

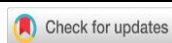


MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS HABITUATION AS A STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING STUDENT CHARACTER THROUGH PRE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT SMP AL-AZHAR TLAMBAH SAMPANG

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening students' character remains an important challenge in Islamic education. This study aims to analyze the management of religious habituation as a strategy for strengthening students' character through pre-learning activities at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings indicate that religious habituation was systematically planned and implemented and contributed to strengthening students' character. The activities included the 3S habituation (smiling, greeting, and addressing others politely), prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational Duha prayer, and the recitation of selected Qur'anic surahs, all of which were conducted consistently. These habituation practices strengthened students' religious character, discipline, sense of responsibility, and politeness. The novelty of this study lies in examining the management of religious habituation through pre-learning activities as a strategy for strengthening students' character from the perspective of Islamic Educational Management. In conclusion, systematic and consistent management of religious habituation can strengthen students' character and foster a religious culture within the school environment.

ABSTRAK

Penguatan karakter peserta didik merupakan tantangan penting dalam pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis manajemen pembiasaan religius sebagai strategi penguatan karakter melalui kegiatan pra-pembelajaran di SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen pembiasaan religius dilaksanakan melalui perencanaan dan pelaksanaan yang sistematis serta memberikan implikasi terhadap penguatan karakter peserta didik. Kegiatan meliputi pembiasaan 3S (senyum, salam, sapa), doa, Asmaul Husna, salat Duha berjamaah, dan pembacaan surah-surah pilihan yang dilakukan secara konsisten. Pembiasaan tersebut memperkuat karakter religius, disiplin, tanggung jawab, dan sopan santun. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada pengelolaan pembiasaan religius melalui kegiatan pra-pembelajaran dalam perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. Kesimpulannya, manajemen pembiasaan religius yang dilakukan secara sistematis dan konsisten dapat memperkuat karakter peserta didik serta membangun budaya religius di sekolah.

Kata Kunci: Pembiasaan Religius, Penguatan Karakter, Kegiatan Pra-Pembelajaran

INTRODUCTION

The importance of character development has become increasingly evident amid globalization, rapid technological advancement, and changing social conditions. These developments have influenced student behavior, including discipline, responsibility, social concern, and appreciation of religious values. Consequently, schools need to develop an educational culture that consistently integrates character formation into students' learning and daily activities. Character education provides an important foundation for cultivating positive attitudes, ethical values, and responsible behavior (R et al., 2021). However, its implementation needs to evolve through relevant, innovative, and contextual approaches that respond to the changing needs of students and their social environment (Taja et al., 2021).

Table 1. National assessment findings related to student character

No	Character Dimension	National Assessment Finding
1	Independence	Independence was identified as one of the relatively lower character dimensions among students
2	Global Diversity	Global diversity was identified as one of the relatively lower character dimensions among students
3	Character Development	The National Assessment indicates that student character remains an important dimension of educational outcomes alongside cognitive learning achievement

Management plays a very important role in creating a religious culture in educational institutions. A religious culture in schools can be established through a well planned and well organized managerial approach, which includes the stages of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation (Saimima, 2022). From the perspective of Islamic Educational Management, the development of student character is a process that requires systematic management through the planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of various school programs. Strategies for developing a religious culture in schools are designed to establish positive habits among students so that they grow into individuals with noble character and become the next generation of the nation grounded in Islamic values (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025). One strategy that is widely implemented is religious habituation, namely the process of developing positive habits through religious activities carried out in a planned, consistent, and sustainable manner. This process plays an important role in shaping students' identities while influencing how they respond to various problems and dilemmas encountered in everyday life (Aflisia et al., 2021).

Religious habituation is not only intended to improve the quality of students' worship but also to develop discipline, responsibility, honesty, concern, and noble character, which constitute part of the objectives of Islamic education. Strengthening a school culture that focuses on Islamic values and religious character can be achieved through various habituation practices in the school environment, such as reading the Qur'an, maintaining cleanliness, praying before and after learning, respecting teachers, and practicing tolerance (Purwandari et al., 2022). The development of students' religious character must be implemented based on commitment and consistency in its application. This means that the habituation process must be carried out continuously and consistently so that religious values can be internalized and become part of students' character (Syaroh & Mizani, 2020).

The integration of religious values into education is an effective strategy for strengthening students' moral resilience in facing the highly dynamic and complex currents of globalization (Masturin, 2024). Thus, the success of religious habituation is determined not only by the types of activities implemented but also by the effectiveness of school management in managing these programs so that they can become an integral part of school culture and students' daily lives.

Previous studies have reported that religious culture is implemented through various religious habituation activities, teacher role modeling, and the strengthening of school culture integrated into daily activities. This implementation is carried out through three main strategies, namely structured and sustainable habituation, the integration of religious values into all aspects of school life, and the habituation of character values from an early age. These three strategies have proven effective in fostering religious values, discipline, responsibility, and politeness among students (Wulandari et al., 2026). The findings revealed a three phase strategic management model: (1) strategic formulation through the vision based "Kurikulum Keassalaman," which integrates religious and social values; (2) implementation through systematic habituation, teacher role modeling, and student leadership programs (Askar and Dakwah); and (3) evaluation through collaborative monitoring involving parents through the PPNP system. This integrated approach significantly improved students' social confidence and religious discipline (Dian et al., 2025). The findings show that effective character education strategies should integrate spiritual, moral, and cognitive dimensions into both formal and non-formal curricula through contextual, participatory, and sustainable approaches. The character education model developed emphasizes the principles of inclusivity, contextual relevance, and the involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, families, and communities. Religious values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance serve as the main foundation for developing student character (Bahiyah, 2025). The findings also show that the integration of Islamic habituation into primary education not only promotes individual moral development but also creates a school environment conducive to learning religious values (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024)

Various previous studies have demonstrated that religious culture and habituation programs make a positive contribution to student character development. The implementation of routine religious activities has been shown to improve students' discipline, responsibility, and social behavior. Other studies have also emphasized that school principal leadership and the management of character education programs influence the successful implementation of religious culture in schools. In addition, habituation activities such as collective prayers, congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and various other religious activities serve as effective means of internalizing Islamic values when supported by the commitment of the entire school community. These findings indicate that character development requires well-planned, systematic, and sustainable program management so that religious values can develop into a school culture.

Nevertheless, most previous studies have focused on the implementation of religious activities or the effectiveness of character education in general. Studies specifically analyzing the management of religious habituation through pre-learning activities, encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation as a strategy for strengthening student character, remain relatively limited. Furthermore, previous studies have not extensively examined how religious habituation is managed as part of a school management strategy to develop a sustainable religious culture. This gap indicates the need for research that not only describes the forms of religious activities but also analyzes their management processes from the perspective of Islamic Educational Management.

SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang is one of the schools that consistently implements various religious habituation programs through pre-learning activities, such as prayer recitation, the recitation of Asmaul Husna, Duha prayer, the recitation of selected Qur'anic surahs, and the 3S habituation (smiling, greeting, and showing respect). These programs are routinely implemented as part of efforts to develop a religious culture and strengthen student character (Imamudin et al., 2022). This condition makes SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang a relevant context for examining how the management of religious habituation is implemented as a strategy for character development through pre-learning activities.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the management of religious habituation as a strategy for strengthening student character through pre-learning activities at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang. This study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic Educational Management studies, particularly in the management of religious culture in schools, as well as a practical contribution to school principals and teachers in designing and implementing effective, systematic, and sustainable religious habituation programs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in depth understanding of the phenomenon of religious habituation management through pre-learning activities within the natural context of the school environment. According to Rahardjo, a case study is a series of scientific activities conducted intensively, comprehensively, and in detail toward an individual, group, institution, or organization to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon (Adiwijaya et al., 2024). The research was conducted at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Karangpenang, Sampang Regency. The research location was purposively selected because the school consistently implements a religious habituation program through pre-learning activities as part of its strategy for strengthening student character.

The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from the principal, vice principal, teachers, and students involved in the implementation of the religious habituation program. Secondary data were obtained from school documents, such as work programs, school regulations, activity schedules, school archives, photographs of activities, and other relevant documents.

Data were collected through observation, in depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to obtain an overview of the implementation of religious habituation before learning activities began. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants to obtain information regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the religious habituation program. Meanwhile, documentation was used to complement and strengthen the data obtained through observation and interviews.

Data validity was examined using source triangulation and technique triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to obtain valid and reliable data. Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted iteratively from the data collection process until credible research findings were obtained.

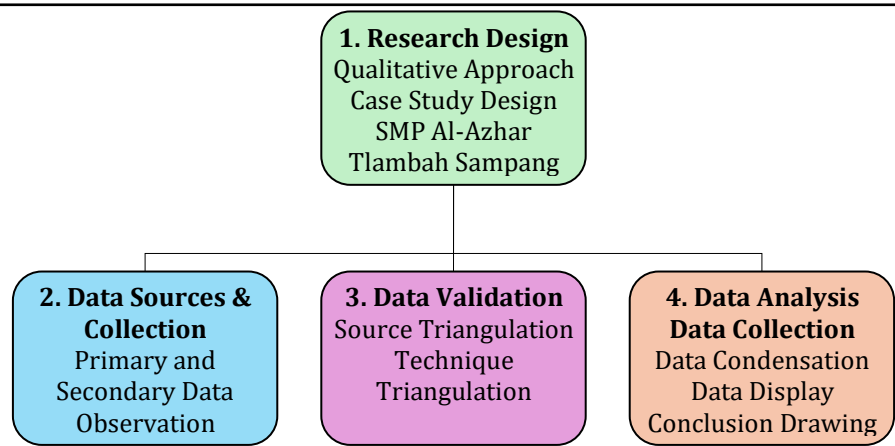


Figure 1. Research procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Planning for Religious Habituation

The findings show that the planning of religious habituation at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang is carried out systematically as part of the school’s strategy to develop a religious culture and strengthen student character. The planning begins with aligning the religious habituation program with the school’s vision, mission, and objectives so that all designed activities have a clear direction in supporting student character development. According to Warzi and Mohammad Thoha, the success of a program depends greatly on the accuracy of the strategies designed and implemented (Warzi & Thoha, 2026)

The planning process is carried out through coordination among the principal, vice principal, teachers, and educational staff. During this process, the types of activities, implementation schedules, task distribution, and program implementation mechanisms are determined. This collaborative planning aims to establish a shared understanding while strengthening the commitment of the entire school community to implementing the religious habituation program consistently.

Based on the research findings, the religious habituation activities designed as part of the pre-learning activities include the 3S habituation (smiling, greeting, and showing respect), recitation of prayers before learning, recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational Duha prayer, recitation of selected Qur’anic surahs, and various other religious activities routinely conducted before learning begins. According to Marini, character values in a religious school culture are manifested through the provision of facilities and opportunities for worship, collective prayer activities, the use of religious slogans and songs within the school environment, the organization of various religious activities such as animal sacrifice during Eid al-Adha, the habituation of infak as a form of social concern for people in need, the use of Muslim uniforms on Fridays, and the implementation of pesantren programs to strengthen students’ faith, morals, and worship practices (Marini, 2017). In addition to determining the forms of activities, the school also assigns responsibilities to the principal, teachers, homeroom teachers, and teachers on duty so that each activity can be carried out according to the established schedule.

The findings also show that the development of the religious habituation program takes into consideration the characteristics of the students and the conditions of the school. Therefore, the activities are designed not only to improve religious understanding but also to develop positive habits reflected in students’ religious attitudes, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and social concern.

These findings indicate that the planning of religious habituation at SMP Al-Azhar

Tlambah Sampang is not merely oriented toward preparing an activity agenda but also serves as a foundation for developing a religious culture that is implemented in a directed, systematic, and sustainable manner.

Systematically planned religious habituation indicates that the school has implemented the planning function as one of the important elements of educational management. Planning serves as the main foundation for the successful implementation of a program because it provides clear direction regarding objectives, forms of activities, task distribution, and implementation mechanisms. This is in line with G. R. Terry's management theory, which emphasizes the importance of planning, organizing, implementation, and controlling functions in achieving objectives (Ginting et al., 2024). In addition, school policies need to be designed to align with efforts to strengthen religious culture, for example, by implementing regulations that support various religious activities (Rohmah, 2023)

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous research indicating that the success of strengthening student character is influenced by the management of programs designed systematically and sustainably. Religious habituation programs developed based on the school's vision and supported by clear task distribution can create a school culture conducive to the internalization of religious values. Previous research also shows that the principal acts as the primary person responsible for directing program implementation in accordance with the school's vision and mission (Pratama & Istiqomah, 2026). Alfisyah et al. stated that, as a leader, the principal is responsible for designing and implementing various programs that support the development of a religious culture in schools (Alfisyah et al., 2024)

Planning for religious habituation does not merely function as the preparation of a work program but also serves as a strategic effort to integrate Islamic values into all school activities. Through a planning process involving various elements of the school community, religious habituation is no longer understood as a ceremonial activity but as part of an organizational culture that supports sustainable student character development. Thus, the planning conducted at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang serves as an important foundation for the successful implementation of religious habituation in developing student character.

Implementation of Religious Habituation

The findings show that the implementation of religious habituation at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang is carried out consistently through pre-learning activities scheduled by the school. All students participate in a series of religious activities before the learning process begins as part of the school culture, which aims to develop religious character and habituate students to practice Islamic values in their daily lives.

The implementation of religious habituation begins with the application of the 3S culture (smiling, greeting, and showing respect) when students enter the school environment. The activity is followed by reciting prayers before learning, reciting Asmaul Husna, performing congregational Duha prayer, reciting selected Qur'anic surahs, and other religious activities conducted according to the school schedule. All activities are carried out routinely so that they become habits embedded in students. According to Al Ghozali and Muhlasin Amrullah, students practice the 5S habituation by smiling and kissing the teacher's hand when greeted by teachers at the school gate before entering. Students also practice the 5S habituation with their friends and parents at home (Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025)

In its implementation, the principal serves as the person responsible for the program, while teachers, homeroom teachers, and teachers on duty accompany and guide students throughout the activities. The involvement of the entire school community indicates that the implementation of religious habituation is not solely the responsibility of Islamic Religious Education teachers but is a shared responsibility in developing a religious culture within the

school environment. Furthermore, research by Fuadi et al. emphasizes that the successful implementation of religious culture is strongly influenced by the role of the principal as a manager who coordinates program implementation, builds collaboration among members of the school community, and ensures that all religious activities are carried out consistently. Thus, the implementation of religious habituation is not merely a religious activity but constitutes part of the school management strategy for developing a sustainable religious culture and supporting the strengthening of student character (Fuadi et al., 2025). Another study states that religious culture in schools is key to developing students' noble character. The principal plays a highly strategic role in managing and instilling Islamic values within the school environment. Through effective management, the principal can create a religious culture that not only supports the academic learning process but also strengthens students' moral and spiritual development (Dewi, 2024)

The findings also show that the implementation of religious habituation is not only oriented toward conducting religious activities but is also directed toward developing discipline, responsibility, politeness, concern, and positive habits among students. Repeated habituation means that religious values do not remain merely routine activities but develop into part of students' behavior in their daily lives. The findings are also supported by Maryani's research, which explains that the implementation of religious culture is one of the important functions of educational management, realized through the habituation of religious values in students' daily activities. Implementation carried out in a directed and continuous manner can improve attitudes and morality while strengthening the religious culture within the school environment (Maryani, 2021). In line with previous research conducted by Munir, the findings show that religious values can be internalized through habituation programs (Hafidzh & Madhakomala, 2024)

The consistent implementation of religious habituation demonstrates that program implementation depends not only on planning but also on the commitment of the entire school community to carrying out the activities sustainably. Implementation involving the principal, teachers, and students reflects that religious culture is developed through a habituation process integrated into daily school activities. These findings are consistent with research by Laila Mustika and Muhlasin Amrullah, which shows that the implementation of religious character education through school culture habituation is carried out through routine activities, such as the 5S culture, prayers before and after learning, habituation of gratitude, tolerance, and various religious activities conducted consistently. The implementation of these habituation practices has proven to be an effective strategy for strengthening students' religious character (Mustika & Amrullah, 2024)

Table 2. Religious habituation activities and character values developed at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang

No	Religious Habituation Activities	Implementers	Character Values Developed
1	3S culture (smile, greeting, and salutation) and welcoming students	Principal and teachers	Politeness, respect, and social awareness
2	Prayer before learning, recitation of Asmaul Husna, and selected Qur'anic verses	Teachers and students	Religious values, discipline, and love for the Qur'an
3	Congregational Duha prayer	Principal, teachers, and students	Religious commitment and responsibility

4	Guidance and supervision of religious activities	Principal, homeroom teachers, and duty teachers	Consistency, collaboration, and school culture development
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The table shows that the implementation of religious habituation at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang is carried out through various routine activities integrated into the school culture. These activities involve the principal, teachers, and students as a form of shared responsibility in developing a religious school environment. Through consistent habituation, religious values, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and social concern can be internalized in students' daily behavior.



Figure 1. Religious habituation activities before learning at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang

The figure shows the implementation of religious habituation activities conducted before the learning process at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang. These activities demonstrate that religious habituation has been integrated into the school's daily routine as part of efforts to strengthen students' religious character.

Implications for Character Strengthening

The findings show that religious habituation implemented in a planned, consistent, and sustainable manner has positive implications for strengthening student character. Pre-learning activities, such as the 3S habituation (smiling, greeting, and showing respect), prayer recitation, recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational Duha prayer, and recitation of selected Qur'anic surahs, not only develop worship habits but also instill religious values reflected in students' daily behavior. Through these habituation practices, students become more disciplined in following school rules, demonstrate a sense of responsibility for assigned tasks, behave politely toward teachers and peers, and show concern for the school environment. This is consistent with Hidayah et al., whose simple linear regression analysis showed that religious habituation has a positive and significant effect on strengthening religious culture in schools (Hidayah et al., 2025)

The findings also show that religious habituation can develop a school culture conducive to character formation. Islamic values are not only taught through classroom learning but are internalized through routine activities carried out continuously, thereby becoming part of students' habits. This habituation process encourages the development of religious character that is not only evident during religious activities but is also reflected in social interactions, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect in students' daily lives within the school environment. As stated by Nasikhah et al., this implementation has a positive impact on student character development, making students more disciplined, religious, honest, and independent (Nasikhah et al., 2021). This is also in line with Hadi and Prayogi, who state that religious cultural activities in educational institutions play a very important role in developing student character, including values of honesty, discipline, and

responsibility (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025)

These implications indicate that religious habituation is an effective strategy for supporting the strengthening of student character. Character formation does not occur merely through the theoretical delivery of material but through real experiences carried out repeatedly, allowing the values taught to develop into habits and school culture. In line with Nahriyah et al., these values not only function to improve students' knowledge but also shape their character, which is the primary objective of character education in schools (Nahriyah et al., 2024). Thus, religious habituation not only functions as a religious activity but also serves as a means of internalizing character values that support the creation of a religious, disciplined, and morally upright educational environment.

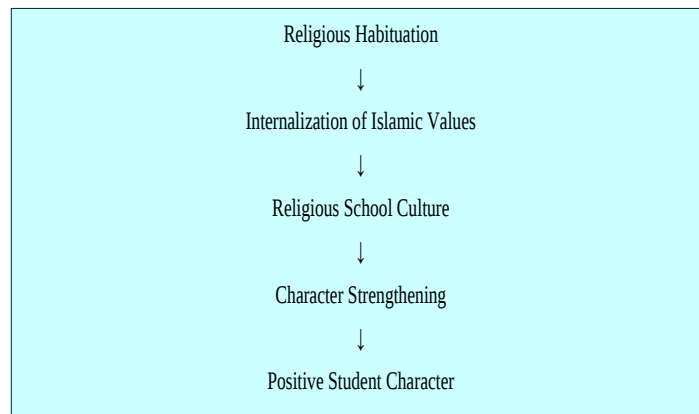


Figure 2. Implications of religious habituation for students

The figure shows that religious habituation carried out routinely and continuously becomes a process of internalizing Islamic values within students. Through religious activities integrated into the school culture, values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and social concern develop into actual behaviors, thereby strengthening student character and supporting the formation of a religious and morally upright school culture.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the management of religious habituation at SMP Al-Azhar Tlambah Sampang is implemented through systematic and continuous planning and implementation. The program is designed based on the school's vision and objectives through coordination among the principal, teachers, and educational staff. Its implementation is carried out through pre-learning activities, including the 3S habituation (smiling, greeting, and addressing others politely), prayer, the recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational Duha prayer, and the recitation of selected Qur'anic surahs. Consistent implementation of these habituation practices contributes to strengthening students' character, particularly in terms of religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and politeness.

This study confirms that the management of religious habituation can serve as a strategy for fostering a religious school culture while strengthening students' character. However, the study is limited to a single school and employs a case study approach; therefore, its findings cannot be broadly generalized. Future research is recommended to involve multiple schools and employ comparative or mixed methods approaches to gain a broader understanding of the effectiveness of religious habituation in strengthening students' character.

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