

Building Organisational Culture through the Application of Character Values in Primary Madrasahs

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ABSTRACT. Character education in madrasahs is not only concerned with the implementation of formal educational programmes, but also with the application of values in day-to-day organisational practice. This study analyses how character values are translated into organisational practice at MI Iantus Sholehin in Pamekasan. The study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observation and documentation, and were subsequently analysed thematically. The findings identified four interrelated practices: guidance from the headteacher, teachers setting a good example, the cultivation of behaviour, and the provision of guidance and correction regarding pupils' behaviour. These practices demonstrate how the institution's value orientation is applied in day-to-day educational activities through leadership guidance, educators' behaviour, and consistent behavioural guidance. This study contributes to the field of Islamic educational management by framing character education as an organisational practice that links institutional expectations with day-to-day interactions, rather than merely as a formal programme. These findings underscore the importance of consistency in values and coordination amongst educators in supporting the development of a character-based organisational culture within madrasahs.

Keywords. Character Education; Madrasah Organisational Culture; Islamic Education Management; Teachers as Role Models; Behavioural Conditioning

Abstrak. Pendidikan karakter di madrasah tidak hanya berkaitan dengan pelaksanaan program pendidikan formal, tetapi juga dengan penerapan nilai-nilai dalam praktik organisasi sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menganalisis cara nilai-nilai karakter diterjemahkan ke dalam praktik organisasi di MI Iantus Sholehin Pamekasan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi empat praktik yang saling berkaitan, yaitu arahan kepala madrasah, keteladanan guru, pembiasaan perilaku, serta pemberian arahan dan koreksi terhadap perilaku siswa. Praktik-praktik tersebut memperlihatkan bagaimana orientasi nilai kelembagaan diterapkan dalam kegiatan pendidikan sehari-hari melalui arahan kepemimpinan, perilaku pendidik, dan pembinaan perilaku yang konsisten. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian manajemen pendidikan Islam dengan menjelaskan pendidikan karakter sebagai praktik organisasi yang menghubungkan harapan kelembagaan dengan interaksi sehari-hari, bukan semata-mata sebagai program formal. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya konsistensi nilai dan koordinasi antarpendidik dalam mendukung pengembangan budaya organisasi madrasah berbasis karakter.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter; Budaya Organisasi Madrasah; Manajemen Pendidikan Islam; Keteladanan Guru; Pembiasaan Perilaku

Introduction

Character is a fundamental aspect of education that encompasses moral values, attitudes and behaviour, which are shaped through habitual practice (Alnashr dkk., 2022). In Islamic education, character is developed through the internalisation of Islamic values, such as responsibility, discipline, honesty, setting a good example, and respect for others. Primary madrasahs play a strategic role in building children's moral foundations; however, character education programmes must be supported by the consistent application of these values in leadership, teachers' behaviour, interactions amongst the madrasah community, and institutional routines (Sari & Sumedi, 2024). Study findings (Rahayu dkk., 2022) emphasises character development through school culture, whilst (Torres, 2022) linking organisational culture to leadership. From an educational management perspective, this reflects the formation of organisational culture through the translation of an institution's values into shared norms and practices that influence the behaviour of its members.

Previous research has examined character education through school culture, leadership and institutional management. Research by (Muttakin dkk., 2025) emphasises the internalisation of Aswaja-based character through the environment, learning, and collaboration with families and the community. Other research (Cahyanto dkk., 2024; Hartatik & Siswanto, 2023) highlights role modelling, habit formation and school culture. Other studies (Ningsih, 2024) to examine school culture in relation to character, policy, leadership and teacher quality. Meanwhile, the study (Rahayu dkk., 2022) emphasises the support of leaders, educators, parents and the community. Another study (Mutsaqofah & Yohamintin, 2025) discusses routines, norms, collaboration and communication, whilst (Haryati & Dewi, 2025) highlights programme management, role modelling, habit formation, parental involvement and evaluation. However, the research has not yet fully explained how formal values become behavioural guidelines that are collectively understood and upheld by the organisation's members.

The gap in this research lies in the need to explain how character values shape organisational culture in madrasah ibtidaiyah. Previous research has discussed habit formation, role modelling, collaboration and the management of character programmes (Haryati & Dewi, 2025), whereas (Wildaaa & Hanif, 2026) emphasises the role of informal practices, customs and interactions in the formation of school culture. However, the relationship between the headteacher's guidance, teachers' application of values, daily routines and the formation of shared norms still needs to be examined empirically. Therefore, the research at MI Iantus Sholeh in Pamekasan is aimed at understanding the formation of organisational culture based on actual practices, rather than merely assuming it to be the result of character education programmes.

The application of character values within organisational culture involves a link between institutional commitment and the repeated actions of members. In the study (Cucchiara dkk., 2025)

distinguishing between formal values and actual practices in schools, which may or may not be aligned. The values embodied in the vision, rules and guidance provided by the headteacher are realised through teachers' exemplary behaviour, the consistent application of rules, student guidance and educational routines. If reinforced through coordination and shared expectations, these values can develop into behavioural norms. Research (Torres, 2022) emphasises the link between leadership and school culture. Conversely, a discrepancy between guidance and practice hinders consistency in behaviour. Therefore, the development of organisational culture needs to be examined through leadership guidance, teachers' practices, the enforcement of rules, and interactions amongst the madrasah community, rather than being regarded as an automatic result of habitual behaviour.

This study aims to analyse the application of character values and their relationship to the formation of organisational culture at MI Iantus Sholehin Pamekasan through the guidance of the headteacher, teachers' exemplary behaviour, the cultivation of habits, and the correction of pupils' behaviour. Its novelty lies in the analysis of the relationship between leadership values and everyday educational practices in shaping shared norms. This study enriches the field of Islamic educational management by linking policies, the actions of members, and institutional routines. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of madrasah organisational culture, whilst in practical terms it serves as a reference for strengthening coordination, exemplary behaviour, and consistency in the application of character values.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to analyse the formation of organisational culture through the implementation of character values at MI Iantus Sholehin in Pamekasan. This design allows for an in-depth examination of the phenomenon within its real-world context and institutional environment (Yin, 2017). A qualitative approach also enables researchers to understand the meanings constructed by participants and the processes taking place within the research context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The analysis covers the leadership of the madrasah in guiding the implementation of character values, the involvement of teachers in translating these into educational practice, and the institutional routines that support consistency in the behaviour of the madrasah community.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on the relevance of their experience and knowledge to the research focus, in line with the nature of qualitative research, which requires in-depth information (Palinkas dkk., 2015; Patton, 2014). The research involved four informants: one headteacher of a madrasah, who served as a source of information on policy, guidance and institutional coordination; and three teachers who described the implementation of character values through teaching, setting a good example, fostering habits and guiding pupils'

behaviour. Data collection took place over a period of three months, from 3 January to 2 April 2026, at MI Iantus Sholeh in Pamekasan.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observation and documentation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The interviews explored the informants' understanding of character values, the headteacher's guidance, coordination amongst teaching staff, leading by example, and the consistency of rules. Observations covered the instilling of good habits, the enforcement of rules, interactions amongst the madrasah community, as well as guidance and correction of pupils' behaviour. Documentation comprised the school rules, behaviour-shaping programmes, activity timetables and available school policies. Interview guidelines, observation sheets and documentation guidelines were used to ensure that data collection remained aligned with the research focus. These three techniques enabled the triangulation of evidence sources and a contextual understanding of the phenomena under study.

Data analysis involves organising, coding, categorising, comparing across sources, and drawing conclusions (Miles dkk., 2014). Interview transcripts, observation notes and documents were grouped and coded according to aspects of leadership, character policies, teachers' practices, coordination, habit formation, the enforcement of rules, and shared norms. Related codes were categorised to identify links between institutional directives and day-to-day practices. The categories were then compared according to data sources and collection techniques to identify similarities, differences and recurring patterns. A systematic and transparent analysis helped to explain the process of transforming data into research interpretations in this case study.

The validity of the data was verified through triangulation of sources and methods by comparing the statements of the headteachers and teachers, as well as the results of interviews, observations and documentation relating to policies, the fostering of good habits, leading by example and the enforcement of rules (Schlunegger dkk., 2024). Discrepancies in information are examined in light of the context and evidence before conclusions are drawn. Triangulation is carried out by comparing data in practice, rather than merely using a variety of data collection techniques. The analysis also ensures that the empirical evidence is consistent with the researcher's interpretation, whilst upholding participants' consent and the confidentiality of information.

Research Findings and Discussion

Finding

Translating Character Values into Organisational Practice

The results of interviews with the headteacher and three teachers pointed to four aspects of the implementation of character values, namely leadership guidance, educators setting a good example, fostering positive behaviour in pupils, and consistency in providing guidance. The headteacher explained that character education cannot simply be treated as subject matter delivered

in the classroom. Character values need to be present in everyday actions and form part of educators' behaviour when interacting with pupils.

"Character education in madrasahs is not sufficient if it is merely taught in lessons or presented as subject matter for pupils. These values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty and courtesy need to be put into practice in everyday activities. Teachers must also lead by example, as pupils do not merely listen to what is said, but also observe their teachers' behaviour. We endeavour to guide teachers so that these values are applied both in learning activities and in their day-to-day interactions with pupils. Should any inappropriate behaviour arise, teachers need to provide guidance and support so that pupils understand the behaviour that is expected of them." (KM, interview on translating character values into organisational practice)

The KM's statement indicates that character education is part of an educator's remit, not merely a subject to be taught. The headteacher's guidance emphasises the application of values in day-to-day activities, teachers setting a good example, and providing guidance to pupils whose behaviour is less than appropriate.

Character values are instilled through habits directly linked to learning activities. Emphasis is placed on punctuality, being prepared for lessons, completing assignments, and adhering to class rules.

"In learning activities, we instil character values through simple habits. For example, pupils are encouraged to arrive on time, prepare their learning materials, complete their assignments, and ask permission before leaving the classroom. Teachers must also lead by example. If teachers expect pupils to be disciplined, they must demonstrate discipline themselves first, including when starting lessons and carrying out their duties."

(G1, interview on the application of character values in learning activities)

Description G1 shows that discipline and responsibility are translated into behaviour that is directly linked to learning activities. Character values are not only conveyed through advice, but are also linked to actions that are expected to be repeated. Teachers' exemplary behaviour forms part of this practice, as they are positioned both as enforcers of the rules and as role models for their pupils.

The second teacher emphasised the use of polite language and the importance of explaining the reasons behind the rules in place. Guidance on pupils' behaviour was provided by giving them instructions to help them understand the connection between their actions and the expected values.

"We encourage pupils to use polite language when speaking to their teachers and classmates. When a pupil speaks in an impolite manner or makes a mistake, we try to explain why that behaviour is inappropriate. So, pupils are not merely asked to follow the rules, but also need to understand the reasoning behind them. In this way, it is hoped that they will adopt good behaviour in their daily lives." (G2, interview on fostering politeness and guiding pupils' behaviour)

The G2 statement indicates that character development involves regulating behaviour and explaining why a particular action is considered appropriate or inappropriate. In this context, teachers do not merely convey rules, but also help pupils understand the behavioural expectations that apply in social interactions at the madrasah.

The third teacher explained that the application of character values requires adaptation to the pupils' circumstances. Repeated guidance is necessary when pupils have not yet consistently demonstrated the expected behaviour.

"The teaching of character must be adapted to the pupils' circumstances and habits. Some pupils grasp instructions quickly, whilst others need to be reminded repeatedly. Therefore, teachers need to instil in pupils the habit of taking responsibility, maintaining cleanliness and respecting others. It is important that the messages conveyed by teachers are consistent so that pupils do not receive conflicting instructions when practising these habits." (G3, interview on character development and consistency in teachers' guidance)

The G3 guidelines emphasise that the instilling of character values is a process that requires repetition and consistency. Teachers' responses are tailored to the developmental needs of their pupils, whilst consistency in guidance is required to ensure that rules and behavioural expectations do not vary from one situation to another.

Observations at MI Iantus Sholehin in Pamekasan covered the application of character values in learning and day-to-day interactions, including discipline, responsibility, courtesy, teachers setting a good example, and behavioural guidance. Discipline was observed through adherence to rules, readiness to learn, and teachers' exemplary behaviour; responsibility through the completion of tasks, maintaining cleanliness, and fulfilling obligations; whilst courtesy was observed through the use of language, the manner of reprimanding, and interactions amongst the madrasah community. Teachers' responses to pupils' behaviour were also observed to identify ways of guiding and reinforcing desired behaviour. These observations demonstrate the application of character values in everyday actions, rather than merely through advice.

The application of character values at MI Iantus Sholehin in Pamekasan involves guidance from the headteacher, teachers setting a good example, the cultivation of habits, and consistent guidance. The headteacher sets the values, whilst teachers apply them through study habits, polite communication, the fulfilment of responsibilities, and the handling of inappropriate behaviour. Guidance requires repetition and alignment of guidance amongst teachers. These findings indicate that character values have the potential to shape organisational culture through shared behaviour, routines and consistent expectations. However, actual practices and institutional routines need to be supported by relevant observational evidence and documentation.

Discussion

Findings at MI Iantus Sholehin in Pamekasan indicate that the values of discipline, responsibility, honesty, courtesy and respect are embodied through behavioural expectations, the performance of duties, social interaction and guidance. This is in line with (Rahayu dkk., 2022b; Setiawan dkk., 2025), which emphasises the cultivation of habits, leading by example, the organisation of activities, and supervision in the management of school culture. This study highlights the interrelationship between leadership guidance, educators' behaviour, the cultivation of habits, and consistency in guidance in developing character values into organisational norms (Amalia & Subiyantoro, 2025; Mutsaqofah & Yohamintin, 2025; Schein & Schein, 2017). However, the establishment of a well-established organisational culture must be demonstrated through consistent practice and empirical evidence.

The madrasah's leadership guides the application of the values of discipline, responsibility, honesty and courtesy in learning and in day-to-day interactions. This is in line with (Masrufa & Qomaria, 2023; Ningsih, 2024), which identifies leadership, school policy, pupils' character and teacher quality as aspects of school culture. At MI Iantus Sholehin, leadership guidance serves as a benchmark for teachers in applying character values, but does not automatically guarantee consistency in practice. Therefore, the contribution of leadership to organisational culture must be assessed in terms of the alignment between the values promoted and the actions of educators.

Teachers' exemplary behaviour links institutional values with pupils' direct experiences. Findings from the field indicate that discipline and responsibility are not only expected of pupils, but must also be modelled by teachers in the performance of their duties and in the teaching process. In line with (Hartatik & Siswanto, 2023), Role modelling and the cultivation of habits form part of character building through school culture. This study emphasises the consistency between the behaviour expected of pupils and that demonstrated by teachers (Jumatullailah dkk., 2025). Such alignment provides a concrete example of the application of values, whilst inconsistency has the potential to undermine the consistency of the organisation's message. However, the importance of setting a good example must be distinguished from evidence that all educators have consistently put it into practice.

The practice of putting character values into action in learning activities and social interactions. Discipline is demonstrated through punctuality, readiness to learn and adherence to rules; responsibility through the completion of tasks and the fulfilment of duties; whilst courtesy is demonstrated through the use of polite language and respect for others (Wulandari dkk., 2023). These findings are consistent with (Rahayu dkk., 2022), which positions the cultivation of habits as an integral part of school culture in character development. This study emphasises the link between the cultivation of habits and leadership guidance, teachers' exemplary behaviour, and

behavioural guidance. The repetition of actions provides learners with the opportunity to apply values in a concrete manner; however, it has not yet demonstrated internalisation, which requires evidence of behavioural stability and consistency across various situations.

Behavioural guidance complements the process of habit-forming by explaining and correcting pupils' actions so that they understand why a particular behaviour is considered appropriate or inappropriate. In character education, guidance clarifies behavioural boundaries and provides direction to pupils when their actions do not yet align with the prioritised values (Dewi dkk., 2021; Rijal dkk., 2023). This is in line with (Rahayu dkk., 2022) regarding the monitoring of behaviour and (Hartatik & Siswanto, 2023) on role modelling and routine activities within school culture. This study emphasises the link between guidance and habit formation, and the consistency of direction: habit formation provides opportunities to practise expected behaviour, whilst guidance clarifies norms when deviations occur. However, the effectiveness of guidance in bringing about behavioural change cannot yet be confirmed without evidence regarding pupils' responses and behavioural development.

Consistency in guidance links teachers' practices to the establishment of shared norms through the harmonisation of guidance provided to pupils. Consistency does not require a uniform approach to guidance, but the values of discipline, responsibility and courtesy must remain consistent (Cucchiara dkk., 2025) distinguishing between formal, informal and environmental cultures, as well as the meanings and practices of school culture, so that the relationship between the values communicated and everyday practices must be taken into account. In the context of MI Iantus Sholeh, consistency in norms serves as a link between institutional expectations and educators' practices. However, the available data suggests that consistency is more important as a guiding principle than as evidence of its uniform application in all situations.

Previous research has examined the relationship between character education and school culture from various perspectives. Studies (Rahayu dkk., 2022; Ubaidillah & Ismawati, 2026) to examine the management of school culture through planning, organisation, implementation and supervision; (Hartatik & Siswanto, 2023) emphasising the school's cultural practices in character building; (Ningsih, 2024) mapping the themes of school culture, including pupil character, policies, leadership and teacher quality; whilst (Cucchiara dkk., 2025) examining the relationship between meaning and practice, as well as formal, informal and environmental cultural sources. The study confirms that school culture is shaped not only through formal programmes, but also through organisational practices and interactions. Research at MI Iantus Sholeh emphasises the interconnection between leadership guidance, teachers' exemplary behaviour, habit formation, mentoring and the consistency of norms. Its novelty lies in mapping the relationships between these mechanisms in the implementation of character education in madrasahs, rather than in the

claim that each mechanism is entirely new. These conclusions are limited to the research evidence and do not represent all madrasahs.

The development of organisational culture through character-based values links managerial orientation with pedagogical practice and the reinforcement of madrasah norms. Leadership sets the direction for these values; teachers' exemplary behaviour brings them to life through action; habitual practice shapes behaviour; whilst guidance and alignment of direction reinforce shared norms. From a managerial perspective, this underscores the importance of mutual understanding amongst teachers, alignment between expectations and educators' behaviour, and the evaluation of how values are applied in day-to-day practice. The research's scientific contribution lies in explaining the interrelationships between these mechanisms in translating values into organisational practice. However, claims regarding the establishment of organisational culture and the internalisation of character require observational evidence, as well as concrete documentation and long-term tracking of behavioural consistency.

Conclusion

The implementation of character values at MI Iantus Sholehin Pamekasan is linked to four key practices: guidance from the headteacher, teachers setting a good example, the cultivation of behavioural habits, and consistent mentoring. These four practices illustrate the connection between the values prioritised by the madrasah and the behaviour expected in day-to-day educational activities. The formation of organisational culture in this context takes place through efforts to translate character values into shared practices and norms, rather than merely through the delivery of teaching materials or the implementation of formal programmes. Whilst maintaining consistency in norms, there remains scope for variation in guidance methods according to the needs of the pupils.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its explanation of the interrelationship between leadership, pedagogical practices, the cultivation of habits, and guidance in the management of character education at the madrasah. These findings broaden the perspective on Islamic educational management by positioning the application of character values as part of day-to-day organisational practice. In practical terms, madrasahs need to maintain alignment between institutional directives, educators' behaviour, and the guidance provided to pupils. However, these findings do not yet prove that character values have been deeply internalised or that an organisational culture has been firmly established.

This study is limited to a single madrasah and has not examined long-term changes in pupils' behaviour. Future research could involve several madrasahs with different organisational characteristics and utilise longitudinal observation to examine the consistency of value implementation and the sustainability of character-based organisational culture formation.

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