

Strengthening the Amaliah Values of Nahdlatul Ulama Through Character Habit-Building Activities of Aswaja (PKA) in an Effort to Improve Religious Character

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the importance of strengthening the religious character of students through the instilling of Nahdlatul Ulama's practical values from an early age. The Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) activity at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo is one of the strategic efforts in internalizing the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah to students. This study aims to describe the implementation of PKA, the instilled Nahdlatul Ulama practical values, and their impact on improving the religious character of students. The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that PKA activities are carried out routinely every morning before learning with various religious activities, such as joint prayers, sholawat, tahlil, diba', istighotsah, and reading of prayer prayers. Through consistent habits, the values of tawassuth, tawazun, tasamuh, and i'tidal can be internalized in the attitudes and behavior of students. Despite challenges such as a lack of attention and discipline among some students, teacher mentoring and the involvement of the character team supported the program's success. In conclusion, the PKA program was effective in strengthening Nahdlatul Ulama's practical values, enhancing students' religious character, and fostering a religious culture within the madrasah.

Keywords

Amaliah Values, Aswaja, Character, Religious



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INTRODUCTION

Schools play a vital and strategic role in shaping pupils' character, serving as the second sphere of education after the family and reinforcing the moral and social values first instilled at home (Lestari, 2022). Education itself is a conscious and planned effort to develop pupils holistically, guiding them towards intellectual, physical and spiritual maturity rather than academic achievement alone (Rahayuningtiyas, 2023). From an Islamic perspective, this developmental aim converges with the goal of producing individuals who are faithful and God-fearing while leading a balanced life (Alvissabila, 2023).

Character education is commonly defined as a systematic effort to instil noble moral values so that they are understood not merely cognitively but also reflected consistently in pupils' attitudes and daily conduct, integrating knowledge, attitude and psychomotor aspects (Fauziah et al., 2021; Fathurrochman & Muslim, 2021). Character itself is a person's distinctive moral quality, formed gradually through environment, education and sustained practice rather than instilled instantly (Putri et al., 2024).

Across this literature, habituation is consistently identified as the most effective mechanism for embedding character values: through repeated and consistent practice, values that are initially abstract become concrete, lived behaviour (Dewantari et al., 2024; Dewantari, 2023). This process is reinforced by teachers, who function as the primary role models that pupils observe and imitate in daily school life (Usan & Suyadi, 2022). Taken together, these studies converge on the view that character formation requires an integration of understanding, attitude and consistent action, rather than cognitive instruction alone.

Within Islamic education, and particularly in madrasahs affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, this habituation approach is applied to the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) tawasuth (moderation), tawazun (balance), tasamuh (tolerance) and i'tidal (fairness) through recurring religious practices such as communal prayer, sholawat, tahlil, diba' and istighotsah. Prior studies report that this Aswaja-based habituation, generally termed Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA), strengthens moderate and tolerant religious attitudes among pupils by integrating knowledge, attitude and action (Muttaqin et al., 2024; Aziz & Kuswanto, 2024; Rahayuningtiyas, 2023).

MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo, Bojonegoro, is one such institution that has implemented the PKA programme as part of its curriculum, in line with its vision of producing pupils who are academically capable, strong in faith, and of noble character within the an-Nahdliyah tradition.

However, most existing studies on Aswaja-based character education have concentrated on describing programme design or its general impact at secondary and tertiary level (Aziz & Kuswanto, 2024; Rahayuningtiyas, 2023), with comparatively little attention paid to how PKA is implemented on a daily basis among primary-level (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) pupils including how its schedule is structured and sustained, and the practical challenges encountered in habituating these values at this early educational stage. This gap is significant given that primary school age is a formative period for character internalisation, yet the mechanisms by which daily habituation practices translate into religious character at this level remain underexplored.

Building on this gap, this study aims to describe the implementation of the Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) programme at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo, the practical values (amaliah) of Nahdlatul Ulama instilled through it, and its impact on strengthening pupils' religious character. In doing so, this study offers a novel contribution by documenting, at the primary madrasah level, not only the values transmitted but also the scheduling, supervisory strategies and behavioural sanctions that sustain PKA's daily implementation aspects that have received limited attention in prior research.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach, specifically a descriptive qualitative research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand and describe in depth the process of strengthening the practical values of Nahdlatul Ulama through Aswaja Character Development (PKA) activities as part of efforts to enhance the religious character of pupils. Qualitative descriptive research enables the researcher to explore social and religious phenomena comprehensively based on the natural conditions occurring within the madrasah environment.

This research was conducted at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo during the Teaching Assistance (AM) programme, which took place from 12 January to 12 February 2026. The research subjects comprised several parties directly involved in the implementation of the PKA activities, namely the supervising teachers or teachers leading the Aswaja Character Development (PKA) activities, pupils at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo who actively participated in the PKA activities, and Teaching Assistance students who acted as mentors and were also involved in the implementation of these activities. The selection of research subjects was carried out using purposive sampling, taking into account the subjects' involvement in and understanding of the PKA activities.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews and documentation. Direct observation was carried out to monitor the implementation of the Aswaja Character Building (PKA) activities, covering the nature of the activities, student participation, the religious attitudes and behaviour demonstrated during the activities, and the interaction between teachers and students. Interviews were conducted in an open and semi-structured manner with PKA supervising teachers and pupils to obtain more in-depth information regarding the implementation of the activities, their objectives, the challenges faced, and the impact of PKA activities on the enhancement of pupils' religious character. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of photographs, videos, and activity records relating to the implementation of the Aswaja Character Development Programme (PKA).

Data analysis in this study was carried out interactively and continuously, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation was presented in the form of systematic narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding of the data. Conclusions were drawn to formulate the research findings regarding the role of the Aswaja Character Development Programme (PKA) in strengthening the practical values of Nahdlatul Ulama and enhancing the religious character of the pupils.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data obtained from PKA supervising teachers, pupils, and student teaching assistants. Methodological triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation so that the data obtained possessed a high level of validity and credibility and was scientifically accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Character refers to the mental and moral qualities or strengths reflected in an individual's conduct and moral behaviour. Character forms part of a person's unique personality and acts as a driving force in their thought processes, attitudes and actions. Through their character, a person reveals their true self, which distinguishes one individual from another in how they respond to various situations in life.

Character is not formed instantly, but rather through a lengthy process influenced by habits, education, and the social and cultural environment. The process of character formation takes place continuously as individuals interact with their surroundings. Consequently, character plays a vital role in determining the direction of an individual's behaviour in daily life whether in personal, social or spiritual contexts and therefore needs to be developed consciously and systematically through education (Surur, 2022).

It can thus be understood that character refers to the traits, disposition, nature, moral qualities, or ethics inherent in a person as distinctive characteristics that distinguish their behaviour, actions, and conduct from those of other individuals. Although character resides in the deepest inner realm, its presence can be recognised through the attitudes and behaviour consistently displayed in daily life. In the context of education, particularly through the Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) programme, these character values are internalised through various religious activities and the cultivation of attitudes grounded in the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. Character education through the Aswaja Character Development Programme (PKA) is understood as a system for instilling character values in the entire school community, encompassing the aspects of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and concrete actions in practising these values. Through continuous practice, Aswaja character values are not only understood conceptually but are also manifested in the religious behaviour of pupils in their daily lives (Muid, 2021).

Character education is an effort to instil behavioural values in pupils at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Through the instilling of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) values, pupils are guided to grow into individuals of noble character from an early age. Education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah emphasises not only the attainment of academic abilities but also the development of positive attitudes, behaviour and character, so that pupils can become religious, ethical individuals who bring pride to their parents, the madrasah and the community (Aziz & Kuswanto, 2024).

Another study states that character education is a deliberate and planned effort to assist individuals in the process of understanding, instilling, and internalising moral, ethical, and virtuous values. Through character education, pupils are guided to develop moral awareness, to be able to distinguish between good and bad behaviour, and to apply these values consistently in their daily lives. Character education does not focus solely on cognitive aspects but also encompasses the development of attitudes and behaviours that reflect a noble

character, a sense of responsibility, and social concern within the family, school and wider community (Yuniar et al., 2025).

It is further explained that character education comprises a series of efforts undertaken by teachers that directly influence the formation of pupils' character. Teachers play a strategic role in helping to shape pupils' character and personality through setting an example in their attitudes and behaviour demonstrated in everyday school life. Such exemplary behaviour encompasses the way teachers conduct themselves, speak, deliver learning materials, demonstrate tolerance, and treat pupils fairly and respectfully. From this statement, it can be understood that education today does not merely focus on cognitive achievements, but also places great emphasis on the development of pupils' affective aspects. Therefore, character education is a fundamental necessity in the effort to develop high-quality human resources with noble morals and good character. The optimal implementation of character education requires the support and shared commitment of various parties, ranging from teachers, families and the community to the government as the education policy-maker (Khusnia, 2019).

More broadly, it can be argued that character formation takes place through the interrelated stages of knowledge (knowing), practice (acting), and habit formation (habit). In the context of the Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) programme, pupils are not only provided with an understanding of the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah and the practices of Nahdlatul Ulama, but are also guided to implement these values directly through various religious activities and the cultivation of attitudes within the school environment. Character education in PKA does not stop at the cognitive aspect alone, but emphasises real-life practice carried out consistently and sustainably. Through continuous implementation, Aswaja values such as tawasuth, tawazun, tasamuh, and amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar will become ingrained as habits, ultimately shaping a strong religious character within the pupils. Thus, PKA activities serve as a strategic means of internalising character values in a holistic and sustainable manner (Nikmah, 2018).

The process of instilling religious character in pupils at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo is generally carried out through the Aswaja Character-Building Programme (PKA), which takes place every morning before lessons begin. These character-building activities are integrated into the school culture and are carried out repeatedly and continuously through the practice of the values of Nahdlatul Ulama, such as communal prayer, the recitation of sholawat, istighotsah, dziba', the recitation of prayers for the five daily prayers, and the cultivation of the attitudes of tawasuth, tawazun and tasamuh. These habits have a positive psychological impact on pupils, including increased discipline in participating in religious activities, compliance with teachers' instructions, and a respectful attitude throughout the learning process. Thus, habits practised consistently and continuously can support the formation of pupils' religious attitudes and behaviour in a more permanent manner, so that religious character is firmly ingrained in pupils' daily lives.

This research is grounded in the vision of MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo, namely the development of pupils who excel in academic achievement, possess strong faith (imtaq), and

exhibit noble character ('akhlaqul karimah) in accordance with the Ahlussunnah wal jama'ah an-nahdliyah tradition. This vision serves as the primary foundation for strengthening the practical values of Nahdlatul Ulama through various religious character-building programmes implemented in a structured and sustainable manner within the school environment. In line with this vision, the Aswaja Character Development Programme (PKA) has been designed as a character education strategy to accustom pupils to become proficient in reading, understanding and practising various religious practices based on the teachings of Aswaja. Through the PKA programme, pupils are not only guided to master the Nahdliyah religious texts but are also encouraged to implement them in their daily lives as a form of practising moderate religious values and good moral character.

An interview with one of the PKA supervising teachers revealed that this programme tangibly supports the achievement of the school's vision. One of the PKA supervising teachers stated that the cultivation of Aswaja character aims to ensure that pupils become proficient in practising Nahdliyah traditions, both in terms of reading and application, so that Aswaja values are truly instilled within them through consistent practice.

Aswaja education is a key component of the education system, aimed at enhancing pupils' spiritual potential and shaping individuals who are faithful and God-fearing towards Allah SWT, whilst possessing noble character. This objective is realised through the Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) programme, which is implemented in a structured and sustained manner within the school environment. The noble character developed through PKA encompasses ethical, moral and behavioural values as a tangible manifestation of religious education in daily life. The enhancement of spiritual potential within PKA involves the process of introducing, understanding and instilling the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah, which are subsequently implemented through the cultivation of various religious activities and social attitudes, both in individual and collective community life. Through these practices, pupils are guided to optimise their various potentials so that they are able to actualise themselves as servants of Allah SWT who possess religious awareness, social responsibility, and a sense of nationalism that is in harmony with Islamic values (Rifa'i et al., 2017).

The implementation of Aswaja character cultivation is evident in various religious and social activities that form part of the school's routine, such as the recitation of prayers and salawat together, the cultivation of polite and courteous behaviour, and the application of the values of tolerance and togetherness in interactions between pupils. These activities serve as an effective medium for learning values, as pupils directly experience and practise Aswaja teachings in their daily lives. Thus, the cultivation of Aswaja character acts as a bridge between conceptual understanding and the practical application of Islamic values (Maulida, 2024).

Furthermore, the cultivation of Aswaja character fosters the development of akhlakul karimah in pupils. Pupils demonstrate behavioural changes that reflect the core values of Aswaja, such as tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance) and i'tidal (justice). These values are not taught merely as doctrine, but are shaped through the exemplary

conduct of teachers and the reinforcement of a religious school culture. This demonstrates that the cultivation of Aswaja character serves as a vital instrument in the sustainable development of pupils' religious character. Based on the results of interviews, PKA supervising teachers stated that

Habituation plays a strategic role in developing religious activities and character so that they are not merely temporary but become structured, organised, and sustainable activities (Mustika & Amrullah, 2024). In the context of instilling Aswaja character, activities carried out consistently such as reciting prayers, sholawat, and istighotsah, as well as practising the attitudes of tawasuth, tawazun, tasamuh, and amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar are capable of fostering positive habits in pupils. Through this habit-forming process, the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah are not merely understood conceptually but are also internalised and manifested in the pupils' daily behaviour within the school environment. Thus, the Aswaja character-building programme serves as an effective means of fostering the pupils' religious character in a continuous and meaningful manner.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) activities at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo are carried out routinely every day before lessons begin. The PKA supervisor also explained that these activities are conducted consistently and are integrated with classroom learning activities. He stated that PKA activities follow a structured timetable: every Tuesday, students recite sholawat such as Sholawat Munjiyat, Tibbil Qulub, Sholawat NU, Nariyah, Busyro, and other sholawat. On Wednesdays, the focus is on reciting prayers for the five daily prayers, with the aim of helping pupils understand and recite the prayers fluently. Although there are still some pupils who are not yet fluent in their recitation, through continuous practice, they are beginning to show gradual improvement in the fluency of their prayer recitations. Furthermore, on Thursdays, the recitation of the Dhiba' takes place, whilst Fridays are devoted to tahlil activities, which aim to accustom pupils to praying for their parents, particularly those who have passed away. On Saturdays, an istighotsah session is held, designed to introduce and instil in the pupils the practice of always seeking help solely from Allah SWT. The PKA supervisor emphasised that this entire programme of activities is carried out consistently so that pupils become accustomed to practising Aswaja values in their daily lives.

The Aswaja Character Development (PKA) programme is held routinely every morning, as this time is considered the most effective for instilling religious values and positive character traits in pupils before they begin their lessons. Through consistent practice, pupils are encouraged to pray, recite salawat and perform istighotsah, thereby creating a calm, religious inner state and preparing them to receive their lessons. Furthermore, conducting PKA in the morning aims to foster discipline, good manners, and a love for Aswaja teachings from an early age, as habits practised repeatedly are more easily ingrained in pupils' daily behaviour, both within and outside the school environment.



Figure 1. PKA (Aswaja Character Development) activities for Grade 1–3



Figure 2. PKA (Aswaja Character Development) Activities for Grade 4–6

The habit-forming approach in Aswaja character-building activities plays a role in encouraging and providing opportunities for pupils to directly apply the values and teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah in their daily lives. Through habit-forming activities such as reciting prayers, sholawat, istighotsah, congregational prayer, and the practice of tawasuth, tawazun, tasamuh, and amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar, religious concepts that are abstract and theoretical become easier for pupils to understand. Habit-forming activities carried out repeatedly and continuously ensure that Aswaja values are not only understood cognitively but are also internalised and manifested in the students' attitudes and actual behaviour, making religious education feel more accessible, meaningful, and relevant to their lives (Ahsanulkhaq, 2019).

Religious character can be effectively shaped through the application of the habituation method in various religious activities carried out consistently and continuously as part of everyday life at school. These activities include communal prayers before and after lessons, the recitation of the Asmaul Husna, as well as the active involvement of pupils in congregational prayers and the observance of major Islamic holidays. Through the habitual practice of these religious activities, pupils are not only accustomed to performing acts of worship but are also guided to cultivate spiritual awareness, discipline, and a sense of responsibility in their religious lives (Kholifah, 2025).

Amaliah is a form of religious tradition that has become a custom and is practised continuously by a group or community, thereby shaping the distinctive character and

collective identity of that group. In the context of Nahdlatul Ulama, amaliah is understood not merely as ritual practice, but as the embodiment of the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) that are alive and thriving within society. The sustained practice of amaliah serves as the primary means of preserving the continuity of Aswaja teachings from one generation to the next.

As stated by Funk and Wagnalls, as cited by Muhaimin, tradition encompasses knowledge, doctrine, customs and practices passed down from generation to generation, including the ways in which they are conveyed and practised. From this perspective, NU amaliah can be understood as a religious tradition that encompasses not only the substance of the teachings but also the method of internalising values through consistent, practical application. This process of transmission enables Aswaja values to become deeply ingrained within individuals as they are directly experienced in daily life (Gandung, 2021).

In the field of education, NU religious practices integrated into activities aimed at fostering Aswaja character serve as an effective instrument in shaping the religious character of pupils. The practice of religious activities such as communal prayer, sholawat, istighotsah, and the attitudes of tawasuth, tawazun, and tasamuh, when applied in school activities, not only strengthens pupils' understanding of Aswaja teachings but also fosters habits of behaviour in line with these values. Through these practices, carried out routinely and continuously, Aswaja values are transformed from normative knowledge into concrete attitudes and actions.

NU's religious practices, carried out through the cultivation of Aswaja character, play a strategic role in building the religious character of pupils. These vibrant and contextual traditions of practice not only strengthen the religious identity characteristic of Nahdlatul Ulama but are also in line with the objectives of national character education, which emphasises the cultivation of religious attitudes, tolerance, and noble character (akhlakul karimah). Therefore, the practice of Aswaja can serve as a relevant and sustainable model for character education in educational institutions.

The values of Nahdlatul Ulama's religious practices instilled through the Aswaja Character Cultivation Programme (PKA) include tawassuth (moderation), tawazun (balance), tasamuh (tolerance) and i'tidal (justice). These values are not merely conveyed theoretically, but are internalised through the consistent cultivation of attitudes and behaviours in the madrasah environment. Pupils report that through PKA activities such as communal prayer, sholawat, tahlil, diba' and istighotsah, they have become more accustomed to worship, to behaving respectfully towards teachers and peers, and to respecting one another's differences. This consistent practice gradually shapes the students' religious character, as reflected in their increased discipline in participating in religious activities, their awareness of the need to pray before and after studying, and their tolerant and fair attitudes in social interactions. Thus, PKA activities play a vital role as a means of reinforcing the practical values of Nahdlatul Ulama in the ongoing effort to enhance the students' religious character.

Based on an interview with one of the PKA supervising teachers, it was found that the daily implementation of PKA activities has a positive impact on the development of pupils' religious character. The supervising teacher explained that repeated practice helps pupils become accustomed to reciting prayers, salawat and other religious texts. Although, in reality, there are still many Year 1 pupils who are not yet fluent readers, through these daily practices, pupils find it easier to memorise and recall these texts. This demonstrates that PKA activities not only serve as a means of fostering religious practices but also help to gradually improve pupils' ability to remember and put religious values into practice.

Teachers play a strategic role as role models in the implementation of PKA. The teachers' exemplary behaviour is a key factor in the success of instilling Aswaja character traits, as pupils imitate the behaviour displayed by their teachers in daily life. However, several challenges are still encountered in the implementation of PKA activities, particularly regarding pupils' levels of attention and discipline. Based on field observations, there are still some pupils who pay little attention to the activities, talk amongst themselves, or do not follow the readings properly. This situation persists even though pupils have been divided into two learning groups—namely, Years 1–3 and Years 4–6—with the aim of facilitating management and supervision. However, the relatively large number of pupils, coupled with differences in their personalities and levels of maturity, means that PKA supervising teachers still face difficulties in optimally controlling and maintaining order amongst all pupils throughout the activities.

To address these issues, the madrasah has implemented various strategic measures. One such measure involves enhancing the role of teachers in directly supervising the conduct of PKA activities, both in guiding the reading and in persuasively reprimanding pupils who breach the rules of conduct. The implementation of PKA activities is also supported by the involvement of the madrasah's character development team, which assists with supervision, guidance and the instilling of discipline among the pupils. This collaboration between supervising teachers and the character development team is considered effective in creating a more orderly and conducive atmosphere for the activities, thereby ensuring that the objective of reinforcing the practical values of Nahdlatul Ulama through PKA activities can be achieved to the fullest extent in the effort to enhance the religious character of the pupils.

The solution adopted by the school in addressing this issue is to establish educational rules and sanctions for the implementation of the Aswaja Character Development (PKA) programme. The rules enforced during PKA activities include the obligation for pupils to arrive on time, to participate in the entire series of PKA activities in an orderly manner and with full dedication, and to bring the PKA handbook as a guide for the activities. For pupils who breach these provisions, the school imposes a sanction requiring them to stand for the duration of the PKA activities until they are completed, followed by guidance from the Deputy Head of the Madrasah responsible for pupil affairs. The imposition of this sanction is not intended merely as a form of punishment, but rather as a guidance measure to instil discipline,

responsibility, and awareness among pupils regarding the importance of participating in PKA activities as part of the development of religious character.

The implementation of the Aswaja Character Development (PKA) programme not only enhances the religious character of individual pupils but also makes a significant contribution to strengthening the religious culture within the school environment as a whole. Through the regular practice of religious activities, such as communal prayer, sholawat, tahlil, diba', and istighotsah, a religious, orderly and spiritually enriching school atmosphere is created. PKA activities serve as an effective means of instilling the practical values of Nahdlatul Ulama, which include the principles of tawassuth, tawazun, tasamuh and i'tidal, ensuring that these values are not only understood but also brought to life in the daily practices of the school community. Thus, PKA can serve as a model for Aswaja-based character education in madrasahs, capable of shaping students with religious character whilst simultaneously preserving and sustaining the Islamic traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama in a sustainable manner.

Based on an interview with one of the supervisors of the Aswaja Character Development Programme (PKA), it was revealed that the future hope for the implementation of PKA activities is that students will not only participate in routine activities within the madrasah environment but will also be able to implement and practise the values of Nahdlatul Ulama in their daily lives. The PKA mentor explained that through consistent practice, pupils are expected to cultivate a religious attitude and a love for the Islamic traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama, as well as to be able to put Aswaja values such as tawassuth, tasamuh, tawazun and i'tidal into practice within the school, family and wider community.

Discussion

These findings support character education theory, which holds that character develops through a continuous progression from knowledge to action to habit (Nikmah, 2018; Surur, 2022). What this study clarifies is why this progression succeeds specifically through PKA: because the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah are attached to concrete, repeated ritual acts — communal prayer, sholawat, istighotsah, diba' and tahlil — rather than delivered as abstract instruction, pupils do not need to grasp Aswaja as doctrine before practising it. The ritual itself becomes the vehicle through which cognitive understanding, attitude and behaviour are acquired simultaneously, which explains why discipline and respectful conduct emerge as by-products of habituation rather than as separately taught outcomes.

This pattern is consistent with previous research showing that religiously grounded habituation strengthens pupils' character and social attitudes (Rifa'i et al., 2017; Ahsanulkhaf, 2019; Kholifah, 2025). This study extends that work by indicating that the effectiveness of habituation is conditional rather than automatic: it depends on the regularity of the schedule, consistency of enforcement, integration into the wider school culture and, critically, the exemplary conduct of teachers, who function as the reference point pupils imitate. Where supervisory consistency was weaker, habituation alone proved insufficient to sustain the desired attitudes, suggesting that the amaliah practised within PKA operates less as a fixed curriculum

and more as a socially reinforced routine whose success is contingent on surrounding structures of accountability rather than on repetition alone.

The attention and discipline problems identified among some pupils, echoing Khusnia (2019), point to a limitation inherent in habituation-based approaches: repetition builds routine, but routine does not automatically produce internalised meaning, particularly among younger pupils who have not yet developed sufficient self-regulation. The madrasah's response — combining structured sanctions with intensive teacher and character-team mentoring — worked because it added an external accountability mechanism to compensate for pupils' still-developing self-discipline, rather than relying on habituation to self-correct. This indicates that Aswaja-based character education is most effective not as a stand-alone habituation programme, but as a habituation process embedded within a supporting structure of supervision, exemplary modelling and consequence, refining how the knowledge-action-habit model operates in practice at the primary level.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Aswaja Character Habituation (PKA) programme at MI NU Walisongo Sumberrejo effectively strengthens Nahdlatul Ulama's practical values and pupils' religious character. Its effectiveness stems not merely from the repetition of religious activities but from their integration with consistent scheduling, teacher exemplarity and structured supervision, which together compensate for pupils' developing self-discipline and sustain the transition from ritual practice to internalised religious character, with effects extending beyond individual pupils to the madrasah's religious culture as a whole.

This study is limited to a single madrasah and a small group of research subjects; future researchers are therefore encouraged to examine PKA-type habituation across multiple madrasahs, or through complementary research designs, to build a more comprehensive understanding of how Aswaja values are internalised at the primary education level.

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