included the madrasah profile, religious activity schedules, school regulations, and photographs of religious activities. The use of multiple data collection techniques enabled the researcher to capture the complexity of the phenomenon more comprehensively and to strengthen the credibility of the findings through data triangulation (Patton, 2015).

The research instruments consisted of an interview guide, field notes, an audio recorder, and a camera. The interview guide was used to maintain consistency in the interview process while allowing the researcher to explore relevant issues that emerged during the interviews.

4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The analysis involved organizing the data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation according to the predetermined themes and focus of the study. The researcher subsequently interpreted the organized data to identify patterns, meanings, and relationships relevant to the research objectives and to formulate conclusions (Rijali, 2018).

The analytical process involved several interconnected stages: organizing the collected data, identifying relevant information, categorizing data according to emerging themes, interpreting the findings, and drawing conclusions. This process allowed the researcher to develop a coherent understanding of how religious activities were implemented and how they contributed to the development of students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah*.

5. Data Validity and Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was strengthened through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, and students, whereas technique triangulation involved comparing findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. These procedures were employed to identify consistencies and discrepancies among the data sources and to enhance the credibility and objectivity of the research findings (Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULTS

1. Forms of Religious Activities in Fostering Students' Discipline

The findings indicate that religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru were implemented as structured and routine components of the madrasah's daily educational practices. Rather than being treated as occasional religious events, these activities were incorporated into students' daily schedules and were accompanied by teacher guidance and supervision. The principal, religious-activity coordinator, and students consistently described the activities as part of the madrasah's effort to cultivate disciplined behavior through repeated religious practices. The main activities identified during the fieldwork included Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus*) before lessons, collective prayers before and after teaching and learning activities, congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, the habituation of greeting teachers and other members of the school community, and religious activities conducted on particular days (Observation, May 12, 2026).

The observational data further showed that the religious activities followed a relatively consistent sequence. Students were expected to arrive before the scheduled morning activities, participate in Qur'anic recitation, and engage in collective prayer before formal classroom instruction began. Congregational *Dhuhr* prayer was subsequently conducted as part of the school-day routine. Teachers were present during these activities and provided direction when students were not sufficiently prepared or attentive. The repeated nature of these practices created a structured behavioral environment in which punctuality, orderly participation, and compliance with established routines were continuously reinforced (Observation, May 24, 2026). This pattern suggests that the disciplinary dimension of religious activities was not derived solely from the religious content of the activities but also from the structured routines surrounding their implementation.

The principal emphasized that the routine implementation of religious activities was associated with a noticeable improvement in students' punctuality. According to Hendra Karma, S.Pd., Principal of MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, student lateness had been more prevalent before the religious activities were consistently incorporated into the morning routine. The requirement to participate in *tadarus* and collective prayer encouraged students to arrive earlier and prepare themselves before the beginning of formal lessons:

"Before religious activities were implemented routinely, quite a number of students still arrived late at school. However, after Qur'anic recitation and collective prayer became part of the morning routine, students began arriving earlier so that they could participate in the activities. At present, the level of lateness has decreased considerably compared with the previous situation" (P01, Male, Principal, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 15, 2026).

This statement indicates that religious activities functioned not only as instruments of religious instruction but also as mechanisms for regulating students' daily behavior. The obligation to be present before the commencement of *tadarus* and collective prayer established an early behavioral expectation that indirectly strengthened students' awareness of punctuality. This interpretation was consistent with observations showing that students who arrived early generally proceeded directly to the designated activity area and prepared for the scheduled religious practice, whereas late-arriving students were reminded by teachers to comply with the established routine (Observation, June 3, 2026).

The religious-activity coordinator similarly identified a positive development in students' discipline, particularly in relation to punctual participation. Yulia Kartika, S.Pd., explained that most students had gradually developed the habit of arriving before religious activities began. However, she also acknowledged that the process was not entirely uniform, as several students continued to require guidance and supervision:

"In general, students' discipline in participating in religious activities is fairly good. Most students have become accustomed to arriving on time before the activities begin, particularly for Qur'anic recitation and congregational prayer. Although several students are still occasionally late, after receiving guidance and supervision, they have begun to demonstrate positive changes" (P02, Female, Religious Activities Coordinator, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 17, 2026).

The observation data support this account. During several observed sessions, most students were already assembled before the religious activities commenced, while teachers monitored participation and reminded students who were late, talked during the activity, or were insufficiently attentive. The teachers' supervisory role appeared to be particularly important for students who had not yet fully internalized the routine. Rather than relying exclusively on sanctions, teachers

generally used reminders, verbal guidance, and repeated direction to encourage compliance (Observation, June 16, 2026). This finding suggests that discipline was cultivated through a combination of routine, supervision, reinforcement, and gradual habituation.

Students' accounts provided additional evidence concerning the perceived effects of these activities. Interviews with eight students indicated that regular participation in *tadarus* and congregational prayer had encouraged them to pay greater attention to time and madrasah regulations. Several students described arriving earlier because they did not want to miss the religious activities, while others associated the routines with becoming more accustomed to following school rules. One student explained that participating in the activities had gradually influenced his daily habits:

"I have become more accustomed to arriving early because I know that tadarus begins before the lesson. If I arrive late, I miss the activity and the teacher reminds me. Because of this routine, I now try to manage my time better" (P03, Male, Grade VIII Student, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 15, 2026).

Another student highlighted the relationship between religious routines and compliance with school regulations:

"The religious activities make us used to following a schedule. We have to be ready before the activity starts, and we are reminded to follow the rules. I think this has helped me become more disciplined at school" (P04, Female, Grade VIII Student, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 16, 2026).

Similar perceptions were expressed by other student participants. Some students reported that the routine of *tadarus*, collective prayer, and congregational *Dhuhr* prayer encouraged them to organize their time more carefully and to participate in school activities more orderly. Although individual experiences varied, the dominant pattern across the eight student interviews was an increased awareness of punctuality, routine, and compliance with institutional expectations (P03–P10, Students, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interviews, July 15–17, 2026).

The students' accounts were further corroborated by documentary evidence. The madrasah's religious activity schedule demonstrated that Qur'anic recitation, collective prayer, and congregational *Dhuhr* prayer had been incorporated into the formal daily routine rather than being conducted as unscheduled activities. The school regulations also contained behavioral expectations concerning punctuality, orderly participation, and compliance with madrasah procedures. Photographic documentation further confirmed the actual implementation of *tadarus*, collective prayer, and congregational prayer involving students and teachers (Document Analysis, Religious Activity Schedule and School Regulations, 2026; Document Analysis, Religious Activity Photographs, 2026).

The documentary evidence is particularly important because it demonstrates that the observed disciplinary practices were supported by an institutional framework. The religious activities were not solely dependent on individual teachers' initiatives but were embedded in the madrasah's organizational routines. This institutionalization provided continuity and helped transform religious practices into repeated behavioral experiences for students. The alignment between scheduled activities, observed practices, and participants' accounts strengthens the credibility of the finding that religious activities were systematically used as part of the madrasah's character-building strategy (Document Analysis, Madrasah Religious Activity Program, June 2026).

Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that the implementation process remained developmental rather than fully uniform. Although most students participated punctually and followed the established routines, occasional lateness, inattentiveness, and minor violations were still observed. Teachers responded through reminders, guidance, and supervision rather than

treating discipline as an immediate outcome of religious participation. In this respect, discipline emerged as a gradual behavioral process requiring repetition and consistent reinforcement (Observation, June 28, 2026). The principal similarly acknowledged that improvement in punctuality did not mean that all disciplinary problems had disappeared:

“There has been clear improvement, but we cannot say that every student is already fully disciplined. Some students still need to be reminded, especially when they are late or less focused during the activity. What is important is that they are gradually changing and becoming more accustomed to the routine” (P01, Male, Principal, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 15, 2026).

Taken together, the interview, observation, and documentary findings indicate that religious activities contributed to students’ disciplinary development through four interconnected mechanisms: structured routines, repeated habituation, teacher supervision, and behavioral modeling. *Tadarus*, collective prayer, and congregational *Dhuhr* prayer established regular temporal structures that required students to manage their time and participate punctually. Continuous repetition transformed these requirements into everyday habits, while teacher supervision reinforced compliance and provided corrective guidance when necessary. At the same time, teachers’ participation and exemplary conduct provided students with observable models of disciplined behavior (Observation, July 8, 2026; Document Analysis, Madrasah Religious Activity Program, July 2026).

Therefore, the findings suggest that the contribution of religious activities to students’ discipline should not be understood merely as a direct consequence of performing religious rituals. Rather, their formative effect emerged from the systematic integration of religious practices into the institutional routine of the madrasah. When religious activities were scheduled consistently, accompanied by teacher guidance, monitored continuously, and repeatedly practiced by students, they became a practical mechanism for developing punctuality, orderliness, responsibility, and compliance with institutional norms. The triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentary evidence provides convergent support for this interpretation and indicates that religious habituation constitutes an important component of disciplinary character formation at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru.

2. Implementation of Religious Activities in Fostering Students’ Akhlakul Karimah

The findings demonstrate that religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru functioned not only as instruments for strengthening students’ religious knowledge and worship practices but also as a structured mechanism for fostering *akhlakul karimah*, understood in this study as commendable moral conduct grounded in Islamic values. The implementation of *tadarus* Al-Qur’an, collective prayer, congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, greeting practices, handshaking with teachers, and other religious routines provided students with repeated opportunities to practice values such as respect, responsibility, patience, honesty, care for others, and self-control. The activities were therefore positioned within the broader educational process rather than being treated as isolated ritual practices (Observation, May 18, 2026).

Field observations indicated that the moral dimension of the religious activities was evident in students’ interactions with teachers and peers. Before lessons began, students participated in *tadarus* and collective prayer under teacher supervision. Students were also encouraged to greet teachers, maintain appropriate behavior during religious activities, and demonstrate respect toward others. Teachers did not merely supervise the technical implementation of worship practices but also provided brief reminders concerning manners, responsibility, and respectful conduct

(Observation, May 27, 2026). These practices suggest that the formation of *akhlakul karimah* occurred through the integration of religious rituals with everyday behavioral expectations.

The principal emphasized that the religious activities were deliberately implemented as part of the madrasah's broader character-development strategy. According to Hendra Karma, S.Pd., religious practices were expected to influence students' behavior beyond the immediate context of worship:

"Our religious activities are not intended merely to make students perform religious practices. We also want them to understand that these activities contain values that should be reflected in their daily behavior. For example, prayer teaches discipline and responsibility, while greeting and respecting teachers teach students how to behave properly toward others" (P01, Male, Principal, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, June 19, 2026).

This statement indicates that the madrasah conceptualized religious activities as a form of value-based habituation. The emphasis was not exclusively placed on students' ability to perform religious rituals correctly but also on their capacity to translate religious values into interpersonal conduct. This orientation was reflected in the observation of teachers who repeatedly connected religious practices with students' daily responsibilities and social behavior (Observation, June 21, 2026).

The role of teachers was particularly prominent in this process. Yulia Kartika, S.Pd., the teacher responsible for religious activities, explained that students were continuously reminded that religious practices should be accompanied by appropriate moral conduct:

"We always remind students that religious activities should not stop at the activity itself. They must also show good behavior afterward. We encourage them to respect teachers, speak politely, help their friends, and take responsibility for their duties. If a student makes a mistake, we provide guidance and explain what should be improved rather than simply giving punishment" (P02, Female, Religious Activities Coordinator, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, June 25, 2026).

The observation data corroborated this account. During religious activities, teachers were observed correcting students' behavior through verbal reminders, personal guidance, and exemplary conduct. When students talked during *tadarus* or prayer preparation, teachers generally responded by reminding them to maintain appropriate behavior. In several instances, teachers demonstrated the expected behavior themselves by participating in the activities, greeting students politely, and maintaining orderly conduct (Observation, July 2, 2026). Thus, teacher involvement operated through both direct instruction and behavioral modeling.

Students' experiences provided further evidence concerning the perceived influence of these activities on their moral behavior. One eighth-grade student described how repeated participation in *tadarus* and congregational prayer had gradually influenced personal habits and attitudes:

"After participating in tadarus and congregational prayer every day, I have become accustomed to waking up earlier so that I do not arrive late at school. I also try to complete my assignments on time because the teacher always reminds us that disciplined people are those who value trust and time. Now I am also more accustomed to following school rules without having to be reminded repeatedly" (P03, Male, Grade VIII Student, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 15, 2026).

The student's account illustrates an important process in character formation: religious activities were perceived not merely as acts of worship but as repeated experiences through which students associated religious practice with responsibility and self-regulation. Another student emphasized the interpersonal dimension of the program:

"The teachers always remind us to greet them and speak politely. At first, I did it because it was part of the school routine, but now I am more accustomed to greeting teachers and showing respect. We are also reminded to help friends and not make fun of others" (P04, Female, Grade VIII Student, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 16, 2026).

This account was consistent with the experiences reported by other student participants. Students generally associated religious activities with greater awareness of respectful interaction, appropriate speech, obedience to school rules, and responsibility toward others. The eight student interviews suggested that these behavioral changes were not necessarily experienced as immediate transformations but as gradual adjustments resulting from repeated exposure to the same expectations and practices (P03–P10, Students, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interviews, July 15–17, 2026).

The findings also revealed that the development of *akhlakul karimah* was not completely uniform across students. Several students acknowledged that they occasionally engaged in minor inappropriate behaviors, including talking during religious activities, arriving late, or failing to follow instructions immediately. However, teachers responded through guidance and repeated reminders. One student explained:

"Sometimes I still talk with my friends when the activity is taking place, especially when I am not paying attention. The teacher usually reminds us and explains why we should be respectful during the activity. After being reminded several times, I try not to repeat it" (P05, Male, Grade VIII Student, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 17, 2026).

This finding is significant because it demonstrates that *akhlakul karimah* was understood as a developmental process rather than an automatically achieved outcome. The persistence of minor behavioral violations suggests that participation in religious activities alone was insufficient to guarantee consistent moral conduct. Instead, the internalization of values required continuous guidance, reinforcement, and opportunities for students to correct their behavior. This interpretation is supported by observations in which teachers repeatedly used reminders and personal guidance when students demonstrated less desirable behavior (Observation, July 10, 2026).

Teacher modeling emerged as another important mechanism in the development of students' moral conduct. The teachers' behavior provided students with direct examples of how Islamic values could be expressed in everyday interactions. During observations, teachers were seen greeting students, using respectful language, participating in congregational prayer, maintaining punctuality, and assisting students who experienced difficulties during activities (Observation, June 30, 2026). Such practices created a visible connection between the values communicated through religious instruction and their practical expression in everyday school life.

The principal confirmed the importance of teacher modeling:

"Students will more easily follow what they see than what they only hear. Therefore, teachers must provide examples through their own behavior. If we ask students to be disciplined, respectful, and active in religious activities, teachers must also demonstrate those behaviors" (P01, Male, Principal, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, Interview, July 15, 2026).

The documentary evidence further supports the existence of an institutional framework for cultivating *akhlakul karimah*. The madrasah's religious activity schedule documented regular *tadarus*, collective prayer, and congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, while school regulations emphasized behavioral expectations related to respect, orderliness, discipline, and appropriate conduct. Photographic documentation also showed students and teachers participating together in religious activities

(Document Analysis, Religious Activity Schedule and School Regulations, 2026; Document Analysis, Religious Activity Photographs, June–July 2026).

In addition, the religious activity program guidelines indicated that the activities were connected to broader educational objectives concerning students' religious and moral development. This documentary evidence is important because it demonstrates that the cultivation of *akhlakul karimah* was not merely an informal expectation communicated by individual teachers but was embedded within the madrasah's broader educational practices (Document Analysis, Madrasah Religious Activity Program Guideline, June 2026). The convergence between institutional documents, observed practices, and participants' accounts strengthens the credibility of the finding.

The implementation process can therefore be understood through four interrelated mechanisms: religious habituation, value internalization, teacher role modeling, and corrective guidance. First, repeated participation in religious activities provided students with continuous opportunities to practice desirable behaviors. Second, teachers explicitly connected religious practices with moral values such as responsibility, respect, patience, and care for others. Third, teachers modeled these values through their own conduct. Fourth, when students demonstrated inappropriate behavior, teachers provided corrective guidance and opportunities for behavioral improvement rather than relying solely on punitive measures (Observation, July 20, 2026).

The findings also indicate that the moral effects of religious activities extended beyond the immediate performance of religious rituals. Students' accounts suggested that the routines influenced their attitudes toward teachers, peers, school rules, and personal responsibilities. The habituation of greeting, handshaking, polite speech, congregational prayer, and orderly participation created repeated social interactions through which students practiced respect and self-control. In this sense, religious activities served as a practical arena in which religious values were transformed into observable social behavior.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating a deterministic or automatic relationship between participation in religious activities and the formation of *akhlakul karimah*. The continued presence of minor behavioral violations indicates that character formation remained an ongoing process. The effectiveness of the activities depended on consistent implementation, teacher commitment, supervision, and students' repeated opportunities to practice and reflect upon the expected behaviors. This interpretation is consistent with qualitative research showing that religious routines and character formation are most meaningful when supported by consistent habituation and teacher role modeling rather than by ritual participation alone.

Overall, the triangulated findings demonstrate that religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru provided a structured environment for cultivating *akhlakul karimah* through repeated religious practice and everyday social interaction. The combination of *tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational *Dhuhr* prayer, greeting practices, teacher modeling, and continuous guidance enabled students to encounter Islamic moral values not only as abstract principles but as behaviors to be practiced in daily life. The development of *akhlakul karimah* therefore emerged as a gradual process of habituation, modeling, reinforcement, and behavioral reflection, supported by the institutional culture of the madrasah (Observation, July 22, 2026; Document Analysis, Madrasah Religious Activity Program Guideline, July 2026).

DISCUSSION

1. Results Analysis

The present study aimed to examine how religious activities are implemented at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru and how these activities contribute to the development of students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah*. The findings indicate that religious activities function beyond their ritual dimension: they constitute an integrated character-formation mechanism embedded in the daily institutional life of the madrasah. Qur'anic *tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, greeting and handshaking practices, and other religious routines were implemented through regular schedules, teacher supervision, behavioral guidance, and exemplary conduct. The major finding is that the contribution of these activities to students' character development emerged primarily through repetition, structured routines, teacher modeling, supervision, and continuous behavioral reinforcement, rather than through religious participation alone. Thus, the findings suggest that the formative power of religious activities lies in how religious practices are transformed into repeated behavioral experiences that students gradually internalize.

The first significant finding concerns the relationship between religious routines and students' disciplinary development. The observed improvement in punctuality, orderly participation, and compliance with madrasah regulations suggests that religious activities created a structured temporal and behavioral framework for students. The requirement to participate in *tadarus* and collective prayer before formal lessons meant that students had to arrive at school earlier, prepare themselves, and follow a predetermined sequence of activities. Consequently, punctuality was not taught merely as an abstract disciplinary principle but was embedded in a concrete daily routine. This explains why several students reported becoming more accustomed to managing their time and arriving earlier after the activities became routine. The disciplinary effect therefore appears to originate from the behavioral structure surrounding religious practice, in which students repeatedly encounter expectations concerning time, order, responsibility, and compliance.

This finding also explains why the presence of occasional lateness and inattentiveness does not necessarily contradict the overall positive contribution of the religious activities. Rather, these behaviors demonstrate that discipline was still undergoing a process of internalization. The fact that teachers continued to remind and guide students indicates that repeated participation does not immediately transform externally regulated behavior into internally regulated conduct. The findings therefore suggest a developmental sequence in which students initially comply because of institutional expectations and teacher supervision, but gradually develop personal routines and awareness through repeated exposure. In this sense, religious activities operate as a habituation mechanism, whereby disciplined behavior is practiced continuously until it becomes increasingly familiar and less dependent on external instruction.

The second major finding concerns the formation of *akhlakul karimah*. The findings demonstrate that religious activities provided students with practical contexts for translating Islamic moral values into observable interpersonal behavior. Greeting teachers, handshaking, using polite language, respecting others, helping peers, participating orderly in collective worship, and taking responsibility for school obligations were not treated as separate moral lessons. Instead, they were connected to religious routines and reinforced through everyday interactions. This indicates that *akhlakul karimah* was developed through a process of embodied value practice. Students encountered Islamic values not only through verbal explanations but also through repeated opportunities to enact respect, responsibility, patience, self-control, and social concern.

The importance of this process becomes particularly evident in the students' accounts. Some students explained that they initially followed greeting and respectful behavior because these practices were required by the school routine, but gradually became accustomed to performing them. This pattern indicates a movement from external compliance toward behavioral habituation and potential value internalization. The finding is important because moral education becomes more sustainable when students are repeatedly exposed to situations in which values must be enacted rather than merely understood cognitively. Thus, the religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru functioned as a practical moral environment in which Islamic values could be experienced, practiced, reinforced, and progressively incorporated into students' daily conduct.

The findings further demonstrate that discipline and *akhlakul karimah* were not two independent outcomes. They were closely interconnected dimensions of the same character-development process. Religious routines first established behavioral structures requiring punctuality, orderliness, responsibility, and self-control; these disciplinary behaviors subsequently created conditions for the expression of moral conduct. For example, arriving on time enabled students to participate properly in *tadarus* and prayer, while orderly participation required self-control and respect for others. Similarly, greeting teachers and using polite language represented both compliance with institutional expectations and the practical expression of Islamic ethics. Therefore, the relationship can be understood as religious practice → behavioral habituation → disciplinary regulation → value internalization → moral conduct. This interconnected process provides a more comprehensive explanation of how religious activities contribute simultaneously to discipline and *akhlakul karimah*.

Teacher involvement constitutes a critical mechanism within this process. The findings indicate that teachers did not merely organize religious activities but actively shaped the meanings and behavioral consequences of those activities. Through reminders, personal guidance, supervision, participation, and exemplary conduct, teachers connected religious practices with broader expectations of student behavior. The principal's statement that students tend to follow what they observe rather than what they merely hear illustrates the significance of behavioral modeling. Teachers who demonstrated punctuality, respectful communication, participation in congregational prayer, and appropriate interaction provided students with visible examples of how Islamic values should be enacted. Accordingly, the influence of religious activities cannot be separated from the social environment in which those activities are implemented.

Teacher supervision also explains why the implementation produced positive developments despite the persistence of minor behavioral violations. When students talked during *tadarus*, arrived late, or failed to follow instructions, teachers generally responded through reminders and corrective guidance. Such responses transformed disciplinary incidents into opportunities for learning and behavioral adjustment. The process therefore involved not only habituation but also reinforcement and reflection. Students were repeatedly exposed to the expected behavior, informed about why it mattered, and given opportunities to correct inappropriate conduct. This suggests that the effectiveness of religious activities depends substantially on the continuity of the pedagogical process surrounding them.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be interpreted through the principle that character develops through the interaction of practice, social modeling, and environmental reinforcement. Religious activities provided the behavioral context, teachers provided social models, and the institutional routines provided reinforcement. Within this framework, religious values became meaningful when students repeatedly encountered situations requiring them to act

according to those values. The findings therefore extend a purely instructional understanding of religious education. Religious education at the madrasah operates not only through the transmission of religious knowledge but also through the creation of a religiously structured behavioral environment in which students practice what they are expected to believe and demonstrate.

The findings also suggest that the institutionalization of religious activities is more important than their mere existence. Documentary evidence showed that *tadarus*, collective prayer, and congregational Dhuhr prayer were incorporated into formal madrasah schedules and supported by school regulations and program guidelines. This institutional structure provides continuity across different days and activities, reducing dependence on individual teachers' personal initiatives. In analytical terms, institutionalization transforms religious activities from isolated programs into an organizational culture of habituation. When the same expectations are communicated through schedules, regulations, teacher practices, and daily routines, students encounter consistent behavioral messages across multiple contexts. Such consistency potentially strengthens the process of internalizing discipline and *akhlakul karimah*.

The findings directly address the first objective of the study, namely to identify and describe the forms of religious activities implemented to foster students' discipline. The evidence demonstrates that the madrasah employed a combination of daily and periodic religious practices, particularly *tadarus* Al-Qur'an, collective prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, greeting and handshaking practices, and other religious routines. More importantly, these activities were implemented systematically rather than as occasional supplementary programs. Their disciplinary significance emerged from the routines, schedules, participation requirements, and supervision accompanying them.

The findings also directly answer the second objective concerning how religious activities contribute to the development of *akhlakul karimah*. The evidence indicates that their contribution occurred through four mutually reinforcing processes: religious habituation, teacher role modeling, continuous supervision, and corrective guidance. Religious habituation provided repeated opportunities for practice; teacher modeling demonstrated desirable conduct; supervision maintained behavioral consistency; and corrective guidance helped students recognize and improve inappropriate behavior. Thus, *akhlakul karimah* developed as an ongoing process rather than as an immediate or automatic consequence of religious participation.

An important analytical implication is that the relationship between religious activities and character formation should not be conceptualized as deterministic. The findings do not demonstrate that every student who participates in religious activities automatically becomes fully disciplined or consistently demonstrates *akhlakul karimah*. The continuing occurrence of lateness, talking during activities, and other minor violations indicates that participation creates opportunities and conditions for character formation, but internalization still depends on students' individual responses and the quality and consistency of institutional support. Therefore, religious activities should be understood as a structured pedagogical mechanism rather than a guaranteed behavioral intervention.

Taken together, the findings can be synthesized into an integrated character-formation process. At the initial level, the madrasah establishes religious routines through scheduled activities and institutional expectations. At the second level, students repeatedly participate in these activities under teacher supervision. At the third level, teachers connect religious practices with concrete behavioral values and model the expected conduct. At the fourth level, students gradually develop

habits of punctuality, orderliness, responsibility, respect, and self-control. At the final level, these repeated practices create opportunities for the internalization and expression of *akhlakul karimah* in students' everyday interactions. The resulting analytical model can therefore be expressed as institutionalized religious activities → repeated habituation → teacher modeling and supervision → behavioral reinforcement → value internalization → discipline and *akhlakul karimah*. This synthesis represents the central explanatory contribution of the findings.

Overall, the Results Analysis demonstrates that the effectiveness of religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru lies not simply in the religious content of the activities but in their systematic transformation into daily behavioral practices. *Tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, greetings, handshaking, and related practices become formative when they are consistently scheduled, repeatedly practiced, socially modeled, supervised, and connected to meaningful moral expectations. The findings consequently position the madrasah as a behavioral and moral environment in which religious practice serves as a medium for developing discipline and *akhlakul karimah*. This interpretation provides the basis for the next stage of discussion, namely comparing these findings with previous empirical studies and examining the extent to which the present evidence confirms, extends, or differs from existing scholarship.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with previous research demonstrating that religious habituation can contribute to the development of students' discipline and moral character. The present study, however, provides a more contextual explanation of the mechanisms through which such effects may occur. Whereas previous studies have frequently examined particular religious practices or specific character outcomes, the findings from MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru indicate that discipline and *akhlakul karimah* develop through the interaction of multiple religious activities, teacher modeling, supervision, and institutional routines. This finding reinforces the argument that religious activities become educationally meaningful when they are integrated into the everyday culture of the school rather than implemented as isolated rituals.

The finding concerning improved punctuality is consistent with Laelasari (2022), who reported an association between habituation to congregational prayer and students' disciplinary behavior. The present study extends this finding by showing that the disciplinary contribution of religious activities was not limited to participation in prayer itself. At MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, *tadarus*, collective prayer, and congregational Dhuhr prayer collectively established a structured temporal routine that encouraged students to arrive earlier, prepare themselves, and follow predetermined schedules. Thus, the present findings support Laelasari's emphasis on habituation while suggesting that the broader organizational structure surrounding religious activities is an important explanatory factor.

Similarly, the findings correspond with Fajrussalam et al. (2022), who found that consistent participation in congregational prayer contributed to students' discipline and responsibility. The present study confirms this relationship qualitatively by demonstrating how repeated participation created opportunities for students to practice punctuality, responsibility, and compliance with school expectations. However, the current findings also suggest that the effect is mediated by continuous supervision and reinforcement. Students who had not yet fully internalized the routine continued to require reminders and guidance from teachers. This indicates that religious practice may provide the behavioral structure for discipline, while teachers and institutional routines help transform participation into more stable behavioral patterns.

The findings are also consistent with Ahsani et al. (2022), who demonstrated that religious school culture can strengthen discipline when religious and disciplinary values are systematically incorporated into daily educational programs and supported by positive teacher examples. The present study provides further qualitative evidence for this proposition. Documentary analysis showed that religious activities were formally incorporated into the madrasah schedule and supported by school regulations and program guidelines. At the same time, observations demonstrated that teachers actively participated in and supervised these activities. The convergence of institutional documentation and field observations therefore strengthens the interpretation that religious activities function most effectively when supported by an organizational culture rather than depending solely on students' individual religious motivation.

The role of teacher motivation, modeling, and guidance identified in this study is particularly consistent with Zein and Nugraha (2022). Their findings emphasized that congregational prayer as a disciplinary strategy requires teacher motivation, direct modeling, and continuous guidance. The present study reaches a similar conclusion but broadens its application beyond congregational prayer. At MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, teacher modeling and guidance were evident across *tadarus*, collective prayer, greeting practices, handshaking, and other religious routines. Teachers did not merely instruct students to behave appropriately; they demonstrated punctuality, respectful communication, participation, and orderly conduct. This suggests that teacher exemplarity constitutes a cross-cutting mechanism that connects diverse religious activities with character formation.

The findings concerning *akhlakul karimah* are likewise compatible with Fakhrurozi et al. (2023), who identified religious habituation as a practical mechanism for translating religious values into students' everyday conduct. The present study provides concrete evidence of this translation process. Students associated repeated religious practices with greeting teachers, speaking politely, respecting peers, helping others, complying with school rules, and accepting responsibility. Importantly, the findings indicate that this translation was gradual rather than instantaneous. Students sometimes initially followed the expected behavior because it was part of the school routine, but repeated practice gradually made these behaviors more familiar. This finding supports the conceptualization of habituation as a process through which religious values can move from formal expectations toward observable conduct.

The present findings also reinforce Haidir et al. (2023), who found that students' religious discipline is influenced by Islamic Religious Education and religious culture within school and family environments. However, the current study places greater emphasis on the institutional environment of the madrasah. The findings suggest that the school provides a structured space in which religious values are continuously practiced and reinforced. Although the present study did not systematically examine family variables, the evidence demonstrates that the madrasah itself can provide an important environmental context for shaping students' daily behavioral patterns. This complements Haidir et al.'s broader ecological perspective by demonstrating how institutional routines operate at the school level.

The findings further correspond with Dian et al. (2025), who reported that systematic habituation combined with teacher exemplarity and student participation can strengthen religious discipline and socio-religious attitudes. The present study confirms these three elements but adds continuous supervision and corrective guidance as important components. The persistence of minor behavioral violations among some students demonstrates that participation and habituation alone are insufficient. Students require ongoing feedback to understand and adjust their behavior.

Therefore, the present findings suggest that an effective religious character program involves not only doing religious activities repeatedly, but also being guided to understand and enact the values embedded within those activities.

The relationship between school culture and discipline identified by Rosadi et al. (2025) is also strongly reflected in the current findings. Rosadi et al. demonstrated quantitatively that discipline functions as an important pathway linking school culture and religious character. The present qualitative evidence provides a complementary explanation of how such a pathway may operate in practice. Religious routines establish institutional expectations; students repeatedly participate in them; teachers reinforce compliance through supervision and modeling; and students gradually develop patterns of punctuality, responsibility, self-control, and respectful interaction. In this respect, the current study does not challenge the quantitative findings of Rosadi et al.; rather, it provides a process-oriented interpretation of the behavioral mechanisms underlying the relationship between school culture, discipline, and religious character.

The findings are also compatible with Harfi et al. (2025), who found that discipline culture in an Islamic school was reinforced through written rules, advice, and sanctions and subsequently contributed to students' religious character. The present study similarly demonstrates the importance of institutional rules and teacher guidance. Nevertheless, an important difference concerns the dominant corrective approach. At MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru, teachers generally emphasized reminders, personal guidance, and repeated behavioral correction rather than relying primarily on punitive sanctions. This suggests that discipline and *akhlakul karimah* can be cultivated through a supportive corrective model in which inappropriate behavior becomes an opportunity for reflection and improvement.

The findings further support Chadijah et al. (2025), who found that character education in an Islamic junior high school can be embedded within school culture, religious routines, teacher practices, and institutional mechanisms. The present study demonstrates a similar pattern in the madrasah context. However, the current research provides a more focused explanation of the relationship between religious routines and two interconnected outcomes: discipline and *akhlakul karimah*. Rather than treating religious activities as one component of a broader character program, this study demonstrates how their repeated implementation can become a practical arena for practicing discipline and Islamic moral conduct.

Finally, the findings are consistent with Hadi and Prayogi (2025), who emphasized the systematic integration of Islamic values into daily institutional practices. The evidence from MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru supports this perspective because religious values were incorporated into schedules, regulations, teacher practices, and student routines. The similarity across these studies strengthens the argument that Islamic character formation is more sustainable when religious values are institutionalized within everyday educational practices. At the same time, the present study contributes additional qualitative detail by demonstrating that institutionalization alone is insufficient without teacher involvement, continuous supervision, and opportunities for students to correct and repeat their behavior.

Overall, comparison with previous studies demonstrates substantial consistency regarding the importance of religious habituation, school culture, teacher modeling, and discipline. The principal contribution of the present study is therefore not to claim that religious activities inherently produce moral character, but to clarify how their formative potential is activated within an institutional context. The findings suggest that the strongest character-forming process occurs when religious activities are systematic, repetitive, socially modeled, supervised, and connected

explicitly to everyday moral behavior. This process-oriented explanation complements previous quantitative and qualitative studies and provides a more integrated understanding of religious activities as mechanisms of character formation.

3. Implications of Findings

The findings generate important theoretical implications for understanding the relationship between religious activities, discipline, and *akhlakul karimah* in Islamic education. First, the study reinforces a practice-oriented understanding of character education in which values are developed not merely through cognitive instruction but through repeated behavioral experiences. The findings demonstrate that students encounter Islamic values most meaningfully when they are required to practice them through concrete routines such as *tadarus*, congregational prayer, greeting teachers, handshaking, orderly participation, and respectful communication. This suggests that religious education should be understood as both a process of value transmission and behavioral formation.

Second, the findings contribute to a more integrated understanding of discipline and *akhlakul karimah*. Rather than treating discipline as an independent behavioral outcome and *akhlakul karimah* as a separate moral outcome, the study demonstrates that the two can develop through interconnected processes. Punctuality, responsibility, self-control, and compliance provide behavioral foundations for respect, politeness, responsibility toward others, and other forms of commendable conduct. The proposed process—institutionalized religious activities → habituation → teacher modeling and supervision → behavioral reinforcement → value internalization → disciplined and moral conduct—offers a conceptual interpretation that can complement previous studies of religious school culture and character education.

Third, the study has implications for the understanding of teacher agency in Islamic character education. Teachers function simultaneously as organizers, supervisors, motivators, role models, and corrective guides. This multidimensional role indicates that the success of religious programs cannot be evaluated solely according to student attendance or participation. The quality of teacher engagement is equally important. Teachers who consistently demonstrate the behaviors expected from students strengthen the credibility of the values being taught and create a social environment in which those values become visible and practicable.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that madrasahs should integrate religious activities into their daily institutional routines rather than treating them as supplementary programs. Religious activities should have clear schedules, defined objectives, responsible personnel, and consistent supervision. In addition, each activity can be explicitly connected to specific character values. For example, *tadarus* may be associated with responsibility and consistency, congregational prayer with punctuality and self-discipline, while greeting and handshaking may reinforce respect and politeness. Such explicit connections can help students understand the behavioral meaning behind religious practices.

The findings also suggest that teacher supervision should prioritize formative guidance rather than punishment alone. Minor violations such as lateness, talking during *tadarus*, or inattentiveness should be addressed through reminders, explanation, reflection, and repeated opportunities for correction. This approach recognizes that character formation is developmental. Students may require different amounts of time and support before externally regulated behavior becomes more internally motivated. Accordingly, madrasahs should develop mechanisms for continuous observation and constructive feedback rather than evaluating character only through occasional assessments.

Another practical implication concerns institutional consistency. The documentary findings indicate that religious activities were supported by schedules, regulations, and program guidelines. This alignment is important because inconsistent expectations may weaken habituation. Madrasahs seeking to strengthen discipline and *akhlakul karimah* should therefore ensure that religious values are reflected consistently in school rules, teacher behavior, student activities, and institutional evaluation. Character education becomes more credible when students encounter the same expectations across different aspects of school life.

The findings also have implications for educational policy and madrasah management. The results support policies emphasizing religious, moral, disciplined, orderly, and independent character through habituation in educational institutions. However, the study suggests that policy implementation should move beyond simply requiring religious activities. Institutional policies should also consider the mechanisms necessary for successful implementation, including teacher exemplarity, supervision, continuity, student participation, and behavioral reflection. In this regard, the study provides contextual evidence supporting the broader policy orientation toward habituation-based character education.

More broadly, the findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that religious activities can function as a form of pedagogical infrastructure for character development. Their significance lies not only in their religious content but also in their capacity to structure time, regulate behavior, facilitate social interaction, and provide repeated opportunities for value enactment. This perspective broadens the conventional understanding of religious activities as worship-oriented programs and positions them as educational mechanisms capable of connecting religious commitment with everyday social behavior.

4. Research Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a qualitative case study design focusing on a single madrasah, MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru. The context-specific nature of the research enabled an in-depth understanding of the implementation process but limits the transferability of the findings to other madrasahs, schools, regions, or educational contexts. Differences in institutional culture, leadership, teacher capacity, student characteristics, community environment, and religious traditions may produce different outcomes.

Second, the participants were selected purposively and consisted of the principal, teachers responsible for religious activities, and selected students. Although these participants were directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation, the study did not include a broader range of external stakeholders, such as parents or community religious leaders. Their perspectives might have provided additional information concerning whether changes in students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah* were also visible outside the madrasah environment.

Third, the study relied substantially on observations and participant accounts concerning behavioral changes. Such data may be influenced by observer effects and social desirability bias. Students and teachers may have presented their experiences in ways that reflected institutional expectations, particularly because the topic concerned religious behavior and moral conduct. Although source and technique triangulation were used to strengthen credibility, these methodological limitations cannot be completely eliminated.

Fourth, the study did not employ quantitative measurements of students' disciplinary behavior or *akhlakul karimah*. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating a statistically measurable causal effect of religious activities. The observed

improvements and participants' perceptions provide qualitative evidence of contribution and perceived change, but they do not establish causal relationships in the same manner as longitudinal or experimental designs.

Fifth, the study was conducted over a relatively limited period from May to July 2026. Character formation is a long-term process, and the study therefore cannot determine whether the behavioral changes observed during the research period will remain stable over an extended period. Longitudinal research would be necessary to examine whether habituated behaviors become deeply internalized and continue after students move to different educational levels or environments.

Finally, several potentially influential factors were not systematically controlled or examined, including students' family environments, peer relationships, individual religious motivation, prior disciplinary experiences, and exposure to broader social and digital environments. These factors may interact with school-based religious activities and influence students' discipline and moral behavior. Therefore, the contribution of religious activities should be interpreted as part of a broader character-development process rather than as an isolated determinant.

Despite these limitations, the triangulation of observations, interviews, and documentary evidence provides a credible contextual account of how religious activities operate within MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru. Future research could strengthen the evidence by employing multi-site comparative case studies, longitudinal designs, mixed-method approaches, and broader participant groups. Such research would help determine whether the mechanisms identified in this study—habituation, teacher modeling, supervision, behavioral reinforcement, and value internalization—operate similarly across different Islamic educational contexts and whether their effects remain sustainable over time.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious activities at MTs Darul Aitam Jerowaru function as an integrated mechanism for developing students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah*, rather than merely serving as routine forms of religious worship. The implementation of Qur'anic *tadarus*, collective prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, greeting and handshaking practices, and other religious routines created a structured environment in which students repeatedly practiced punctuality, orderliness, responsibility, self-control, respect, and appropriate social conduct. The findings indicate that the contribution of these activities emerged primarily through the interaction of religious habituation, teacher role modeling, continuous supervision, and corrective guidance. Religious routines established behavioral expectations, while repeated practice and teacher involvement gradually encouraged students to incorporate these expectations into their everyday conduct. Although occasional lateness, inattentiveness, and minor behavioral violations remained, these conditions indicate that character formation is a gradual process of behavioral development rather than an automatic consequence of religious participation.

The study further demonstrates that discipline and *akhlakul karimah* are interconnected dimensions of character formation. Discipline provides a behavioral foundation through which religious and moral values can be practiced, while religious activities provide concrete contexts for transforming these values into observable conduct. The findings therefore suggest an integrated process in which institutionalized religious activities → habituation → teacher modeling and supervision → behavioral reinforcement → value internalization → disciplined and morally appropriate conduct. This process represents the principal contribution of the study by explaining how multiple religious activities can operate collectively as a pedagogical and institutional

mechanism for character development in a madrasah context. The study consequently extends existing understandings of religious education by positioning religious routines not simply as instruments for religious instruction, but as part of the behavioral infrastructure through which Islamic values can be practiced and progressively internalized.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. The study was conducted as a qualitative case study at a single madrasah and therefore does not seek to establish statistically generalizable or causal relationships. The purposive selection of participants, reliance on interviews and observations, relatively short data-collection period from May to July 2026, and absence of systematic quantitative measurement may also limit the assessment of long-term behavioral change. In addition, factors outside the madrasah, including family environment, peer interaction, individual motivation, and broader social influences, were not examined systematically. The findings should therefore be interpreted as a context-specific explanation of the mechanisms through which religious activities contribute to character formation.

Future research should extend this investigation through longitudinal, comparative, and mixed-method designs involving multiple madrasahs and broader participant groups, including parents and community members. Quantitative measures of discipline and *akhlakul karimah* could be combined with qualitative observation to examine the sustainability and magnitude of behavioral changes over time. Future studies should also investigate how family involvement, peer relationships, digital environments, and individual religious motivation interact with school-based religious habituation. Such research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which religious activities can produce sustained internalization of Islamic values and strengthen students' discipline and *akhlakul karimah* across diverse educational contexts.

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