



Religious Activity Habituation and Religious Character Formation of Upper-Grade Students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh pembiasaan kegiatan keagamaan terhadap pembentukan karakter religius siswa kelas atas (kelas IV, V, dan VI) di MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh fenomena melemahnya nilai-nilai religius pada peserta didik akibat arus globalisasi dan perkembangan teknologi informasi yang tidak terbendung. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan jenis penelitian korelasional. Populasi sekaligus sampel penelitian adalah seluruh siswa kelas IV, V, dan VI MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa yang berjumlah 34 siswa (kelas IV = 12 siswa, kelas V = 13 siswa, kelas VI = 9 siswa) dengan teknik sampling jenuh. Instrumen penelitian berupa angket skala Likert 1-4 yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya. Teknik analisis data menggunakan analisis regresi linier sederhana dengan bantuan aplikasi JAMOV1 versi 2.6.44. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat pengaruh yang positif dan signifikan antara pembiasaan kegiatan keagamaan terhadap pembentukan karakter religius siswa dengan nilai signifikansi $< 0,001$ dan koefisien determinasi R^2 sebesar 61,8%. Kegiatan keagamaan rutin seperti shalat dhuha berjamaah, tadarus Al-Qur'an, pembacaan asmaul husna, doa bersama, dan pembiasaan 5S terbukti berkontribusi signifikan dalam membentuk karakter religius peserta didik. Sisa varians sebesar 38,2% mengindikasikan bahwa lingkungan keluarga, pengaruh teman sebaya, dan budaya sekolah lebih luas turut memberikan kontribusi pelengkap yang penting.

Kata Kunci: Pembiasaan kegiatan keagamaan, Karakter religius, Madrasah ibtidaiyah

Abstract: This study examines the influence of religious activity habituation on the formation of religious character among upper-grade students (grades IV, V, and VI) at MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa. The research was prompted by observable signs of weakening religious values among students in the face of rapid globalization and the pervasive spread of information technology. A quantitative correlational design was employed. The entire population of 34 upper-grade students served as the sample through saturated sampling grade IV (n=12), grade V (n=13), and grade VI (n=9). A four-point 1-4 Likert-scale questionnaire, with items validated for both content validity and internal consistency, was used as the primary data collection instrument. Simple linear regression via JAMOV1 version 2.6.44 revealed a positive and significant influence ($p < 0.001$) with a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 61.8\%$. Daily religious routines congregational dhuha prayer, Al-Qur'an recitation, asmaul husna reading, communal supplication, and 5S character habituation proved to be meaningful contributors to students' religious character development. The remaining 38.2% of variance suggests that family environment, peer influence, and broader school culture also play important complementary roles.

Keywords: Religious activity habituation, Religious character, Madrasah ibtidaiyah

INTRODUCTION

Schools do not merely transfer academic knowledge they also carry the responsibility of shaping students' moral and spiritual character. In Indonesia, this dual obligation is explicitly embedded in the national education philosophy. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System states that education functions to develop potential and to build the character and civilization of a dignified nation. Among the various dimensions of character, religious character occupies a central position, particularly within Islamic educational institutions. It refers to the internalized attitudes and behaviors that reflect genuine faith and devotion to God in everyday life (Mubin & Moh. Arif Furqon, 2023).

The contemporary challenge, however, is substantial. Globalization and the rapid diffusion of digital technology have dramatically altered the social and cultural landscape in which children grow up. Students today are constantly exposed to content, values, and behavioral models that do not necessarily align with Islamic principles. Supriyantini et al. (2025) note that this exposure does not only affect students in urban settings madrasah in smaller towns and rural areas are equally touched by these currents. The concern is not technology per se, but the relative absence of strong countervailing influences that anchor students to their religious identity at a formative age.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), as the primary-level Islamic school, is positioned to serve precisely this function. Its curriculum, daily routines, and institutional culture are, in principle, designed to reinforce Islamic values from early childhood. One of the most consistently recommended pedagogical strategies for achieving this is habituation the deliberate and repeated practice of religious behaviors until they become second nature. Hidayah et al. (2025) describes this process as one in which external compliance gradually transforms into internal conviction; students who begin by following rules eventually come to embrace those rules as part of their identity. Religious activities that are scheduled and conducted regularly such as congregational dhuha prayer, recitation of Al-Qur'an, reading of asmaul husna, communal supplication, and observance of Islamic occasions serve as the primary vehicle for this transformation (Hariyani & Rafik, 2021).

MI Qur'an Mathlul Huda Ambarawa has maintained a structured religious habituation program as a core feature of its school culture. Initial fieldwork observations confirmed that these activities are conducted daily and involve all students, including those in the upper grades (grades IV, V, and VI). What has been lacking, however, is any empirical measurement of the actual impact of this program on students' religious character. Upper-grade students are a particularly important cohort to examine, as Mahmudiyah & Mulyadi (2021) point out that children in this age bracket have entered the conventional stage of moral development and are capable of internalizing values at a deeper level than younger

students. The absence of systematic data means that educators cannot confidently assess whether the program achieves its intended outcomes or identify where improvements might be needed.

Theoretically, the mechanism through which habituation shapes character draws from multiple traditions. From a behaviorist perspective, religious behavior is reinforced through repeated stimuli and positive association, (Hariyani & Rafik, 2021). From within Islamic educational theory, the concept of *tarbiyah al-akhlaq* frames character formation as a gradual process of moral cultivation that integrates intellectual understanding, emotional engagement, and consistent practice (Muhaimin, 2021). Lickona (2012) synthesizes these perspectives through his three-component model of character: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action all three of which are engaged when students participate regularly in structured religious activities. Ahsanulhaq (2019) specifically identifies habituation as the most effective method for building religious character when it is implemented in a systematic and sustained manner.

The concept of religious character itself is multidimensional. Trisnantari et al. (2026) define it as encompassing obedience in religious practice, tolerance toward others' beliefs, and the ability to coexist harmoniously with people of different faiths. In the framework of Islamic education, Syafri (2014) organizes it around *iman* (faith), *Islam* (submission through worship), and *ihsan* (sincere excellence in conduct). For MI students specifically, Lubis (2022) identifies five observable indicators: consistency in worship, honesty and trustworthiness, noble conduct in social interactions, gratitude and reliance on God, and a tolerant disposition.

The three-stage internalization model proposed by Setyaningsih & Rochma (2020) provides a useful developmental lens for understanding how habituation works over time. In the first stage, *ta'rif*, students are introduced to a religious activity and begin to understand its meaning and purpose. In the second stage, *ta'wid*, they practise it repeatedly until it becomes routine. By the third stage, *tafakkur*, the activity has been sufficiently internalized that students engage in it reflectively and willingly, out of genuine devotion rather than rule compliance. Upper-grade students, having been exposed to the school's religious program for several years, are likely to be at varying points along this continuum some still in the habituation stage, others already capable of reflective practice. Tajudin & Aprilianto (2020) add an institutional dimension to this model: the quality of the madrasah principal's leadership in cultivating a religious school culture is a crucial determinant of how far along this internalization continuum most students progress. Without deliberate institutional reinforcement, habituation alone may not be sufficient to drive genuine character transformation.

Prior research lends broad support to the hypothesis that religious habituation programs contribute to character formation. Nurbaiti et al. (2020) documented positive outcomes at MIN 2 Bandar Kidul, while Danuwara & Giyoto (2024) found significant contributions of dhuha prayer habituation to both religious character and student discipline. Mubin & Moh. Arif Furqon (2023) and Basri et al. (2023) emphasize that consistency and whole-school involvement are critical moderating factors. Despite this growing body of literature, empirical studies using inferential statistics to measure the magnitude of this influence particularly in small, Al-Qur'an-focused MI settings remain scarce. This gap motivates the present study. MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa was selected as the research site for three converging reasons. First, the institution operates an integrated Al-Qur'an-based curriculum in which religious habituation is institutionalised as a daily, school-wide programme rather than confined to specific subject hours. Second, despite serving a semi-rural community in Pringsewu Regency where students are increasingly exposed to digital media, the madrasah has consistently maintained its religious habituation routines, providing a naturalistic setting in which the variable of interest is reliably present. Third, the school had not previously been the subject of any empirical evaluation of its religious habituation programme, so its leadership expressed openness to a study that could yield evidence-based feedback. The novelty of this study lies in being the first to apply a quantitative inferential approach—simple linear regression with assumption testing—to measure the magnitude of the effect of religious activity habituation on religious character formation in a small, Al-Qur'an-focused Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, thereby complementing the predominantly qualitative literature in this area.

This study therefore pursues three objectives: (1) to describe how religious activity habituation is implemented at MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa; (2) to profile the religious character of upper-grade students at that institution; and (3) to quantify the influence of religious activity habituation on the formation of religious character among those students.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design, which was suited to the goal of measuring the strength and direction of the relationship between religious activity habituation (variable X) and students' religious character (variable Y). The research was conducted at MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa during the 2025/2026 academic year.

The research population comprised all upper-grade students those in grades IV, V, and VI totalling 34 individuals: 12 in grade IV, 13 in grade V, and 9 in grade VI. Because the

population was small enough to be fully accessible, saturated sampling (total sampling) was applied, meaning every member of the population became a research participant (Sugiyono, 2019). This approach eliminates sampling error and is appropriate for studies with populations under 100.

Data were collected using a closed questionnaire built on a four-point Likert scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always. The scale was deliberately designed without a neutral midpoint to encourage respondents to commit to either positive or negative tendency. The instrument comprised 42 items in total 20 measuring religious activity habituation and 22 measuring religious character organized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Instrument Grid

Variable	Indicator	Example Statement	Item No.	n	Total
Religious Activity Habituation (X)	Intensity of religious activity implementation	I participate in congregational dhuha prayer every day at madrasah	1-5	5	5
	Student activeness and participation	I recite asmaul husna earnestly	6-10	5	5
	Madrasah and teacher support for activities	Teachers always remind and guide students during Al-Qur'an recitation	11-15	5	5
	Consistency and regularity of the religious program	Communal prayer is conducted routinely every day at school	16-20	5	5
Religious Character (Y)	Belief dimension (iman)	I believe that Allah always watches over every deed I do	21-24	4	4
	Worship/religious practice dimension	I perform the five daily prayers without ever skipping	25-29	5	5
	Religious knowledge dimension	I know the meaning of the asmaul husna recited every morning	30-33	4	4
	Internalization dimension (ihsan)	I feel calm and focused during congregational dhuha prayer	34-37	4	4
	Daily practice dimension	I habitually say salaam when meeting teachers and friends	38-42	5	5
Total Items				42	

Source: Adapted from Lubis (2022), Hariyani & Rafik (2021), and Nurbaiti et al. (2019)

Before data collection, the instrument was field-tested for validity and reliability. Validity was assessed via Pearson Product Moment Correlation; items with r -count exceeding r -table ($r = 0.339$ for $n=34$, $df=32$, $\alpha=5\%$) were retained. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60 (Sugiyono, 2019). Both criteria were met for all subscales. Specifically, all 20 items measuring religious activity habituation (X) yielded item–total correlations ranging from $r = 0.412$ to $r = 0.781$, all exceeding the critical r -table value of 0.339, and the subscale produced a Cronbach's α of 0.873. The 22 items measuring religious character (Y) likewise produced item–total correlations between $r = 0.398$ and $r = 0.812$, again exceeding the critical value, with a subscale Cronbach's α of 0.891. Both alpha coefficients fall well above the conventional 0.70 threshold for good internal consistency, indicating that the instrument as a whole is psychometrically sound for this sample.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) were computed for both variables to characterize the distribution of scores. Second, two prerequisite tests were conducted: a Shapiro-Wilk normality test, which is appropriate for small samples ($n < 50$) and generally more sensitive than the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and a linearity test using Deviation from Linearity to confirm that the relationship between X and Y could reasonably be modelled as a straight line. Third, simple linear regression was applied to test the directional hypothesis that religious activity habituation (X) significantly predicts religious character formation (Y).

The regression model produces a coefficient of determination (R^2) that quantifies the proportion of variance in Y attributable to X, and a t -statistic that evaluates whether the regression coefficient B differs significantly from zero. All computations were carried out using JAMOVI version 2.6.44, a free open-source statistical platform whose output has been cross-validated against SPSS in the methodological literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Questionnaire data were collected from all 34 respondents with no missing values. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for both variables. It should be noted that the maximum possible score for variable X (20 items \times 4 points) is 80, and for variable Y (22 items \times 4 points) is 88. The observed means 56.7 for X and 61.4 for Y therefore represent approximately 71% and 70% of the respective maximum scores, suggesting that most students fell in the moderately high range on both dimensions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Median	Missing
Religious Activity Habituation (X)	34	45.0	67.0	56.7	5.21	56.0	0
Religious Character (Y)	34	48.0	76.0	61.4	6.86	62.0	0

Source: Primary data processed using JAMOV version 2.6.44

The mean score for religious activity habituation (X) was 56.7 (SD = 5.21, Median = 56.0), and for religious character (Y) it was 61.4 (SD = 6.86, Median = 62.0). The relatively small standard deviations suggest that students' responses were reasonably homogeneous, without extreme outliers in either direction. The somewhat higher mean for variable Y than X suggests that students' religious character scores were generally slightly higher than their habituation scores, which could reflect the influence of non-school factors such as family upbringing and peer environment on character formation as well.

Per-Indicator Analysis

To provide a finer-grained portrait of the data and to address the multidimensional structure of both constructs, mean scores were also computed for each of the four indicators of religious activity habituation (X) and the five indicators of religious character (Y). Table 3 reports these per-indicator means, accompanied by the percentage each represents of the maximum attainable score for that indicator (with the per-item average shown in parentheses for comparability across indicators of differing length).

Table 3. Mean Score per Indicator (N = 34)

Variable	Indicator	Items	Mean (per item)	% of Max
Religious Activity Habituation (X)	Intensity of religious activity implementation	5	14.50 (2.90)	72.5%
	Student activeness and participation	5	13.70 (2.74)	68.5%
	Madrasah and teacher support for activities	5	15.00 (3.00)	75.0%
	Consistency and regularity of the religious program	5	13.50 (2.70)	67.5%
Religious Character (Y)	Belief dimension (iman)	4	12.50 (3.13)	78.1%
	Worship/religious practice dimension	5	13.50 (2.70)	67.5%
	Religious knowledge dimension	4	11.00 (2.75)	68.8%
	Internalization dimension (ihsan)	4	10.40 (2.60)	65.0%
	Daily practice dimension	5	14.00 (2.80)	70.0%

Source: Primary data processed using JAMOV version 2.6.44.

Several patterns are worth highlighting. On the habituation side, the highest-scoring indicator was *madrasah and teacher support for activities* (75.0% of maximum), followed by *intensity of religious activity implementation* (72.5%). The relatively lower scores for *student*

activeness and participation (68.5%) and *consistency and regularity of the religious program* (67.5%) suggest that the institutional infrastructure for habituation is in place and well perceived by students, while the more intrinsic, student-side aspects (active engagement and self-perceived regularity outside structured sessions) leave room for further cultivation. On the religious-character side, the *belief dimension (iman)* stands out clearly as the strongest (78.1%), consistent with the expectation that affirmative beliefs about Allah and the unseen are the most fully formed dimension at the upper-MI age. *Daily practice* (70.0%), *religious knowledge* (68.8%), and *worship/religious practice* (67.5%) cluster in the moderately high range, while the *internalization dimension (ihsan)* registers the lowest score (65.0%). Read through the lens of Setyaningsih and Rochma's (2020) ta'rif, ta'wid, tafakkur progression, this gradient is theoretically coherent: belief and outward practice (the entry stages) are well established, whereas the deepest layer reflective, sincere internalisation (tafakkur) is by nature the slowest to consolidate. The pattern thus reinforces the discussion in the next section, where we argue that the unexplained 38.2% of variance in religious character is most plausibly tied to the slower-developing, more contextually sensitive dimensions captured here by ihsan.

Prerequisite Tests

Prior to regression analysis, normality and linearity assumptions were verified. Table 3 shows the normality test results.

Table 4. Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value	Decision
Religious Activity Habituation (X)	0.971	0.487	Normally distributed
Religious Character (Y)	0.977	0.672	Normally distributed

Source: Output JAMOV version 2.6.44

Both variables returned Shapiro-Wilk p-values well above 0.05 (X: $W = 0.971$, $p = 0.487$; Y: $W = 0.977$, $p = 0.672$), confirming that the data are normally distributed. The Shapiro-Wilk test is generally preferred over the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for small samples such as this one, as it has greater statistical power to detect departures from normality when n is below 50. The linearity test produced a Deviation from Linearity significance of $0.672 > 0.05$, indicating a linear relationship between X and Y. With both assumptions satisfied, the regression analysis was warranted.

Simple Linear Regression

Tables 5 and 6 present the regression model fit and coefficient estimates, respectively.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (Model Summary)

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.786	0.618	0.606	4.22

Source: Output JAMOV version 2.6.44

Table 6. Regression Coefficients

Model	B	SE	t	F	p	95% CI
Constant (a)	2.82	8.188	0.344	-	0.733	-13.86, 19.49
Religious Activity Habituation (b)	1.03	0.144	7.189	51.7	< 0.001	0.741, 1.330

Source: Output JAMOV version 2.6.44. N = 34.

The model explains 61.8% of the variance in religious character scores ($R^2 = 0.618$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.606$). The regression coefficient for habituation is $B = 1.03$ ($SE = 0.144$, 95% CI [0.741, 1.330], $t = 7.189$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that each one-unit increase in the habituation score is associated with a predicted increase of 1.03 units in the religious character score. The constant is non-significant ($p = 0.733$), which is unremarkable for regression purposes. The full regression equation is: $\hat{Y} = 2.82 + 1.03X$. H_1 is therefore accepted: religious activity habituation exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on the formation of religious character among upper-grade students at MI Qur'an Mathlul Huda Ambarawa.

Discussion

The finding that religious activity habituation accounts for 61.8% of the variance in students' religious character is both statistically and practically significant. It confirms, through inferential methods, what qualitative researchers have long argued: structured, repeated religious practice in the madrasah environment meaningfully shapes students' spiritual identity and conduct. The result is consistent with Ahsanul Khaq (2019), who argues that habituation, when systematically implemented, shapes religious character in a holistic way touching not only observable behavior but also inner conviction.

This result also aligns with findings from comparable settings. Danuwara & Giyoto (2024) demonstrated that dhuha prayer habituation at madrasah ibtidaiyah contributed significantly to both religious character and disciplinary behavior, suggesting that the benefits of religious routines extend beyond strictly spiritual outcomes. Basir et al. (2024) similarly found that Al-Qur'an literacy programs conducted regularly produced measurable strengthening of religious character. What is notable about the present study is its use of regression analysis in a small, Al-Qur'an-focused MI, confirming that the habituation-character relationship holds even in more modestly resourced institutional contexts.

Mubin & Moh. Arif Furqon (2023) offer a useful theoretical explanation for this trajectory: students initially comply with religious routines because they are required by the school, but over time through repeated practice and gradual meaning-making they come to own those practices as part of their personal identity. This internalization process maps closely onto what Setyaningsih & Rochma (2020) describe as the three-stage progression from ta'rif (introduction) to ta'wid (habituation) to tafakkur (reflective internalization). The

quantitative effect captured in this study is, in a sense, the aggregate outcome of these individual internalization journeys across 34 students.

The unexplained 38.2% of variance points to the genuine complexity of character formation. Religious character is not shaped by school alone. Hariyani & Rafik (2021) identify at least four additional factors: teacher and principal role-modeling, parental reinforcement of values at home, peer group norms, and the overall quality of program management at the institutional level. Supriyantini et al. (2025) add that when religious values are woven into the full fabric of school culture rather than confined to discrete activities their developmental impact is far more pervasive. This suggests that MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa, while already performing well, could potentially increase its character formation outcomes by deepening the integration of religious values across all subject areas and social interactions, not only during dedicated habituation sessions.

It is also worth situating these findings within the broader context of character education research in Indonesia. The country's national character education policy (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter, PPK) identifies religious character as the primary value from which all other character dimensions flow. This policy framework implicitly validates the kind of habituation-centered approach documented at MI Qur'an Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa. When schools align their daily routines with the PPK's vision treating religious character not as a subject to be taught but as a disposition to be cultivated through lived practice the policy and the pedagogy reinforce each other. The present study offers quantitative evidence that this alignment, when achieved, produces real developmental outcomes rather than merely symbolic compliance with policy mandates.

It is also worth acknowledging what this study does not capture. The correlational design establishes a strong association between habituation and religious character, but cannot by itself confirm causality in the strict experimental sense. It is plausible, for instance, that students with stronger pre-existing religious character participate more actively in religious activities a reverse-causation pathway that longitudinal or experimental designs would be better equipped to disentangle. Additionally, the sample of 34 students from a single institution, while suitable for total sampling, limits the extent to which findings can be generalized to other MI contexts without replication. Future studies should consider multi-site sampling across institutions with varying levels of program formalization, and might benefit from supplementing quantitative measures with interview or observation data to capture the qualitative texture of students' habituation experiences.

From a practical standpoint, these findings have clear implications for school leadership and teachers. Adawiyah et al. (2022) recommend that effective religious habituation programs require structured scheduling, ongoing teacher monitoring, and

regular program evaluation not simply the existence of activities on a timetable. Basri et al. (2023) underscore the importance of whole-community involvement: when habituation is a shared institutional commitment rather than a responsibility confined to religious education teachers alone, its effects are amplified. Melati & Achadi (2025) further suggest that periodic contextual analysis should accompany these programs to ensure they remain responsive to the evolving needs and developmental stages of students. These recommendations provide a practical roadmap for MI Qur'an Mathlul Huda Ambarawa to sustain and strengthen the progress documented in this study.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious activity habituation exerts a positive and significant influence on the formation of religious character among upper-grade students (grades IV, V, and VI) at MI Qur'an Mathlul Huda Ambarawa. This is confirmed by simple linear regression: $F(1,32) = 51.7, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.618, B = 1.03$. The regression equation $\hat{Y} = 2.82 + 1.03X$ indicates that every one-unit increase in the habituation score corresponds to a predicted rise of 1.03 units in students' religious character score. The 61.8% variance explained by the model underscores habituation as a substantive driver of character development, while the remaining 38.2% points to the role of complementary factors such as family upbringing, peer environment, and overall school culture.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are offered: (1) the madrasah should sustain and strengthen its religious habituation program through structured scheduling, consistent teacher monitoring, and periodic evaluation; (2) teachers should consistently model the religious values they seek to cultivate, as student character formation is heavily influenced by adult example; (3) parents are encouraged to actively continue religious habituation practices at home as a complement to what is done at school; and (4) future researchers should extend this inquiry through multi-site or mixed-methods designs to capture broader institutional variation and the qualitative dimensions of students' internalization experiences.

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