

Religious Habituation Management: Autonomy vs Control in Vocational Schools

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Abstract: This study comparatively analyzes the management of Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation programs in two vocational high schools: SMKN 12 Bandung and SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung, to understand their effectiveness in shaping students' religious character. Employing a qualitative approach with a multi-site comparative design, the research explores how different organizational cultures and management models influence program outcomes. SMKN 12 Bandung utilizes a decentralized model, granting autonomy to students through Rohis, which fosters responsibility but struggles with attendance consistency and spiritual internalization depth due to dense practical schedules and minimal control. In contrast, SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung implements a centralized, disciplinary model that ensures order and consistent attendance but risks creating ritualism and feelings of compulsion among students. The findings highlight that effective religious character formation requires a harmonious balance between external discipline and internal awareness. An optimal model should combine consistent implementation with mechanisms for deep reflection and student autonomy, avoiding scenarios where control without autonomy leads to superficial practice, or autonomy without control compromises quality. The study suggests tailored improvements for each school, emphasizing structured supervision for SMKN 12 and greater student initiative with richer religious content for SMKS Angkasa Husein.

Keywords: Student Affairs Management; Dhuha Prayer; Asmaul Husna Dhikr; Religious Character.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini secara komparatif menganalisis manajemen program pembiasaan Salat Duha dan Zikir Asmaul Husna di dua sekolah menengah kejuruan: SMKN 12 Bandung dan SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung, untuk memahami efektivitasnya dalam membentuk karakter religius peserta didik. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain komparatif multi-situs, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana budaya organisasi dan model manajemen yang berbeda memengaruhi hasil program. SMKN 12 Bandung menggunakan model desentralisasi, yang memberikan otonomi kepada siswa melalui Rohis, yang mendorong tanggung jawab tetapi mengalami kesulitan dalam konsistensi kehadiran dan kedalaman internalisasi spiritual karena jadwal praktik yang padat dan kontrol minimal. Sebaliknya, SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung menerapkan model sentralisasi yang disiplin, yang memastikan ketertiban dan kehadiran yang konsisten tetapi berisiko menciptakan ritualisme dan perasaan paksaan di kalangan siswa. Temuan menyoroti bahwa pembentukan karakter religius yang efektif memerlukan keseimbangan harmonis antara disiplin eksternal dan kesadaran internal. Model optimal harus

menggabungkan implementasi yang konsisten dengan mekanisme refleksi mendalam dan otonomi siswa, menghindari skenario di mana kontrol tanpa otonomi mengarah pada praktik superfisial, atau otonomi tanpa kontrol mengorbankan kualitas. Penelitian ini menyarankan perbaikan yang disesuaikan untuk setiap sekolah, menekankan pengawasan terstruktur untuk SMKN 12 dan inisiatif siswa yang lebih besar dengan konten religius yang lebih kaya untuk SMKS Angkasa Husein.

Kata kunci : Manajemen Kesiswaan; Salat Duha; Zikir Asmaul Husna; Karakter Religius.

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Introductions

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping the nation's civilization, not only through the transfer of knowledge and skills, but also the internalization of sustainable character values (Saepudin et al., 2023; Yusri et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the national education objectives emphasize the formation of faithful students, pious to the Almighty God, and of noble character (Maha, 2023; Salam, 2022). Therefore, strengthening religious character becomes a strategic dimension integrated into the school education process (Subrata & Ayu, 2022), through Religious Education subjects and school culture development (ARTI et al., 2024; Utami, 2022).

Schools serve as strategic spaces for habituating religious values through various structured programs, such as the Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation programs (Rosadi et al., 2025; Saepudin et al., 2023). These programs are expected to foster spiritual awareness, discipline, inner calm, and religious attitudes in students' daily lives (Alianto et al., 2025; Sugianti et al., 2023). More than mere ritual routines, this habituation functions as a means of internalizing values that influence students' attitudes, behaviors, and character (Elisa et al., 2024).

At the vocational education level, particularly in Vocational High Schools, strengthening religious character faces unique challenges (Lestari et al., 2025; Rosadi et al., 2025). The SMK curriculum, dominated by intensive practical activities for mastering vocational competencies and work readiness (Rahmadhani et al., 2022; Rosina et al., 2021), has the potential to sideline spiritual development aspects if not managed systematically (Aryawan, 2023). However, SMK graduates are not only required to have technical skills but also a work ethic, integrity, discipline, and religious values as essential capital in the world of work and social life (Said et al., 2024). In this context, student affairs management becomes key to bridging vocational competency demands with religious character strengthening.

Field realities show that the implementation of worship habituation programs is often not optimal. Many schools launch Dhuha Prayer and Dhikr programs, but their execution tends to be normative and administrative, stopping at attendance

aspects without follow-up strengthening of meaning, role modeling, mentoring, or in-depth evaluation of their impact on changes in students' religious attitudes and behaviors. The effectiveness of programs is greatly influenced by the context and characteristics of educational units, where SMKs with different institutional backgrounds and cultures exhibit diverse student affairs management dynamics.

Previous literature has examined the role of school religious activities in character formation, such as the positive correlation between religious activities and increased discipline from Fitriah et al. (2024), as well as the impact of dhikr on emotional calm (Fajrussalam et al., 2022; Suyadi et al., 2021). However, these studies tend to be general, focused on specific school levels, or only on one type of activity. Research that specifically compares and deeply analyzes student affairs management, integrating Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation in two SMK institutions with different organizational cultures in a comparative and holistic manner is still very limited.

Current literature has not adequately analyzed how different student affairs management models, particularly between autonomous decentralization approaches and disciplinary centralization, in the SMK context, affect the effectiveness and depth of religious character internalization through Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr programs. This gap is important because understanding contextual factors and optimal management models in vocational environments can help schools bridge dense curriculum challenges with holistic character formation, thereby preventing superficial or forced religious practices.

This research fills that gap through a comparative analysis of integrative student affairs program management in two contrasting SMK environments. This study holistically describes planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation models of the programs, as well as identifying contextual factors influencing their effectiveness. The novelty of this research lies in the proposition that the effectiveness of religious character formation is not only measured by attendance quantity but by the harmonization between external discipline and internal awareness. Based on this review, this research aims to identify the most effective and sustainable student affairs management model for integrating Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation in forming religious character among students at SMKN 12 Bandung and SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung.

Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with a multi-site comparative study design. The qualitative approach is understood as an effort to explore and understand the meanings attached by individuals or groups to a social or educational issue (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This approach was selected because it enables the researcher to deeply comprehend the student affairs program

management processes and the meanings of religious value internalization experienced by students in their natural context. Qualitative research is not oriented toward statistically measuring cause-and-effect relationships but rather toward revealing the processes, patterns, and dynamics occurring in the field. A multi-site comparative study was used to systematically compare the implementation of Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation program management in two Vocational High Schools with differing organizational culture characteristics. This multi-site approach aligns with Yin's (2018) view, which asserts that comparative case studies across contexts strengthen theoretical analysis and enhance the validity of findings through inter-site comparisons.

This research was conducted at two Vocational High Schools in Bandung City, namely SMKN 12 Bandung and SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung. Site selection was purposive, considering differences in institutional characteristics and student affairs management culture. SMKN 12 Bandung represents a public SMK with diverse expertise competencies, high student heterogeneity, and dense practical learning schedules. This condition demands flexibility in student affairs program management, so the Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation is managed adaptively, with active involvement of the Islamic Spirituality Organization as the primary technical implementer. The degree of Rohis autonomy in program implementation is one of the key research analysis focuses.

SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung was selected to represent a private SMK under the auspices of a foundation with an aeronautical institutional background. This background shapes a school culture emphasizing high discipline, clear hierarchy, and rule compliance. The Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation program at this school is managed more centralistically and structured, with tight supervision to ensure orderliness and simultaneous student attendance. These management characteristics serve as comparators to analyze how differing disciplinary approaches influence the internalization of religious values among students.

The primary research subjects are the student affairs programs for Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, considering their direct involvement and strategic roles in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This technique was employed because intentional informant selection allows researchers to obtain rich data from those who best understand the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Informants included the principal and vice principal for student affairs as policymakers, coordinators, and Islamic Religious Education teachers as technical implementers, OSIS or Rohis board members representing student leadership, and a minimum of five students per school (a total of 10 students across both schools). Student participants were

intentionally grouped as follows: active students (identified based on consistent participation in Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr programs with an attendance rate >80% and positive feedback from teachers regarding their engagement), less active students (identified based on moderate participation with an attendance rate of 40-79% or expressions of less enthusiasm for the programs), and students resistant to the program (identified through teacher observations and records of frequent non-participation or expressions of reluctance). These resistant students were carefully approached through teacher recommendations, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. This diverse grouping aimed to provide a balanced view of religious value internalization levels, participation motivation, and perceptions of the school's habituation and discipline approaches.

Data collection employed techniques, including in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. This process was conducted over a period of two months at each school. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with all informants, with a total of approximately 20-25 interviews carried out at both research sites. Interview questions were designed to explore planning, organizing, implementation, obstacles, and evaluation of the student affairs program, as well as informants' views on the program's impact on students' religious character formation. The main themes explored included perceived benefits, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Participatory and non-participatory observations were conducted during Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr sessions, with approximately 10-12 sessions per school, each lasting 30-60 minutes. Observations focused on levels of discipline, student engagement, interaction patterns, and visible behavioral changes during and after activities, guided by protocols that recorded specific behaviors, interactions, and contextual details. Official school documents, such as student affairs program plans, OSIS, and Rohis organizational structures, activity schedules, meeting minutes, and evaluation reports, were reviewed to corroborate data from interviews and observations.

Data analysis was interactive and ongoing from the data collection phase, following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, which emphasizes that data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification are interconnected and simultaneous processes (Miles et al., 2014). Data were reduced by selecting, choosing, and focusing on information relevant to student affairs program management and religious character formation. Reduced data were presented as rich descriptive narratives and cross-site comparative matrices to clarify patterns of similarities and differences across schools. Conclusions were drawn through in-depth interpretation linking empirical findings to theoretical frameworks and prior research, verified via source/technique triangulation and member checking with informants to ensure interpretive accuracy.

Trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation (Lincoln et al., 1985). To manage researcher bias (reflexivity), the research team conducted regular debriefing sessions to critically reflect on assumptions and potential subjectivity during data interpretation. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including parental consent for minors. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by anonymizing all data and using pseudonyms. Crucially, specific measures were taken to create a safe, non-judgmental environment for students to express critical or resistant views regarding the mandatory religious programs, ensuring no negative impact on their academic standing.

Result and Discussion

Result

To ensure confidentiality and maintain the anonymity of research participants, this study employs a coding system for all informants. The description of these codes is presented in Table 1.

Code	Role	Institution
VP-1	Vice Principal (Student Affairs)	SMKN 12 Bandung
S-1	Student (Active Participant)	SMKN 12 Bandung
S-2	Student (Passive Participant)	SMKN 12 Bandung
T-1	Teacher / Coordinator	SMKS Angkasa Husein
S-3	Student (Less Active/Resistant)	SMKS Angkasa Husein

Student Affairs Program Management Model at SMKN 12 Bandung

The student affairs management model at SMKN 12 Bandung adopts a decentralized and adaptive approach, characterized by significant autonomy granted to students through the Islamic Spirituality Organization (Rohis) in implementing the Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation programs.

Planning and Organization Document analysis of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and semester coordination meeting minutes reveals that program planning is directly integrated with PAI subject matter and evaluated semesterly. The Vice Principal for Student Affairs acts as the primary coordinator but operationally delegates execution to PAI teachers and Rohis members. This strategy aligns with the statement from the Vice Principal regarding student agency:

"We trust in student initiative. PAI teachers and Rohis are given the freedom to arrange schedules and technical execution, provided the habituation goals are met."
(Informant VP-1)

Implementation and Interaction Patterns Due to limited prayer space, implementation is conducted on a rotational basis by grade level or major. Field observations over 12 sessions indicated that Dhuha Prayer was frequently led

independently by Rohis members, with PAI teachers present primarily as passive supervisors or occasionally absent from the immediate site. Asmaul Husna Dhikr was led by PAI teachers on a rotational basis, though the duration was relatively brief (approximately 10–15 minutes).

Interaction patterns observed between teachers and students were informal and non-instructive. Active students were frequently seen reminding peers to participate, reflecting a sense of ownership. Informant S-1, a student identified as an active participant, expressed this sentiment:

"We feel this is our program, not just the school's. So we have to ensure Dhuha keeps running, even without strict supervision from PAI teachers. This is what we call internal awareness." (Informant S-1)

However, observations also revealed significant variability in participation. In the absence of strict supervision by PAI teachers or senior Rohis members, several students were observed opting out of worship or leaving the prayer lines.

Character Formation and Challenges The dominant religious characters formed were time discipline (among consistent participants) and tolerance. However, this model faces tangible challenges regarding consistency. Attendance data analysis showed significant fluctuations, particularly on days with dense vocational practice schedules. Informant VP-1 acknowledged this trade-off: *"Dense practice schedules are indeed a challenge. Sometimes students have to choose between laboratory practice or Dhuha."*

Furthermore, the depth of spiritual internalization appeared uneven. Observations noted that execution sometimes felt rushed. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with less active students revealed that many viewed the worship as a mere routine without deep semantic understanding. Informant S-2, a passive participant, stated: *"I joined because my friends asked me to, but if I'm alone, I sometimes feel lazy. I don't really understand why we have to do Dhikr every day." This indicates that autonomy without adequate control risks compromising the quality of spiritual internalization.*

Student Affairs Program Management Model at SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung

In contrast to SMKN 12, SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung implements a centralized management model highly integrated with a strong school culture of discipline. The program is a mandatory activity fully supported by the foundation, emphasizing the motto "Angkasa Cerdas Spiritual" (Angkasa Spiritually Intelligent).

Planning and Organization Planning and organization fall under the direct command of the Vice Principal for Student Affairs and PAI teachers. This structure is reinforced by internal policies found in the school's code of conduct and student affairs guidebooks. Informant T-1 emphasized the school's philosophy during the interview:

"Here, discipline is worship. Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr are mandatory and recorded. If one does not participate, there are sanctions. This is our way of instilling obedience and work readiness." (Informant T-1)

Crucially, document analysis of the teacher duty roster (SK Pembagian Tugas) confirmed that the involvement of all non-PAI teachers in supervision is mandatory, creating a "whole-school approach."

Implementation and Interaction Patterns The program is executed simultaneously in the school field or hall every morning prior to lessons. Observations over 10 sessions demonstrated a very high level of discipline; 100% of students and teachers were present on time. Dhikr was led by PAI teachers, accompanied by a short sermon (tausiyah) lasting 5–10 minutes. Non-PAI teachers were observed actively monitoring rows and reprimanding students who lacked focus.

Interaction patterns were formal and hierarchical, emphasizing obedience. Peer interactions were highly regulated, with virtually no extraneous conversation observed during the ritual. However, interviews with "resistant" or "less active" students revealed underlying feelings of coercion. Informant S-3, a student identified as less active, admitted:

"We participate out of fear of getting penalty points, not because we truly want to be solemn. So, we just do the Dhikr quickly so it finishes faster." (Informant S-3)

Character Formation and Challenges The dominant religious characters formed were high obedience/discipline and togetherness (kebersamaan). The depth of spiritual internalization was supported by daily tausiyah, providing more cognitive religious input than in SMKN 12. However, findings indicate that strict discipline risks creating ritualism, where physical practice occurs but internal value internalization is impeded. This was evidenced by students' expressions, which reflected a fear of sanctions rather than an understanding of the worship's essence.

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model. Findings were verified through source triangulation (comparing perspectives of principals, teachers, and students) and technique triangulation (interviews, observations, and documents).

For instance, the claim regarding "student autonomy" at SMKN 12 by Informant VP-1 was corroborated by field observations of *Rohis*-led prayers and document analysis of the *Rohis* organizational structure. Conversely, the "strict discipline" claim at SMKS Angkasa Husein was strongly supported by direct observation of high compliance rates and the analysis of the school's sanction system.

However, the "sense of coercion" expressed by students at SMKS Angkasa Husein (represented by Informant S-3) was validated by observations showing

unenthusiastic facial expressions and hurried movements during *Dhikr*, particularly among students previously identified as 'resistant' by teachers.

Discussion

Analysis of Differences in Management Models and Organizational Culture

This discussion critically analyzes the fundamental differences in the management models of the Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation programs between the decentralized-autonomous SMKN 12 Bandung and the centralistic-disciplinary SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung. These differences, as reviewed in the abstract, are greatly influenced by the school's organizational culture. Organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping management practices and educational effectiveness (Prasetyo & Fadhillah, 2022). At SMKN 12, the adaptive and decentralized culture encourages Rohis to be the main organizer, aligning with the idea that a strong school culture can guide the behavior of organizational members. This model fosters a sense of ownership and personal responsibility among students, enabling "horizontal socialization" of religious values among peers.

Conversely, SMKS Angkasa Husein implements a highly centralized and disciplinary model, reflecting an organizational culture that emphasizes hierarchy, order, and compliance. Nevertheless, this model is effective in ensuring attendance and consistency, yet it also creates a "vertical socialization" dynamic where values are transmitted top-down with strict control. This model, supported by internal policies and mandatory supervision by non-PAI teachers, demonstrates how a discipline-oriented culture can drive high compliance. This comparison is presented in Table 1.

Management Aspects	SMKN 12 Bandung	SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung
Main Organizer	Rohis/IRMA and PAI Teachers	Waka for Student Affairs and PAI Teachers
Non-PAI Teacher Involvement	Voluntary and Conditional	Mandatory and Structured
Main Focus of the Program	Quantity of Implementation and Time Flexibility	Order, Discipline, and Simultaneous Presence
Character Formed	Time Discipline, Tolerance	Obedience, High Discipline, Togetherness

Program Effectiveness, Value Internalization, and Motivation Theory

Building on the management model analysis, the effectiveness of the habituation program in shaping religious character is not measured solely by

attendance quantity, but by the depth of religious value internalization. Findings at SMKN 12, where student autonomy risks sacrificing consistency and spiritual depth, align with (Fajrussalam et al., 2022)'s view that discipline without spiritual enthusiasm can weaken internalization. On the other hand, the "feeling of compulsion" phenomenon at SMKS Angkasa Husein supports (Fitriah et al., 2024)'s argument about the potential for ritualism arising when control without autonomy triggers compliance rather than internal awareness.

Theoretically, this dynamic can be explained through Self-Determination Theory, which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, stemming from internal interest and satisfaction, leads to deeper value internalization, whereas extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards or punishments, tends to produce superficial compliance. Therefore, support for autonomy, such as meaningful choices and control, is essential for developing responsible and autonomous learners, which in turn facilitates better value internalization. Research also indicates that, as mentioned by Walker et al., autonomy support is a stronger predictor of spiritual maturity when religious pressure is low (Walker et al., 2020). Furthermore, authoritarian approaches to religious values education can hinder student maturity and freedom, potentially causing negative psychological impacts. In the context of these findings, SMKN 12, with its decentralized model, has the potential to nurture intrinsic motivation and student autonomy but faces challenges in consistency due to a lack of structured control, resulting in uneven internalization. Conversely, SMKS Angkasa Husein, with its strict discipline, achieves attendance consistency but risks creating compliance driven by fear of sanctions rather than deep spiritual awareness. This reflects an "external orientation" in students' locus of control, where actions are performed due to external coercion rather than internal choice (Sakač & Marić, 2019).

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in identifying that the effectiveness of religious character formation is not measured solely by attendance quantity or compliance, but by the harmonization between external discipline and internal awareness. An optimal model combines consistent implementation with deep reflection mechanisms and student autonomy. Failure to achieve this balance will result in a disciplined yet spiritually dry character, or a highly aware yet inconsistent character in practice.

Based on the above findings, to address the gap between quantity and quality in worship habituation program implementation, a more holistic management approach is urgently needed. This is also highly relevant to the ethical implications of mandatory programs. Schools must balance religious character formation goals with respect for student autonomy and avoid feelings of compulsion.

Specifically for SMKN 12, improving consistency and spiritual depth can be achieved by integrating structured supervision without eliminating student autonomy. This could be realized through a more active Rohis peer mentoring system, reflective tasks integrating worship experiences with PAI subjects, or regular workshops to deepen the meaning of worship. Supervision does not have to be repressive but supportive, as suggested in the concept of "autonomy scaffolding" that encourages conscious choices, as in (O'Grady, 2017).

Meanwhile, for SMKS Angkasa Husein, reducing feelings of compulsion can be done by providing greater space for student initiatives in managing certain program aspects, as well as enriching religious sermon content with more participatory and relevant approaches to vocational high school adolescents' lives. This could include Q&A sessions, small group discussions, or student-initiated projects linking religious values to daily life. Flexibility in regulations, considering students' uniqueness, is also important to support tolerance and respect for differences.

It must be acknowledged that this qualitative study, although providing in-depth insights from two study sites, has limitations in generalizing findings. The specific characteristics of SMKN 12 and SMKS Angkasa Husein, as well as the cultural context and educational policies in Bandung, may influence the observed dynamics. Further research with a broader scope, involving more vocational schools, or using quantitative methods, can complement these findings. Future research could also more deeply explore the long-term psychological impacts of both management models on students' mental well-being, especially related to mandatory religious programs (Oberoi & Trickett, 2018).

Conclusion

Based on the comparative analysis of student affairs program management for Dhuha Prayer and Asmaul Husna Dhikr habituation at SMKN 12 Bandung and SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the program in shaping students' religious character is highly influenced by the management model and the school's organizational culture. SMKN 12 Bandung implements a decentralized and adaptive model that grants significant autonomy to students through Rohis, successfully fostering a sense of ownership and personal responsibility among students. However, this model faces challenges in terms of consistency in attendance and the depth of spiritual internalization due to dense practical schedules and minimal control, which risks compromising quality.

Conversely, SMKS Angkasa Husein Bandung, with its strong centralized and disciplinary model, effectively ensures order and consistent attendance. Nevertheless, this overly strict approach potentially creates ritualism without a deep internalization of spiritual meaning, leading to feelings of compulsion among

students, consistent with findings. This research underscores that the effectiveness of religious character formation is not solely measured by the quantity of implementation, but by the harmonization between external discipline and internal awareness. An optimal model requires a balance: autonomy without control risks compromising quality, while control without autonomy can lead to compulsion (Fajrussalam et al., 2022; Fitriah et al., 2024). To address this gap, it is suggested that SMKN 12 increase structured supervision and mentoring systems without eliminating student autonomy. Meanwhile, SMKS Angkasa Husein can provide greater space for student initiatives and enrich the content of religious talks (tausiyah) to reduce feelings of compulsion and enhance spiritual internalization.

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