

# Implementation of Character Education through Habituation and Exemplary Practices

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## Abstract

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### Keywords:

Character Education, Habituation, Exemplary Practice, Islamic Elementary School, Qualitative Study

Character education in Islamic elementary schools requires implementation strategies that move beyond normative formulations toward contextual and institutional practices. This study examines the implementation of character education through habituation and exemplary practices at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students. Data were analyzed using an interactive model of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that character education is systematically embedded in daily school routines through structured habituation programs such as religious activities, literacy practices, and discipline-based routines and reinforced by consistent teacher role modeling. The effectiveness of these strategies is supported by strong leadership commitment, a conducive institutional culture, and parental involvement, although inconsistencies in implementation remain a challenge. Analytically, the study shows that character internalization operates through socio-institutional mechanisms rather than solely through individual moral instruction. This research contributes to the development of character education theory by demonstrating how habituation and social learning are contextually integrated within an Islamic elementary school setting.

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### Abstrak

*Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Pembiasaan, Keteladanan, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Penelitian Kualitatif*

*Pendidikan karakter di sekolah dasar Islam memerlukan strategi implementasi yang tidak berhenti pada tataran normatif, tetapi diwujudkan dalam praktik kontekstual dan kelembagaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi pendidikan karakter melalui pembiasaan dan keteladanan di MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala madrasah, guru, dan siswa. Analisis data dilakukan melalui model interaktif yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter diintegrasikan secara sistematis dalam rutinitas harian madrasah melalui program pembiasaan terstruktur seperti kegiatan keagamaan, literasi, dan pembentukan disiplin serta diperkuat oleh keteladanan guru secara konsisten. Efektivitas strategi ini didukung oleh komitmen kepemimpinan, budaya kelembagaan yang kondusif, dan keterlibatan orang tua, meskipun masih terdapat tantangan berupa inkonsistensi dalam pelaksanaan. Secara analitis, internalisasi karakter berlangsung melalui mekanisme sosial-institusional, bukan semata-mata melalui transmisi nilai secara individual. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan teori pendidikan karakter melalui integrasi pembiasaan dan pembelajaran sosial dalam konteks madrasah ibtidaiyah.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of character education at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto is the primary focus of this study, given the importance of habituation and role modeling as the primary means of character formation for students (Putra, 2020; Anwar, 2021). Consistent habituation can shape positive student behavior in daily life, both within the madrasah and outside of school. Furthermore, the exemplary behavior of teachers as role models significantly influences the moral development and spiritual attitudes of students.

Based on observations and in-depth discussions with teachers and Madrasah leaders, it was revealed that despite recognition and efforts to implement character education in daily activities, there are still challenges in consistency that impact the effectiveness of the habit (Interviews with Teachers & Madrasah Leaders 2025). This information indicates a gap between character education policy and implementation in the field that must be addressed so that the goals of character education can be achieved optimally.

Literature reviews over the past decade have shown that habits and real-life examples are effective ways to foster character, particularly in fostering discipline, responsibility, and tolerance in students (Hidayat, 2014; Sari & Wijaya, 2018; Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023). However, most studies have focused on secondary education, and qualitative analysis in Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) using observation and interviews as the primary methods is rare. This study aims to address this gap with a more detailed approach based on primary data from MI Roudlotul Ulum.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of character education through habituation and role modeling at MI Roudlotul Ulum, based on the perspectives of teachers and principals. It also seeks to identify implementation patterns, supporting and inhibiting factors, and the dynamics that emerge in character education practices within the madrasah environment. Furthermore, it aims to offer recommendations for improving the quality of character education implementation. This study utilizes the insights of Thomas Lickona (1991) and Larry Nucci (2001) as a conceptual foundation for understanding the process of internalizing moral values through role modeling and habituation.

The innovation of this research lies in the use of observation and interview data as primary sources to provide an in-depth description of the local context

and dynamics of character education implementation in Islamic elementary schools. Unlike previous research, which tends to be general and quantitative, this study emphasizes a contextual and descriptive understanding of character education practices within the actual madrasah setting. This research is expected to contribute to the development of character education, particularly in madrasah-based elementary education.

Teachers are leaders in the classroom. A leader's character is one of the factors that determines a leader's success or failure. A leader's success is based on efforts to develop positive habits as the foundation of their character (Covey, 1997). Meanwhile, Yusron Aminulloh stated that teachers play a strategic role in the future of the nation, even playing a crucial role in the advancement of civilization. They live not only for themselves, but also as a beautiful mirror for the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of students who spend time with them every day (Aminulloh, 2014).

Role modeling is an important approach in character education because moral values are more effectively transmitted through teachers' concrete actions than simply verbally conveyed by students. In the context of Islamic education, the figure of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is understood as a relevant moral role model for character education practices because it demonstrates the integration of religious and social values in daily interactions (Nasution & Ismail, 2024). Empirical research shows that consistent teacher behavior as a role model can contribute to student character formation, including through religious attitudes, responsibility, and empathy in classroom learning (Kamaludin & Rizal, 2025).

In this research, role modeling is understood as a pedagogical practice that can be empirically observed in madrasah life, so the focus of the study is directed at how teachers practice character values through concrete behaviors in learning interactions and school life. Apart from that, teachers must also teach with their hearts, as in the story of a teacher told by Munif Chatib in his book *Gurunya Manusia* (Chatib, 2014). Some examples that we can do in instilling character values in students, namely: a) Religious, always obedient in worship/prayer, and praying; b) Discipline, entering and leaving class on time; c) Friendly/Communicative; giving students the opportunity to ask questions, and praising students who ask or answer teacher questions; d) Honest, keeping promises; e) Caring for the environment, picking up trash scattered on the floor.

In a book entitled *Soft Skills for Educators* (Elfindri, 2011), it says that there are several tips to hone children's honesty, namely: a) Teachers must always keep every promise they make to their students; b) Maintain discipline in the learning

process, teaching, and exam process; c) Take the initiative to create an honesty school canteen.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on the implementation of character education through habituation and role model activities at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojokerto. The research variables focused on the forms of habituation activities carried out by the madrasah and the exemplary practices provided by teachers. The research subjects were teachers, the madrasah principal, and students in grades IV to VI who were directly involved in the application of character values.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the madrasah principal, class teachers, and some students to explore their understanding and experiences regarding habits and role models in character building. Participatory observation was conducted by directly observing daily activities at the madrasah, such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, flag ceremonies, and teacher-student interactions inside and outside the classroom. Documentation was used to obtain written and visual data in the form of activity schedules, photographs, meeting minutes, and supporting notes.

Research instrumentsThe researcher herself served as the primary instrument, assisted by interview guides, observation sheets, and field notes compiled based on the research focus (Moleong, 2019). All collected data were then reduced, presented, and conclusions drawn using interactive analysis techniques (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data validity was maintained through source triangulation (teachers, students, madrasah principals), technical triangulation (interviews, observation, documentation), and extended field participation (Sugiyono, 2020).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis developed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing conducted cyclically throughout the research process.

During the data condensation stage, interview transcripts and observation notes were coded to identify concrete forms of implementation of character education through habituation and exemplary practices. The coding process focused on extracting units of meaning related to: (1) planning of character-based activities, (2) daily and programmed habituation practices, (3) teachers' exemplary behaviors in instructional and non-instructional settings, and (4)

monitoring and reinforcement mechanisms. Similar codes were clustered into thematic categories to reveal structural patterns of implementation.

In the data display stage, thematic matrices were developed to map the implementation process, including actors involved (teachers and the principal), forms of activities, situational contexts, and interaction patterns within the madrasah environment. This analytical mapping enabled the researchers to examine how character education was operationalized in daily school life rather than merely articulated at the policy level. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the recurring patterns of implementation and linking them to the research objectives. The findings were continuously verified through source triangulation and iterative comparison between interview and observational data to ensure credibility. Through this systematic procedure, the study provides an empirically grounded description of how character education is implemented through habituation and exemplary practices at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto, highlighting procedural mechanisms, institutional culture, and teacher agency within the madrasah context.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Habitual Activities in Character Education**

According to the results of interviews with the two madrasah principals and several teachers, the results of the study indicate that the implementation of character education at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto is carried out through structured habituation activities and teacher role models in daily life at the madrasah. Based on the results of interviews with the madrasah principal, these habituation activities have been systematically designed to form religious, disciplined, and responsible characters in students from an early age. Habituation activities carried out include flag ceremonies every Monday, istighosah on Tuesday, reading Surah Ar-Rahman on Wednesday, reading Surah Yasin and performing dhuha prayers together on Thursday, as well as group exercise every Friday and Saturday. The madrasah principal also emphasized that all these routine activities are not only intended as routines, but as a means of forming an attitude of independence, togetherness, and fostering a critical and religious spirit in students through direct experience in daily life at the madrasah (Laily Faridah.2025).

The practice of students arriving before 6:15 a.m. is not merely understood as an administrative routine, but as a strategic mechanism for implementing character education aimed at fostering discipline and responsibility. Based on interview findings, one teacher stated:

“We habituate students to arrive before 6:15 a.m. so they learn discipline from an early age. When punctuality becomes a habit, it also influences their learning attitude.” (Erniati.2025)

This statement indicates that early arrival is perceived as a structured effort to internalize character values rather than simply enforce attendance regulations. Field observations further revealed that students who arrive early tend to prepare their learning materials independently before lessons begin, reflecting the development of responsible behavior.

In addition, the daily practice of shaking hands with teachers serves as both a form of exemplary conduct and a mechanism for cultivating respect within the madrasah culture. The principal explained:

“The handshake tradition is not merely a formality. We want students to become accustomed to respecting teachers and elders. It is part of the character education we implement every day.” (Laily Faridah.2025)

These findings demonstrate that the handshake practice functions as a concrete medium for moral internalization through direct social interaction. Teachers do not merely convey values of respect verbally; they embody them in everyday relational practices. Thus, habituation and exemplary conduct operate simultaneously within the social environment of the madrasah, illustrating that the implementation of character education is embedded in daily school culture rather than limited to formal instructional discourse.



Figure 1: Students shake hands with teachers

The flag-raising ceremony, held every Monday, serves as a means of instilling national values, discipline, and responsibility. Through this activity, students learn to appreciate the services of heroes, understand the meaning of struggle, and foster a love for their homeland. Regularly holding the ceremony also helps students develop a sense of nationalism and pride as Indonesian citizens.

Furthermore, the ceremony also serves as a platform for students assigned to officiate and practice courage, leadership, and organizational skills. Through this responsibility, students learn to work as a team, prepare themselves well, and develop self-confidence in the presence of the entire madrasa community. Thus, the ceremony not only instills patriotism but also fosters discipline and resilience in the students (Alfa Rohmatin, 2025).



Figure 2: Flag Ceremony

Every Tuesday through Thursday, students participate in religious activities such as istighosah (recitation of the Qur'an) and the recitation of selected surahs, such as Surah Ar-Rahman and Surah Yasin. These activities are intended to foster religious character, strengthen spirituality, and instill the habit of regularly reciting dhikr and reading the Quran. Through these activities, students are encouraged to draw closer to Allah SWT and to cultivate the habit of starting the day with a blessed atmosphere.

Besides being a routine activity, istighosah and the recitation of selected surahs also serve as a means of moral and spiritual education for students. Students not only learn to read and understand the meaning of holy verses, but are also expected to practice them in their daily lives both at the madrasah and at home. Thus, these activities are an important part of developing a personality with noble morals and based on the values of the Quran.



Figure 3: Reading of Istighosah and Selected Surahs

Following the daily prayer of remembrance and recitation of selected surahs, the activity continues with a congregational Dhuha prayer at 6:45 a.m. at the madrasah mosque. This activity serves as a consistent practice of worship at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto. Through the Dhuha prayer, students are trained to improve their discipline in worship, cultivate a sense of gratitude, and practice asking Allah SWT for blessings of knowledge and sustenance before beginning their studies.

Furthermore, congregational Dhuha prayer also serves to strengthen togetherness among students and foster a religious atmosphere within the madrasah environment. Through this activity, spiritual values are not only taught theoretically but also experienced directly through the practice of communal worship. Thus, making Dhuha prayer a habit is one of the madrasah's concrete efforts to shape religious character and Islamic personalities in students.



Figure 4: Dhuha Prayer Together

On Fridays and Saturdays, the entire madrasah community participates in group exercise in the schoolyard. This activity aims to instill awareness of the importance of maintaining physical and mental health. Through this activity, students are encouraged to develop healthy, active, and enthusiastic lifestyles in their daily activities at the madrasah.

Besides promoting physical health, group exercise also fosters cooperation, togetherness, and sportsmanship among students. With its cheerful and energetic atmosphere, this activity serves as a form of character building through enjoyable physical activity. Through this activity, the madrasah strives to balance spiritual strengthening and physical health as part of developing students' holistic character.



Figure 5: Morning Exercise

In addition to these routine activities, MI Roudlotul Ulum students are also accustomed to performing the Dzuhur prayer in congregation at the madrasah mosque every day, except Fridays, when they leave earlier, at 10:30 a.m. This activity is carried out regularly and is an important part of developing religious character and discipline in worship. Through this activity, students are guided to perform prayers on time and in congregation, as a form of applying Islamic values in their daily lives.

Through this habit, students learn to value time, maintain devotion, and strengthen Islamic brotherhood with their classmates. In addition to strengthening relationships between students, congregational prayer also strengthens their spiritual connection with Allah SWT. On Fridays, congregational prayer is not held at the madrasah because students return home early to perform Friday prayers at home.



Figure 6: Dzuhur Prayer in Congregation

### **Teacher Exemplary Behavior in Character Education**

The role of teachers as role models is crucial in supporting character development. Teachers demonstrate religious exemplary behavior by guiding students in various religious activities at the madrasah. Every morning, teachers

accompany students in the recitation of daily prayers and short surahs before learning begins, as a form of spiritual practice that instills religious values in students. Furthermore, teachers play an active role in the weekly istighosah (religious prayer) and the recitation of selected surahs (chapters). This allows students not only to hear but also to see firsthand how educators practice Islamic values in their daily lives. This exemplary behavior is further evident when teachers consistently accompany students in performing congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers at the madrasah mosque. Through this guidance, teachers serve not only as supervisors but also as role models, teaching the importance of reverence, discipline, and togetherness in worship. Thus, teachers' religious behavior serves as a concrete example for students in building strong Islamic character and noble morals.



Figure 7: Teacher Accompanying Daily Prayers



Figure 8: Teacher accompanies prayer

Teachers also set a good example of discipline by consistently arriving on time and completing assignments according to the established schedule. The consistent presence of teachers serves as a concrete example for students of the importance of respecting time and being responsible for their obligations. Furthermore, teachers not only enforce rules but also impose educational

sanctions on students who violate school regulations. These sanctions are intended to foster awareness and a sense of responsibility, not simply to intimidate or punish. In carrying out their roles, teachers also demonstrate a high level of responsibility for their duties, both in the learning process and in school administration. Honesty is consistently instilled, particularly in assessments and attendance recording, so that students can emulate the values of honesty and integrity in their daily lives. Through these examples, teachers become respected and emulated figures for students, fostering strong character traits of discipline, responsibility, and honesty.



Figure 9: Teachers carry out tasks according to schedule

Teachers also serve as role models in maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of the madrasah environment by always disposing of trash properly and keeping classrooms and surrounding areas clean. These simple habits provide students with a concrete example of the importance of environmental responsibility and the value of cleanliness as part of their faith. Furthermore, teachers consistently display a friendly, polite, and patient attitude in their interactions with students, both inside and outside the classroom. Throughout the learning process, teachers consistently employ good manners, including the use of Javanese language with polite and respectful manners. This use of civilized language and behavior not only reflects local cultural values but also teaches students the importance of respecting others and maintaining ethical communication. The exemplary behavior demonstrated by teachers has a significant impact on students' behavior. They habitually imitate their teachers' words, actions, and habits in their daily lives, whether in matters of worship, discipline, or social interactions. Thus, the role of teachers as role models is a crucial factor in shaping students' character, which includes noble character, discipline, and politeness.

### Supporting Factors and Constraints

Based on interviews with the principal of the Madrasah, the main supporting factors in the implementation of character education at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojokerto are the principal's commitment, teacher exemplary behavior, active student involvement, and parental support. The principal plays a crucial role in designing, monitoring, and evaluating all habituation programs, while also being directly involved in every activity such as ceremonies, istighosah, and congregational prayer. Teachers' exemplary discipline, responsibility, and patience are also key pillars that positively influence student behavior. In addition, parental support strengthens the sustainability of character education at home through intensive communication with the madrasah. (Lailiy Faridah.2025)

In terms of facilities and infrastructure, madrasahs have a number of facilities that optimally support the implementation of character education. The madrasah mosque serves as the center of religious activities, such as congregational Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers, recitation of selected surahs, and istighosah (religious reflection). The mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also as a space for spiritual development and strengthening of students' religious values.

Madrasah libraries serve to foster a culture of literacy and curiosity. Through reading activities, students are guided to expand their horizons, instill a sense of responsibility for knowledge, and cultivate independent learning habits.



Figure 10: Library Space

Sports field It serves as a means of fostering character, discipline, cooperation, and sportsmanship. Every gymnastics activity, traditional game, and inter-class competition is held on this field to instill a spirit of togetherness and fair play. Furthermore, the madrasah canteen plays a role in fostering healthy

and honest lifestyle habits. Teachers constantly supervise students' shopping behavior to encourage them to practice orderliness, avoid fighting, and be honest in their transactions.

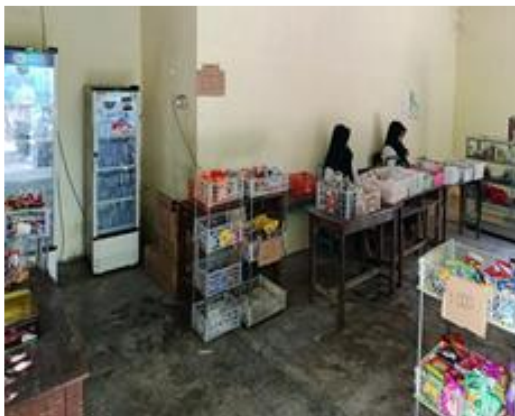


Figure 11: Cooperative and School Canteen

The School Health Unit (UKS) is a crucial place to instill awareness of cleanliness, health, and self-responsibility. Students are taught to understand the importance of a clean lifestyle and to help friends who need minor medical attention.

Meanwhile, technological facilities such as computers and projectors support interactive and engaging learning, especially in instilling character values through digital media, learning videos, and educational digital literacy activities.



Figure 12: Computer Laboratory

A religious, clean, and safe madrasa environment free from negative influences from the surrounding community contributes to creating a conducive atmosphere for the development of positive character in students. However, the implementation of character education still faces several obstacles, both internal

and external. Internal obstacles include a lack of consistency among some teachers in implementing collective agreements. External obstacles stem from a lack of awareness among some parents in motivating their children to apply character values at home and limited moral and material support provided to the madrasa. Nevertheless, with a spirit of togetherness and commitment from all members of the madrasa community, the implementation of character education remains effective and continues to improve over time.

Overall, the implementation of character education through habituation and role modeling at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto has had a positive impact on student behavior. Children are accustomed to prayer, Quran recitation, time management, honesty, and the ability to cooperate with their peers. Consistent habituation, the teachers' exemplary behavior, and support from the principal, parents, and the surrounding community have created an educational environment that fosters character values in students' daily lives.

## **Discussion**

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of character education at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto is carried out through two main approaches, namely habituation activities and teacher role models. Habituation activities such as flag ceremonies, istighosah, reading selected surahs, group exercise, and congregational dhuha prayers every morning provide space for students to build regularity in behavior. This finding is in line with the concept of character education which states that character can be formed through habituation that is carried out consistently within the school environment. According to Lickona (1991), effective character formation occurs through habituation, namely the repetition of good behavior so that it becomes part of the child's personality. Thus, routine activities at MI Roudlotul Ulum become a real strategy in instilling religious values, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation in students.

Beyond habituation practices, teacher exemplary behavior in this study functions not merely as individual moral modeling but as an institutionalized mechanism embedded in the daily culture of the madrasah. The findings indicate that character internalization does not occur solely through individual observation, as emphasized in social learning theory, but through repeated and structured interactions within school routines. While Albert Bandura (1977) conceptualizes learning as a process of observation and imitation, this study demonstrates that observational learning becomes more sustainable when supported by systematic habituation and institutional consistency.

Similarly, the character education framework proposed by Thomas Lickona (2012) highlights the importance of moral modeling in fostering ethical development. However, the present findings suggest that moral modeling in the madrasah context operates not only at the interpersonal level between teacher and student, but also at the organizational level, shaped by leadership commitment, religious school culture, and parental engagement. In this regard, the study refines Lickona's normative perspective by situating character education within a socio-institutional framework.

Furthermore, the identified supporting and inhibiting factors indicate that character education implementation is ecosystemic rather than teacher-centered. This supports contemporary perspectives emphasizing whole-school approaches to character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). The observed outcomes improved discipline, honesty, religiosity, and cooperation suggest that sustained habituation combined with consistent role modeling contributes to gradual character formation.

Thus, this study contributes theoretically by demonstrating that the effectiveness of character education through habituation and exemplary practices depends on institutional integration, not merely individual moral transmission. This contextualization offers a nuanced understanding of how character education operates within Islamic elementary school settings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The most important finding of this study is that the implementation of character education at MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto is very systematic through a combination of habituation activities and teacher role models. What is surprising about this research is the consistency of all members of the madrasah, from the principal, teachers, to students, in carrying out routine habits such as congregational Dhuha prayers, istighosah, reading selected surahs, and group activities such as gymnastics and ceremonies. This consistency not only makes students accustomed to religious rituals but also forms behaviors of discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social awareness. The fact that simple activities carried out repeatedly can produce real character changes is a field finding that only came to light after the research was conducted.

The scientific contribution of this research is to strengthen the perspective that character education cannot be taught solely through theory, but must be realized through continuous, real-world practice. These findings confirm Lickona's habituation theory on character formation through habituation, while also strengthening Bandura's social learning theory that teacher role models significantly determine student behavior. Furthermore, this research enriches the

study of character education by emphasizing the importance of three-party synergy schools, parents, and the environment as a key supporting factor for successful implementation. Thus, this research contributes a conceptual framework emphasizing that the success of character education rests not only on the curriculum, but also on the school culture that is alive in students' daily lives.

A limitation of this study is its limited scope to a single location, MI Roudlotul Ulum Mojosari Mojokerto. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other madrasas or elementary schools with different social, cultural, and geographical conditions. Furthermore, this study only focuses on one level of elementary education and has not been compared with other levels of education that may have different dynamics. Another limitation lies in the descriptive qualitative research method with a limited number of informants, so the findings do not reflect broader variations. Therefore, further research is needed involving a larger sample, more diverse locations, and mixed methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. With more in-depth and comprehensive results, more appropriate character education policies can be formulated for application in various school contexts.

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