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School Religious Culture and Its Implications for the Character Development of Students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of school religious culture and its implications for students' character development at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin, Beringin, Alalak, Barito Kuala. The study employed field research with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving the madrasah principal, teachers, and students, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that religious culture is implemented through Qur'anic recitation, collective prayer, congregational prayer, Islamic celebrations, teacher role modeling, religious habituation, and the creation of a supportive religious environment. These practices are associated with the development of students' religiosity, discipline, responsibility, politeness, honesty, and social concern. Supporting factors include leadership commitment, teacher involvement, sustainable religious programs, adequate facilities, and a conducive school environment, while inhibiting factors include external social influences, digital technology, diverse student backgrounds, and limited supervision outside school. The novelty lies in explaining religious culture as an integrated mechanism of habituation, role modeling, and environmental reinforcement within a private one-roof Islamic senior secondary school context.
Keywords: School Religious Culture, Character Development, Islamic Education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi budaya religius sekolah dan implikasinya terhadap pembentukan karakter peserta didik di Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin, Beringin, Alalak, Barito Kuala. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian lapangan dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi nonpartisipan, wawancara semiterstruktur, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala madrasah, guru, dan peserta didik, kemudian dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya religius diimplementasikan melalui kegiatan membaca Al-Qur'an, doa bersama, salat berjamaah, peringatan hari-hari besar Islam, keteladanan guru, pembiasaan keagamaan, serta penciptaan lingkungan religius yang mendukung. Praktik-praktik tersebut berkaitan dengan perkembangan religiusitas, kedisiplinan, tanggung jawab, kesopanan, kejujuran, dan kepedulian sosial peserta didik. Faktor pendukung meliputi komitmen kepemimpinan, keterlibatan guru, keberlangsungan program keagamaan, ketersediaan

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sarana dan prasarana yang memadai, serta lingkungan sekolah yang kondusif. Sementara itu, faktor penghambat meliputi pengaruh sosial eksternal, perkembangan teknologi digital, keberagaman latar belakang peserta didik, dan keterbatasan pengawasan di luar sekolah. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penjelasan mengenai budaya religius sebagai mekanisme terpadu yang mencakup pembiasaan, keteladanan, dan penguatan lingkungan dalam konteks madrasah aliyah swasta satu atap.
Kata Kunci: Budaya Religius Sekolah, Pembentukan Karakter, Pendidikan Islam

Introduction

Islamic education has a fundamental responsibility to develop students not only as knowledgeable individuals but also as persons who demonstrate morally responsible behavior. The educational process therefore involves the transmission of knowledge as well as the internalization of values that guide students' actions in everyday life. In Islamic educational philosophy, moral development occupies an important position because knowledge is expected to produce beneficial conduct.(Hanafiah, 2024a) Religious education consequently cannot be restricted to classroom instruction or the mastery of religious concepts. It must also provide opportunities for students to experience, practice, and internalize religious values in authentic social settings. Recent studies similarly emphasize that character development requires coherent educational environments in which values are repeatedly practiced rather than merely explained (Kosasih et al., 2026; Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

The contemporary educational environment presents increasingly complex challenges to character formation. Students encounter diverse cultural influences through family, peers, community, mass media, and digital platforms. Such influences may enrich students' learning experiences, but they may also expose them to behaviors that are inconsistent with religious and moral values.(Mujani et al., 2024) The digital environment is particularly significant because students can access information and social interaction beyond the direct supervision of parents and teachers. Recent research indicates that technological development can create challenges related to ethics, discipline, responsibility, and religious behavior among students. Consequently, schools need systematic cultural strategies that help students develop moral orientations capable of guiding their behavior across different environments (Purnawan et al., 2026; Rosadi et al., 2025).

Character education becomes more effective when moral values are embedded in the everyday life of an educational institution. A school culture provides a social environment in which students repeatedly encounter expectations, norms, relationships, routines, and behavioral models.('Afifah et al., 2026) Through such interactions, students can learn what the institution considers valuable and appropriate. Character education therefore depends not only on curriculum content but also on the cultural practices that surround students during their daily activities. Research on Islamic school culture has demonstrated that routine activities, teacher modeling, environmental conditioning, and social interaction can jointly support the development of religious, responsible, cooperative, honest, and polite behavior (Yuniar et al., 2020).

Within Islamic education, religious culture represents a more specific form of school culture because the values being institutionalized are grounded in religious teachings. Religious culture can include worship practices, Qur'anic activities, religious celebrations, greetings, dress, interpersonal manners, teacher behavior, and the organization of the school environment.(Wahyudi, Amin, et al., 2026) The essential

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characteristic is not simply the presence of religious activities but their integration into the everyday institutional life of the school. When religious practices are carried out consistently, they can become meaningful experiences through which students learn to connect religious principles with concrete behavior. This perspective is supported by research showing that religious culture functions through habituation, role modeling, participation, and environmental reinforcement (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025; Santani et al., 2026).

The relationship between religious culture and character formation can also be understood through the concept of habituation. Repeated behaviors may gradually become familiar patterns of action, especially when they are reinforced by institutional expectations and social relationships. In an Islamic school, activities such as Qur'anic recitation, collective prayer, greetings, respectful communication, and maintaining cleanliness provide repeated opportunities for students to practice values.(Baiti et al., 2026) Habituation, however, should not be understood as mechanical repetition alone. Its educational value increases when students understand the meaning of the activity and encounter consistent examples from teachers and other members of the school community (Saidah & Falah, 2023; Purnawan et al., 2026).

Teacher behavior is another important dimension of religious school culture. Teachers interact with students regularly and therefore become highly visible representatives of the values promoted by the institution. Students can observe how teachers communicate, respond to problems, follow rules, participate in worship, and treat other people. Such observation can provide concrete examples of how abstract religious values are translated into everyday conduct.(Hutfhi et al., 2026) Recent studies of Islamic education indicate that teacher role modeling is closely associated with students' religious and moral behavior, particularly when exemplary conduct is consistent with the values communicated through instruction (Rifki et al., 2022; Ubaidillah & Haryanto, 2026).

School leadership also has a significant role in sustaining religious culture. A principal determines institutional priorities, supports programs, coordinates teachers, allocates resources, and establishes expectations concerning student behavior. Religious culture is difficult to sustain when it depends only on individual teachers without institutional commitment.(Mukhlis et al., 2026; Nurhidayah & Handayani, 2025) Conversely, leadership support can transform isolated religious activities into systematic programs that involve different components of the school. A recent systematic review found that school leaders are frequently identified as important actors in integrating religious values into policies, routines, extracurricular programs, and the broader school environment (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025).

The physical environment also contributes to the development of religious culture. A prayer room, Qur'anic resources, appropriate learning spaces, religious symbols, and a clean environment can provide institutional support for religious practices. Nevertheless, physical facilities alone do not automatically produce religious character. Their educational significance depends on how they are used and connected with meaningful practices and relationships.(Khairiyah et al., 2024) Earlier research in Indonesian schools found that worship facilities, religious ceremonies, and religious symbols were associated with students' religious character, including religious obedience, tolerance, and harmonious social relations (Marini et al., 2018).

Religious culture is particularly relevant in madrasahs because madrasahs have an explicit educational mission that combines general education with Islamic learning. The madrasah environment provides opportunities to integrate religious knowledge with

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practical moral education. Students are expected not merely to know Islamic teachings but also to demonstrate akhlakul karimah in their relationships with teachers, peers, family, and society. Therefore, the success of a madrasah cannot be assessed exclusively through academic performance. Its contribution to students' religious and moral development is also an important educational outcome (Suriadi, 2020; Sarip et al., 2023).

The concept of akhlak in Islamic education encompasses patterns of conduct that reflect internalized moral and religious values. Akhlak is manifested through relationships with God, oneself, other people, and the surrounding environment. Consequently, character development in an Islamic educational institution should include both personal religiosity and social morality.(Hanafiah, 2024b; Mukhlis, 2024) Students' ability to pray, read the Qur'an, and participate in religious activities is important, but it should be accompanied by honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, cooperation, and social concern. Research on religious school culture similarly identifies these values as important outcomes of sustained religious habituation (Yuniar et al., 2020; Santani et al., 2026).

An important issue is that religious activities may become merely ceremonial if students perform them without understanding or internalizing their meaning. Repetition alone does not necessarily guarantee moral transformation. Students may participate in prayer, recitation, or religious celebrations because these activities are required by school regulations while their personal moral awareness remains underdeveloped. Contemporary research therefore emphasizes the importance of connecting religious routines with interpretation, participation, relationships, and institutional reinforcement. Religious culture becomes educationally meaningful when ritual practices are connected to broader processes of moral learning and character formation (Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

The role of discipline is also important in explaining how school culture may influence character. Discipline translates institutional values into repeated behavioral patterns that students are expected to follow. Punctuality, participation in religious routines, adherence to school regulations, and responsibility for assigned tasks provide concrete forms through which religious values can become behavioral habits. Recent quantitative research in Indonesian Islamic schools found that school culture was associated with both student discipline and religious character, while discipline functioned as an important pathway connecting school culture to religious character (Rosadi et al., 2025).

Another important dimension is the relationship between school, family, and community. Students do not spend their entire lives within school, and therefore school-based character education can be weakened if external environments communicate contradictory values. Parents, peers, community members, and digital networks can either reinforce or challenge values learned at school. Recent research suggests that collaboration between schools, parents, and communities can strengthen the sustainability of religious character development. Religious culture should therefore be understood as part of an educational ecosystem rather than an isolated institutional program (Kosasih et al., 2026; Purnawan et al., 2026).

Previous studies have established an important relationship between school culture and character formation, but they have been conducted in different educational settings. Some studies have focused on elementary schools, while others have examined Islamic junior secondary schools, integrated Islamic schools, public schools, or special education institutions.(Hatmiah, 2026) These studies demonstrate the importance of habituation, role modeling, leadership, school environment, and religious programs.

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However, the institutional characteristics of a private one-roof madrasah may differ from those of larger or more established Islamic educational institutions. The present study therefore provides a context-specific examination of religious culture within a private Islamic senior secondary school (Marini et al., 2018; Yuniar et al., 2020; Sarip et al., 2023).

The research context is Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin, located in Beringin Village, Alalak District, Barito Kuala. The uploaded research source identifies the institution as a private Islamic senior secondary school and describes its religious culture as involving habituation, teacher role modeling, religious activities, and a religious school environment. The source also identifies character outcomes in the domains of religiosity, discipline, responsibility, politeness, honesty, and social concern. These empirical features provide an appropriate basis for examining how institutional religious practices are connected with students' everyday moral behavior.

The study is also significant because it does not treat religious culture as a single intervention or isolated religious program. Instead, it examines religious culture as a system consisting of repeated activities, teacher behavior, institutional support, and environmental conditions. This perspective allows the study to explore the processes through which religious values become part of students' everyday behavior. It also makes it possible to identify factors that support or hinder the continuity of religious culture. Such an approach is consistent with recent research that emphasizes institutional coherence rather than the simple number of religious activities offered by schools (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025; Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

Based on this background, the study focuses on three interconnected issues. The first concerns the forms of religious culture implemented in the madrasah. The second concerns the implications of these practices for students' character development. The third concerns the factors that support and hinder the implementation of religious culture. The study seeks to contribute an empirically grounded explanation of how religious habituation, teacher modeling, religious activities, and environmental conditions operate together in a private Islamic senior secondary school. The novelty of the study therefore lies in interpreting school religious culture as an integrated process of habituation, modeling, and environmental reinforcement within the specific context of a private one-roof madrasah.

Literature Review

School Religious Culture

School culture refers to the values, norms, routines, relationships, expectations, and practices that develop within an educational institution. It influences how members of the school community understand appropriate behavior and how they interact with one another.(Nabriz et al., 2026) Culture is therefore more comprehensive than formal rules because it includes both explicit institutional policies and implicit behavioral expectations. In character education, school culture provides a context in which values can be experienced repeatedly. Research in Islamic schools has shown that character education is implemented through routine activities, spontaneous responses, teacher modeling, and environmental conditioning (Yuniar et al., 2020).

Religious school culture can be understood as school culture that is explicitly informed by religious values and practices. In an Islamic educational institution, these values may include faith, worship, honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, cooperation, modesty, and social concern. Religious culture is therefore not limited to

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formal worship.(Ghani et al., 2026) It can also influence language, interpersonal relationships, classroom routines, institutional policies, and the treatment of the physical environment. Hadi and Prayogi (2025) describe religious culture management as a process of integrating Islamic values into daily educational practices, while Santani et al. (2026) emphasize habituation, role modeling, participation, and reflection.

A central feature of religious culture is habituation. Habituation involves repeated opportunities for students to perform desirable behaviors until those behaviors become familiar and increasingly self-regulated.(Ghani et al., 2026) In Islamic education, habituation may take the form of Qur'anic recitation, collective prayer, greetings, religious reflection, and social activities. The educational objective is not simply to make students comply with school routines but to encourage them to internalize the values represented by those routines. Saidah and Falah (2023) found that religious culture implemented through socialization, habituation, and behavioral reinforcement supported students' discipline and responsibility.

Religious habituation is closely related to discipline. A routine requires students to organize their time and behavior according to institutional expectations. For example, students who are expected to attend Qur'anic recitation or congregational prayer at a particular time learn to manage schedules and fulfill collective responsibilities.(Ghuni et al., 2026; Mahmoud et al., 2026) Discipline therefore becomes a behavioral dimension through which religious values are made visible. Rosadi et al. (2025) provide empirical evidence that school culture is associated with student discipline and that discipline is an important mechanism in the development of religious character.

Teacher role modeling constitutes another major dimension of religious school culture. Students learn not only from explicit instruction but also from observing the conduct of significant adults. A teacher who consistently demonstrates politeness, punctuality, honesty, religious commitment, and respect provides a behavioral model that students can observe and imitate.(Moh Al Ayat & Saputera, 2026) The effectiveness of role modeling depends on consistency because contradictions between what teachers teach and what they practice can weaken students' trust in institutional values. Research on Islamic education has repeatedly emphasized the strategic position of teachers as role models in religious character formation (Rifki et al., 2022; Ubaidillah & Haryanto, 2026).

Leadership is an important organizational dimension of religious culture. School principals can determine whether religious activities are isolated initiatives or become part of institutional policy and everyday school routines.(Yahya et al., 2025) Leadership influences planning, resource allocation, teacher coordination, supervision, and communication with parents. A religious culture that lacks leadership support may depend heavily on individual enthusiasm and may become inconsistent. Conversely, strong leadership can help create continuity across school programs and reinforce shared expectations among teachers and students (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025).

The physical environment can also reinforce religious culture. Facilities such as prayer rooms, Qur'ans, libraries, halls, and appropriate spaces for religious activities provide practical opportunities for students to participate in religious routines. However, environmental support should be understood as part of a larger cultural system rather than as an independent determinant of character. Marini et al. (2018) demonstrated that worship facilities, religious ceremonies, and religious symbols were related to religious character among Indonesian students. The finding suggests that physical and symbolic environments can strengthen cultural messages when integrated with meaningful educational practices.

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Religious celebrations constitute another component of school religious culture. Activities such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, Isra and Mi'raj, Ramadan programs, and other Islamic events can create collective experiences that connect students with religious traditions.(Abdullah et al., 2025) These activities can also strengthen social bonds because students participate in them collectively. Their educational significance increases when they are accompanied by reflection, participation, and opportunities for students to assume responsibility. Santani et al. (2026) similarly found that religious activities can function as continuous character education rather than merely ritual events.

Religious culture can also operate as a form of hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum refers to values and behavioral expectations communicated indirectly through institutional practices and social relationships. When students repeatedly encounter greetings, respectful communication, collective worship, cleanliness, and teacher modeling, they learn institutional norms even when these values are not explicitly discussed as lesson objectives. Religious activities can therefore become pedagogical instruments that shape attitudes and behavior. This interpretation is consistent with recent scholarship describing religious activities in madrasahs as forms of implicit educational practice that contribute to character formation.

Character Development in Islamic Education

Character development refers to the process through which students acquire, internalize, and demonstrate desirable values in their behavior. Within Islamic education, character is closely connected with akhlak because moral behavior is understood as an expression of internalized religious values.(Fatikhah et al., 2026) Akhlak therefore involves more than compliance with rules. It concerns the formation of dispositions that encourage individuals to behave appropriately even when external supervision is limited. This distinction is important because genuine character development involves movement from externally regulated behavior toward internal moral awareness.

Religious character includes both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension concerns the individual's relationship with God, including worship and religious commitment.(Husna et al., 2025; Mukhlis, Tarlam, et al., 2025) The horizontal dimension concerns relationships with other people and the environment, including respect, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and social concern. Islamic education therefore seeks to integrate religious devotion with ethical conduct. Studies of Islamic school culture similarly identify religiosity, discipline, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, and politeness as interconnected character outcomes (Yuniar et al., 2020; Santani et al., 2026).

Religiosity represents an important foundation of Islamic character. Students who regularly participate in Qur'anic recitation, prayer, and religious activities have opportunities to develop familiarity with religious practices. Nevertheless, participation should ideally be accompanied by understanding and personal reflection. Rosenda and Rahmawati (2026) emphasize that religious routines become educationally meaningful when institutional and relational processes help students connect ritual practice with character formation. Thus, the development of religiosity should not be measured merely by participation in religious ceremonies but also by changes in students' attitudes and behavior.

Discipline represents another important character dimension. Religious practices often require students to follow specific schedules and procedures. Regular participation

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can encourage punctuality, responsibility, and respect for collective rules. However, discipline becomes educationally meaningful when students gradually understand why particular behaviors are valuable rather than merely complying because of punishment. Rosadi et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of discipline as a behavioral pathway through which school culture can influence religious character.

Responsibility is closely related to discipline but involves a broader sense of obligation. Students demonstrate responsibility when they complete assignments, participate in school programs, care for facilities, and fulfill roles within collective activities. Religious culture can reinforce responsibility by presenting obligations as moral commitments rather than merely institutional requirements.(Mukhlis, Yazid, et al., 2025; Wahyudi, Suraijiah, et al., 2026) Collective worship and social activities can provide opportunities for students to practice responsibility toward themselves and others. This perspective is consistent with research showing that religious habituation can support responsible behavior in Islamic educational environments (Saidah & Falah, 2023; Purnawan et al., 2026).

Politeness and respect are central elements of akhlakul karimah. In the school environment, these values can be expressed through greetings, appropriate language, respectful communication, and consideration for teachers and peers. Such behaviors are not merely matters of social etiquette but can be connected to Islamic principles concerning adab.(Husna et al., 2026) Teacher role modeling is particularly important because students need concrete examples of how respectful behavior is practiced. Recent research indicates that teacher modeling and religious habituation can contribute to students' politeness and respect (Rifki et al., 2022; Purnawan et al., 2026).

Honesty is another essential component of character development. In an educational environment, honesty involves truthful communication, responsible completion of tasks, and avoidance of deceptive behavior. Religious education can provide a moral foundation for honesty by connecting it with accountability before God. However, students are more likely to internalize honesty when the school environment consistently rewards truthful behavior and when teachers demonstrate integrity. Yuniar et al. (2020) identify honesty as one of the character values that can be developed through Islamic school culture.

Social concern represents the broader social dimension of character. Students need opportunities to cooperate, help others, participate in collective activities, and develop empathy toward people around them. Religious culture can facilitate these outcomes through group worship, social activities, collective work, and community-oriented programs. Such practices provide experiences in which students recognize that religious life includes obligations toward other people. Recent research similarly identifies cooperation and social concern as outcomes associated with religious school culture (Santani et al., 2026; Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

Religious Culture and Value Internalization

Value internalization refers to the process by which external values become part of an individual's internal system of beliefs and behavioral orientations. In school contexts, students may initially comply with values because of rules or supervision. Over time, repeated experiences and meaningful relationships can lead them to accept the values as personally significant. This process explains why religious culture should be understood as a long-term educational process rather than a collection of isolated

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activities.(Ghuni et al., 2025) Religious culture provides repeated opportunities for transformation from knowing values to practicing and eventually internalizing them.

The process of internalization can be strengthened when students encounter consistency between institutional messages and actual behavior. If teachers promote honesty but demonstrate dishonesty, students receive contradictory signals. Similarly, if a school promotes religious discipline but does not consistently enforce its own expectations, students may perceive religious routines as ceremonial.(Arisandi et al., 2026) Recent studies emphasize that coherence between leadership, teacher modeling, habituation, and environmental conditions is important for sustained character development (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025; Kosasih et al., 2026).

Social interaction is another mechanism of internalization. Students do not develop character in isolation but through relationships with teachers, peers, parents, and other members of the community. Peer behavior can reinforce or undermine institutional expectations. A student may learn a religious routine at school but encounter contradictory practices outside school.(Aslamiah et al., 2026; Mufid et al., 2026) Therefore, character development requires a network of reinforcing relationships. Recent research emphasizes collaboration among school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and communities as an important component of sustainable religious character development (Purnawan et al., 2026; Kosasih et al., 2026).

Digital technology adds another dimension to value internalization. Students can now encounter moral messages, religious content, entertainment, and social influences continuously through digital media. Technology itself is neither inherently positive nor negative, but its educational consequences depend on how students use it and how adults guide them. A strong religious school culture can provide students with ethical frameworks that help them evaluate digital content and online behavior. Purnawan et al. (2026) specifically identify ethical technology use as one of the character outcomes associated with strengthened school religious culture.

The literature indicates that religious culture should therefore be understood as an ecological system. Its effectiveness depends on the interaction between routines, people, leadership, physical environment, family, community, and broader social conditions. This ecological perspective moves beyond the assumption that one religious activity automatically produces one character outcome. Instead, character formation is understood as a gradual process produced through multiple reinforcing experiences. The present study adopts this perspective to analyze the religious culture of MA Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin and its implications for students' character development.

Method

This study employed field research with a qualitative approach to investigate school religious culture and its implications for students' character development at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin, Beringin, Alalak, Barito Kuala. A qualitative design was selected because the study sought to understand institutional practices, participants' experiences, and observable behavioral patterns in their natural educational setting. The approach enabled the researcher to explore not only what religious activities were implemented but also how those activities were understood and experienced within the madrasah. This methodological orientation is consistent with recent qualitative studies of religious culture that use naturalistic observation, interviews, and documentary evidence to understand character formation (Saidah & Falah, 2023; Purnawan et al., 2026).

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The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin in Beringin Village, Alalak District, Barito Kuala. The participants consisted of the madrasah principal, teachers, and students who were directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of religious culture. The uploaded research source identifies observation, interviews, and documentation as the principal data collection techniques and identifies the principal, teachers, and students as sources of primary information. The selection of these participants enabled the researcher to compare institutional perspectives, teacher experiences, and student behavior rather than relying on a single source of information.

Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on religious habituation, religious activities, teacher behavior, student interaction, discipline, politeness, responsibility, and social concern. Interviews were used to obtain deeper information concerning the planning, implementation, meaning, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors associated with religious culture. Documentation was used to examine institutional profiles, programs, rules, facilities, and records of religious activities. Similar combinations of observation, interviews, and documentation have been used in recent qualitative studies of religious school culture and character development (Sarip et al., 2023; Kosasih et al., 2026).

The data were analyzed through three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, information obtained from observations, interviews, and documents was selected and organized according to the research focus. Data display involved grouping the information into themes concerning forms of religious culture, character implications, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors. Conclusions were then developed by identifying patterns and comparing information across data sources. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and technique triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checking, consistent with qualitative research practices reported in recent educational studies (Saidah & Falah, 2023; Sarip et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

Research Setting and Forms of Religious Culture

The research was conducted at MA Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin, a private Islamic senior secondary institution in Beringin Village, Alalak District, Barito Kuala. The madrasah was established in 2019 and received operational permission in June 2022. The institution has a religious educational orientation and seeks to develop students who are academically capable while also demonstrating Islamic character and akhlakul karimah. The source describes the madrasah as having 14 teachers and 58 students distributed across Grades X, XI, and XII. This institutional context is important because the relatively compact school community creates opportunities for direct interaction among school leaders, teachers, and students.

Daily religious habituation constitutes an important dimension of the religious culture implemented at the madrasah. Students participate in Qur'anic recitation and collective prayer before learning activities begin, while congregational Dhuhr prayer is also incorporated into the daily school routine.(Bolat et al., 2025; Yilmaz et al., 2025) These practices are conducted regularly and involve both teachers and students, thereby establishing religious activities as an integral part of institutional life. Beyond their function as acts of worship, such routines provide structured opportunities for students to practice religious values through repeated and observable behaviors. The consistency of

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these activities indicates that religious habituation operates simultaneously as a form of religious practice, an institutional routine, and a mechanism for character development. This pattern is consistent with research showing that religious habituation can support discipline, responsibility, and religious character when implemented consistently (Saidah & Falah, 2023; Purnawan et al., 2026).

Teacher role modeling represents another significant dimension in the formation of the madrasah's religious culture. Teachers do not function merely as instructors who transmit knowledge but also as visible representations of Islamic conduct within the school environment. Observations indicated that teachers greeted students, maintained appropriate dress and speech, demonstrated respectful behavior, and actively participated in religious activities.(Bakr et al., 2025; Begum et al., 2025) Consequently, students encountered religious values not only through explicit verbal instruction but also through daily interpersonal interactions and behavioral examples. The consistency between the values communicated by the institution and the conduct demonstrated by teachers contributes to the credibility of the religious culture being cultivated. This observation corresponds with studies emphasizing teacher exemplary conduct as an important mechanism in the development of students' religious character (Rifki et al., 2022; Ubaidillah & Haryanto, 2026).

Periodic religious programs further contribute to the institutionalization of religious culture within the madrasah. The institution organizes various Islamic activities and commemorative events, including the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, Isra and Mi'raj, Ramadan programs, and other maulid-related activities. These activities involve teachers and students collectively, creating spaces for religious learning, communal participation, and interpersonal interaction.(Eriska et al., 2026; Nurdi et al., 2026) Their educational significance extends beyond ceremonial observance because they provide students with opportunities to experience religious values within a collective social context. Participation in such activities can also strengthen students' sense of belonging to the religious community established within the madrasah. This finding corresponds with research indicating that religious celebrations and collective religious activities can become meaningful components of school-based character education when accompanied by active participation and reflective learning (Marini et al., 2018; Santani et al., 2026).

The physical and social environment of the madrasah also plays a substantive role in sustaining its religious culture. The availability of a prayer room and Qur'anic resources provides material support for the implementation of religious activities, while religious expressions such as greetings, collective prayer, and respectful interaction are incorporated into everyday school life.(Halil & Aini, 2026) Such environmental conditions reinforce behavioral expectations communicated through formal religious programs and classroom instruction. Students consequently encounter religious values through interconnected physical, social, and behavioral environments rather than through formal teaching alone. The continuity between institutional facilities, interpersonal relationships, and daily practices strengthens the visibility of religious values within the school setting. This condition supports the perspective that religious culture becomes more effective when the physical, social, and behavioral environments consistently communicate and reinforce shared values (Yuniar et al., 2020; Hadi & Prayogi, 2025).

The implementation of religious routines is also reflected in the development of students' religious attitudes and practices. Students were observed participating in Qur'anic recitation, collective prayer, and congregational worship as components of their

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ordinary school activities. Such practices provide repeated opportunities for students to translate religious knowledge and values into observable forms of behavior. Teachers further reported that continuous habituation helped students become increasingly familiar with religious practices and their associated behavioral expectations.(Nurdi et al., 2025; Wahidah Wahidah, Irfan Noor, 2025) The findings therefore indicate that the development of religious character is supported when religious practices become embedded in students' everyday educational experiences rather than being presented solely as theoretical knowledge. In this context, religious habituation functions as a gradual process through which religious values are repeatedly practiced, reinforced, and incorporated into students' daily conduct. Similar evidence has been reported in studies examining the relationship between religious school culture and character development in Indonesian educational institutions (Suriadi, 2020; Purnawan et al., 2026).

The cultivation of discipline is closely associated with the structured religious routines implemented at the madrasah. Students are expected to follow established schedules for Qur'anic recitation, prayer, learning activities, and other institutional programs. Regular participation in these activities requires students to manage their time, follow established procedures, and comply with collectively agreed expectations. Teachers reported that the continuity of these routines contributed to students' awareness of punctuality, rules, and personal responsibilities.(Nurhidayah & Handayani, 2025) Discipline in this setting is consequently integrated into the broader religious culture rather than being treated as an isolated behavioral requirement. Religious routines provide concrete contexts in which students repeatedly practice punctuality, compliance, and consistency in carrying out their obligations. This finding is particularly consistent with Rosadi et al. (2025), who identified discipline as an important pathway linking school culture with students' religious character.

The cultivation of responsibility is likewise evident in students' participation in academic, religious, and environmental activities. Students were observed completing assignments, participating in school programs, and contributing to the maintenance of the cleanliness of the school environment. Religious routines create recurring situations in which students are expected to fulfill responsibilities associated with both individual and collective activities. Teachers also provide guidance and supervision to help students understand and carry out their respective responsibilities.(Mukhlis, 2026) The development of responsibility thus emerges through the interaction between institutional expectations, students' participation, and teacher supervision. Such experiences allow responsibility to be practiced in concrete situations rather than merely communicated as an abstract moral principle. This pattern corresponds with recent studies identifying responsibility as one of the character dimensions associated with the implementation of religious school culture (Santani et al., 2026; Purnawan et al., 2026).

Politeness and respectful interaction constitute another observable dimension of students' character development within the madrasah environment. Students were observed greeting teachers, using polite language, and demonstrating respect toward older individuals. These behaviors were reinforced through teachers' own examples of respectful communication and interpersonal conduct. Consequently, politeness was not positioned merely as an isolated moral lesson but was embedded within the everyday social interactions of the madrasah community.(Susanti et al., 2025) Such practices demonstrate that Islamic character education operates not only through individual religious observance but also through the quality of relationships established among members of the educational community. The social expression of religious values

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becomes particularly visible when students translate principles of respect and adab into their interactions with teachers, peers, and other members of the school community. Similar character outcomes have been identified in studies of Islamic school culture that emphasize manners, respect, habituation, and teacher exemplary conduct (Yuniar et al., 2020; Santani et al., 2026).

The social dimension of religious character is reflected in students' participation in cooperation, mutual assistance, and collective activities. These experiences provide opportunities for students to practice solidarity, empathy, and concern for others within the school community. Religious activities therefore extend beyond individual acts of worship by creating social contexts in which students interact, cooperate, and respond to the needs of others. Such participation demonstrates that religious culture can encompass both vertical relationships with God and horizontal relationships among members of society. The development of social concern is consequently supported when students are provided with meaningful opportunities to practice cooperation and mutual assistance in their daily educational environment. These findings are consistent with recent research indicating that religious school culture can contribute to cooperation, social care, respect, and other interpersonal dimensions of character development (Santani et al., 2026; Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

The cultivation of honesty is embedded in the madrasah's broader process of moral guidance and character formation. Teachers consistently emphasize truthful speech and responsibility for one's actions while encouraging students to avoid behaviors that conflict with Islamic moral principles. Although the degree of internalization may differ among individual students, the findings indicate that honesty is continuously reinforced through guidance, interpersonal interaction, and the expectations embedded in the school culture. This approach positions honesty not merely as a theoretical moral concept but as a behavioral value that should be manifested in students' everyday conduct. The significance of honesty within the religious culture is particularly evident because it connects religious principles with students' relationships, responsibilities, and decision-making in ordinary school situations. Research on Islamic school culture similarly indicates that honesty can be strengthened through systematic habituation, moral guidance, and the consistent modeling of ethical behavior (Yuniar et al., 2020; Suriadi, 2020).

Table 1. Forms of Religious Culture and Character Implications

No.	Religious Culture Practice	Implementation at the Madrasah	Character Implication
1	Qur'anic recitation	Recitation before learning activities	Religiosity, discipline
2	Collective prayer	Prayer before and after learning	Religiosity, responsibility
3	Congregational prayer	Dhuhr prayer at the madrasah	Discipline, religiosity, cooperation
4	Teacher role modeling	Greetings, polite language, appropriate conduct	Politeness, respect, honesty

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5	Islamic celebrations	Mawlid, Isra and Mi'raj, Ramadan activities	Religiosity, solidarity
6	Social activities	Cooperation and mutual assistance	Social concern, responsibility
7	Religious environment	Prayer room, Qur'ans, religious atmosphere	Religious habituation
8	Moral guidance	Teacher advice and supervision	Honesty, responsibility
9	School routines	Compliance with schedules and rules	Discipline
10	Environmental care	Cleanliness and collective responsibility	Social concern, responsibility

The findings indicate that the religious culture at MA Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin operates through several interconnected mechanisms rather than through a single program. Qur'anic recitation, prayer, religious celebrations, teacher modeling, and environmental conditioning reinforce one another. This pattern is important because character development rarely results from one isolated activity. Instead, students repeatedly encounter similar values through different aspects of school life. The finding supports the argument that religious culture should be conceptualized as an institutional ecosystem that integrates routines, people, and environmental messages (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025; Kosasih et al., 2026).

Habituation constitutes a fundamental mechanism through which religious culture becomes embedded in students' everyday behavior. The repeated performance of Qur'anic recitation, prayer, greetings, and other religious practices establishes behavioral regularity within the madrasah environment. Through sustained repetition, students become increasingly familiar with the behaviors expected by the institution and gradually incorporate them into their daily routines. Nevertheless, habituation alone does not necessarily guarantee meaningful internalization of religious values. The findings indicate that repetitive religious practices need to be accompanied by appropriate guidance, explanation, and exemplary conduct so that students understand the values underlying the practices they perform. Without such reinforcement, religious activities may risk becoming merely procedural routines rather than meaningful processes of character formation. This interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing that ritual repetition becomes educationally meaningful when it is connected with interpretation, active participation, and institutional reinforcement (Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

Teacher exemplary conduct constitutes a complementary mechanism in the internalization of religious values. Teachers provide students with direct and observable representations of how religious principles can be translated into everyday behavior. Their participation in religious activities and their demonstration of polite, respectful, and appropriate communication strengthen the credibility of the values promoted by the madrasah. Students consequently perceive that religious norms are not merely institutional requirements imposed upon them but behavioral standards that are also practiced by adults within the educational community. Such consistency between normative instruction and teachers' actual conduct can strengthen students' trust in the

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moral messages conveyed by the institution. Teacher modeling therefore provides a concrete reference through which students can observe, interpret, and potentially reproduce desirable religious behaviors. This interpretation corresponds with research identifying teacher exemplary conduct as an important component of students' religious and moral character development (Rifki et al., 2022; Ubaidillah & Haryanto, 2026).

The sustainability of religious culture is also supported by institutional reinforcement through policies, schedules, facilities, programs, and established routines. The madrasah does not rely exclusively on individual teachers to initiate religious activities but incorporates them into the broader organization of school life. Such institutionalization transforms religious practices from occasional activities into recognizable components of the madrasah's organizational identity. The existence of structured programs and supporting facilities also provides continuity when particular individuals or circumstances change. From this perspective, character development requires not only individual commitment but also an institutional structure capable of maintaining religious practices over time. The findings therefore indicate that religious culture is strengthened when religious values are embedded within the organizational systems and routines of the institution. Hadi and Prayogi (2025) similarly demonstrate that the management of Islamic school culture encompasses institutional policies, leadership, curricular integration, extracurricular activities, and the creation of supportive religious environments.

The relationship between religious culture and character formation is particularly evident in the cultivation of student discipline. Religious routines require students to follow established schedules, participate in collective activities, and comply with shared institutional expectations. Consequently, discipline is practiced through concrete daily experiences rather than presented merely as an abstract behavioral principle. Repeated engagement in scheduled religious activities may encourage students to develop awareness of punctuality, consistency, and compliance with established responsibilities. These behavioral dispositions can subsequently support other dimensions of character because the ability to regulate one's actions is relevant to the fulfillment of responsibilities and adherence to ethical expectations. The findings therefore position discipline as an important behavioral dimension through which religious culture may become visible in students' everyday conduct. This interpretation is supported by Rosadi et al. (2025), who provide empirical evidence that discipline mediates part of the relationship between school culture and students' religious character.

Interpersonal relationships within the madrasah provide an important context for the social internalization of religious values. Students encounter religious norms through interactions with teachers and peers, including greetings, cooperation, mutual assistance, respectful communication, and collective worship. These recurring experiences enable abstract moral concepts such as respect, solidarity, and ukhuwah to be translated into concrete patterns of interpersonal behavior. Religious culture consequently operates not only at the level of individual religious practice but also through the social relationships that characterize everyday school life. The social dimension becomes particularly important because character is expressed through how students respond to, communicate with, and cooperate with other people. The findings thus indicate that religious practices acquire broader educational significance when they are accompanied by opportunities for meaningful social interaction. This interpretation is consistent with research identifying cooperation, social concern, politeness, and respect as important outcomes associated with religious school culture (Santani et al., 2026).

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The physical and symbolic environment of the madrasah provides additional reinforcement for the internalization of religious values. The availability of a prayer room, Qur'anic resources, and an atmosphere characterized by religious practices communicates the institutional significance of religious values to members of the school community. Although physical facilities alone cannot guarantee the development of students' character, they can facilitate religious practices and provide visible reminders of the behavioral expectations established by the institution. Environmental conditions can therefore function as supportive elements that strengthen the consistency between what students are taught, what they observe, and what they practice. In this sense, the religious environment operates in conjunction with habituation and teacher modeling rather than as an independent determinant of character development. Marini et al. (2018) similarly found that worship facilities, religious ceremonies, and religious symbols can contribute to the development of students' religious character. The present findings further indicate that environmental reinforcement becomes more meaningful when integrated with continuous practice and exemplary conduct.

The implications of religious culture extend beyond individual worship to the broader development of students' social morality. The findings associate religious practices with behavioral dimensions such as responsibility, cooperation, politeness, honesty, and social concern. This broader orientation is particularly relevant to Islamic education because the concept of akhlak encompasses not only devotion to God but also ethical relationships with other human beings. Religious practices can therefore provide a foundation for wider moral development when they are connected with interpersonal relationships and social responsibilities. The integration of religious devotion and social morality prevents religious education from being reduced to ritual observance alone. Instead, religious culture becomes an educational environment in which students are encouraged to express Islamic values through both worship and everyday social conduct. This interpretation is consistent with Yuniar et al. (2020), who found that Islamic school culture can foster religious values alongside discipline, responsibility, cooperation, honesty, and politeness.

Character formation within a religious school culture should also be understood as a gradual and context-dependent process. The findings do not indicate that participation in religious activities automatically produces immediate or uniform transformation in students' character. Rather, character development appears to emerge progressively through the interaction of repeated practice, supervision, teacher example, social interaction, and environmental reinforcement. Differences in students' backgrounds, experiences, and levels of readiness may also influence the extent to which religious values are internalized. Consequently, the same institutional program may be experienced differently by individual students and may generate varying degrees of behavioral internalization. This perspective positions religious culture as a facilitating educational environment rather than as a single or deterministic causal factor. Such an interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing the complex and context-dependent nature of religious character formation (Kosasih et al., 2026; Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

The formation of students' character is further influenced by social and technological environments beyond the madrasah. The findings identify external social influences, digital technology, social media, differences in students' backgrounds, and limited supervision outside school as challenges to the continuity of religious character formation. These conditions demonstrate that the madrasah operates within a broader social ecology in which students encounter diverse values and behavioral models. Values

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promoted within the school may not always correspond with those encountered by students in their families, peer groups, communities, or digital environments. The increasing accessibility of social media and digital content intensifies this situation by enabling students to encounter external influences continuously beyond the direct supervision of educators. Consequently, the effectiveness of religious culture depends partly on the capacity of educational institutions to help students critically navigate diverse social and digital influences. Purnawan et al. (2026) similarly emphasize that digital development presents both opportunities and challenges for the formation of students' character in contemporary educational settings.

The sustainability of religious character formation ultimately requires collaboration among the educational environments surrounding students. The findings indicate that the madrasah cannot independently regulate students' behavior and value formation outside the school environment. Families and communities therefore have an important role in reinforcing the religious and moral values cultivated within the institution. Consistency among the messages communicated by the school, family, and community can provide students with a more coherent moral framework and strengthen the continuity of character formation. Conversely, substantial differences between these environments may create challenges for students in internalizing and consistently practicing the values promoted at school. Religious culture should therefore be understood as part of an interconnected educational ecosystem rather than as an institutionally isolated program. Recent research likewise emphasizes parent and community collaboration as an important component of sustainable religious character development (Kosasih et al., 2026; Purnawan et al., 2026).The findings can also be compared with earlier Indonesian research. Marini et al. (2018) demonstrated relationships between religious school culture and students' religious character, while Yuniar et al. (2020) identified routine activities, teacher example, spontaneous activities, and environmental conditioning as components of character education. Suriadi (2020) similarly emphasized curriculum, student development, and educator management in cultivating religious character in madrasahs. The present study is consistent with these findings but places greater emphasis on the combined implications for religiosity, discipline, responsibility, politeness, honesty, and social concern in a private senior secondary madrasah.

The study also corresponds with more recent research. Sarip et al. (2023) found that religious culture-based character management involves strategic planning, organizational roles, consistent implementation, and supervision. Hadi and Prayogi (2025) emphasize leadership, habituation, teacher modeling, and parent-community collaboration. Rosadi et al. (2025) further explain the role of discipline as a mechanism connecting school culture with religious character. Together, these studies strengthen the interpretation that religious culture works through multiple institutional and behavioral pathways rather than through ritual participation alone.

The study further confirms the relevance of teacher modeling. The observation of teachers participating in religious activities and demonstrating polite and respectful conduct indicates that religious culture is embodied through daily relationships. Students are not merely recipients of religious instruction but observers of adult behavior. This finding is particularly relevant in Islamic education because teachers are expected to embody adab as well as transmit knowledge. The consistency between instructional messages and teacher behavior can therefore strengthen students' opportunities to internalize religious values (Rifki et al., 2022; Ubaidillah & Haryanto, 2026).

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The study also demonstrates that religious culture contributes to both individual and collective dimensions of character. Individual outcomes include religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and honesty. Collective outcomes include politeness, cooperation, social concern, and respect. This combination is important because Islamic character cannot be reduced to personal worship alone. A student who participates in religious activities but fails to respect others would represent an incomplete realization of akhlakul karimah. The findings therefore support an integrated understanding of religious character that connects worship with social ethics.

The novelty of this study can be identified in its contextualization of religious culture within a private one-roof Islamic senior secondary school. Much previous research has focused on public schools, elementary schools, Islamic junior secondary schools, integrated Islamic schools, or special education institutions. The present study contributes a detailed description of a smaller private madrasah context in which institutional leadership, teacher involvement, facilities, student diversity, and community relations interact. The findings demonstrate that even in a relatively compact institutional environment, character formation remains dependent on sustained cultural practices and external reinforcement.

The findings also provide practical implications for madrasah management. Religious culture should be designed as a coherent institutional system rather than as a collection of ceremonial activities. School leaders should ensure that religious programs are scheduled consistently, teachers are actively involved, facilities are maintained, and character outcomes are periodically evaluated. Teachers should receive support to strengthen their role as moral and religious models. These recommendations are consistent with recent literature emphasizing leadership, institutional coherence, teacher modeling, and sustained habituation (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025; Kosasih et al., 2026).

The findings also imply that digital literacy should become part of contemporary religious character education. Because students encounter moral and social influences through digital platforms, religious culture should provide ethical guidance for online behavior as well as offline conduct. Teachers and parents can help students evaluate digital content, communicate respectfully online, and use technology responsibly. This does not mean rejecting technology, but rather integrating digital behavior into the broader moral framework of Islamic education. Recent research explicitly identifies ethical technology use as a relevant dimension of character development in the digital era (Purnawan et al., 2026). Finally, the study demonstrates that religious culture should be understood as a continuous process of educational formation. The most important feature is not the quantity of religious activities but their consistency, meaning, institutional support, and connection with everyday behavior. The findings at MA Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin indicate that religious culture becomes meaningful when students repeatedly encounter the same values through worship, teacher example, school routines, social interaction, and environmental conditions. The character outcomes identified in the study therefore reflect an ongoing process of internalization rather than an immediate effect of a single program. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary research describing religious school culture as a mechanism through which routines, relationships, discipline, and institutional reinforcement contribute to character formation (Rosadi et al., 2025; Rosenda & Rahmawati, 2026).

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Conclusion

This study concludes that school religious culture at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Satu Atap Al-Amin is implemented through daily religious habituation, teacher role modeling, periodic Islamic religious activities, and the creation of a supportive religious environment. Qur'anic recitation, collective prayer, congregational prayer, greetings, polite interaction, Islamic celebrations, and teacher participation in religious activities constitute interconnected components of the institutional culture. The culture is therefore not limited to formal religious instruction but is integrated into students' everyday school experiences. Its implications are visible in students' religiosity, discipline, responsibility, politeness, honesty, and social concern. The findings indicate that character development occurs through repeated practice, exemplary behavior, social interaction, and environmental reinforcement rather than through religious instruction alone. The study further concludes that the sustainability of religious culture depends on institutional and environmental support. The commitment of the principal and teachers, continuous religious programs, adequate facilities, and a conducive madrasah environment support the process of character development. At the same time, external social influences, digital technology and social media, differences in student backgrounds, and limited supervision outside school present challenges. The principal implication is that religious character formation requires cooperation among the madrasah, family, and community. The novelty of this study lies in explaining religious culture as an integrated mechanism of habituation, teacher role modeling, discipline, and environmental reinforcement in the context of a private one-roof Islamic senior secondary school. The findings may therefore contribute to the development of more contextual and sustainable strategies for Islamic character education in madrasahs.

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