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The Implementation of Worship Habituation in Developing Students' Religious Character at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes

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ABSTRACT

Religious character education has become an important concern in Indonesian schools, particularly in response to students' declining discipline, spiritual awareness, and moral behavior in daily life. Although worship habituation is widely practiced in schools, its systematic implementation and contribution to students' religious character in public junior secondary schools remain underexplored. This study aimed to examine the implementation of worship habituation in developing students' religious character at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes. The study employed a descriptive qualitative design involving the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students as research informants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, while data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Source and method triangulation were used to ensure data trustworthiness. The findings showed that worship habituation was implemented through structured and continuous religious activities, including congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation before lessons, collective prayers, and special religious programs. Daily activities generated higher student participation than weekly or monthly activities. The program contributed positively to students' religious character, particularly in worship discipline, responsibility, politeness, spiritual awareness, and religious social behavior. However, some students still showed situational compliance, indicating that value internalization requires stronger reflection, supervision, and collaboration between school and family. The study implies that worship habituation can serve as an effective and sustainable strategy for strengthening religious character education in public schools when supported by teacher role modelling, consistent school culture, and meaningful religious guidance.

Keywords:
character education;
Islamic education;
religious character;
school culture;
worship habituation

INTRODUCTION

Religious character education has become one of the central concerns in the national education system, particularly in responding to the challenges of moral degradation among students in the modern era. Ideally, schools should not merely function as institutions for transferring knowledge but also as educational spaces for shaping

students' personalities based on religious values. However, school realities indicate that some students have not consistently demonstrated religious behavior, as reflected in weak discipline in performing worship, limited spiritual awareness, and insufficient internalization of religious values in daily life. This gap between ideal expectations and actual conditions requires an effective and sustainable educational strategy. Religious character education is therefore essential because it helps strengthen students' moral foundations through continuous guidance, exemplary practice, and habituation in school life (Solihah et al., 2024).

One relevant approach is the implementation of worship habituation in the school environment. Habituation refers to an educational process carried out repeatedly and systematically so that desirable values and behaviors can become part of students' daily conduct. In Islamic education, worship habituation, such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and other religious activities, is believed to support the internalization of religious values more deeply. Achadah et al. (2022) found that religious character can be strengthened through habituated activities such as dhuha prayer in congregation, dhuhur prayer in congregation, Qur'an reading, and Islamic commemorative activities, which contribute to students' worship awareness, discipline, faith, social care, and moral behavior.

Nevertheless, a research gap remains regarding how worship habituation is systematically implemented at the junior secondary school level and how it concretely contributes to students' religious character formation. Therefore, this study seeks to examine in depth the implementation of worship habituation at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes as an innovation in strengthening religious character education. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analysis of the forms of worship habituation activities, the implementation process, and their impact on students' religious behavior within the context of a public school. This focus is relevant because Rahayu and Istanto (2025), in their study at SMP Negeri 1 Gatak, showed that structured religious habituation through Qur'an reading and writing, Friday recitation, congregational prayer, amaliyah books, discipline, and tolerance can create a religious and conducive school environment.

Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of religious-value-based character education studies, as well as practical contributions for schools in designing effective and sustainable worship habituation programs. In addition,

the findings of this study may serve as a reference for future researchers who examine strategies for developing students' religious character in formal educational settings. Rahmadin and Astutik (2025) emphasize that systematic school-based religious habituation can serve as a sustainable and replicable model for strengthening worship discipline, religiosity, social harmony, and lifelong religious values among students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to provide an in-depth account of the implementation of worship habituation in shaping students' religious character. This approach was selected because it enables the researcher to understand the process, meaning, and experiences that occur naturally within the school context. A descriptive qualitative design is also relevant for studies on religious character habituation because it allows researchers to examine daily religious practices, school culture, and character formation as contextual educational phenomena (Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes. The research subjects consisted of the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the consideration that they were directly involved in the implementation of worship habituation programs at the school. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative educational research because it enables researchers to select informants who can provide relevant, rich, and in-depth information related to the research focus (Latipah et al., 2025).

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly examine worship habituation activities, such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and other religious activities. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students to obtain information about the implementation, challenges, and impacts of these activities. Documentation was used to complement the data in the form of activity schedules, photographs, and other supporting documents. These three techniques are commonly used in studies of Islamic habituation and religious character education because they allow researchers to capture both observable practices and participants' perspectives (Febriyanti & Amrullah, 2023).

The data were analyzed using an interactive analysis technique, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and organizing information relevant to the research focus. Data display was conducted by presenting the findings in a systematic descriptive form, while conclusion drawing was used to interpret the data and answer the research questions. To ensure data trustworthiness, this study employed source and method triangulation so that the findings could be scientifically accountable. Similar procedures have been used in qualitative studies on religious character habituation, where data reduction, data presentation, conclusion formulation, and source triangulation were applied to strengthen the credibility of findings (Milah et al., 2026).

Through this method, the study is expected to provide a clear and accurate description of the implementation of worship habituation in shaping students' religious character at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes. The use of a descriptive qualitative method is considered suitable because it enables the researcher to describe how religious values are practiced, internalized, and reflected in students' daily behavior within the school environment. Previous character education research also shows that qualitative methods can effectively reveal how habituation activities contribute to the development of religious, moral, and social values in students (Dewi & Rezania, 2023).

Instruments and Procedures

The instruments used in this study were aligned with the descriptive qualitative approach. The researcher served as the main instrument or human instrument, supported by several auxiliary instruments, namely an observation guide, an interview guide, and a documentation sheet. These instruments were designed to obtain in-depth data on the implementation of worship habituation in shaping students' religious character. A similar descriptive qualitative design has been used in religious character habituation studies because it enables researchers to examine daily religious practices, school culture, and character formation through observation, interviews, and documentation (Al Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

First, the observation guide was used to directly observe the implementation of worship habituation activities at school, such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and other religious activities. The observation was conducted participatively by recording

important aspects, including students' involvement, discipline, and the atmosphere of the activities. Observation is relevant in this type of study because school-based religious programs are commonly manifested in daily and periodic practices, such as obligatory prayers, tadarus, Islamic commemorative activities, and community-based religious engagement (Riantina, 2025).

Second, the interview guide was used to obtain in-depth information from informants consisting of the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to develop follow-up questions according to field situations while remaining focused on the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for studies on Islamic character formation because they allow researchers to explore the experiences and perspectives of principals, teachers, and students who are directly involved in religious education programs (Fikri, 2023).

Third, the documentation sheet was used to collect supporting data, including official school documents, schedules of religious activities, photographs, and other relevant archives. Documentation was used to complement observational and interview data so that the implementation of worship habituation could be examined more comprehensively. In qualitative studies on Islamic Religious Education and student character formation, documentation is commonly used together with observation and interviews to support the credibility and completeness of the data (Latipah et al., 2025).

The research procedure was carried out in several stages. The first stage was preparation, which included developing the instruments, obtaining research permission, and determining the informants. The second stage was implementation, namely collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation in the field. The third stage was data analysis, which was conducted continuously from the data collection process to the conclusion-drawing stage. The final stage was writing the research report systematically in accordance with academic writing conventions. Such a procedure is consistent with qualitative studies on Islamic habituation, in which religious character education is examined through scheduled and consistent school activities supported by field-based data collection (Febriyanti & Amrullah, 2023).

Through these instruments and procedures, this study was expected to produce data that were credible, dependable, and aligned with the research objectives. In qualitative

inquiry, trustworthiness is strengthened when the researcher uses multiple data sources and methods to capture the complexity of school-based religious practices. Previous research on religious character education has also shown that systematic habituation activities can strengthen students' worship discipline, Qur'an recitation habits, religiosity, and social interaction (Rahmadin & Astutik, 2025).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively using an interactive analysis model. The analysis began during the early stages of data collection and continued throughout the research process, allowing the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This approach is suitable for studies on religious habituation because interactive qualitative analysis enables researchers to connect field observations, interview data, and documentation in order to interpret how religious values are transformed into students' observable behavior (Milah et al., 2026).

The first stage was data reduction, which involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation. At this stage, the researcher grouped the data according to the research focus, such as the forms of worship habituation activities, the implementation process, and their impact on students' religious character. Data reduction is important because it helps researchers summarize relevant information and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of character education (Kurniawan & Rambe, 2024).

The second stage was data display, in which the reduced data were organized into systematic descriptive narratives to make them easier to understand. This stage aimed to help the researcher identify patterns, relationships, and tendencies emerging from the collected data. The third stage was conclusion drawing and verification, in which the researcher interpreted the meaning of the displayed data and drew conclusions based on the research findings. Verification was conducted continuously by comparing data across sources and methods through triangulation to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings. In qualitative character education research, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are commonly strengthened through triangulation, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Noni et al., 2024).

Using this analytical technique, the findings of this study are expected to provide an accurate, in-depth, and academically accountable description of the implementation of worship habituation in shaping students' religious character. The analysis also enables the researcher to explain not only what religious activities are implemented, but also how these activities are experienced by students and how they contribute to the internalization of religious values in the school context. Prior studies indicate that school-based religious habituation becomes more meaningful when it is implemented systematically, supported by teachers and school culture, and directed toward observable changes in students' attitudes and behavior (Al Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of worship habituation at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes was carried out in a structured and continuous manner through various routine religious activities. These activities included congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation before lessons, collective prayers, and religious activities conducted on particular days. The program involved the entire school community, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers, who played a central role in guiding and mobilizing the activities. This finding is consistent with Rahayu and Istanto's study, which showed that religious habituation in public junior secondary schools can be implemented effectively through structured and sustainable school-based practices involving teachers, students, and the wider school community (Rahayu & Istanto, 2025).

In general, students' participation in worship habituation activities was relatively high. This was reflected in students' attendance in routine activities and their active involvement during the implementation of the program. In addition, there was an improvement in students' discipline and awareness in performing worship. Previous research also found that religious school culture, such as collective prayers, Qur'anic recitation, dhuha prayer, and congregational dhuhur prayer, positively influences students' religious character (Nuraeni & Labudasari, 2021).

Table 1. Forms and Frequency of Worship Habituation Activities

No.	Type of activity	Frequency of implementation	Level of participation

1	Congregational prayer	Daily	High
2	Qur'an recitation	Daily	High
3	Prayers before and after lessons	Every lesson	Very high
4	Special religious activities	Weekly/Monthly	Moderate

Based on Table 1, daily routine activities had a higher level of student participation than incidental or periodic activities. This indicates that consistency in program implementation strongly influences students' engagement in worship habituation. This finding is supported by Al Ghozi and Amrullah, who found that daily religious habituation, school culture, teacher involvement, and a supportive school environment contribute to the strengthening of students' religiosity, responsibility, and moral values (Al Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

Furthermore, interviews with teachers and students revealed that worship habituation had a positive impact on the formation of students' religious character. Students became more disciplined in performing worship, developed a stronger sense of responsibility, and demonstrated more polite and respectful behavior in daily life. This finding is in line with Rahmawaty and Supriyadi, who reported that routine worship habituation, such as dhuha prayer, istighosah, infaq, and Qur'anic recitation, can cultivate discipline, cooperation, and spiritual awareness among students (Rahmawaty & Supriyadi, 2025).

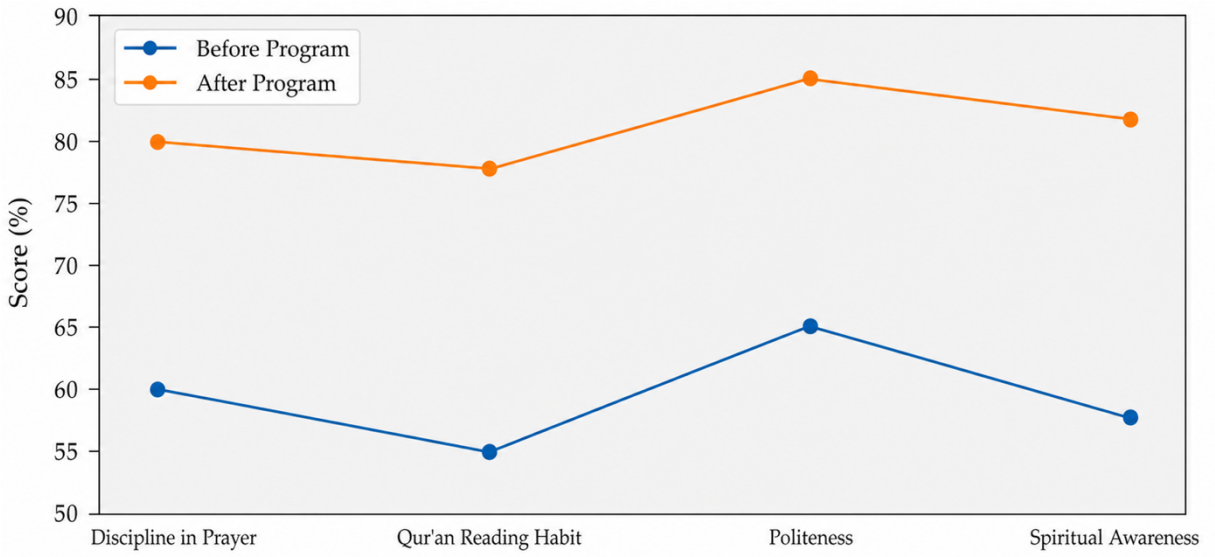


Figure 1. Improvement in Students' Religious Character

The observation results showed an increasing tendency in students' worship discipline, spiritual awareness, and religious social behavior after the implementation of worship habituation activities.

Overall, the findings indicate that worship habituation implemented consistently and systematically can make a meaningful contribution to the formation of students' religious character at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes. This finding strengthens previous evidence that systematic integration of school-based religious activities can improve students' worship discipline, religiosity, social harmony, and Islamic brotherhood (Rahmadin & Astutik, 2025).

Discussion

The implementation of worship habituation from theoretical and contextual perspectives

The findings show that worship habituation at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes did not merely function as a routine activity but also served as a systematic pedagogical mechanism for shaping students' religious character. From a behavioristic perspective, repeated religious practices can strengthen expected patterns of behavior, while from a contextual learning perspective, students also begin to construct personal meaning from their religious experiences. This interpretation is consistent with Nurbaiti et al., who found that religious character can be formed through repeated religious activities, including collective prayers, dhuha and dhuhur prayers, Qur'anic recitation, istighasah, infaq, and polite daily interaction (Nurbaiti et al., 2020).

In the context of character education, worship habituation can be understood as an effective strategy for internalizing values, particularly when supported by a conducive school environment. The worship habituation program implemented in this school reflects not only religious action but also the development of religious awareness and moral responsibility. Achadah et al. found that the internalization of religious character values through dhuha prayer, dhuhur prayer, Qur'an reading, and other habituated activities can increase students' worship awareness, faith, piety, good behavior, social awareness, tolerance, honesty, and discipline (Achadah et al., 2022).

In addition, the role of teachers as role models became a crucial factor in the success of the program. In practice, teachers did not only instruct students but also participated

directly in worship activities with them, creating a more transformative pedagogical relationship. This finding is supported by Latipah et al., who showed that Islamic Religious Education teachers function not only as educators but also as role models, and that the success of moral education is influenced by classroom learning, school-wide practices, and school-family collaboration (Latipah et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the implementation of worship habituation still faced challenges related to consistency and supervision. Some students showed situational compliance, meaning that they performed worship mainly when they were under teacher supervision. This indicates that the internalization of religious values had not fully reached the stage of moral autonomy. Therefore, a more integrative approach is needed, combining habituation, value understanding, and reflective guidance so that students' religious character does not remain superficial. Similar challenges have been reported in previous studies, where religious habituation was supported by teacher involvement and school culture but still required stronger facilities, parental support, and consistent reinforcement (Al Ghozi & Amrullah, 2025).

The impact of worship habituation on students' religious character formation

The findings also show that worship habituation had a positive impact on students' religious character, particularly in the aspects of discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness. Improved discipline was reflected in students' consistency in joining worship activities on time, while responsibility was shown through their active participation without constant reminders. Spiritual awareness also developed, as indicated by students' calmer attitudes, politeness, and respect for others. Rahmawaty and Supriyadi similarly found that structured worship habituation involving regular religious practices can strengthen students' moral and spiritual development (Rahmawaty & Supriyadi, 2025).

These findings are also consistent with previous research showing that routine religious activities can strengthen students' religious behavior. The impact was not only individual but also social, as the repeated implementation of religious activities contributed to the formation of a religious school culture that influenced student interactions. Muflih et al. reported that activities such as Zuhur prayer, Qur'an recitation, Iqra reading, zakat fitrah, and Islamic commemorative activities can improve students'

religious character, especially when supported by teacher habituation and exemplary behavior (Muflih et al., 2022).

However, the impact of worship habituation was not entirely homogeneous among all students. Differences in family background, religious understanding, and internal motivation influenced the extent to which students internalized religious values. This indicates that worship habituation needs to be supported by synergy among the school, family, and community. In other words, religious character formation is a multidimensional process that cannot rely solely on school-based intervention. This argument is supported by Latipah et al., who emphasized that the internalization of Islamic values is strengthened through collaboration between education, habitual practices, parental involvement, and a supportive school environment (Latipah et al., 2025).

Critically, the findings also indicate that the success of worship habituation depends on program sustainability and innovation in its implementation. If religious activities are conducted monotonously without meaningful reinforcement, students may experience boredom and perform the activities only as formal routines. Therefore, innovation is needed through reflective approaches, varied religious mentoring methods, and the careful integration of technology. Amin and Nasution found that digital innovation in Islamic Religious Education becomes more meaningful when it is integrated with reflective, contextual, and value-based learning rather than being used merely as a technical medium (Amin & Nasution, 2025).

Thus, this discussion confirms that the implementation of worship habituation is effective in supporting students' religious character formation, but it requires a comprehensive, sustainable, and adaptive approach. The findings enrich previous studies by providing a more contextual analysis at the junior secondary school level, particularly in a public school setting. This conclusion aligns with Rahayu and Istanto's finding that structured and collaborative religious habituation can create a religious and conducive learning environment in public junior secondary schools (Rahayu & Istanto, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that worship habituation at SMP Negeri 5 Brebes was implemented in a structured, consistent, and school-wide manner through congregational

prayer, Qur'an recitation, collective prayers, and other religious activities. The findings show that daily and regularly scheduled activities encouraged higher student participation than incidental activities. Worship habituation also contributed to the development of students' religious character, particularly in worship discipline, spiritual awareness, responsibility, politeness, and religious social behavior. These findings imply that worship habituation can serve as an effective pedagogical strategy for strengthening religious character education in public junior secondary schools when it is supported by teacher role modelling, school culture, and continuous supervision.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a single public junior secondary school, so the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. Second, the study used a descriptive qualitative design, meaning that the impact of worship habituation was interpreted from observation, interviews, and documentation rather than measured through experimental or longitudinal data. Some students also showed situational compliance, indicating that religious values had not been fully internalized as autonomous behavior. Therefore, future studies are suggested to involve more schools, use longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, and examine the role of family, peer environment, and digital innovation in sustaining students' religious character formation. Schools are also encouraged to strengthen worship habituation programs through reflective guidance, varied religious activities, and stronger collaboration between teachers, parents, and the wider school community.

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