
A Habituation-Based Learning Model for Islamic Religious Education and Character Building to Strengthen Students' Religious Character at MTs Darul Hikmah Burneh, Bangkalan

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Abstract

Strengthening students' religious character holds a strategic position in madrasah education amidst the declining morality of the younger generation. However, instruction in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education often remains confined to the cognitive realm, meaning students do not necessarily translate their knowledge into daily moral actions. Addressing this issue, this study aims to develop and describe a habituation-based learning model for PAI and Character Education designed to strengthen students' religious character at MTs Darul Hikmah in Burneh District, Bangkalan Regency. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, combining a literature review with a preliminary study involving observation and document analysis at the research site; data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model—involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study formulates a habituation-based learning model comprising three stages: planning (integrating religious values into instructional materials); implementation (daily, weekly, and monthly habituation activities integrating the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action); and evaluation (authentic assessment through attitude observation, daily journals, and spiritual portfolios). While supported by *pesantren* culture, teacher role-modeling, and parental synergy, the model faces challenges regarding the students' diverse backgrounds and limited supervision outside the *madrasah*. Thus, the habituation model systematically integrates Lickona's three character dimensions into a single cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation, offering a practical reference for PAI and Character Education teachers and paving the way for further research to empirically test the model.

Keywords

habituation; religious character; Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction; moral character; madrasa



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's aspiration to achieve a Golden Indonesia 2045 faces a serious challenge in the form of a moral crisis affecting the younger generation. Bullying, intolerance, and violence in educational environments continue to emerge, indicating that character education has not yet been implemented as expected. Schools and madrasahs generally continue to position character education at the level of moral conceptual understanding, enabling students to recognize what is right without necessarily developing the habit of doing what is right. Ironically, this condition is also evident in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education, which are substantively rich in values, morality, and spirituality. In practice, such learning is often reduced to the transmission of religious knowledge that students memorize and demonstrate through written tests rather than through observable behavioral transformation.

Several recent studies have proposed solutions by emphasizing that PAI learning must move beyond the cognitive dimension if students' religious character is to be genuinely developed. Azizah, Jariah, and Aprilianto (2023) reported that the development of students' religious character through PAI learning in vocational secondary schools produced positive outcomes when mastery of religious knowledge was accompanied by consistent habituation of attitudes and religious practices. Purboretno, Mansur, and Mustafida (2022) demonstrated that students' discipline character developed significantly through religious activities repeatedly implemented within PAI learning. Meanwhile, Harmit, Nurbika, and Asiyah (2022) emphasized that the internalization of **akhlakul karimah** among students depends heavily on the exemplary behavior demonstrated by PAI teachers. These three findings reinforce Lickona's (2015) perspective that good character is constructed through three interconnected components—moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action—which can only be integrated through continuous repetition and consistent habituation.

Nevertheless, the existing research landscape still reveals a significant gap. Most previous studies have focused on describing habituation practices or examining the role of teachers separately within general schools and madrasahs. Few studies have formulated a comprehensive learning model that systematically organizes habituation practices from the stages of planning and implementation to evaluation. This gap becomes even more apparent in educational institutions situated within modern Islamic boarding school environments, where classroom-based PAI and Character Education should ideally be systematically integrated with the established pesantren culture, which is deeply rooted in religious habituation. MTs Darul Hikmah, located on Jalan Raya Langkap, Langkap Village, Burneh District, Bangkalan Regency (NPSN 20583071), is a private madrasah accredited B and operates within the educational ecosystem of Pondok Pesantren Darul Hikmah Langkap. The pesantren is a modern Islamic boarding school that provides a tiered educational system ranging from madrasah ibtidaiyah to higher education, complemented by flagship programs such as **Takhassusul Qur'an** and **baca kitab kuning**. This context provides substantial potential for developing an integrated habituation-based learning model. The educational concept at the madrasah is also undergoing

a process of maturation, transforming from an emphasis on multiple-intelligence approaches and *storytelling* toward strengthening habituation as a primary strategy for developing students' religious character.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to develop and describe a habituation-based PAI and Character Education learning model for strengthening students' religious character at MTs Darul Hikmah Burneh, Bangkalan. The novelty of this study lies in the development of a model that explicitly maps Lickona's three dimensions of character—*moral knowing, moral feeling,* and *moral action*—onto the instructional stages of learning planning, implementation, and evaluation, while taking into account the distinctive characteristics of a madrasah operating within a modern Islamic boarding school ecosystem. The focus of this study is specifically directed toward formulating the model rather than empirically testing its effectiveness.

The researcher's interest in this issue stems from the author's academic experience as a doctoral student in Islamic Religious Education who is engaged in the study of PAI learning development within pesantren-based madrasahs. The researcher's direct involvement in the development and refinement of the learning concept at MTs Darul Hikmah—from assisting with the implementation of multiple-intelligence and *storytelling* approaches to strengthening habituation—provides contextual proximity that enriches the analysis presented in this study. Accordingly, the researcher is not merely an external observer but is also part of the ongoing development process within the madrasah.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach that combined library research with a preliminary field study. The research design was organized into two stages. In the first stage, the library research involved identifying and reviewing relevant scientific articles, books, and policy documents related to habituation, character education, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education, with priority given to publications from the past five years. In the second stage, a preliminary field study was conducted through non-participant observation and a review of learning documents at MTs Darul Hikmah Burneh, Bangkalan, as part of the author's dissertation research. This stage was intended to obtain an initial understanding of the institutional context, pesantren culture, and habituation practices that have been implemented at the madrasah.

The informants in the preliminary study consisted of the head of the madrasah, PAI and Character Education teachers, and the pesantren caretaker. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct knowledge and understanding of habituation practices at the madrasah. As supporting materials, curriculum documents and learning instruments were also used as supplementary units of analysis.

In the data collection process, the researcher served as the primary instrument (*human instrument*), supported by a non-participant observation guide and a document review guide. Primary data were obtained from the results of preliminary observations as well as curriculum

documents and PAI and Character Education learning instruments at MTs Darul Hikmah. Secondary data were derived from academic literature discussing the concept of habituation, Lickona's theory of character education, and policies related to strengthening character education. Data collection techniques included documentation, literature review, and observation.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. To ensure data validity, source triangulation was employed by comparing findings from the literature review with the results of field observations and documentation.

The preliminary field study was conducted in July 2026 for approximately two months as part of the initial stage of the author's dissertation preparation. Meanwhile, the library research was conducted throughout the article-writing period.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION (Palatino Linotype 11, Space 1.15, Justify)

Based on the conceptual review and the findings of the preliminary study, the habituation-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education learning model for strengthening students' religious character at MTs Darul Hikmah was formulated into three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. A summary of the main findings is presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, followed by a descriptive explanation of each stage.

Stage	Main Component	Brief Description
Planning	Integration of religious values into teaching modules/lesson plans; preparation of a habituation schedule	Teachers formulate indicators of religious attitudes and habits for each learning topic and develop daily, weekly, and monthly habituation schedules aligned with the madrasah and pesantren academic calendars.
Implementation	Daily, weekly, and monthly habituation activities (<i>moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action</i>)	Joint prayers, <i>shalat dhuha</i> and congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, 3S (<i>senyum, salam, sapa</i>), and cleanliness duties (daily); <i>kultum</i> , Friday prayers, and the recitation of <i>Nadham Al-Fannani</i> (weekly); Islamic commemorations, <i>muhasabah</i> , <i>Jam'iyah Hadroh</i> , and <i>muhadhoroh</i> (monthly/incidental), integrating moral knowledge, feelings, and actions progressively.
Evaluation	Authentic assessment of religious attitudes and behavior	Attitude observation sheets, daily journals/spiritual records, portfolios of religious and social activities, self-assessment, and peer assessment; conducted formatively

		and continuously.
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Planning Stage

At the planning stage, teachers explicitly integrate religious character values into the PAI and Character Education teaching modules/lesson plans. Planning does not stop at identifying cognitive learning outcomes but also includes the formulation of indicators of religious attitudes and habits to be developed through each learning topic. In addition, planning involves the preparation of daily, weekly, and monthly habituation schedules aligned with the madrasah academic calendar and pesantren activities. Through synchronized scheduling, habituation practices in the classroom and within the pesantren environment can be implemented continuously and coherently.

Implementation Stage

The implementation stage is organized progressively across three time scales. At the daily level, habituation activities include joint prayers before and after lessons, *shalat dhuha* and congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus*), and the practice of smiling, greeting, and addressing others respectfully (3S) in interactions within the madrasah environment. At the weekly level, habituation activities include religious lectures or *kultum*, congregational Friday prayers, and the recitation of *Nadham Al-Fannani* as a distinctive pesantren program that habituates students to read and understand *kitab kuning*. At the monthly or incidental level, activities include Islamic commemorations, *muhasabah*, religious and social activities, and participation in religious extracurricular activities such as *Jam'iyah Hadroh* and *muhadhoroh* (public speaking practice). These three scales of habituation integrate Lickona's three dimensions of character progressively. Moral knowing is developed through explanations of the meaning and wisdom underlying each habituation activity. Moral feeling is cultivated through teacher modeling, reflection, and *muhasabah*. Moral action is developed through the consistent implementation and repetition of habituation activities until they become an established part of students' daily behavior.

Evaluation Stage

Evaluation in this model emphasizes authentic assessment of students' religious attitudes and behaviors rather than relying solely on written tests. The instruments include attitude observation sheets completed periodically by teachers, daily journals or spiritual records completed by students as a form of self-reflection, portfolios documenting religious and social activities, as well as self-assessment and peer assessment. Evaluation is formative and continuous, with the aim of monitoring the development of students' religious character habituation over time.

Negative Data and Anomalies

The preliminary study also identified variations in the outcomes of habituation practices. Students known as *siswa kalong*—students who do not reside in the pesantren—demonstrated lower levels of consistency in habituation compared with students who reside in the pesantren, because habituation practices implemented at the madrasah do not always continue within the home environment. This anomaly is important to acknowledge because it

indicates that the effectiveness of the model is not uniform across all students but is influenced by their respective residential contexts.

DISCUSSION

The habituation-based learning model formulated in the Results section demonstrates both alignment with and extension of findings from previous studies. Azizah, Jariah, and Aprilianto (2023) showed that the development of students' religious character through PAI learning becomes effective when religious materials are accompanied by consistent habituation of attitudes and religious practices. This finding is relevant to the implementation stage of the proposed model, which places daily religious practices at the core of character development. Purboretno, Mansur, and Mustafida (2022) demonstrated that repeated religious activities within PAI learning can develop students' discipline character; this finding is consistent with the principle of repetition that forms the foundation of habituation in the proposed model. Harmit, Nurbika, and Asiyah (2022) emphasized the role of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior in internalizing *akhlakul karimah*, which in this model is positioned as an important element of the *moral feeling* dimension.

The fundamental difference between this model and previous studies lies in its attempt to transform previously fragmented habituation practices into a systematic learning model consisting of three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The model also explicitly maps each stage onto Lickona's (2015) three dimensions of character, namely *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. The context of MTs Darul Hikmah, which operates within a modern Islamic boarding school environment, further strengthens the potential of the model because habituation practices designed within classroom learning can be continuously reinforced by habituation activities conducted in the pesantren environment. Such conditions are not always available in general schools or madrasahs that constitute the research settings of many previous studies.

The implementation of this model is supported by several factors. The pesantren culture has long cultivated discipline in religious practices; teachers and *kiai* serve as central role models in habituating ethical behavior; parents or guardians provide support and collaboration; and adequate facilities for religious activities are available within the madrasah environment. On the other hand, implementation faces challenges arising from the heterogeneous family backgrounds and home environments of students, as indicated by the anomaly involving *siswa kalong*. Limited supervision of students' behavior outside the madrasah environment and variations in teachers' consistency in implementing habituation activities continuously also constitute significant challenges. These obstacles require mitigation strategies involving more intensive communication and collaboration among the madrasah, pesantren, and students' parents.

Overall, this model provides a conceptual contribution by offering a framework that integrates the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of students in a comprehensive manner. Through this framework, PAI and Character Education learning no longer stops at the acquisition of religious knowledge but proceeds toward the development of awareness

and the habituation of religious actions. For MTs Darul Hikmah and similar madrasahs situated within modern Islamic boarding school environments, this model offers a practical framework that can be replicated and adapted according to the characteristics of each educational institution.

CONCLUSION

The habituation-based learning model for Islamic Religious Education and Character Building (PAI and Budi Pekerti)—designed to strengthen students' religious character at MTs Darul Hikmah Burneh, Bangkalan—was formulated through three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. These stages explicitly integrate the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. While the model is supported by an *Islamic boarding school* (pesantren) culture, teacher role-modeling, and parental synergy, it must also address challenges such as the diverse backgrounds of the students and limited supervision outside the madrasah.

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