

The Implementation of Aqidah Akhlak Learning in Shaping Students' Character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah Banjarmasin

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning in shaping students' character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah, West Banjarmasin, and to identify the factors influencing its implementation. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach through field research. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation involving the Aqidah Akhlak teacher, the madrasah head, administrative staff, and students of Grades VII and VIII, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and verification. The findings indicate that implementation was conducted through systematic lesson planning, varied instructional practices, continuous learning motivation, effective classroom management, and routine evaluation. Character formation was supported by teacher role modelling, understandable learning methods, positive teacher-student interaction, student interest, adequate learning resources, and a supportive school environment. The study's novelty lies in showing how these elements operate as an integrated implementation pattern in a small urban madrasah context, where character formation is not treated as a separate program but is embedded in everyday Aqidah Akhlak instruction. The findings also indicate that the process remains developmental because a small number of students still require additional motivation and supervision.

Keywords: Aqidah Akhlak, Islamic Character, Character Formation, Madrasah

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pelaksanaan pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak dalam membentuk karakter peserta didik di Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah, Banjarmasin Barat, serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi pelaksanaannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui penelitian lapangan. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan guru Aqidah Akhlak, kepala madrasah, tenaga administrasi, serta peserta didik kelas VII dan VIII. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan pembelajaran dilakukan melalui perencanaan pembelajaran yang sistematis, penerapan praktik pembelajaran yang bervariasi, pemberian motivasi belajar secara berkelanjutan, pengelolaan kelas yang efektif, serta evaluasi pembelajaran secara rutin. Pembentukan karakter didukung oleh keteladanan guru, metode pembelajaran yang mudah dipahami, interaksi positif antara guru dan peserta didik, minat belajar peserta didik, ketersediaan sumber belajar yang memadai, serta lingkungan madrasah yang mendukung. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada temuan mengenai bagaimana berbagai unsur tersebut bekerja sebagai suatu pola pelaksanaan yang terintegrasi dalam konteks madrasah perkotaan berskala kecil, di mana

pembentukan karakter tidak diposisikan sebagai program yang terpisah, melainkan diintegrasikan ke dalam proses pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak sehari-hari. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa proses pembentukan karakter masih bersifat berkembang karena sebagian kecil peserta didik masih memerlukan motivasi dan pengawasan tambahan.

Kata kunci: Aqidah Akhlak, Karakter Islami, Pembentukan Karakter, Madrasah

Introduction

Education in the Islamic tradition is directed not only toward intellectual development but also toward the formation of a morally responsible human being.(Abdullah et al., 2025a) Contemporary Islamic education research similarly emphasizes that learning becomes meaningful when knowledge, values, attitudes, and conduct are connected within the learner's everyday experience (Jannah, 2020; Maksudin, 2023). Character therefore cannot be reduced to a list of desirable traits or a cognitive understanding of moral concepts. It develops through repeated encounters with values, social expectations, exemplary conduct, and opportunities to practice what has been learned. In this perspective, schools and madrasahs have a responsibility to create learning environments in which moral knowledge can be translated into observable behavior. Aqidah Akhlak learning is particularly relevant because it connects Islamic belief with ethical conduct and therefore provides a direct curricular space for character formation.

The importance of character formation is also reflected in the Indonesian educational context, where education is expected to develop learners who possess knowledge, competence, faith, and noble character. Islamic educational institutions have an additional responsibility because religious instruction is expected to shape both understanding and practice.(Wahyudi, Suraijiah, et al., 2026; Yahya et al., 2025a) Recent studies of Aqidah Akhlak learning indicate that the subject can contribute to honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, religious commitment, and other positive dispositions when its content is connected with students' daily lives (Ambarsari & Darmiyati, 2022; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). Such findings suggest that the effectiveness of religious learning cannot be assessed solely from test scores. It must also be considered through the extent to which students begin to embody the values communicated in the classroom. Consequently, character formation should be understood as an integral outcome of meaningful religious learning rather than an additional activity outside the curriculum.

Within Islamic education, aqidah constitutes a foundational dimension because it concerns convictions about Allah and the principles of faith, whereas akhlak concerns the moral disposition expressed through human action. The conceptual relationship between morality, akhlaq, and character has been examined in recent Islamic education scholarship, which shows that the concepts overlap but are not identical (Maksudin, 2023). Akhlaq is grounded in Islamic normative sources, while the broader concept of character may also incorporate social, cultural, and civic dimensions. Nevertheless, both perspectives emphasize the internalization of values and their manifestation in conduct. Aqidah Akhlak learning therefore has potential to bridge the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of education. The central educational challenge is how teachers

transform abstract religious concepts into habits and dispositions that students can enact consistently.

The role of the teacher becomes crucial in this process because students encounter values not only through textbooks but also through interpersonal relationships. Recent studies show that teacher modelling, habituation, contextual learning, and sustained guidance are repeatedly associated with character formation in Islamic educational settings (Andrean & Muqowim, 2020; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). A teacher who explains respect but behaves disrespectfully creates a contradiction that can weaken the educational message. Conversely, a teacher who demonstrates discipline, politeness, responsibility, and care provides students with a concrete representation of the values under study. Character education consequently depends on the coherence between what teachers teach and what they practice. The teacher's role is therefore simultaneously instructional, relational, exemplary, and formative.

Character formation also requires continuity between classroom learning and the wider school culture. Research on Islamic character education indicates that values become more sustainable when they are reinforced through routines, social relationships, school rules, and religious practices (Jannah, 2020; Khusaini et al., 2023). A classroom lesson about honesty, for example, is strengthened when students encounter consistent expectations for honesty in assessment, interpersonal communication, and school administration. Likewise, lessons about respect become more meaningful when students routinely practice respectful communication with teachers and peers. (Abdullah et al., 2025b; Moh Al Ayat & Saputera, 2026) This means that Aqidah Akhlak learning should not be isolated from the broader educational ecosystem. The madrasah environment functions as an extended learning space in which religious values are repeatedly enacted, observed, corrected, and reinforced.

At the same time, the formation of student character is not automatic merely because religious subjects are taught. Recent research identifies challenges such as inconsistent learning strategies, negative influences from digital media, weak supervision outside school, and differences in students' readiness to internalize values (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). Such challenges demonstrate that character formation is a gradual process rather than an immediate consequence of exposure to moral instruction. Teachers must therefore combine explanation with example, practice, reflection, motivation, and evaluation. Students also require opportunities to understand why a behavior is valued rather than simply being instructed to perform it. A sustainable approach consequently treats character as a developmental outcome that requires repeated pedagogical reinforcement.

The local context of a madrasah is also important because educational practices are shaped by institutional conditions, teacher characteristics, student backgrounds, and available resources. Research in different madrasah settings has shown that the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning varies according to school culture, teacher competence, curriculum practices, and supporting facilities (Masyithoh & Achadah, 2022; Ambarsari & Darmiyati, 2022). A finding from one institution therefore cannot

automatically be generalized to another. Field-based research is useful because it reveals how formal curriculum intentions are translated into actual classroom practices. It can also identify the everyday mechanisms through which values are transmitted and reinforced. The present study adopts this contextual perspective by examining implementation at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah in Banjarmasin.

Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah presents a relevant context because preliminary observations identified several behaviors that require continued character development. The source study reports that some students arrived late, paid insufficient attention during lessons, and did not always display expected politeness toward teachers and peers. These observations do not indicate that the learning process failed, but they demonstrate a gap between the normative goals of Aqidah Akhlak education and the consistency of students' everyday conduct. Such a gap is pedagogically significant because character education is measured through the gradual alignment of knowledge, attitudes, and action. (Husna et al., 2025a; Mukhlis, Yazid, et al., 2025) The presence of challenges also provides an opportunity to examine how teachers respond through planning, instruction, motivation, classroom management, and evaluation. This makes the madrasah an appropriate setting for investigating implementation rather than merely measuring outcomes.

The source study shows that the Aqidah Akhlak teacher prepares instructional documents before teaching. These include teaching plans and supporting instructional programs that organize objectives, content, methods, media, learning resources, and assessment. Planning is important because character formation requires intentional selection of experiences rather than incidental moral advice. Recent research likewise reports that character-oriented Aqidah Akhlak learning benefits from lesson planning that explicitly connects curricular content with desired attitudes and behavior (Ambarsari & Darmiyati, 2022). Planning also gives teachers a framework for selecting methods that fit the content and students' needs. Thus, instructional planning becomes the first stage through which character values are deliberately embedded in classroom practice.

The implementation stage is equally important because planned values must be translated into interaction and activity. The source study indicates that the teacher used lectures, question-and-answer activities, individual or group exercises, and assignments. The teacher also emphasized explanation accompanied by examples of commendable conduct and direct modelling of caring behavior. This combination is consistent with research showing that students' character develops more effectively when moral concepts are connected with concrete practice and exemplary behavior (Andrian & Muqowim, 2020; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). Varied methods can also reduce passive learning and provide students with multiple ways to engage with moral concepts. Therefore, instructional variation should be understood not simply as a technique for increasing academic engagement but also as a mechanism for facilitating value internalization.

Learning motivation represents another component of implementation. The source study reports that the teacher used pre-tests and post-tests and maintained interaction with students to stimulate attention and participation. Motivation is particularly important in



character-oriented learning because students must be willing to engage with reflection and practice rather than merely receive information. Recent educational research emphasizes the importance of supportive teacher–student relationships and meaningful learning experiences in encouraging participation and internalization (Jannah, 2020; Sitompul et al., 2023). Motivation can also help students who initially show weaker interest to participate more consistently. Thus, motivational practice contributes to the conditions under which moral learning can become personally meaningful.

Classroom management also has a character dimension. The source study reports that the teacher was able to maintain students’ attention, distribute attention across the class, and create a relatively orderly learning environment. (Wahyudi, Suraijiah, et al., 2026; Yahya et al., 2025b) Classroom order is not only a managerial outcome because it provides a context in which students practice discipline, responsibility, listening, and respect for others. Research on Islamic education similarly suggests that character is strengthened through routines that make desirable conduct part of normal classroom interaction (Khusaini et al., 2023). When classroom expectations are clear and consistently enacted, students receive repeated opportunities to practice self-regulation. Classroom management therefore operates simultaneously as a condition for learning and as a practical arena for character formation.

Evaluation is another important dimension because character formation cannot be inferred solely from lesson completion. The source study indicates that the teacher used written assessments after several competencies or chapters, oral tests at the end of learning, daily assessment, and observation of student attitudes and behavior. Recent research recommends broader assessment approaches in religious education because character includes behavioral and affective dimensions that may not be visible in written examinations alone (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). Evaluation can also provide teachers with information about which values require reinforcement. When feedback is used formatively, assessment becomes part of the process of improving learning rather than merely assigning grades. The evaluation component in the present setting therefore deserves attention as a mechanism for monitoring both learning and character development.

Teacher characteristics constitute another important contextual factor. The source study identifies the Aqidah Akhlak teacher as having an undergraduate background in Islamic studies and approximately seventeen years of teaching experience. Such professional background provides a foundation for subject knowledge and classroom experience, although experience alone does not guarantee effective character formation. Contemporary research stresses that teacher competence includes pedagogical, interpersonal, and modelling dimensions (Sitompul et al., 2023). Students in the source study specifically described the teacher’s examples, advice, understandable explanations, and guidance as helpful. This indicates that professional experience becomes educationally meaningful when it is translated into practices that students can perceive and emulate.

Student characteristics also shape implementation. The source study found that most students expressed positive interest in Aqidah Akhlak and that their attention during learning was generally adequate, although a small number still needed additional motivation. Student interest is important because internalization requires active participation rather than passive exposure. Studies of character-oriented religious learning similarly identify student engagement as a supporting condition for successful value formation (Ambarsari & Darmiyati, 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2026). Differences in motivation should therefore be treated as part of the instructional context rather than as a fixed deficiency in students. Teachers need differentiated encouragement and sustained guidance to help students move from understanding values to consistently practicing them.

Learning resources and school environment provide additional structural support. The source study reports that instructional media, teaching aids, and Aqidah Akhlak textbooks were generally available, although teaching aids were used selectively according to the lesson content. The school environment was also described as supportive, with positive relationships among teachers and students and communication with parents or guardians. Research in Islamic education emphasizes that character formation becomes stronger when school culture, resources, and family relationships reinforce classroom learning (Jannah, 2020; Khusaini et al., 2023). Resources alone do not create character, but they can enable teachers to design richer learning experiences. Likewise, a supportive environment can reinforce expectations that students encounter during formal instruction.

Despite these supporting conditions, the initial observation of some disciplinary and politeness issues indicates that character formation remains a continuing process. The presence of late arrival, limited attention, and occasional insufficient politeness suggests that knowledge and behavior are not always synchronized. This is consistent with broader scholarship that distinguishes moral understanding from moral enactment and emphasizes the need for habituation and contextual reinforcement (Maksudin, 2023). The educational implication is that Aqidah Akhlak should be implemented as a sustained process rather than a set of isolated lessons. Teachers need to revisit values through examples, classroom routines, feedback, and evaluation. Such continuity can help transform moral concepts into increasingly stable dispositions.

The present study is therefore important for three reasons. First, it documents the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning in a specific urban madrasah using field-based qualitative evidence. Second, it examines the implementation as an integrated sequence of planning, teaching, motivation, classroom management, and evaluation rather than focusing on a single teaching technique. (Ghuni et al., 2026; Husna et al., 2025b; Mukhlis, Tarlam, et al., 2025) Third, it identifies how teacher, student, facility, and environmental factors interact in supporting the process. This perspective complements previous studies that have often focused on individual aspects such as teacher role, religious character, or curriculum integration (Andrean & Muqowim, 2020; Masyithoh & Achadah, 2022; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). The study consequently contributes a contextual implementation picture from Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah Banjarmasin. Its central



concern is not to claim universal effectiveness, but to explain how character-oriented Aqidah Akhlak learning is enacted in the setting investigated.

Literature Review

Aqidah Akhlak learning can be understood as a form of Islamic education that connects faith, moral understanding, and conduct. The concept of aqidah concerns conviction and faith, while akhlak concerns the disposition that becomes visible in action. Contemporary conceptual analysis argues that akhlaq and character share an emphasis on moral conduct but differ in their normative foundations (Maksudin, 2023). In Islamic education, akhlaq is anchored in revelation and prophetic example, whereas character education may incorporate broader civic and social values. This distinction is important because it clarifies that Aqidah Akhlak does not simply reproduce generic character education. It provides an explicitly Islamic value framework for interpreting and practicing moral behavior.

The relationship between faith and conduct is central to the pedagogical rationale of Aqidah Akhlak. Religious belief becomes educationally significant when it influences how learners treat themselves, other people, and their environment. Jannah (2020) found that Aqidah Akhlak learning can be implemented applicatively so that students practice values introduced through instruction and school programs. Such an approach positions religious learning as a process of internalization rather than information transmission. The teacher therefore needs to create opportunities for students to connect lesson content with concrete behavior. Character formation becomes stronger when students repeatedly experience this connection in authentic situations.

Character education generally involves the internalization of values through knowledge, emotional engagement, habituation, and social practice. In Islamic educational contexts, these dimensions can be reinforced through exemplary conduct, religious routines, reflection, and community expectations. Andrean and Muqowim (2020) emphasize the importance of teachers' efforts to habituate character through Aqidah Akhlak learning. Their study demonstrates that classroom instruction can become a medium for repeated practice of desired dispositions. The significance of habituation is that repeated conduct can gradually become part of students' behavioral repertoire. Thus, character formation requires continuity between what is taught, what is practiced, and what is socially reinforced.

Teacher modelling is a major theoretical mechanism in Islamic character education. Students observe how teachers speak, respond to mistakes, manage conflict, and demonstrate responsibility. Recent research on Aqidah Akhlak instruction identifies teacher role modelling as a key means of internalizing honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and respect (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). This mechanism is especially relevant in adolescence because students are developing more complex social identities and are sensitive to interpersonal examples. (Fatikhah et al., 2026; Ghuni et al., 2025a; Husna et al., 2026) Teacher modelling also reduces the distance between normative instruction and actual behavior. The teacher consequently functions not only as a transmitter of knowledge but as an embodied representation of the values being taught.



Habituation complements modelling because occasional examples are insufficient to establish stable conduct. Character becomes more durable when desirable behaviors are practiced repeatedly in predictable settings. Research on Islamic moral education describes habituation, discipline, and exemplary behavior as interconnected mechanisms for developing personal, social, and spiritual character (Astuti & Winarti, 2026). In a madrasah, such habituation can include greeting others, praying before learning, listening respectfully, asking permission, completing responsibilities, and maintaining orderly conduct. These practices transform abstract values into routines that students can perform with decreasing external prompting. The educational challenge is to ensure that habituation remains meaningful rather than becoming mechanical compliance.

Contextual learning is another important dimension of character-oriented religious instruction. Students are more likely to understand moral concepts when examples are connected to situations they encounter in daily life. The source study indicates that the teacher explained commendable behavior while giving direct examples of how students should act toward others. This approach is compatible with contemporary findings that contextual and practice-oriented Aqidah Akhlak learning supports the internalization of values (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). Contextualization also allows students to discuss moral choices rather than simply memorize definitions. It therefore creates opportunities for moral reasoning as well as behavioral practice.

Learning methods influence how students engage with moral content. Traditional lecture methods can efficiently introduce concepts, but question-and-answer activities, exercises, group work, and assignments provide additional opportunities for participation. Ambarsari and Darmiyati (2022) reported that character values can be integrated into the opening, core, and closing stages of Aqidah Akhlak learning. Such integration suggests that character education should not be confined to a special segment of the lesson. (Ghuni et al., 2025b; Mahmoud et al., 2026) Instead, it can be embedded across instructional phases. Methodological variation can consequently serve both cognitive learning and affective-behavioral development.

Motivation is relevant because students do not internalize values through exposure alone. They need reasons to participate, opportunities to succeed, and feedback that helps them recognize progress. The source study describes the use of pre-tests and post-tests and positive teacher–student interaction as motivational practices. Contemporary research likewise emphasizes that supportive interactions can strengthen student engagement in Islamic learning (Sitompul et al., 2023). Motivation should not be interpreted merely as making lessons entertaining. It involves creating conditions in which students perceive learning as meaningful and believe that they can participate successfully.

Classroom management can be considered a hidden curriculum of character education. Rules concerning attention, participation, movement, communication, and responsibility teach students how to regulate their behavior in relation to others. When teachers manage classrooms fairly and consistently, students encounter practical lessons in discipline and mutual respect. The source study reports that the teacher maintained

attention and gave relatively equal attention to students, contributing to a conducive learning environment. This observation aligns with the broader argument that school routines become moral learning spaces when expectations are clear and consistently practiced. Classroom management is therefore not separate from character education but one of its everyday mechanisms.

Assessment in character-oriented learning should encompass more than cognitive achievement. Written tests are useful for determining students' conceptual understanding, but observation and oral interaction may be needed to examine how values are interpreted and expressed. The source study reports written and oral assessments as well as observation of student behavior. Recent Aqidah Akhlak research similarly calls for evaluation that considers religious attitudes and behavioral development (Rahmawati et al., 2026). Such assessment can inform teachers about which values require additional explanation or practice. Formative evaluation is particularly important because character formation is developmental and requires iterative feedback.

Teacher competence is multidimensional in Islamic education. Subject knowledge is necessary because teachers must explain theological and ethical concepts accurately. Pedagogical competence is needed to translate those concepts into age-appropriate learning experiences. Interpersonal competence is important because students learn through relationships, and moral competence is expressed through the teacher's own conduct. Sitompul et al. (2023) emphasize the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in mediating character and moral development. The source study's identification of the teacher's Islamic educational background and long teaching experience therefore provides relevant contextual information about the implementation.

Student interest functions as an enabling condition for learning. When students perceive Aqidah Akhlak as understandable and relevant, they are more likely to attend, participate, and practice what they learn. The source study found that most interviewed students expressed positive attitudes toward the subject and considered the material relatively accessible. This pattern is consistent with research showing that accessible instruction and positive teacher guidance can facilitate character-oriented learning (Jannah, 2020). Nevertheless, individual differences remain important because a small number of students may still require stronger motivation. Effective implementation therefore combines general classroom strategies with attention to individual needs.

School culture extends the influence of formal lessons. Students spend substantial time interacting with teachers, peers, rules, routines, and institutional expectations. If these elements communicate consistent moral standards, they reinforce classroom learning. Research on Islamic character education highlights the importance of school environment and religious culture in supporting value internalization (Khusaini et al., 2023). Conversely, inconsistency between classroom messages and everyday school practices can weaken internalization. The literature therefore supports examining Aqidah Akhlak learning as part of a broader educational ecology.

Family and community relationships are also relevant because students do not leave their moral identities at the school gate. Values learned at school can be



strengthened or weakened by experiences in the home and community. Jannah (2020) identified family environment as a potential inhibiting factor in character education, while the source study reports positive communication between the school and parents or guardians.(Abdullah et al., 2025c; Bolat et al., 2025; Yilmaz et al., 2025) This suggests that institutional collaboration can help extend character development beyond classroom boundaries. However, the present study primarily investigates the school setting and does not claim to measure family influence comprehensively. The family dimension is therefore best understood as a contextual factor rather than a directly measured outcome.

Digital media has become an increasingly relevant challenge for moral education. Students encounter language, behavior, and social norms from online environments that may not correspond with school expectations. Recent studies note that negative digital influences can complicate the consistent application of character values outside the madrasah (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). This does not mean that digital media is inherently harmful, but it means teachers need to help students interpret digital behavior through ethical principles.(Desyulita et al., 2025; Mukhlis, Knudstad, et al., 2025) Aqidah Akhlak learning can provide a framework for discussing online communication, respect, responsibility, and self-control. Such contextual expansion can make religious learning more responsive to contemporary adolescent experience.

Research on Aqidah Akhlak at the madrasah level has produced broadly consistent findings about the importance of planning, teacher modelling, habituation, and school culture. Masyithoh and Achadah (2022), for example, found that Aqidah Akhlak learning at an Islamic junior secondary school was connected with discipline and order, while the pesantren context provided additional support. Ambarsari and Darmiyati (2022) similarly described structured integration of character values within learning stages. These studies support the view that character formation is strengthened when curriculum and institutional culture work together. The present study extends this literature by examining a different madrasah context and by organizing the implementation around five operational components.

Recent studies also show a methodological trend toward qualitative investigation of Aqidah Akhlak and Islamic character education. Observation, interviews, and documentation allow researchers to examine not only what teachers intend to do but also what occurs in actual educational settings. The source study follows this tradition through field observation, interviews, and documentation. The use of multiple data sources is important because character-related claims are vulnerable to overreliance on self-report.(Arisandi et al., 2026) Triangulation can reveal convergence and divergence among teachers, students, administrators, and documents. This methodological orientation provides a stronger basis for describing implementation as a contextual process. The literature nevertheless leaves room for more institution-specific studies that connect instructional stages with supporting conditions. Many studies focus on teacher roles, religious character, or particular values, while fewer provide a detailed account of how planning, teaching, motivation, classroom management, evaluation, teacher factors, student factors, resources, and environment operate together. The present study addresses

this gap through a focused field study at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah Banjarmasin. Its contribution is descriptive and contextual rather than causal. The study does not claim that Aqidah Akhlak alone produces character change. Instead, it shows how the subject is implemented within a network of pedagogical and environmental supports.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design. The design was selected because the research sought to understand the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning as it occurred naturally in the madrasah setting rather than to test a statistical causal relationship. The research focused on the implementation process and the factors that supported or influenced it. The field site was Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah, West Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin City, during the 2025/2026 academic year. Qualitative field research is appropriate for examining educational practices because it allows researchers to connect participants' accounts with observed behavior and institutional documents. Similar qualitative designs have been used in recent research on Aqidah Akhlak and Islamic character education (Jannah, 2020; Ambarsari & Darmiyati, 2022; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025).

Participants and information sources included the Aqidah Akhlak teacher, the madrasah head, administrative staff, and selected students from Grades VII and VIII. The source study specifically identified the teacher and four students from Grades VII and VIII as primary informants, while the madrasah head and administrative personnel contributed institutional information. Grade IX was not included as an informant because the students were preparing for final examinations. Data concerned lesson planning, learning implementation, learning motivation, classroom management, evaluation, and the factors affecting implementation. The study also considered secondary information concerning the madrasah, teachers, students, facilities, and infrastructure. This participant structure enabled comparison among instructional, administrative, and student perspectives.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine classroom processes, student attention, teacher interaction, and classroom management. Interviews were conducted to obtain explanations from the Aqidah Akhlak teacher, madrasah head, and students concerning learning practices, motivation, difficulties, and supporting factors. Documentation was used to examine instructional planning and institutional information. The combination of techniques allowed the researcher to compare what participants reported with what was observed and documented. Such triangulation is consistent with qualitative studies of Islamic character education that use multiple sources to strengthen credibility (Andrean & Muqowim, 2020; Masyithoh & Achadah, 2022).

Data analysis followed three main stages: data reduction, data display, and verification. During reduction, information relevant to the research questions was selected, organized, and condensed. During data display, findings were arranged according to the implementation components and influencing factors so that patterns

could be identified. Verification involved examining the consistency of interpretations across observations, interviews, and documents. The analysis was descriptive rather than statistical, and the findings were interpreted in relation to the contextual conditions of the madrasah. This procedure corresponds with the analytical pattern used in recent qualitative studies of Aqidah Akhlak learning (Jannah, 2020; Alhabsyi et al., 2025).

Results and Discussion

The field findings indicate that Aqidah Akhlak learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah was implemented relatively well across five interconnected components: lesson planning, learning implementation, learning motivation, classroom management, and evaluation. The source study did not portray implementation as a single technique but as a sequence of instructional activities. This pattern is important because character formation requires continuity from preparation to classroom practice and subsequent feedback. The findings also show that implementation was supported by teacher characteristics, student interest, facilities, and the school environment. These results are broadly consistent with earlier qualitative studies of Aqidah Akhlak learning (Jannah, 2020; Ambarsari & Darmiyati, 2022).

Planning constituted the initial stage of implementation. The teacher prepared instructional documents before conducting classroom learning, including teaching plans and supporting instructional programs. The planning process included objectives, materials, methods, media, learning resources, and assessment. The madrasah head also expected teachers to prepare lesson plans before instruction. (Aslamiah et al., 2026; Mufid et al., 2026) This indicates that character formation was incorporated into the formal structure of instruction rather than left entirely to spontaneous advice. The finding corresponds with Ambarsari and Darmiyati (2022), who found that character values can be integrated into the planned stages of Aqidah Akhlak learning.

Learning implementation employed several methods rather than relying on a single instructional procedure. The teacher used lectures, question-and-answer activities, individual or group exercises, and assignments. The teacher also emphasized understanding and examples of commendable behavior, including caring attitudes toward others. (Isna et al., 2026) The use of varied methods provided opportunities for explanation, interaction, practice, and reinforcement. Students reported that explanations were understandable and that teacher examples helped them recognize appropriate behavior. This pattern supports research emphasizing contextual learning and teacher modelling in character-oriented Aqidah Akhlak instruction (Andrean & Muqowim, 2020; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025).

Learning motivation was implemented through continuous teacher interaction and the use of pre-tests and post-tests. (Hutfhi et al., 2026) The purpose was not merely to measure knowledge but also to stimulate attention and participation. The madrasah head reported that teacher–student interaction during learning was generally effective and conducive. Observation also showed that most students paid attention to the teacher during instruction. These findings indicate that motivation was embedded in everyday classroom communication rather than treated as a separate program. This is compatible



with research showing that supportive teacher interaction contributes to engagement in Islamic learning (Sitompul et al., 2023).

Classroom management was another component of the implementation. Observation showed that the teacher was able to maintain order, attract students' attention, and distribute attention across the classroom. Students generally remained focused, did not create substantial disturbances, and displayed appropriate conduct such as requesting permission when leaving the classroom. (Nurhidayah & Handayani, 2025) Although some students occasionally talked with peers or became less focused, these behaviors did not substantially disrupt the learning process. The pattern suggests that classroom management was sufficiently stable to support instruction. In character terms, classroom management also provided repeated practice in discipline, attention, respect, and self-regulation.

Evaluation was conducted through several forms. The teacher used written tests after completing a chapter or several competencies, oral tests at the end of lessons, daily assessment, and observation of student attitudes and behavior. (Baiti et al., 2026) Time limitations sometimes made it difficult to conduct oral assessment fully after every lesson. Nevertheless, evaluation was conducted routinely and was intended to determine students' understanding and development. The use of behavioral observation is particularly relevant to Aqidah Akhlak because character cannot be adequately represented by cognitive scores alone. Recent research similarly recommends combining academic and affective-behavioral evidence in evaluating religious character development (Rahmawati et al., 2026).

Teacher factors supported implementation. The Aqidah Akhlak teacher had an undergraduate background in Islamic studies and approximately seventeen years of teaching experience. The source study interpreted this educational background and experience as supportive of the teacher's instructional competence. (Mukhlis et al., 2026; Nabriz, Knudstad, et al., 2026) The teacher also demonstrated preparation, method selection, classroom management, motivation, and evaluation practices. Students perceived the teacher as providing examples, advice, and understandable explanations. These findings reinforce the literature emphasizing that teachers' modelling and pedagogical practices are central to character formation (Andrean & Muqowim, 2020; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025).

Student factors were generally supportive but not uniform. Most students expressed positive interest in Aqidah Akhlak and reported that the subject was understandable and not excessively difficult. Most students also paid attention during lessons, although a small number still required additional motivation and supervision. (Hatmiah, 2026; Wahyudi, Amin, et al., 2026) Student statements emphasized that teacher advice, examples, and clear explanations helped them understand how to behave appropriately. This suggests that student interest functioned as a resource for implementation rather than merely as an outcome. At the same time, the variation among students confirms that character formation requires differentiated encouragement.

Facilities and infrastructure also supported implementation. The source study reports that teaching media, teaching aids, books, and other learning supports were generally available. (Afifah et al., 2026; Hanafiah, 2024a) Teaching aids were used selectively according to the material being taught rather than in every lesson. Most students had access to Aqidah Akhlak textbooks, which facilitated continuity between classroom explanation and individual study. These resources did not independently create character but enabled the teacher to organize learning more effectively. The finding is consistent with research emphasizing that instructional resources should be integrated with pedagogical strategy rather than treated as substitutes for teacher competence.

The school environment provided another supportive condition. The relationship between teachers and students was described as positive, and the school maintained communication with parents or guardians. Students also described a conducive learning atmosphere and support from peers and the wider school environment. Such conditions are important because character values are reinforced when students encounter consistent expectations across social interactions. Research on Islamic character education similarly emphasizes school culture, habituation, and social reinforcement (Jannah, 2020; Khusaini et al., 2023). The environmental factor therefore helps explain why classroom instruction could extend into everyday student behavior.

Table 1. Integrated Findings on the Implementation of Aqidah Akhlak Learning and Character Formation

Implementation Dimension	Field Finding	Character Relevance	Supporting Condition
Lesson planning	Instructional plans and supporting teaching documents prepared before learning.	Makes character objectives and learning activities intentional.	Teacher competence and experience.
Learning implementation	Lecture, question-answer, individual/group practice, assignments, explanation, and modelling.	Connects moral concepts with observable conduct.	Understandable methods and teacher example.
Learning motivation	Pre-tests, post-tests, interaction, advice, and encouragement.	Strengthens attention, participation, and willingness to practice values.	Positive teacher–student relationship.
Classroom management	Teacher maintains order, attention, equal interaction, and student participation.	Practices discipline, respect, responsibility, and self-control.	Conducive classroom climate.



Implementation Dimension	Field Finding	Character Relevance	Supporting Condition
Evaluation	Written tests, oral tests, daily assessment, and observation of behavior.	Monitors knowledge and behavioral development.	Routine assessment and teacher follow-up.
Teacher factor	Relevant Islamic education background and about 17 years' teaching experience.	Provides subject expertise and credible modelling.	Professional experience.
Student factor	Most students show interest and adequate attention; a small group needs additional motivation.	Creates active conditions for internalization.	Student interest and teacher encouragement.
Facilities	Books, media, teaching aids, and supporting learning tools are generally available.	Facilitates meaningful and structured learning.	Adequate learning resources.
Environment	Positive teacher–student relationships and school–parent communication.	Reinforces values beyond individual lessons.	Supportive madrasah environment.

The integrated pattern in Table 1 shows that the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak at Al Abadiyah is best understood as a pedagogical system rather than a collection of isolated classroom techniques. Planning provides direction, implementation provides experience, motivation sustains engagement, classroom management establishes behavioral routines, and evaluation supplies feedback. These components are mutually reinforcing because weakness in one component can reduce the effect of the others. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that character-oriented religious education depends on the interaction of curriculum, teacher example, habituation, and school culture (Jannah, 2020; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). The local finding therefore contributes a concrete example of how these components operate together in a madrasah context.

The planning finding demonstrates that character formation begins before classroom interaction occurs. By preparing objectives, methods, materials, and assessment, the teacher creates a structured pathway through which moral content can be taught and practiced. (Mujani et al., 2024; Mukhlis, 2024) This is important because unplanned moral instruction may depend too heavily on spontaneous correction. Ambarsari and Darmiyati (2022) similarly found that character-oriented Aqidah Akhlak

learning can be integrated into formal lesson stages. The Al Abadiyah case indicates that planning is not merely an administrative obligation but can function as a pedagogical instrument for aligning content and character goals. The implication is that lesson planning should explicitly identify the behavioral meaning of religious concepts wherever appropriate.

The use of varied instructional methods suggests that character formation benefits from more than verbal transmission. Lectures can establish conceptual foundations, while questions, exercises, group activities, and assignments create opportunities for active engagement. Teacher modelling adds another layer by demonstrating how values should appear in conduct. This combination corresponds with Andrean and Muqowim's (2020) emphasis on habituation and with Sayidah and Fatimah's (2025) findings concerning contextual learning and role modelling. The significance is not that one method is universally superior, but that methods should be selected according to the value and learning objective being addressed. Character-oriented teaching is therefore strengthened when students can move between knowing, discussing, observing, and practicing.

The motivational finding highlights the relational character of Islamic education. Students reported that teacher advice, understandable explanations, and a positive atmosphere supported their engagement. The teacher's use of pre-tests and post-tests also created moments for interaction and feedback. Motivation in this context is therefore not simply an internal psychological state but is partly constructed through teacher-student relationships. Sitompul et al. (2023) similarly describe the Islamic education teacher as an important mediator in character and moral development. The implication is that character education requires teachers to maintain communication that is firm enough to establish standards but supportive enough to encourage students to improve.

Classroom management deserves particular attention because it transforms moral expectations into everyday routines. Asking permission, listening when others speak, maintaining attention, and avoiding disruption are themselves forms of practical character education. The observation that students generally behaved orderly while a small number occasionally lost focus illustrates the developmental nature of the process. (Hanafiah, 2024b; Khairiyah et al., 2024) Character should therefore not be interpreted as an all-or-nothing condition. Instead, teachers need to identify patterns of behavior and provide repeated reinforcement. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing habituation and discipline as mechanisms of moral development in Islamic educational environments (Astuti & Winarti, 2026).

The evaluation finding indicates an important strength and a continuing opportunity for development. Written and oral tests provide evidence about students' understanding, while behavioral observation provides evidence about the enactment of values. (Begum et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2025) However, the source study also notes time limitations in conducting oral assessment. This suggests that evaluation practices need to remain feasible while still capturing the affective and behavioral dimensions of learning. Recent research on religious character formation recommends broader assessment because religious attitudes cannot be fully inferred from academic tests

(Rahmawati et al., 2026). A practical implication is that teachers can use brief observation records, reflective questions, or behavior checklists alongside formal tests.

The teacher factor shows how professional background can become meaningful when translated into daily practice. The teacher's Islamic educational background provides subject-related knowledge, while long teaching experience can support classroom management and instructional judgment. Yet the most educationally significant evidence is found in the practices observed and reported by students: examples, explanations, advice, motivation, and attention. (Hushin et al., 2025; Nabriz, Azmi, et al., 2026) This reinforces the distinction between possessing qualifications and demonstrating professional competence. Character education requires both. The finding therefore supports a conception of teacher professionalism that includes ethical modelling and relational competence alongside subject knowledge.

The student factor indicates that character formation should build upon existing interest while addressing differences among learners. Most students reported enjoying Aqidah Akhlak and finding the material manageable, which creates favorable conditions for learning. At the same time, the teacher acknowledged that some students still required additional motivation. This variation is normal in heterogeneous classrooms and should not be interpreted as evidence that the curriculum has the same effect on every student. Differentiated encouragement can help less-engaged students participate without lowering expectations for the whole class. The finding therefore points toward a balanced approach that combines common moral standards with responsive pedagogy.

The facilities finding illustrates the supporting rather than determinative role of educational resources. Books and learning media can make content more accessible, but they do not replace the teacher's interpretive and formative role. (Bakr et al., 2025; Nabriz et al., 2025) The selective use of teaching aids according to material also suggests that resources should be purposeful rather than decorative. This is consistent with the broader literature that treats learning resources as part of an instructional system rather than as independent determinants of character. The practical implication is that madrasahs should prioritize resources that directly support interaction, contextualization, and practice. Adequate resources should therefore be accompanied by teacher capacity to use them meaningfully.

The environmental finding provides perhaps the strongest explanation for the continuity of character formation beyond the formal lesson. Positive relationships among teachers and students create social reinforcement for the values discussed in class. Communication with parents or guardians can also reduce the separation between school expectations and students' lives outside school. This finding is compatible with Jannah's (2020) observation that environmental factors can either support or hinder character formation. It also corresponds with research emphasizing the importance of school culture and habituation (Khusaini et al., 2023). Character education at Al Abadiyah can therefore be understood as a shared institutional process rather than the responsibility of the Aqidah Akhlak teacher alone.

Conclusion

The implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Abadiyah, West Banjarmasin, was found to operate relatively well through an interconnected sequence of lesson planning, learning implementation, motivation, classroom management, and evaluation. The teacher prepared instructional plans, used varied methods, provided examples of commendable conduct, maintained student motivation, managed the classroom, and conducted written, oral, and behavioral evaluation. These practices created opportunities for students to connect religious knowledge with everyday conduct. The character-forming process was supported by teacher modelling, understandable instruction, positive interaction, student interest, available learning resources, and a supportive school environment. The study's main contribution is its contextual description of how these elements function together in a small urban madrasah rather than as isolated interventions. The findings also show that character formation remains developmental because a small number of students still require additional motivation and supervision. Accordingly, Aqidah Akhlak learning should continue to strengthen contextual methods, consistent modelling, behavioral assessment, and cooperation among teachers, students, parents, and the madrasah environment. The study does not establish a causal effect of Aqidah Akhlak learning on character, but it demonstrates a coherent implementation pattern that provides a practical basis for strengthening Islamic character education at the institutional level.

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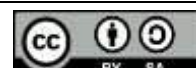
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