



## From Routine to System: Institutionalizing Religious Habituation through Governance Structures in Islamic Junior Secondary Education

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### DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.46963/asatiza.v7i2.3635>

### Cite this Article:

Yasmini, Y., Annur, S., & Oviyanti, F. (2026). From routine to system: Institutionalizing religious habituation through governance structures in Islamic junior secondary education. *Asatiza: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 7(2), 162-179. <https://doi.org/10.46963/asatiza.v7i2.3635>

### Keywords:

Religious  
Habituation;  
Institutionalization;  
Madrasah  
Governance;  
Character Formation;  
Educational  
Management

### ABSTRACT

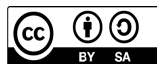
Although religious routine activities are widely implemented in Islamic schools, limited empirical attention has been given to how such programs are structurally embedded within formal governance systems to ensure long-term sustainability. Prior research has primarily focused on measuring student-level outcomes while overlooking the organizational infrastructures that sustain these practices over time. Addressing this gap, this qualitative instrumental single-case study examines how a Morning Religious Program is institutionalized at MTs An Najah Petaling, Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia, over a six-month period (January–August 2025). Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews with six key institutional actors (principal, Islamic Education teacher, homeroom teacher, student affairs administrator, and two students), and analysis of official documents including schedules, attendance logs, and supervisory reports. The study analyzes four interconnected managerial processes: program planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation. The findings indicate that sustainability is reinforced through regulated scheduling, explicit task delegation, continuous monitoring, and systematic documentation. These structured routines function as formalized habituation processes that cultivate discipline, shared responsibility, and the gradual normalization of Islamic values, although deeper moral internalization requires complementary pedagogical reinforcement. The study demonstrates that religious habituation becomes sustainable when systematically aligned with formal institutional management structures rather than relying solely on individual initiative, offering actionable insights for Islamic school leaders and policymakers.

### Article History:

Submitted:  
14/02/2026  
Revised:  
25/02/2026  
Accepted:  
04/03/2026  
Published:  
30/05/2026

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions integrating religious values into their pedagogical systems face a persistent challenge: transforming spiritual principles into stable and embodied student behavior. Within Islamic schooling contexts, religious formation is

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expected to extend beyond doctrinal instruction and become embedded within students' daily routines, disciplinary patterns, and social interactions. However, the translation of normative religious ideals into sustainable institutional practice remains uneven across educational settings.

To better understand the difficulty of translating normative ideals into sustained behavioral practice, insights from behavioral science offer a useful explanatory framework. Behavioral science literature demonstrates that durable behavioral dispositions are cultivated through patterned repetition within structured environments rather than isolated instructional events (Wood & Runger, 2016). When specific practices are consistently reinforced by contextual cues, behavior gradually shifts from deliberate compliance toward internalized routine (Lally & Gardner, 2013; Gardner & Rebar, 2019; Verplanken & Orbell, 2019). This theoretical perspective resonates deeply with, and provides a contemporary scientific lens for, classical Islamic pedagogical traditions emphasizing continuous practice (*riyadah*) as a pathway to moral embodiment. Religious habituation within school settings may therefore function simultaneously as a behavioral mechanism and a pedagogical strategy.

Despite this conceptual alignment, contemporary schooling operates within rapidly shifting social conditions shaped by digital engagement, shifting authority patterns, and motivational variability among adolescents. Empirical studies indicate that religious routines implemented without institutional coherence often remain ceremonial, lacking sustained developmental impact (Muttaqin, 2022; Azizah et al., 2025). In the context of such rapidly shifting social conditions, dependence on individual teacher initiative rather than systemic governance structures becomes increasingly fragile, underscoring the need for institutional coherence to sustain religious routines and their developmental relevance.

Existing scholarship on religious activities in Islamic schools has predominantly concentrated on measurable student outcomes such as discipline, prosocial behavior, and moral conduct (Rahmadin & Astutik, 2025; Bachtiar & Salim, 2025). While these studies demonstrate positive associations, they rarely examine the organizational architecture that sustains such initiatives over time. This oversight means that even when religious programs initially appear effective, their reliance on individual teacher initiative rather

than formalized governance structures renders them vulnerable and difficult to sustain in the long term. Consequently, limited empirical attention has been given to how religious habituation programs are formally structured, administratively regulated, supervised, and embedded within institutional governance systems. As a result, the literature lacks a structural explanation of how routine devotional practices transition from symbolic activities into durable character-forming systems.

Addressing this underexplored dimension, the present study examines the institutional configuration of a Morning Religious Program within an Islamic junior secondary school, analyzing the managerial processes of planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation that underpin its sustainability. By positioning religious habituation within the framework of institutional governance and organizational practice, this research advances international discussions on value-based educational management, reconceptualizing the Morning Religious Program not merely as a ritual activity but as a governance embedded character education system.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative, instrumental single-case study design to examine how a Morning Religious Program is institutionalized within an Islamic junior secondary school setting. The case was treated as instrumental, as it was selected not for its uniqueness but to generate analytical insight into broader processes of institutionalization beyond the specific school context. Rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively, the study aimed to generate in-depth understanding of how religious habituation is structured, administered, and sustained as an institutional practice through governance and organizational arrangements. A qualitative case study methodology is particularly appropriate for investigating complex social phenomena within real-life institutional settings, especially when contextual conditions and organizational dynamics are central to the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2019). This approach enabled detailed exploration of governance processes, decision-making structures, and administrative mechanisms shaping the continuity of religious programs within educational institutions, with the "case" defined as the institutional configuration of the Morning Religious Program at MTs An Najah Petaling, Indonesia.

MTs An Najah Petaling, Indonesia, was purposively selected as the research site due to its long-standing implementation of a structured Morning Religious Program and its formal integration within the school's administrative and supervisory system, making it a relevant setting for examining processes of institutionalization in practice. The analytical focus encompassed four interconnected institutional dimensions: program planning, implementation procedures, supervisory mechanisms, and evaluative practices, which together illuminate how the Morning Religious Program is governed and sustained within the school structure. Field engagement extended over a six-month period (January–August 2025), including preliminary access negotiation, sustained field observation, iterative data analysis, member validation procedures, and final interpretive verification, which allowed for contextual familiarity and enhanced interpretive depth.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals directly involved in decision-making, implementation, supervision, and participation in the Morning Religious Program. Purposive selection is widely recommended in qualitative case study research to obtain information-rich accounts relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan, 2016). The study involved six participants representing multiple institutional roles: the school principal (institutional leadership and policy oversight), one Islamic Education teacher (program design and instructional facilitation), one homeroom teacher (disciplinary monitoring and daily supervision), one student affairs administrator (program coordination and documentation), and two students actively engaged in the program (participant perspective). Participant recruitment continued until conceptual saturation was achieved, indicated by the recurrence of thematic patterns and the absence of substantively new analytical insights, which was confirmed when interviews with later participants (particularly the second student and the student affairs administrator) yielded no new codes or themes beyond those already identified in earlier interviews, confirming analytical redundancy across institutional perspectives.

Consistent with qualitative case study methodology, the researcher served as the primary instrument of data collection, enabling contextual responsiveness and interpretive flexibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). To ensure analytical triangulation and strengthen evidentiary depth, three complementary data collection strategies were

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employed: non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Four structured observation sessions were conducted during Morning Religious activities, each lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, focusing on institutional routines, student engagement patterns, punctuality, leadership roles, supervisory practices, and interactional dynamics among participants. In addition to these formal sessions, the researcher conducted regular informal observations during repeated field visits over the six-month engagement period, which informed contextual understanding and analytic interpretation. Detailed field notes were recorded immediately following each session to preserve descriptive accuracy and reflexive insights. Six in-depth interviews were carried out, ranging from 40 to 70 minutes in duration. The interview protocol was initially developed based on the four analytical dimensions of the study (planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation) and subsequently refined through peer review with a colleague experienced in qualitative educational research. Minor revisions were made to improve question clarity and sequencing prior to formal data collection. All interviews were conducted with informed consent, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim to maintain data integrity. Documentary evidence was systematically reviewed to contextualize and corroborate interview and observational data. Document analysis involved systematic content review of each document type. Policy documents and program guidelines were examined to identify formal governance structures and role allocation; schedules and attendance records were analyzed to assess program regularity and participation patterns; supervisory logs were reviewed to trace monitoring practices and accountability mechanisms. Document analysis facilitated cross-validation and provided insight into formal governance structures underpinning the program. The integration of observation, interviews, and documentation strengthened methodological triangulation and enhanced interpretive credibility (Nowell et al., 2017).

Data analysis followed an iterative, interactive model inspired by Miles et al. (2019), emphasizing cyclical engagement with data throughout the research process. Analysis occurred concurrently with fieldwork to allow emerging insights to inform subsequent data collection. The analysis proceeded through three stages: data condensation, data organization and display, and interpretive synthesis and verification. In data condensation, interview transcripts and field notes were systematically coded

using thematic analysis procedures. Initial open coding was conducted inductively to identify emergent categories grounded in participants' accounts. For example, a participant statement such as "Every morning I check which teachers are assigned to supervision duty and ensure the schedule is posted" was initially coded as supervision scheduling, later grouped under supervisory mechanisms, and ultimately integrated into the broader theme of institutional governance structures. Codes were subsequently refined through axial categorization to identify relational patterns across institutional governance dimensions. In data organization and display, coded data were organized into thematic matrices and analytic summaries to facilitate relational interpretation, enabling the identification of structural linkages between institutional governance practices and the sustainability of religious habituation. In interpretive synthesis and verification, preliminary interpretations were continuously compared across data sources to ensure internal coherence and evidentiary alignment. Member checking was conducted with three participants representing leadership, teaching, and student perspectives. Each participant received a concise written summary of preliminary findings organized by the four analytical dimensions and was invited to comment on accuracy, clarity, and resonance with their experiences. Feedback confirmed the interpretive alignment of findings, with minor clarifications incorporated into the final analysis.

To enhance methodological rigor, the study applied established criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Credibility was reinforced through triangulation, prolonged engagement, and participant validation. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of research procedures, coding decisions, and analytical reflections. Confirmability was supported by maintaining an audit trail and reflexive journaling to minimize subjective bias. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed contextual descriptions of the institutional setting and program structure, enabling readers to assess applicability to comparable contexts. The researcher, a graduate-level scholar in educational management with prior academic exposure to Islamic educational settings but no formal administrative affiliation with MTs An Najah Petaling, maintained a reflexive stance throughout the study. A reflexive journal was used during data collection and analysis to document personal assumptions, field interactions,

and interpretive decisions, allowing ongoing critical self-examination and minimizing the influence of researcher positionality on data interpretation.

Formal authorization to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. All participants received clear explanations regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature. Written informed consent was secured before interviews and observations were undertaken. Participant confidentiality was safeguarded through anonymization of identities and secure storage of digital data in password-protected files accessible solely to the researcher. The study adhered to recognized ethical standards governing research involving human participants. Special ethical consideration was given to the participation of minor students. In addition to obtaining written parental consent, student participants were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw at any stage without academic or disciplinary consequences. To minimize potential power imbalances, interviews with students were conducted in non-evaluative settings and emphasized the independence of the research from school assessment processes.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### ***Institutional Context and Structural Embedding***

The Morning Religious Program at MTs An Najah Petaling is conducted daily prior to formal classroom instruction and includes collective prayer, dhikr, recitation of Surah Yasin, Qur'anic reading (tadarus), and brief moral guidance delivered by teachers. Institutional documents and official schedules confirm that the program is formally incorporated into the daily timetable and aligned with the school's vision of nurturing disciplined, morally grounded, and academically capable students. This formal integration indicates that religious habituation is structurally embedded within the school's governance framework rather than functioning as an incidental or symbolic devotional activity. Despite operating within limited infrastructural resources, the school maintains consistent implementation through coordinated administrative management and regular supervision, suggesting procedural stability within institutional constraints.

#### ***Program Planning and Organizational Structuring***

Interview data indicate that the Morning Religious Program is institutionally planned and formally recognized within school management structures. The principal stated, "This program is part of our institutional responsibility to develop students' character and spirituality. It is not incidental but structured within our academic system" (IF-01). Document analysis confirmed the existence of official scheduling records and internal activity guidelines, with responsibilities systematically distributed among the principal, Islamic Education teacher, homeroom teachers, and student coordinators. This allocation of roles reflects organizational coordination and administrative regulation.

Observations conducted during four separate sessions demonstrated consistent implementation procedures, with activities beginning at a fixed time each morning as students assembled in designated areas to participate collectively under teacher supervision. The Islamic Education teacher explained, "Each session follows a predetermined sequence. I guide the recitation and provide short reminders related to daily conduct" (IF-02). The presence of a predetermined sequence and fixed schedule indicates routinization, a key feature of institutionalized practice, suggesting that the program operates through regulated procedural order embedded within the school's daily structure rather than depending on spontaneous initiative.

### ***Supervisory Mechanisms and Administrative Reinforcement***

Supervisory practices are implemented through systematic teacher rotation and structured attendance monitoring. A homeroom teacher explained, "Student participation is monitored every morning. This helps maintain punctuality and consistency" (IF-03). Observation data across four formal sessions confirmed consistent teacher presence during Morning Religious activities. Teachers arrived before students, positioned themselves at strategic points in the assembly area, and actively monitored student participation, punctuality, and procedural compliance. Attendance was recorded at the beginning of each session and submitted to the student affairs office at the end of the week.

Document analysis further corroborated these findings, as supervision reports and daily attendance logs indicate that monitoring responsibilities are formally assigned and documented, reflecting administrative reinforcement beyond individual teacher initiative.

The presence of structured monitoring and documentation suggests institutional durability, indicating that the program operates as a regulated system rather than a symbolic or ceremonial practice.

### ***Observed Behavioral Patterns***

Interview and observational data indicate that repetitive participation in the Morning Religious Program contributes to the gradual normalization of religious practices among students. The principal noted, "We begin each day with essential worship activities so that students share a common spiritual starting point before lessons" (IF-01). Similarly, the Islamic Education teacher stated, "Over time, students become accustomed to the activities and participate more naturally" (IF-02).

Observational data revealed temporal changes in student participation patterns. During the initial observation session in February, several students hesitated during collective recitation, with some following silently while others led. By the final observation session in July, the same cohort recited Surah Yasin collectively with noticeably smoother rhythm, minimal teacher prompting, and synchronized participation across student rows. Transitions from the religious session to classroom instruction also became more orderly, requiring fewer verbal reminders from supervising teachers.

Teachers further reported behavioral changes associated with the routine, with one homeroom teacher noting, "Students tend to arrive earlier and appear calmer when entering class after the session" (IF-03). Students are periodically assigned leadership roles, such as guiding recitations or organizing attendance. One student reflected, "At first I felt nervous when leading the recitation, but gradually I became more confident" (IF-04). Observation sessions documented supportive peer interactions during student-led activities, with teachers intervening when necessary to ensure a respectful atmosphere. Administrative staff emphasized that formal regulations discourage ridicule or negative peer responses during participation (IF-05). Collectively, these findings suggest the emergence of behavioral regularity facilitated by repetitive participation within a structured and regulated institutional environment.

### ***Supporting and Constraining Conditions***

Triangulated analysis across interviews, observations, and documentation identified several enabling conditions sustaining the program. Strong principal commitment provides strategic direction, while a clearly structured daily schedule ensures consistent implementation. Distributed teacher involvement strengthens supervision, and formal documentation reinforces administrative continuity.

However, several constraining conditions were also identified. Teachers reported variations in student motivation, particularly during examination periods or following school-wide events, when fatigue reduced engagement intensity. Observation data indicated that students arriving late were less participatory during collective recitation. Regarding evaluation, the institution currently relies on informal indicators such as attendance consistency, punctuality, and teacher perceptions of classroom readiness. While these practices provide practical feedback, no standardized evaluative instruments have yet been developed to assess long-term behavioral or character outcomes systematically.

Overall, evidence from multiple data sources indicates that the Morning Religious Program has evolved beyond routine devotional activity into an administratively embedded institutional system supported by structured planning, supervisory mechanisms, and formal governance regulation.

## **Discussion**

### ***Institutionalizing Religious Habituation Through Governance Structures***

The findings of this study suggest that the Morning Religious Program at MTs An Najah Petaling, Indonesia, functions not merely as a routine devotional activity but as a governance-embedded mechanism for institutionalizing religious habituation. Rather than relying on individual teacher initiative or informal tradition, the program is sustained through formal planning, distributed responsibilities, supervisory monitoring, and documented procedures. This shifts the analytical focus from whether religious routines occur to how they are organizationally constructed to endure over time.

This perspective extends existing research on religious activities in Islamic schools, which has predominantly emphasized student behavioral or disciplinary

outcomes. While such outcomes are important, the present study demonstrates that their sustainability depends on underlying institutional arrangements. In this sense, religious habituation emerges as an organizational achievement rather than an incidental pedagogical byproduct, aligning with scholarship on character education that emphasizes cultural embedding, organizational coherence, and systemic alignment over isolated moral instruction (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Brown et al., 2023).

From the standpoint of habit formation theory, the findings illustrate that behavioral repetition becomes effective when supported by stable contextual cues. However, this study advances the theoretical discussion by showing that contextual stability within schools is not naturally occurring but administratively produced. Fixed scheduling at the beginning of the school day, clearly allocated roles among staff, routine supervision, and formal documentation collectively create a predictable environment in which religious practices can be repeatedly enacted, supporting the gradual normalization of behavior (Lally & Gardner, 2019; Gardner & Rebar, 2019; Wood & R nger, 2016).

The placement of the Morning Religious Program at the start of the academic day appears to serve both symbolic and functional purposes. Symbolically, it positions spiritual orientation as foundational to learning. Functionally, it establishes a shared temporal and emotional starting point for students before formal instruction begins. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of such morning habituation does not rest solely on the content of religious rituals but on the consistency and coherence with which they are organizationally reinforced, a pattern also observed in studies of structured morning routines and student readiness (Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

Accordingly, religious habituation in this context should be conceptualized not simply as repeated devotional practice but as a governance-embedded character education strategy. Its sustainability is maintained through routinized coordination, procedural clarity, and institutional alignment. By foregrounding these structural dimensions, the study contributes to broader discussions on value-based educational management and demonstrates how moral and religious formation can be operationalized through institutional governance rather than individual effort alone.

***Internalization, Participation, and Normative Climate***

The gradual shift from externally prompted participation toward normalized engagement among students reflects an early-stage internalization process supported by structured repetition. Self-Determination Theory explains that sustained involvement in meaningful and organized activities fosters autonomous motivation and value integration when competence, relatedness, and structured guidance are present (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The findings indicate that such motivational conditions are reinforced through institutional design, including rotational student leadership roles and consistent teacher facilitation.

Rotational responsibilities cultivate competence and agency, while shared teacher participation strengthens relational bonds within a collective spiritual climate. Research on school climate highlights that behavioral consistency is reinforced through shared norms, adult modeling, and collective enactment (Wang et al., 2020). In character education literature, teacher exemplarity is consistently identified as a central factor in value transmission and student moral engagement (Sanderse, 2013). In this setting, collective enactment reduces ritual formalism and strengthens normative expectations through visible adult participation.

Importantly, the findings indicate behavioral normalization rather than complete moral internalization. Students demonstrated increasingly fluent recitation, punctual attendance, orderly participation, and greater procedural confidence during the Morning Religious Program, clear indicators that religious practices had become routinized and socially normalized within the school environment. However, the data provide limited evidence of deeper moral internalization, such as students' ability to articulate personal meaning, reflect critically on religious values, or demonstrate autonomous moral reasoning beyond structured settings. Student interviews tended to emphasize compliance, familiarity, and comfort with routines rather than conscious value deliberation.

This pattern aligns with habit formation scholarship, which emphasizes that automaticity develops progressively through stable contextual cues and consistent reinforcement, often preceding reflective internalization (Lally & Gardner, 2013; Verplanken & Orbell, 2019). The structured sequence, documented routines, and

supervisory monitoring observed in this study create such cues, facilitating the gradual consolidation of religious practices into students' daily behavioral patterns. From an institutional perspective, this suggests that governance-embedded habituation effectively establishes behavioral foundations upon which deeper moral internalization may later be cultivated but does not by itself guarantee reflective value adoption.

### ***Leadership Alignment and Institutional Sustainability***

Leadership commitment emerged as a decisive factor in sustaining program continuity. When religious habituation is framed as central to institutional identity, it acquires symbolic legitimacy and procedural reinforcement. Educational leadership research emphasizes that sustainable implementation depends on alignment between vision, modeling, and organizational routines (Leithwood et al., 2020; Bush et al., 2022). The findings support this proposition by illustrating how principal commitment anchors consistent scheduling, supervision, and accountability structures.

The sustainability of institutional practices further depends on coherence between moral purpose and systemic design. Theories of educational change argue that durable transformation requires structured reinforcement embedded within organizational culture (Fullan, 2020). Similarly, improvement science literature underscores that lasting change occurs when practices are routinized through shared norms, distributed leadership, and formalized procedures (Bryk et al., 2021). The Morning Religious Program reflects these principles through documented guidelines, collaborative teacher involvement, and structured administrative oversight.

Teacher engagement strengthens program authenticity and prevents habituation from devolving into mechanical repetition. Contemporary moral education scholarship highlights the importance of reflective guidance and value-centered dialogue in sustaining meaningful character development (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). Within this governance-supported structure, teacher participation reinforces procedural stability while preserving pedagogical intentionality.

Nevertheless, motivational variability among students and the absence of comprehensive long-term evaluative instruments indicate contextual limitations. Character development processes remain influenced by broader social and familial

environments beyond institutional control (Lickona, 2021). Despite these limitations, adaptive adjustments implemented by the school demonstrate organizational responsiveness and learning capacity, reinforcing program resilience.

### ***Theoretical Contribution and Implications***

This study contributes to international discussions on institutionalized character education by reconceptualizing religious habituation as a governance-embedded process rather than merely a devotional or psychological phenomenon. While much existing literature on character education emphasizes behavioral outcomes or individual motivational dimensions (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Brown et al., 2023), the present findings foreground the structural role of institutional design in sustaining repetitive moral practices over time.

By demonstrating how fixed scheduling, distributed authority, supervisory monitoring, and administrative documentation operate as stabilizing mechanisms, this study bridges habit formation theory (Lally & Gardner, 2013; Verplanken & Orbell, 2019), motivational psychology (Ryan & Deci, 2020), and educational governance frameworks (Fullan, 2020; Bryk et al., 2021). This integration advances a structurally informed understanding of character formation in faith-based schooling contexts, showing how organizational arrangements condition the durability of moral routines beyond individual intention alone.

### ***Practical Implications for Policy and Practice***

Practically, these findings offer actionable insights for Islamic school leaders and educational policymakers. Rather than relying primarily on moral exhortation or symbolic repetition, character education initiatives appear more sustainable when devotional practices are embedded within formal governance arrangements. Research on educational change and school improvement emphasizes that coherence between leadership, routines, and institutional culture is central to sustaining reform efforts (Fullan, 2020; Bryk et al., 2021).

However, the findings also reveal important constraints. Variation in student motivation suggests that structured habituation facilitates behavioral regularity but does not uniformly lead to deep moral internalization, reflecting the distinction between

behavioral regulation and value integration emphasized in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Moreover, the absence of comprehensive evaluative instruments represents a gap in the institutionalization process, limiting the school's capacity to systematically assess whether observed outcomes, such as fluent recitation, punctual attendance, and orderly participation reflect deeper moral internalization or remain at the level of behavioral normalization. Without structured evaluative and reflective mechanisms, habituation practices risk remaining at the level of compliance rather than contributing to sustained ethical understanding (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008; Brown et al., 2023).

Thus, the Morning Religious Program illustrates how religious practices can function as structured organizational strategies that support moral habituation through systemic coordination while also highlighting the need for complementary evaluative and pedagogical reinforcement to support progression from behavioral regularity toward moral internalization.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that sustainable religious habituation in Islamic schools is fundamentally shaped by institutional governance rather than by devotional repetition alone. Through an in-depth examination of a Morning Religious Program in an Islamic junior secondary school, the research shows how religious routines can evolve into a governance-embedded character education system supported by formal planning, distributed responsibilities, supervisory mechanisms, and administrative documentation.

In addressing the research objective of examining how religious habituation is institutionally structured and sustained, the findings reveal that the durability of religious practice depends on organizational coherence. Fixed scheduling, leadership alignment, structured supervision, and formalized procedures collectively create environmental stability that enables gradual behavioral normalization. Within this framework, religious practice becomes integrated into the daily organizational fabric of the school rather than functioning as a symbolic or ceremonial activity.

Theoretically, the study advances understanding by bridging habit formation theory, motivational psychology, and educational governance frameworks. This

integration clarifies how contextual stability—often treated as an environmental given in habit formation research is actively and deliberately constructed through administrative design and leadership practices in educational institutions. Religious habituation is thus reconceptualized as a multi-level process shaped by institutional design, leadership commitment, and cultural embedding rather than individual intention alone.

Practically, the findings suggest that Islamic school leaders seeking to strengthen character education initiatives should move beyond reliance on individual teacher initiative or moral exhortation. Based on the study's findings, schools may enhance sustainability by: (1) formalizing devotional routines within official schedules and policy documents, (2) distributing supervisory and leadership roles across staff to ensure continuity, and (3) developing evaluative mechanisms to monitor progression from behavioral regularity toward moral internalization. Institutional alignment, procedural clarity, and distributed leadership emerge as central conditions for sustaining moral formation programs over time.

As a qualitative single-case study, this research does not aim for statistical generalization. Instead, it offers analytical generalization by providing theoretically transferable insights into how governance structures can support institutionalized character education in faith-based schooling contexts. The findings may therefore inform similar educational settings facing challenges in sustaining value-based programs.

Future research may extend this work through comparative multi-site studies examining how variations in governance design influence the depth of moral internalization across institutions. Longitudinal research tracking students over time would also be valuable to assess whether behavioral normalization achieved through institutional habituation develops into autonomous moral commitment beyond the school setting. Additionally, future studies could explore the role of evaluative and reflective pedagogical tools in strengthening the transition from compliance-based participation to internalized ethical understanding.

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