Implementation of Character Education Based on Islamic Values at Madrasah Tsanawiyah

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the implementation of character education based on Islamic values at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak using a qualitative approach that emphasizes data obtained from interviews and observations. The focus of this research includes the strategies employed by teachers to instill Islamic values, the roles of the principal and educational staff, and the identification of Islamic values integrated into character education. The findings reveal that religious studies teachers apply contextual learning strategies and group discussions to instill Islamic values in students' daily lives. This approach not only enhances students' cognitive understanding but also fosters deep emotional and social engagement. The principal and educational staff play a crucial role in supporting the implementation through teacher training, integration of Islamic values across various subjects, and the organization of extracurricular activities grounded in Islamic principles. Key values integrated include honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion. These values are applied through learning processes, religious practices, and social interactions among students, and have shown a positive impact on students' attitudes and character

Keywords: Character Education, Islamic Values, Learning Strategies

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan penerapan pendidikan karakter yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai Islam di Madrasah Tsanawiyah al-Makrif Kereak dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang menekankan pada data hasil wawancara dan observasi. Fokus dari penelitian ini mencakup strategi yang diterapkan oleh guru dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai Islam, peran kepala madrasah dan staf pendidikan, serta identifikasi nilai-nilai Islam yang diintegrasikan dalam pendidikan karakter. Hasil penelitian memperlihatkan bahwa guru agama menerapkan strategi pembelajaran kontekstual dan diskusi kelompok untuk menanamkan nilai-nilai Islam dalam kehidupan siswa. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya meningkatkan pemahaman kognitif siswa, tetapi juga mendorong keterlibatan emosional dan sosial yang mendalam. Kepala madrasah serta tenaga pendidik memiliki peranan penting dalam mendukung penerapan tersebut melalui pelatihan bagi guru, integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam berbagai mata pelajaran, serta penyelenggaraan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler yang berbasis pada nilai-nilai keislaman. Beberapa nilai utama yang diintegrasikan mencakup kejujuran, tanggung jawab, disiplin, dan kasih sayang. Nilai-nilai ini diterapkan melalui proses pembelajaran, praktik ibadah, serta interaksi sosial antar siswa, dan telah menunjukkan dampak positif terhadap sikap dan karakter siswa.*

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan Karekter, Nilai-nilai Islam, Strategi Pembelajaran*

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Introduction

Thus far, student learning outcomes have predominantly been assessed through cognitive and psychomotor aspects, while the affective domain often receives insufficient attention. In reality, these three domains, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, are integrally interconnected in shaping a whole human being. Syifa and Ridwan assert that academic achievement cannot be fully optimized without the cultivation of strong character and attitudes. In the educational context, true success is not merely producing intellectually intelligent students, but also individuals who possess sound moral, spiritual, and social values (Syifa & Ridwan, 2024).

Character education has become a strategic issue within the national education system, especially in religious-based institutions such as madrasahs (Kholidin et al., 2025). Within the Madrasah Tsanawiyah environment, character education grounded in Islamic values not only aims to shape students' behavior and morals but also seeks to instill a deep understanding of Islamic teachings in daily life(Fahruddin, 2025). In Islamic tradition, character is referred to as akhlaq, a term that holds profound meaning. Imam Al-Ghazali describes akhlaq as traits deeply embedded in the soul, from which spontaneous, uncontrived actions emerge (Muzakki, 2018). This indicates that character education in Islam goes beyond outward conduct; it involves the formation of the heart and inner consciousness.

However, in practice, various phenomena indicate that a character crisis remains a significant challenge in the world of education, even within madrasahs. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2023) shows that violations of ethical and social norms persist among madrasah students, including intolerance, bullying, and a lack of social responsibility (Aldawiyah & Damayanti, 2023). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology also confirms that the weakness of character education is a contributing factor to the rising conflicts among students in schools. This condition highlights the fact that the integration of Islamic values in education has not yet been fully effective (Hariyanti & Roqib, 2024).

The UNESCO Report (2022) states that strong character education is a fundamental foundation for shaping a young generation capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society (Istianah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2022) reported that

approximately 60% of madrasah students showed positive character development after participating in Islamic values-based education programs. Nevertheless, the report does not elaborate in detail on how the implementation process of character education unfolds at the school level, particularly in private madrasahs such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak.

Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak, as an Islamic educational institution, bears a significant responsibility in shaping a generation that excels not only academically but also in terms of integrity, honesty, and social concern. In its implementation, teachers play a crucial role in conveying character values through participatory, reflective, and contextual learning approaches. Strategies such as group discussions, project-based learning, and involvement in social activities can serve as effective tools for instilling Islamic values in students' daily lives. In addition, the madrasah principal, as the institutional leader, plays a vital role in creating policies that support a character-oriented educational environment—this includes teacher training, school culture development, and strengthening exemplary behavior among all school personnel.

Several previous studies have indeed addressed character education in madrasahs. For instance, Nurul Huda (2019), in her research entitled "The Implementation of Character Education Based on Islamic Values at Al-Furqon Integrated Islamic Junior High School in Lampung," highlighted the importance of Islamic values as the foundation for character education. The similarity between the two studies lies in the focus on integrating religious values into the educational process, both through classroom instruction and school activities. However, Nurul Huda's research emphasized a formal approach through curriculum structure and learning in an urban integrated Islamic school. In contrast, the research at MTs Al-Makrif Kereak emphasizes a cultural and exemplary-based approach rooted in rural community life, highlighting the active roles of teachers and school leaders in students' daily lives.

Siti Nurjanah's study, titled "The Role of Islamic Education in Shaping Students' Character in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Banyumas"(Ningsih, 2021)." shares similarities with the present study in terms of educational level Madrasah Tsanawiyah and its focus on character education. However, Siti's study concentrates more on the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. Meanwhile, the research at MTs Al-Makrif Kereak is more focused on Islamic values-based character education, which encompasses the roles of all stakeholders, from the head of the madrasah and teachers to educational staff. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive and contextual approach to implementing Islamic character

education, particularly within a rural socio-cultural background that is rarely explored in similar studies.

This study holds significant value and benefit in supporting national education policies, particularly in strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum), which places character as a core dimension of the learning process. The findings are expected to contribute substantially to the development of an Islamic values-based character education model that can be adapted by other madrasahs across Indonesia. Moreover, these findings may serve as a reference for the Ministry of Religious Affairs in formulating systematic, integrative, and sustainable policies to strengthen character development in madrasahs.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Islamic values-based character education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak. The case study design was chosen because it allows the researcher to comprehensively explore phenomena within their original context (Yin, 2018). Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and participatory observation. Interviews were conducted with the school principal, Islamic religious education teachers, and several students actively engaged in the learning process to obtain a holistic perspective (Arikunto, 2006). Meanwhile, classroom observations were carried out during learning activities to directly observe the implementation of Islamic values in daily educational practice.

Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling, in which informants were selected based on specific criteria aligned with the needs and objectives of the study (Emzir, 2014). The selected informants were those believed to have relevant understanding and experience regarding the implementation of character education, such as the head of the madrasah, Islamic education teachers, and active students. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, consisting of coding, categorization, and identifying key themes that reflect the implementation of Islamic values. These themes were then interpreted to explain the patterns and meanings that emerged within the context of character education.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study employed several strategies, including source and technique triangulation, by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation (Miles et al., 2014). In addition, member checking was conducted by validating the interpreted data with informants to ensure accuracy and reliability of the information. The researcher also developed an audit trail to systematically and transparently document the

entire data collection and analysis process, enabling further review or replication by other researchers if necessary.

Ethical considerations were a key concern in conducting this research. The researcher obtained formal permission from the madrasah and ensured that all participants provided informed consent. The identity of informants was kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. The research was carried out from March to May 2025, with a schedule adjusted to avoid disrupting the teaching and learning process at the madrasah. Data collection was concluded upon reaching data saturation, that is, when no new significant information emerged. Through this approach, it is expected that the research findings will possess a high level of credibility and trustworthiness and provide meaningful contributions to the development of Islamic values-based character education.

Results And Discussion

Results

Strategies Do Teachers Use to Instill Islamic Values in Daily Learning

The strategies employed by teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak to instill Islamic values demonstrate an integrated approach between delivering subject content and character building. From interviews with the Islamic creed (Aqidah) teacher, it is clear that lessons are not merely focused on theoretical concepts, but rather emphasize the strengthening of students' Islamic attitudes and character. He explained that he consistently connects Islamic teachings with the students' daily lives to make the lessons more relatable and applicable. For instance, when teaching honesty, he does not stop at definitions but includes stories of the Prophet's companions known for their integrity in trade and trustworthiness. These stories serve to inspire and invite students to reflect on these values.

This approach was evident during observed classroom activities. The teacher not only delivered content but also actively engaged in dialogue that encouraged students to link Islamic values with their daily behavior. The contextual strategy was reflected in the Lesson Plan (RPP), particularly in the goals and methods sections, which state that students are expected to emulate Islamic values through stories of notable figures and real-life events.

An interview with the Fiqh teacher reinforced these findings. He emphasized the importance of group discussions in raising students' awareness of Islamic values. Through these discussions, students freely shared their experiences, especially related to helping others. Observations revealed that students were enthusiastic when recounting how they helped their parents, supported friends in need, or assisted neighbors. These activities enabled students to experience and

internalize the value of helping others emotionally, not just intellectually. The open classroom environment encouraged peer learning and deeper value absorption.

The Arabic language teacher also highlighted how Islamic values are implicitly embedded in language instruction. She shared that she often selected reading texts with moral messages, such as respecting parents, guarding one's speech, or maintaining good relations with neighbors. As a result, Arabic lessons not only improved language skills but also became a vehicle for character education. Student worksheets indicated that learners not only grasped grammar and vocabulary but also understood the moral values conveyed in the texts.

From the student involvement perspective, observations showed greater engagement when teachers used discussion methods or related materials to students' personal experiences. In one session, a student named Rina expressed feeling more confident and excited when allowed to share her personal story. This suggests that the teachers' strategies successfully fostered student ownership of the values being taught. Moreover, students appeared more reflective when responding to stories of the Prophet's companions or moral lessons embedded in texts, enhancing the connection between subject matter and real-life experiences.

Institutionally, school documentation supported these strategies. The school principal consistently emphasized the importance of learning that not only transfers knowledge but also shapes character. Lesson plans, teaching materials, class photos, and student assignments demonstrated a strong alignment between planning and implementation.

In conclusion, the instructional strategies applied by the teachers encompass contextual approaches, group discussions, and value integration across subjects, including Arabic. These methods are complementary and work synergistically to create a holistic and Islamic learning environment. Through active and reflective student engagement, Islamic values are not merely taught as theoretical concepts, but are internalized and practiced in their daily lives.

The Role of the Principal and Educational Staff in Supporting the Implementation of Character Education

The role of the principal and school staff in supporting character education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak has proven to be a vital component influencing the successful implementation of Islamic values in learning. The principal functions not only as an administrative leader but also as a driving force behind a school culture that upholds moral and spiritual values. According to interviews with the principal, he consistently encourages all teachers and staff to integrate character values into every aspect of school activity. He emphasizes that education is not merely about acquiring knowledge but about shaping students into morally upright and responsible individuals.

Observations at the school reveal the principal's active involvement in monitoring classroom activities and providing direct guidance to teachers on the importance of incorporating character habits into each subject. During morning assemblies, he often delivers moral messages to students, such as the importance of discipline, honesty, and courtesy in daily life. School documentation shows the principal's involvement in designing character development programs, such as morning Qur'an recitation (tadarus), student leadership training through the student council (OSIS), and the Friday Sharing program—all of which reflect his commitment to making character education an integral part of the school system.

School personnel, such as administrative staff and cleaning workers, also play a significant role in supporting character education. Their duties go beyond administrative tasks and maintaining cleanliness; they serve as role models in their conduct and interactions with students. In an interview, one administrative staff member shared that she always strives to be friendly, polite, and patient when assisting students, believing that such attitudes will be mirrored by the students in their everyday lives.

Observations confirmed that students often notice and imitate the behavior of school staff. For example, when students see cleaning staff working diligently without complaint, they become more mindful of cleanliness and environmental care. This is further reinforced through weekly community service activities (gotong royong) in which staff participate alongside students. Such collaboration fosters a close relationship between students and all school members while serving as an effective means of character education through direct modeling.

School documentation highlights strong collaboration between the principal, teachers, and staff in creating an educational environment that promotes character. Motivational posters, bulletin boards with Islamic quotes, and visual reminders of ethical values are placed throughout the school. These elements are not accidental but the result of collective efforts led by the principal with full support from the staff.

Overall, the roles of the principal and school personnel are not merely supplementary but central to cultivating an educational atmosphere that supports the internalization of character values. The visionary leadership of the principal, along with the dedication of the school staff, provides a solid foundation for the consistent and sustainable implementation of character education. The school environment thus becomes an ecosystem that fosters not only intellectual development but also integrity and social responsibility.

Islamic Values Are Integrated into Character Education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak

The Islamic values integrated into character education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak reflect a holistic approach applied by the institution to nurture students who are not only academically competent but also possess noble character. These values include honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion. These four values are consistently applied in the learning process, daily activities, and the overall school culture.

Based on interviews with the school principal, honesty is regarded as the fundamental value in character development. He stated, "Honesty is the value we instill from the beginning. We believe that by fostering honesty, students will grow into individuals who can be trusted in society." This value is instilled through teachers linking lesson content to real-life situations and promoting openness and integrity in student interactions. In practice, students are encouraged to speak truthfully during exams, return lost items, and admit their mistakes.

Observations show that honesty has become part of the school's living culture. Teachers often tell stories of the Prophet's companions who were known for their honesty. For example, in Aqidah lessons, teachers include stories about companions who were honest in trade and trustworthy in fulfilling responsibilities. Students are then invited to reflect on the meaning of honesty and its impact on social life.

Responsibility is another key value emphasized at the school. Through various activities, students are trained to take responsibility for both individual and group tasks. The Fiqh teacher stated, "We teach students that every action has consequences. By understanding responsibility, they become wiser in their behavior." This value is implemented through extracurricular activities, such as organizing Islamic holiday events (PHBI), where students are given responsibilities as committee members and must complete tasks independently and punctually.

During classroom observations, it was evident that students were entrusted with responsibilities such as maintaining classroom cleanliness, leading prayers as imam or muezzin, and reciting prayers before and after learning sessions. These are practical exercises that help students understand the importance of fulfilling duties with sincerity and commitment.

Discipline is also a core aspect of character education at the school. Congregational prayers serve as a primary medium for instilling discipline, particularly regarding punctuality and orderliness. The structured daily schedule—from class times to breaks and religious activities—helps students develop strong habits of discipline. One student shared, "Through discipline in prayer, I've become more organized in my daily routine." This indicates that the

value of discipline extends beyond religious practices to overall time management in students' lives.

Compassion, or empathy, is another value nurtured within the school environment. In an interview, a student shared, "We're always taught to help one another. When someone is struggling, we try to help as best we can." This practice is visible in student interactions, especially when assisting peers with learning difficulties or personal issues. Teachers and school staff reinforce this value by creating a friendly and supportive classroom atmosphere and promoting social initiatives such as fundraising for disaster victims.

Another student reflected on the impact of learning these values, saying, "After learning about honesty, I try to be honest in everything I do, both at school and at home." This shows that the Islamic values taught in school are not limited to the classroom but influence students' everyday lives.

Teachers play a crucial role as role models. The school principal emphasized, "We strive to set a good example for the students. When they see us practicing these values in daily life, it becomes easier for them to follow." Observations support this, showing that teachers not only verbally teach the values but also demonstrate discipline, honesty, responsibility, and compassion in their daily interactions.

School documentation—such as reports on religious activities, photos of congregational prayers, social events, and student group work—further confirms that Islamic values are actively implemented in school life. These values are interconnected and form a comprehensive framework for the character education practiced at the school.

Character education based on Islamic values at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak has had a positive impact on students' personal development. By reinforcing the values of honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion, the school fosters individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually and emotionally mature.

Discussion

Strategies Do Teachers Use to Instill Islamic Values in Daily Learning

The strategy for integrating Islamic values into learning activities at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak reflects an approach that is not only integrative but also practical and applicable. One of the key strategies implemented by the teachers is the use of contextual learning, which connects subject matter to students' real-life experiences. Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and mutual assistance are not merely conveyed as theoretical concepts but are practiced through case studies or reflections on real-life experiences. For instance, when discussing the value of honesty, students are

invited to reflect on everyday events, such as finding someone else's belongings and responding appropriately based on Islamic principles.

This approach aligns with perspectives that emphasize the significant role of contextual learning in enhancing students' internalization of moral values(Sunardi & Nurwanto, 2024). It has been noted that when students can relate learning content to their own lives, it fosters a deeper understanding of moral values, including empathy, social responsibility, and honesty(Hasan et al., 2025). This also supports the notion that education that touches upon students' lived experiences is more effective in character building than purely abstract and theoretical methods (Sunardi, Munfarida, et al., 2025).

Furthermore, group discussion is a vital instructional strategy implemented in this madrasah(Zai et al., 2024). Through group discussions, students are provided space to share personal experiences related to the practice of Islamic values in their daily lives. This strategy positively contributes to increasing students' active participation and creates a more dynamic and reflective learning environment (Sunardi et al., 2024). Pedagogically, this approach is supported by the theory of social constructivism, which emphasizes that learning is formed through social interaction and dialogue(Maksum & Purwanto, 2019). In this context, group discussion functions not only as a medium for exchanging ideas but also as a space for value formation, where students learn from the experiences and perspectives of their peers.

This collaborative learning model also strengthens social relationships among students and fosters mutual respect. According to Putri, learning that involves group work cultivates a sense of ownership in the learning process and enhances students' attitudes of tolerance and empathy(Putri et al., 2024). This demonstrates that discussion strategies impact not only the cognitive domain but also help develop students' affective and emotional competencies.

At the policy level, the implementation of character education based on Islamic values also receives serious attention from the school leadership. The head of the madrasah emphasizes that the primary goal of education is not solely academic achievement but more broadly includes the formation of students' personalities and moral character. This view aligns with the concept of character education introduced by Thomas Lickona (1991), who asserts that education must aim at moral development as an integral part of the overall educational process. Suwardani adds that character education is a conscious effort to cultivate virtuous values through a systematic and consistent learning process.(Suwardani, 2020).

In simple terms, the approach adopted by Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak represents a holistic model of education. Contextual learning fosters meaningful conceptual understanding, while group discussion strengthens

students' social skills and emotional awareness of values. This is in line with Wakit's view that ideal education should integrate intellectual and moral dimensions to produce whole, responsible individuals who are prepared to face the challenges of social life(Wakit, 2024).

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that the strategy of integrating Islamic values employed by the teachers is not only theoretically effective but also has a tangible impact on the character formation of students. The combination of contextual learning and group discussion has proven effective in deeply instilling Islamic values, making them guiding principles in students' everyday lives. This strategy can serve as a relevant model for Islamic character education that can be adopted in other educational institutions, particularly those within communities that maintain strong Islamic cultural traditions.

The Role of the Principal and Educational Staff in Supporting the Implementation of Character Education

The success of character education based on Islamic values at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak is the result of visionary and transformational leadership exercised by the school principal. The principal does not merely function as an administrator but assumes the role of a moral leader, embedding Islamic values as the foundation in every dimension of the madrasah's activities. This approach reflects that character education is not left to develop naturally but is deliberately organized and strategically directed. This aligns with the view of Hidayatullah and Dahlan, who argue that the school principal, as a moral authority, plays a crucial role in shaping a school culture rooted in noble values(Hidayatullah & Dahlan, 2019).

The integrative strategy adopted by the principal, internalizing Islamic values across all subjects, not limited to religious education, represents a hidden curriculum approach. For instance, in mathematics, values such as honesty and integrity are taught through fair assessments and transparent evaluations. This supports Irianto's assertion that effective character education must encompass three core components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, all of which can be facilitated through interdisciplinary learning (Irianto, 2012).

Furthermore, the principal's systematic efforts to enhance teacher capacity through training and workshops on Islamic values demonstrate a progressive model of instructional leadership (Sari, 2025). These professional development initiatives not only improve teachers' pedagogical skills but also reinforce their moral integrity as role models. This corresponds with the findings of Achmad, who emphasizes that successful educational leaders are those who build continuously growing learning communities, especially in the domains of morality and values. Teachers equipped with a deep understanding of Islamic principles are

more capable of designing meaningful learning experiences and effectively instilling character (Achmad, 2024).

Additionally, the involvement of guidance counselors and educational staff in character-building efforts, particularly through extracurricular activities such as community service, underscores the importance of experiential learning. These activities provide students with direct opportunities to apply Islamic values such as empathy and care. According to Lumbu et al., this approach is consistent with social learning theory, which emphasizes that behavior formation is not solely cognitive but also shaped by observation, direct experience, and role modeling (Lumbu et al., 2025).

In practice, students participating in social activities undergo a deeper internalization of values, as they experience the real-world benefits of the principles being taught. This is supported by Arini et al., who argue that meaningful learning occurs when individuals engage in an active learning cycle: experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing, and reapplying the knowledge in context (Arini et al., 2019).

Equally important is the synergy between the madrasah and students' families through regular communication, which serves as an added strength in character formation. This partnership ensures that Islamic values taught at school are continuously reinforced at home. Zalsabella et al. state that *value cohesion* between school and home strengthens the holistic development of student personality (Difa Zalsabella et al., 2023). Subianto also affirms that value internalization becomes more powerful when there is consistency and continuity between home and school environments in offering support and moral guidance (Subianto, 2016).

Overall, the strategies implemented at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak represent a holistic, systemic, and contextual approach to character education. It is holistic in that it addresses all aspects of student learning and life; systemic, because it involves every element of the school; and contextual, as it is relevant to the students' real-life circumstances. This approach aligns with Afandi's framework of transformative education, which seeks to fundamentally reshape learners' ways of thinking, behaving, and acting based on deeply held values (Afandi, 2011).

In conclusion, character education based on Islamic values at this madrasah is not merely normative discourse but has been translated into concrete and systematic educational practice. This approach not only strengthens students' Islamic identity but also prepares them to become moral, responsible individuals equipped to face social challenges with firmly rooted values.

Islamic Values Are Integrated into Character Education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak

Character education implemented at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak reflects a transformative approach deeply rooted in Islamic values. The integration of values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion is not merely theoretical but is manifested in students' daily practices. This approach demonstrates that character education at the madrasah is not symbolic, but substantive and contextual, fostering a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally and socially mature.

1. Honesty as the Moral Foundation

Honesty is a central pillar of the character education at this madrasah. The principal recognizes that honesty is not only a spiritual value but also a social one, as it is essential for building trust in interpersonal interactions. In line with this, Solechan emphasizes that honesty is part of moral knowing, which forms the basis for moral action. Character education that prioritizes honesty cultivates responsibility, transparency, and integrity in students(Solechan, 2025).

Sunardi, Hasan, et al., also highlight that without honesty, other values such as responsibility and discipline lose their meaning. Accordingly, the madrasah actively promotes honesty through fair assessments, exams without strict supervision, and student self-reflection (Sunardi, Hasan, et al., 2025). This reflects the practice of character education within a trust-based learning environment, as developed by Azizah et al., where students internalize values from within, rather than being driven solely by external supervision (Azizah et al., 2025).

2. Responsibility as a Pillar of Maturity

Responsibility is not only taught conceptually but is practiced through active student involvement in organizational, extracurricular, and community service activities. This illustrates the model of experiential character learning, in which students directly experience decision-making, teamwork, and reflective practices. Mujahidin asserts that training responsibility through real-life experience strengthens students' capacity for ethical decision-making and accountability for their actions (Mujahidin, 2024).

From the perspective of Kohlberg's moral development theory, such experiences help students transition from the pre-conventional stage to conventional or even post-conventional levels, where their actions are guided not by fear of punishment or desire for rewards, but by an internalized understanding of moral principles (Zuliani, 2024).

3. Discipline Through Worship Practices

Discipline is instilled through the routine of congregational prayers, which serve not only as an act of spiritual devotion but also as a way to reinforce structured thinking and behavior. Discipline in worship fosters time management, commitment, and behavioral consistency. Hariyanti and Roqib argue that worship can be an effective medium for teaching discipline because of its repetitive and sacred nature (Hariyanti & Roqib, 2024).

This approach aligns with Durkheim's view on the role of collective rituals in building a shared moral consciousness. At this madrasah, congregational prayer acts as a character-building ritual that encompasses both vertical (relation to God) and horizontal (social ties) dimensions, fostering social bonding and mutual responsibility.

4. Compassion as the Basis of Social Empathy

The value of compassion, practiced in students' daily lives, contributes to a warm and supportive social climate. Student interactions founded on care and empathy help prevent deviant behaviors such as bullying. Anwar and Ridlwan state that compassion is the foundation for the development of empathy and social solidarity. This value encourages students to share in the experiences of others, ultimately creating a safe and comfortable learning community (Anwar & Ridlwan, 2024).

In the framework of social psychology, teaching compassion aligns with prosocial behavior theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through positive social interaction to develop empathy, tolerance, and solidarity.

5. Teachers as Moral Role Models

Teachers at this madrasah are not merely instructors but living curricula who embody Islamic values in their daily behavior. According to Masnawati and Fitria, the role of teachers as role models is vital in shaping student character. Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that children tend to imitate behaviors they observe directly from authoritative figures (Masnawati & Fitria, 2024).

This modeling is crucial because, in character education, affective aspects are more powerfully shaped by role modeling than verbal instruction. This view is echoed by Thomas Lickona (2004), who argues that morally exemplary teachers are key to the success of sustainable character education.

6. Value and Environmental Synergy as a Foundation for Character

The integration of Islamic values across all student activities, both academic and non-academic, creates a cohesive character education ecosystem. The madrasah environment acts as a social environment that enables Islamic

values to be reflected in daily interactions, institutional policies, and school culture. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is highly relevant here, emphasizing the systemic influence of micro (classroom), meso (teacher-parent relations), and macro (institutional culture) environments on individual character development.

Conclusion

Character education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Makrif Kereak has been successfully implemented systematically, grounded in Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion. This success is closely linked to the visionary leadership of the head of the madrasah and the active role of teachers as moral exemplars. These values are instilled through academic learning, religious practices, social activities, and strong collaboration between the madrasah and families. The approach taken is holistic, systemic, and contextual, enabling students to become not only academically competent but also to develop strong character and be prepared to face life's challenges based on Islamic principles.

Despite demonstrating success, this study has several limitations. It is confined to a single institution and lacks comparative analysis with other madrasahs, which limits the generalizability of its findings. Moreover, the data primarily reflects the perspectives of teachers and the head of the madrasah, while the voices of students and parents remain underexplored. Future research should involve a broader range of participants and conduct comparative studies across different madrasahs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Islamic values-based character education in diverse educational settings.

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