

Moral Character Development through the Integration of Classroom Instruction and Madrasah Culture: A Qualitative Case Study at MI ELPIST Temanggung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Moral character education has become increasingly important in Islamic elementary schools amid rapid social and technological change. Although previous studies have examined character education in madrasahs, limited attention has been given to how classroom instruction and madrasah culture operate as an integrated mechanism in private non-pesantren Islamic elementary schools. This study investigates how students' moral character is developed through the integration of learning and madrasah culture at MI ELPIST Temanggung. This study employed a qualitative intrinsic case study conducted over four months. Purposive sampling involved one principal, five teachers, five students, and five parents. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model with thematic coding, triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail to ensure trustworthiness. The findings reveal that students' moral character is fostered through the integration of value-oriented classroom instruction, teacher role modelling, religious habituation, supportive madrasah culture, and sustained school-parent collaboration. These interconnected practices create continuous opportunities for students to internalize moral values through both formal learning and everyday educational experiences. The study proposes an integrated instruction-culture mechanism demonstrating that moral character development is strengthened when curriculum implementation, teacher practices, institutional culture, religious routines, and family support operate as a coherent educational ecosystem. This model extends existing literature by explaining how these dimensions interact to facilitate moral internalization in a private non-pesantren Islamic elementary school and provides practical guidance for strengthening character education in similar contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Moral character development has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary education as schools are expected not only to improve students' academic achievement but also to prepare them to become ethical, responsible, and socially engaged citizens. Rapid technological advancement, digital communication, and changing patterns of children's social interaction have generated new moral and behavioural challenges that require educational institutions to strengthen character education beyond the transmission of academic knowledge (Bier et al., 2024). Within Islamic education, this responsibility is particularly significant because education is expected to develop students holistically by integrating intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and moral dimensions. Consequently, Islamic elementary schools (madrasahs) are expected to cultivate *akhlak* (moral character) alongside cognitive competence through educational experiences that consistently reflect Islamic values.

Character education has therefore become a major area of educational research. Lickona (1991) conceptualizes character education as an integrated process involving moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, emphasizing that students develop good character through the interaction of cognitive understanding, emotional commitment, and repeated moral practice. Similarly, Berkowitz argues that effective character education extends beyond formal instruction and depends largely on the quality of the school climate, teacher role modelling, and institutional culture (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). These perspectives suggest that moral education cannot rely solely on classroom teaching but requires educational environments that consistently reinforce desirable values through everyday experiences.

Within Islamic educational philosophy, this understanding corresponds closely with classical conceptions of *tarbiyah* and *ta'dīb*. Scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh argue that moral virtues are cultivated through continuous habituation, exemplary conduct, and sustained interaction within supportive educational environments rather than through theoretical instruction alone (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). Consequently, Islamic schools are expected to provide learning environments in which moral values are experienced repeatedly through classroom instruction, religious practices, teacher behaviour, and social interaction. Such an approach reflects the understanding that character is gradually internalized through everyday educational experiences rather than acquired through isolated lessons.

Several theoretical concepts underpin this study. First, moral character refers to the internalization of Islamic ethical values reflected consistently in students' attitudes and behaviour. Second, madrasah culture encompasses the shared values, norms, traditions, religious routines, and interpersonal relationships that shape daily life within the school community. Third, integration denotes the intentional alignment between classroom instruction and school culture in promoting students' moral development. Finally, Jackson's (1968) concept of the hidden curriculum explains that students acquire important moral values through institutional routines, teacher behaviour, peer interaction, and the overall educational environment beyond the formal curriculum. Together, these concepts provide an analytical lens for understanding how schools cultivate students' moral character through both explicit and implicit educational processes.

Previous research consistently demonstrates that teacher role modelling, religious habituation, and school culture contribute significantly to students' character development. Teachers serve as important moral exemplars whose attitudes and behaviour strongly influence students' ethical dispositions (James et al., 2021). Likewise, studies conducted in Islamic educational settings indicate that collective worship, Qur'anic recitation, and other religious routines strengthen students' moral development by encouraging repeated practice of Islamic values (Nuryupa et al., 2024). Other studies have emphasized the importance of integrating character education into curriculum implementation and school governance so that moral values become embedded in students' everyday learning experiences (Dwiyana et al., 2025; Rarasati et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that effective character education requires consistency between instructional activities and the wider educational environment.

Despite these advances, several important gaps remain in the literature. First, most previous studies have examined classroom instruction, teacher exemplification, religious habituation, or school culture as separate dimensions of character education, providing limited explanation of how these elements interact as an integrated mechanism that continuously reinforces students' moral development. Second, empirical studies within the Indonesian context have predominantly focused on public madrasahs or pesantren-based institutions where boarding-school traditions naturally facilitate character formation. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to private non-pesantren Islamic elementary schools, where students return home daily and moral education depends largely on the integration of classroom learning, school culture, and family collaboration rather than residential religious life. Consequently, the mechanisms through which these educational dimensions complement one another remain insufficiently understood.

To address this gap, the present study adopts three complementary theoretical perspectives. Lickona's (1991) framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action provides the foundation for understanding students' character development. Jackson's (1968) hidden curriculum theory explains how moral values are transmitted implicitly through school routines, institutional culture, and teacher behaviour. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory further suggests that children's moral development is shaped through interactions among interconnected environments, particularly the relationship between school and family. Integrating these perspectives enables a more comprehensive understanding of how instructional practices, school culture, religious habituation, and parental involvement collectively support students' moral development.

MI ELPIST Temanggung was purposively selected because it represents a theoretically informative case rather than simply a successful Islamic school. As a private non-pesantren Islamic elementary school, MI ELPIST has developed a systematic approach to moral education by integrating value-oriented classroom instruction, teacher role modelling, religious habituation, institutional culture, and continuous collaboration with parents. This distinctive institutional context offers an opportunity to examine how moral character can be cultivated through an integrated educational ecosystem without relying on the traditional boarding-school environment commonly found in pesantren-based institutions.

Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature by explaining the mechanism through which classroom instruction, teacher exemplification, religious habituation, madrasah culture, and parent-school collaboration operate as an interconnected system supporting students' moral character development. Rather than describing individual character education programmes, this study proposes an integrated instruction-culture mechanism that explains how these educational dimensions reinforce one another in facilitating students' moral internalization. Based on this objective, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is students' moral character cultivated through the integration of classroom instruction and madrasah culture at MI ELPIST Temanggung? (2) What mechanisms connect instructional practices and cultural routines in supporting students' moral development? and (3) What enabling and constraining factors influence the implementation of this integrated model of moral character education?

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single intrinsic case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how students' moral character is cultivated through the integration of classroom instruction and madrasah culture at MI ELPIST Temanggung. An intrinsic case study was selected because the primary purpose of the research was to understand the unique practices implemented within a particular institutional context rather than to develop broad generalizations. MI ELPIST Temanggung was purposively selected because it represents a theoretically informative case as a private non-pesantren Islamic elementary school that systematically integrates classroom instruction, religious habituation, teacher role modelling, and school culture in fostering students' moral character.

The fieldwork was conducted over a period of four months. During this period, observations were undertaken regularly to capture classroom learning activities, religious habituation programmes, teacher–student interactions, collective worship, and other daily school routines related to moral character development. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of the school's moral development programmes. They consisted of one principal, five teachers, five students, and five parents who possessed sufficient knowledge and experience regarding the school's character education practices.

Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on instructional practices, teacher role modelling, students' participation in religious activities, classroom interactions, and the implementation of the madrasah's daily cultural routines, including the 5S programme (smile, greeting, respect, courtesy, and politeness). Semi-structured interviews explored participants' perspectives regarding the integration of moral values into classroom instruction, the implementation of madrasah culture, collaboration between teachers and parents, and the factors supporting or constraining students' moral development. Documentary data included lesson plans, school regulations, programme schedules, photographs of school activities, and other institutional documents relevant to character education.

The data were analysed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection through an iterative coding process. Initially, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were subjected to open coding to identify meaningful units of information. Related codes were subsequently organised into broader categories through axial coding, before being synthesised into overarching themes that explained the relationships between instructional practices, madrasah culture, and students' moral character development. The coding process was continuously refined through repeated comparison across different sources of evidence (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and method triangulation were employed by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, students, parents, observations, interviews, and documentary evidence. Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries and preliminary interpretations to the principal and participating teachers to verify the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. In addition, an audit trail consisting of field notes, interview transcripts, coding records, and analytical memos was maintained throughout the research process to enhance the dependability and transparency of the findings.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument throughout the study. To minimise potential bias, reflective notes were maintained after each stage of data collection, while interpretations were continuously compared across multiple participants and data sources before conclusions were drawn. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Institutional permission was obtained from MI ELPIST Temanggung prior to the commencement of fieldwork. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate after receiving information regarding the objectives of the study and the confidentiality of the data. Because the research involved students as minors, informed consent was also obtained from their parents or legal guardians. To protect participants' privacy, all personal information was anonymised, and research data were used solely for academic purposes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Integration of Islamic Education Learning in Moral Development

The findings indicate that moral development at MI ELPIST Temanggung is implemented through the integration of moral values into classroom instruction rather than through a stand-alone character education program. Analysis of teaching practices shows that teachers consistently incorporate moral values into the learning process by connecting lesson content with students' daily experiences. Values such as honesty, sincerity, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect are introduced not only as learning content but also as behavioural expectations throughout classroom activities. Consequently,

students are encouraged to understand moral values cognitively while simultaneously practising them during learning interactions.

The integration is evident in several stages of classroom instruction. At the planning stage, teachers include moral objectives alongside cognitive learning outcomes in lesson preparation. During classroom activities, teachers relate Islamic concepts to authentic situations encountered by students at school and at home, encourage collaborative learning, and facilitate reflective discussions on moral dilemmas. Assessment also extends beyond academic achievement by considering students' participation, responsibility, cooperation, and respectful behaviour during classroom activities. This instructional design demonstrates that moral education becomes an inseparable component of the teaching process rather than an additional programme conducted outside the classroom.

The findings further suggest that classroom learning does not function independently from the broader educational environment. Moral messages introduced during lessons are consistently reinforced through teacher feedback and continued in various daily school activities, enabling students to repeatedly experience and practise the same values in different contexts. This continuous reinforcement creates a reciprocal relationship between classroom learning and school culture, allowing moral values to develop through repeated educational experiences rather than isolated instructional sessions.

This condition was confirmed by the Head of the Madrasah, who stated:

"At MI ELPIST, we do not have a separate subject specifically devoted to moral education. Instead, every teacher is responsible for integrating moral values into the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the goal of classroom instruction is not merely to ensure that students understand the subject matter, but also to cultivate honesty, discipline, respect for teachers, and appreciation for their peers." (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, 2026)

A similar view was expressed by the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher:

"When preparing our teaching modules, we always incorporate objectives related to character development. For example, when discussing topics such as trustworthiness (amanah) or honesty, we do not stop at explaining the concepts. We also design learning activities that enable students to practice these values throughout the learning process." (Interview with PAI Teacher, 2026)

The students' responses also supported these findings:

"During PAI lessons, our teacher often gives examples from everyday life. For instance, she asks us what we should do if we find someone else's money or if we make a mistake—we should be honest. After that, we are asked to share our own experiences related to those situations." (Interview with Student, 2026)

The findings demonstrate that integrating moral values into classroom instruction supports the view that character education is most effective when embedded within everyday teaching rather than implemented as an independent programme. This finding is consistent with the work of Elsa Dwiyan, Dinda Putri Azmalasari, and colleagues (2025), who argue that character education becomes more meaningful when moral values are integrated into curriculum implementation, teacher practices, and the broader school environment.

The instructional practices observed at MI ELPIST also correspond with Nuryupa's (2024) meta-literature review, which emphasizes that religious and moral values should permeate daily educational experiences instead of remaining theoretical concepts. At MI ELPIST, Islamic Religious Education extends beyond transmitting doctrinal knowledge by encouraging students to connect Islamic teachings with authentic social situations through reflection, discussion, and collaborative learning.

These findings further support the concept of the hidden curriculum Jackson (Jackson, 1968), in which students acquire values through classroom interaction, teacher behaviour, and everyday educational experiences. Rather than being transmitted solely through formal instruction, moral values become embedded within the routines and social relationships that characterize classroom life. This

perspective is also consistent with Idris, who argues that Islamic moral education is strengthened when ethical values are demonstrated and experienced in everyday educational practice (Pebrina et al., 2023).

An important contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how instructional activities are systematically connected with the wider culture of the madrasah. Moral values introduced through lesson objectives, learning activities, and authentic assessment are subsequently reinforced through school routines, teacher feedback, and daily religious practices. This instruction–culture coupling illustrates that classroom learning and school culture function as mutually reinforcing components of students' moral development rather than as separate educational domains. Such a mechanism has received limited attention in previous studies, particularly within the context of private non-pesantren Islamic elementary schools.

3.2 Teacher Exemplification as the Primary Source of Moral Formation

The findings indicate that teacher exemplification constitutes one of the most influential mechanisms in students' moral development at MI ELPIST Temanggung. Rather than relying solely on verbal instruction, teachers consistently demonstrate moral values through their daily behaviour and interactions with students. Moral education is therefore experienced directly by students as part of everyday school life rather than being limited to classroom explanations.

Observations of daily school activities suggest that teachers model punctuality, discipline, politeness, empathy, responsibility, and respect in both formal learning situations and informal interactions. Before lessons begin, teachers welcome students politely, encourage them to greet one another respectfully, and consistently remind them to maintain orderly behaviour. During classroom instruction, teachers emphasize respectful communication, encourage students to appreciate differing opinions during discussions, and demonstrate fairness when responding to students' questions and classroom participation. These practices provide students with concrete examples of how Islamic moral values should be translated into daily behaviour.

Teacher exemplification also extends beyond instructional activities. Teachers actively participate in congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, school cleanliness programmes, and other religious activities alongside students. By participating directly rather than merely supervising, teachers reinforce the consistency between moral instruction and personal conduct. This consistency enables students to observe that the values introduced during lessons are continuously practised throughout the school environment.

The findings further suggest that students' moral learning develops through repeated social interaction with teachers. Continuous exposure to teachers' behaviour creates opportunities for students to imitate positive attitudes such as responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and mutual respect. Consequently, teacher exemplification functions not only as an instructional strategy but also as an everyday educational process through which moral values become internalised.

The Head of the Madrasah explained that moral development would not be effective if teachers merely gave advice without demonstrating the expected values through their daily conduct.

"Children are more likely to imitate what they see than what they hear. Therefore, we constantly remind our teachers that they must become role models first. If we expect students to be disciplined, teachers should arrive at school earlier. If we expect students to be courteous, teachers must also speak politely to everyone." (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, 2026)

A classroom teacher similarly explained that she consistently strives to model the same values that are taught to students.

"We cannot simply tell children to behave well. They observe how we arrive at school, how we speak to our colleagues, whether we apologize when we make mistakes, and whether we keep our promises. These everyday actions are often imitated by the children more quickly than verbal instructions." (Interview with Classroom Teacher, 2026)

One student also described how teachers consistently demonstrate appropriate behavior before providing guidance to students.

"When a classmate is being noisy or does not queue properly, the teacher does not immediately get angry. Instead, the teacher talks to us calmly and shows us how we should behave. That way, we do not feel afraid; rather, we feel that we are being guided and reminded." (Interview with Student, 2026)

The findings reinforce the widely accepted view that teacher exemplification represents a fundamental component of character education within Islamic schools. As argued by Arif Kurniawan (2024), teachers occupy a central position in children's moral development because students naturally imitate behaviours consistently demonstrated by significant adults in their educational environment. The findings at MI ELPIST similarly demonstrate that moral learning is strengthened when teachers embody the values they seek to cultivate.

These results are also consistent with Anindhita and Fatimah's (2025) research, which identifies habituation through teacher modelling as an effective approach to character formation. Although their study was conducted in the context of Islamic boarding schools, the present findings indicate that similar mechanisms can also operate effectively within a private non-pesantren Islamic elementary school. What appears to be essential is not the institutional setting itself but the consistency with which teachers demonstrate desirable moral behaviour in everyday educational practice.

From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, the findings reflect the concept of *at-Ta'dīb*, which emphasizes that educators should cultivate moral character through personal example in addition to formal instruction. This perspective is consistent with Rohmah, Wisudaningasih, and Yunita (2024), who argue that teachers' moral integrity constitutes an important foundation for effective Islamic character education. At MI ELPIST, teacher exemplification functions as a continuous educational process in which students learn moral values through observation, interaction, and repeated practice.

The findings further support Lickona's framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Through continuous interaction with teachers, students first recognise appropriate moral behaviour, gradually develop positive emotional attachment to these values, and ultimately practise them in their own daily activities. This progression demonstrates that teacher exemplification facilitates the transition from moral understanding to moral action.

An important contribution of this study is the identification of teacher exemplification as a connecting mechanism between classroom instruction and the wider culture of the madrasah. Teachers do not merely transmit moral values during lessons but consistently reinforce the same values through their behaviour across different educational settings. This continuity strengthens the instruction-culture coupling identified in this study, whereby moral messages introduced during classroom learning are continuously validated through authentic teacher practices, thereby increasing opportunities for students to internalise moral values in everyday school life.

3.3 Madrasah Culture as a Character-Shaping Environment

The findings indicate that the culture of MI ELPIST Temanggung serves as an essential environment for reinforcing the moral values introduced during classroom instruction. Rather than functioning merely as institutional routines, various school activities provide continuous opportunities for students to practise the values they have learned during lessons. This demonstrates that character education extends beyond formal teaching and becomes embedded within students' everyday experiences throughout the school day.

Daily observations of school activities reveal that students consistently participate in routines such as greeting teachers and peers respectfully (the 5S programme: *senyum, salam, sapa, sopan, and santun*), maintaining classroom and school cleanliness, participating in congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an before lessons, and following orderly classroom procedures. These routines are implemented consistently across grade levels and involve the active participation of both teachers and students, creating a shared culture that promotes discipline, responsibility, mutual respect, and social awareness.

An important finding of this study is that these cultural practices are closely connected to classroom learning. Moral values introduced during lessons are repeatedly reinforced through daily routines, allowing students to practise them in authentic situations. For example, lessons discussing responsibility are followed by routines that require students to complete classroom duties and maintain cleanliness, while lessons emphasizing respect and cooperation are reinforced through collective worship, classroom discussions, and interactions with teachers and peers. This continuity creates a feedback loop in which classroom instruction informs students' daily behaviour, while daily routines strengthen the moral messages delivered during instruction.

Document analysis also indicates that these activities are formally incorporated into the school's educational programme through daily schedules, religious activity programmes, and school regulations. Consequently, moral development is institutionalised within the organisational culture of the madrasah rather than depending solely on individual teacher initiatives. The consistency between classroom instruction, school routines, and institutional policies enables students to experience moral values repeatedly across different educational settings.

The Head of the Madrasah explained that moral development cannot be achieved solely through classroom instruction but must be cultivated as a living culture throughout the madrasah environment.

"If moral values are taught only during Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes, the outcomes will not be optimal. Therefore, we strive to build a madrasah culture that encourages students to practice good behavior every day. From the moment they arrive at school, greet their teachers, participate in lessons, until they return home, every activity becomes part of moral education." (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, 2026)

A classroom teacher further emphasized that habituation is one of the most effective approaches for instilling moral values in students.

"What we are actually developing is a set of positive habits. Every day, students are encouraged to greet others with salam, queue patiently, dispose of waste properly, perform congregational prayers, and show respect to everyone they meet. When these practices are repeated consistently, they gradually become part of the students' character." (Interview with Classroom Teacher, 2026)

Similarly, a student explained that the habits cultivated at the madrasah were eventually carried over into life at home.

"At school, we are always encouraged to greet others with salam, queue properly, and perform congregational prayers. Over time, I began doing the same things at home because our teachers remind us about them every day." (Interview with Student, 2026)

The findings demonstrate that school culture functions as an active educational environment that strengthens students' moral development through repeated social and religious practices. Rather than serving merely as supporting activities, daily routines operate as practical extensions of classroom instruction, enabling students to experience moral values in authentic contexts. This finding supports the view that effective character education requires consistency between formal learning and everyday educational experiences.

The results are consistent with Rarasati, Lapasere, and Rahmawati (2025), who argue that character education becomes more effective when school governance, Islamic values, and institutional culture operate as an integrated system. At MI ELPIST, moral values introduced during classroom instruction are continuously reinforced through religious practices, social interaction, and school-wide routines, creating coherence between what students learn and what they experience throughout the school day.

Similarly, Bambang Triyono (2023) demonstrates that the culture of Islamic boarding schools contributes significantly to students' moral development because values are embedded within everyday religious activities. Although MI ELPIST is not a pesantren, the findings indicate that several pesantren-inspired practices—such as Qur'anic recitation, congregational prayer, and structured religious routines—have been successfully adapted into the madrasah context to strengthen students' moral internalisation.

These findings also correspond with the concept of the hidden curriculum, which explains that students acquire moral values through organisational culture, interpersonal relationships, and routine educational experiences beyond the formal curriculum. At MI ELPIST, school culture complements classroom instruction by providing repeated opportunities for students to practise responsibility, discipline, cooperation, empathy, and religious commitment in everyday situations (Jackson, 1968).

A notable contribution of this study is the identification of a reciprocal relationship between instructional practices and school culture. Classroom learning introduces moral concepts, while the culture of the madrasah repeatedly reinforces these concepts through structured routines and social interaction. This instruction–culture coupling demonstrates that students' moral development is strengthened not by isolated programmes but by a continuous educational process in which classroom learning and institutional culture mutually reinforce one another. This mechanism represents an important contribution to the literature on character education in private non-pesantren Islamic elementary schools, where empirical evidence remains relatively limited.

3.4 Religious Habituation in Daily Routines as a Pillar of Character Education

The findings indicate that religious habituation constitutes a central component of moral character development at MI ELPIST Temanggung. Rather than functioning as isolated religious rituals, daily religious activities are systematically integrated into the educational process to reinforce the moral values introduced during classroom instruction. These routines create repeated opportunities for students to practise Islamic values within authentic social and spiritual contexts.

The implementation of religious habituation is reflected in a series of structured daily activities, including morning Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus*), Duha prayer, congregational Zuhur prayer, collective remembrance (*dzikir*), and daily prayers before and after lessons. These activities are conducted consistently and involve active participation from teachers and students alike. Through continuous participation, students become accustomed to practising discipline, responsibility, sincerity, humility, and mutual respect as part of their daily behaviour rather than merely understanding these values conceptually.

The findings further reveal that religious habituation functions as a continuation of classroom learning. Moral messages delivered during Islamic Religious Education lessons are reinforced through repeated religious practices that allow students to apply what they have learned in real situations. For example, lessons concerning discipline and responsibility are strengthened through students' punctual attendance in congregational prayers, while lessons on sincerity, gratitude, and respect are reinforced through collective worship, daily supplication, and respectful interaction during religious activities. This continuity between instruction and habituation strengthens students' opportunities to internalise moral values through repeated experience.

In addition, document analysis indicates that these religious activities form part of the madrasah's official educational programme and daily schedule. Their implementation is therefore institutional rather than incidental, ensuring consistency across classrooms and grade levels. The integration of structured religious routines with classroom learning demonstrates that moral education at MI ELPIST is implemented through a continuous educational process in which religious practice serves as an important mechanism for reinforcing students' character development.

The Head of the Madrasah explained that religious habituation is intentionally designed as a means of fostering students' religious character through consistent and repetitive practice.

"We believe that moral character cannot be developed through theory alone. Children need to be accustomed to practicing religious values every day. Therefore, activities such as Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), congregational prayers, collective supplication, and other forms of religious practice are embedded in the daily routines of the madrasah rather than being treated as supplementary programs." (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, 2026)

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher further explained that every religious activity is explicitly connected to students' moral development.

"We always explain to the students that the purpose of congregational prayer or tadarus is not merely to perform acts of worship. These activities also teach discipline, respect for time, orderliness, patience while waiting for one's turn, and a sense of togetherness. In other words, every religious activity carries a moral value." (Interview with PAI Teacher, 2026)

A student also reported that the religious practices established at the madrasah had gradually influenced his or her habits at home.

"I rarely read the Qur'an before going to school in the past. Now it has become a habit because we recite the Qur'an together every morning. At home, I also read the Qur'an more often and perform my prayers on time." (Interview with Student, 2026)

The findings demonstrate that religious habituation functions not only as spiritual practice but also as an educational strategy for strengthening students' moral character through continuous repetition. Within Islamic educational philosophy, repeated practice is regarded as an essential mechanism for transforming moral knowledge into habitual behaviour. The findings at MI ELPIST illustrate how daily religious activities provide students with consistent opportunities to experience and practise Islamic values beyond formal classroom instruction.

These findings are consistent with Iqbal (2025), who argues that Islamic character education becomes more effective when moral values are embedded within repeated daily practices that gradually shape students' personalities. At MI ELPIST, religious routines serve precisely this function by transforming abstract moral concepts into lived educational experiences that students encounter every school day.

The present findings also resonate with Fahrudin's (Fahrudin, 2025) research on pesantren-based Islamic elementary schools, which highlights the importance of ritual repetition in strengthening students' religious character. Although MI ELPIST operates as a private non-pesantren madrasah, the adoption of structured religious routines demonstrates that similar pedagogical principles can be effectively adapted to different institutional contexts. This suggests that the effectiveness of religious habituation depends less on institutional type than on the consistency of its implementation.

From the perspective of character development theory, the findings further support Lickona's concept of moral action, which emphasizes that moral values become internalised through repeated practice rather than cognitive understanding alone. Daily religious routines provide students with regular opportunities to translate moral understanding into concrete behaviour, thereby strengthening the relationship between moral knowledge and moral practice.

An important contribution of this study is the identification of religious habituation as a reinforcing mechanism within the broader instruction–culture coupling identified throughout this research. Moral values introduced during classroom instruction are continuously strengthened through structured religious routines, while these routines simultaneously provide authentic contexts in which students can demonstrate the values they have learned. Consequently, classroom instruction, religious habituation, and madrasah culture operate as interconnected components of a unified system of moral education rather than as separate educational programmes. This integrated model represents an important contribution to understanding moral character development in private Islamic elementary schools beyond the pesantren setting.

3.5 Collaboration Between Madrasah and Parents in Strengthening Moral Character

The findings indicate that collaboration between MI ELPIST Temanggung and parents constitutes an important component of students' moral character development. The madrasah recognises that character education cannot be achieved solely through classroom instruction or school-based activities but requires continuity between educational experiences at school and students' daily lives at home. Consequently, teachers maintain regular communication with parents to ensure that moral values introduced at school are consistently reinforced within the family environment.

The collaboration is implemented through various forms of communication and parental involvement. Teachers regularly provide information regarding students' behavioural development

during parent meetings, informal consultations, and digital communication platforms. Parents are encouraged to monitor students' religious practices, discipline, responsibility, and social behaviour at home, while teachers provide guidance on how these values can be reinforced beyond the school setting. This reciprocal communication enables both parties to monitor students' moral development and respond collaboratively to emerging behavioural concerns.

The findings further reveal that parents are actively involved in several school programmes designed to strengthen students' character formation. Religious gatherings, charity activities, community service programmes, and other school events create opportunities for parents and teachers to work together in fostering students' moral and social responsibility. These collaborative activities extend the influence of moral education beyond classroom instruction and encourage students to experience consistent moral expectations across different social environments.

Document analysis also indicates that parent involvement is embedded within the madrasah's educational programmes through scheduled parent meetings, communication records, and joint religious and social activities. Such institutional support demonstrates that collaboration with families is not incidental but forms an integral component of the school's character education strategy. Through this partnership, students receive consistent moral guidance both at school and at home, thereby strengthening the continuity of their moral learning experiences.

The Head of the Madrasah emphasized that moral development cannot be fully achieved through school-based efforts alone without active support from families.

"Children spend more time at home than at school. Therefore, we always encourage parents to become our partners. If we cultivate habits such as congregational prayer, discipline, and courteous behavior at the madrasah, these practices need to be reinforced at home so that students' moral development can truly take root." (Interview with the Head of the Madrasah, 2026)

A classroom teacher likewise explained that communication with parents is not limited to addressing students' problems but also serves as a means of monitoring their character development.

"We maintain regular communication with parents, both through WhatsApp groups and face-to-face meetings. We do not only discuss students' academic achievement but also their character development, such as discipline, responsibility, and religious practices. This enables parents to continue reinforcing the same values at home." (Interview with Classroom Teacher, 2026)

One parent also explained that the madrasah actively provides guidance on the positive habits that should be continued in the home environment.

"The teachers often remind us to continue at home the habits that our children have learned at school. We now make an effort to encourage our child to perform prayers on time, recite the Qur'an after the Maghrib prayer, and speak politely to parents as well as siblings." (Interview with Parent, 2026)

The findings demonstrate that collaboration between schools and families strengthens students' moral development by creating continuity between educational experiences across different environments. Rather than positioning moral education as the exclusive responsibility of teachers, MI ELPIST adopts a collaborative approach in which parents actively participate in reinforcing the values introduced through classroom learning and school culture. This continuity contributes to more consistent opportunities for students to practise moral values in their daily lives.

These findings support Epstein's theory of school-family partnership, which emphasises that students' academic and personal development is enhanced when schools and families work collaboratively toward shared educational goals. At MI ELPIST, regular communication between teachers and parents enables both parties to monitor students' behavioural development while providing consistent guidance across school and home settings.

The present findings are also consistent with Nur Fajriyani (2023), who argues that Islamic character education becomes more effective when parents actively reinforce religious and moral values introduced at school. Likewise, Sutisnawati (2025) highlights that teachers function not only as

educators but also as facilitators who connect schools and families in supporting students' character development. The collaborative practices observed at MI ELPIST illustrate how continuous communication strengthens the alignment of moral expectations across educational contexts.

From an ecological perspective, these findings can also be interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which explains that children's development is shaped by interactions among multiple social environments, particularly the relationship between school and family. The consistency of moral messages across these environments enables students to experience similar expectations regarding discipline, responsibility, honesty, and religious commitment, thereby strengthening the internalisation of moral values.

An important contribution of this study is the identification of school–parent collaboration as the final component within the broader instruction–culture–family coupling that characterises moral education at MI ELPIST. Classroom instruction introduces moral concepts, madrasah culture provides opportunities for repeated practice, religious habituation reinforces these values through daily routines, and parental involvement ensures their continuity within the home environment. Together, these interconnected dimensions form an integrated ecosystem of moral education that extends beyond formal classroom learning. This holistic model offers an empirical contribution to the literature on moral character development in private non-pesantren Islamic elementary schools, demonstrating that effective character education depends on the sustained interaction of instructional, cultural, religious, and familial contexts rather than on isolated educational interventions.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that moral development at MI ELPIST Temanggung is supported through an integrated educational system rather than through isolated instructional activities. Moral values are embedded in classroom learning, reinforced through teacher modeling, practiced in daily religious routines, and sustained through a school culture that consistently provides opportunities for students to translate moral knowledge into everyday behavior. The findings indicate that this integration supports students' moral internalization as observed in classroom interactions and school life.

The study also demonstrates that school culture functions as a form of *hidden curriculum* by reinforcing the moral values introduced during formal instruction. Daily routines, religious habituation, and teachers' consistent behavior create a learning environment in which students repeatedly experience and practice expected moral conduct. Furthermore, collaboration between the school and parents extends this process beyond the classroom by maintaining consistency between school-based and home-based moral guidance, thereby strengthening the continuity of students' moral development.

These findings contribute to the literature on moral education by proposing an integrated model of moral development in Islamic primary schools consisting of five interconnected components: curriculum integration, teacher modeling, school culture, religious habituation, and parent–school partnership. Rather than emphasizing the effectiveness of a single program, the study highlights how the interaction among these components supports students' moral internalization within the context of a non-boarding Islamic elementary school.

Practically, madrasahs may strengthen moral development by implementing a minimum program package that integrates value-oriented lesson planning, teacher modeling, structured daily religious routines, and continuous assessment of students' moral behavior. These efforts should be supported by school leadership through regular monitoring of implementation and by systematic communication with parents to ensure consistency between school and home environments.

This study is limited to a single qualitative case study conducted in one Islamic elementary school, which limits the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Future research may examine similar models across multiple madrasahs or compare different institutional settings using longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to better understand how integrated moral education influences students' long-term character development.

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