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Role of School Culture in Enhancing Students' Learning Character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
  ![CC BY-SA] 	*This study aims to examine the role of school culture in enhancing students' learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study method, the research involved in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and students as key informants. The findings indicate that a consistent and religiously oriented school culture—such as Qur'an recitation, greeting teachers respectfully, and congregational prayers—significantly shapes students' learning character. Furthermore, teachers' role modeling emerges as a critical factor, as students tend to emulate positive behaviors demonstrated by teachers, including discipline, honesty, responsibility, and politeness. Supporting factors include the principal's encouragement and the systematic habituation of positive practices. Meanwhile, challenges encountered comprise students' lack of self-awareness, negative peer influence, entrenched bad habits, and external factors such as excessive gadget use and limited family support. Overall, the study underscores that the synergy between a strong school culture, teacher role models, and student motivation is key to fostering positive learning character. The findings have implications for developing character-based educational strategies in religious secondary schools and can serve as a reference for educators seeking to create a conducive learning environment*

INTRODUCTION

School culture plays a strategic role in shaping the character and quality of young generations, serving as a vital asset for national development. Education is not merely aimed at fostering academic intelligence but also at preparing students to be morally upright, faithful, pious, virtuous, healthy, creative, independent, responsible, and appreciative of democratic principles (Law No. 20 of 2003). Character education, including the values conveyed through religious instruction and moral guidance (PAIBP), also emphasizes life skills as essential preparation for facing societal challenges.

A strong school culture oriented toward character values is crucial in creating a conducive learning environment. Harianja emphasizes that daily routines and habits embedded in schools, which reflect values and norms, can have a significant positive impact on students' attitudes and behaviors. Rukman adds that school activities such as flag ceremonies, collective prayers, and disciplinary practices can reinforce comprehensive character development in students (Ansar et al., 2020). Therefore, the consistent implementation of school culture can cultivate positive behaviors and foster mature personalities in learners.

Despite the acknowledged importance of school culture, character education in Indonesia faces several challenges. These include students' lack of discipline, dishonest behaviors such as cheating, low learning interest, weak motivation to compete, and an educational focus still heavily skewed toward academic achievement. Many educators evaluate learning success solely based on cognitive outcomes, neglecting affective and psychomotor aspects. This situation indicates that character education must be realized through systematic strategies to develop generations that are morally upright, dignified, and civilized.

Character refers to the traits, habits, or personalities formed through the internalization of core values that guide thinking, attitudes, and behaviors. Character education aims to develop positive behaviors,

enabling individuals to interact productively in society while avoiding negative influences. According to the Curriculum Center, 18 core character values should be developed, including religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic attitudes, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, achievement appreciation, friendship, love for peace, reading enthusiasm, environmental awareness, social concern, and responsibility. These values can be integrated into learning plans, making character education an effective instrument for shaping democratic and responsible citizens (Suhendra et al., 2024).

MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah, as a religious-based educational institution, has a distinctive school culture, including habitual Qur'an recitation, punctuality, and interactions grounded in moral virtues. This culture functions not merely as a symbol or identity but as a strategic medium for instilling learning character, including responsibility, independence, and a passion for learning. The success of character education in this school heavily depends on the consistent implementation of cultural practices by all school components, from principals and teachers to staff and students.

Preliminary observations indicate that MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah maintains a strong Islamic culture, such as Qur'an reading, Duha prayers before learning, and congregational Dhuhr prayers. This demonstrates that students' character values remain preserved. However, some students have not yet fully developed their character, particularly in terms of discipline, learning motivation, and task completion accuracy. This condition suggests that while the school culture has been established, further understanding is needed on how it comprehensively influences students' learning character.

Based on these conditions, this study focuses on the role of school culture in enhancing students' learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah. The objectives are to understand how the school can create a culture that supports character development, to identify the role of teachers in this process, and to determine the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting character formation.

This study concentrates on three main aspects of students' learning character development. First, it investigates how school culture contributes to shaping and enhancing learning character. Second, it highlights teachers' roles as primary agents in instilling character values through interaction, habituation, and learning processes. Third, it seeks to identify factors that facilitate or hinder students' character development, providing a comprehensive picture of character education dynamics in a religious-based school.

Aligned with these research questions, the study aims to understand effective mechanisms for creating a school culture that enhances students' learning character, examine teachers' contributions and strategies in character formation, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the success of character education at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah.

This research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it contributes to educational science, particularly regarding character education and school culture management. It can also enrich scholarly references for future studies exploring the relationship between school cultural environments and students' learning character, strengthening theories on the importance of conducive school environments in shaping students' behavior and personality.

Practically, the findings can serve as an evaluative resource for schools in creating and developing a positive school culture to support character formation. Moreover, it can guide teachers and school administrators in designing learning strategies and habituating character values effectively, thereby improving educational quality. Consequently, MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah can better understand the role of school culture in shaping student character and motivate enhanced development of learning character. Ultimately, this study is expected to serve as a model for effective, sustainable, and contextual character education in religious-based secondary schools.

School culture comprises the values, norms, habits, attitudes, and behaviors practiced by all members of the school community—including principals, teachers, staff, students, and parents—aimed at creating an effective character education environment (Lestari & Ain, 2022; Henro Widodo, 2019). It encompasses interactions among various school stakeholders and parental involvement as facilitators of learning, providing resources and supporting children's academic activities. School culture includes historical patterns, beliefs, traditions, and widely agreed-upon values, divided into dominant and subordinate cultures. When subordinate cultures conflict with the dominant culture, they may hinder school development toward higher quality (Muslich in NASIH, 2020; Alfabeta, 2015).

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Character itself refers to psychological traits, morality, or ethical behavior that distinguish an individual, formed through the internalization of religious, cultural, legal, and social norms (Suhendra et al., 2024; Fadilah, 2017). Character education in schools is implemented through routine practices such as flag ceremonies, Qur'an recitation, congregational prayers, and spontaneous activities such as community service and donations, which foster social care and moral values (Hasbiyah, 2016; Nurjannah, 2018). The goal of character education is to produce students who are intelligent, independent, virtuous, responsible, possess leadership qualities, environmentally conscious, and patriotic (Melani Septi A.A & Heri, 2017; Ary Ginanjar Agustian, 2017).

Islamic school culture represents a strategic approach to inculcating religious values through the interaction of schools, families, and communities, emphasizing consistency, teacher role modeling, and collaboration among all school members (Abudin Nata, 2018; Kurnia Pratama, 2018).

Relevant studies show that school culture significantly shapes student character at both elementary and secondary levels, through routine activities that instill morals, Pancasila values, and social responsibility (Indriani, 2025; Lestari & Kuria, 2022; Humaeroh & Dewi, 2021). The conceptual framework emphasizes that enhancing student character requires collaboration among school culture, teachers, and parents, ensuring that Islamic character and positive behavior are deeply embedded within the school environment.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative method was selected because it allows researchers to explore phenomena within their natural context, observe attitudes, behaviors, and social interactions in depth, and emphasize the interpretation of data rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2024; Hasan, 2022). Specifically, a case study design was used to provide a holistic and detailed description of the role of school culture in shaping student character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah. Case studies enable researchers to gain comprehensive understanding through multiple data collection techniques, including interviews, observations, and documentation (Creswell in Rukin, 2021; Lincoln & Guba in Rukin, 2021).

The study was conducted at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah, Batu Layar Subdistrict, West Lombok Regency. The location was chosen due to its relevance to the research objectives, namely exploring the extent to which school culture is applied to shape student character. Data collection took place during the even semester of the 2025 academic year, from July to August, with initial observations conducted in November 2024 to map baseline student character conditions.

Data sources were divided into primary and secondary. Primary data were obtained directly from the principal, teachers, and students through observations and interviews, while secondary data came from documents, books, journals, and relevant online sources (Sugiyono, 2024; Rifa'i, 2021). Data collection techniques included participatory observation to monitor daily interactions and activities, structured interviews to explore informants' perspectives in depth, and documentation through archives, photos, and reports for verification purposes.

Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation to guarantee consistency and credibility of information. Time triangulation was not applied, as data collection occurred during school hours, when informants' conditions supported data validity.

Data analysis followed the systematic approach of Miles and Huberman, encompassing data reduction, data display, and verification. Data reduction involved selecting relevant information, data display was presented narratively for clarity, and verification ensured conclusions were strongly supported by evidence. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the process of student character formation through school culture at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of School Culture in Enhancing Students' Learning Character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah

School culture plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah. Based on interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, the consistent implementation of school culture through role modeling, habituation, and character development effectively encourages students to be disciplined, responsible, and diligent in learning.

The principal, Ustadz H. Habibi, S.Pd., explained that the school culture guides students through six foundational principles for pursuing knowledge: being intelligent, eager to learn, diligent, having resources for learning, interacting with teachers, and making optimal use of time. He emphasized that adherence to these six principles cultivates patience and responsibility in learning (personal communication, July 21, 2025). This illustrates that the school's focus extends beyond knowledge transfer, instilling strong learning mentality and ethos.

Similarly, Ustadz Ahmad Ramli, S.Pd., highlighted the teacher's role in motivating students and fostering responsibility through habitual practices, such as completing homework, attending school punctually, and fulfilling teacher-assigned tasks (personal communication, July 21, 2025). According to Ustadz Muhammad Dedi, S.Pd., school culture encourages students to review lessons, complete assignments, and monitor their own learning progress, thus promoting broader responsibility and strong learning character (personal communication, July 22, 2025).

Ustadz Saopan Idris, S.Pd., added that clear rules, structured study schedules, and discipline habituation are essential tools to foster student responsibility. Teachers actively monitor and remind students to complete tasks on time, ensuring positive habits become part of their daily routines (personal communication, July 22, 2025). Ustadzah Najwa Amirasa, S.Pd., emphasized that discipline, punctuality, attendance, and adherence to school regulations form the foundation of a culture that promotes student responsibility (personal communication, July 22, 2025).

Based on these interviews, it can be concluded that a consistently implemented school culture plays a vital role in shaping student responsibility, discipline, and learning consistency. Students who engage in school cultural practices regularly demonstrate positive changes in learning character, reflected in their time management, politeness, respect for teachers and peers, and diligence in completing assignments.

The Role of Teachers in Enhancing Students' Learning Character

In addition to school culture, teachers play a central role in enhancing students' learning character. Teachers not only deliver academic content but also serve as mentors, motivators, and role models who influence students' attitudes and behaviors.

Ustadz H. Habibi, S.Pd., emphasized that teachers must act as role models, as students tend to emulate their behaviors. The proverb "when a teacher urinates standing, the students urinate running" is relevant in this context, meaning students imitate both positive and negative actions of teachers (personal communication, July 21, 2025). This view was reinforced by Ustadz Ahmad Ramli, S.Pd., who noted that honest, disciplined, responsible, polite, and fair teachers provide tangible examples for students to follow in daily life (personal communication, July 21, 2025).

Ustadz Muhammad Dedi, S.Pd., added that as role models, teachers must demonstrate discipline, punctuality, courtesy, and respect for students' opinions. This encourages students to adopt positive behaviors in school and at home (personal communication, July 22, 2025). Ustadzah Najwa Amirasa emphasized that role modeling does not always require lengthy verbal instructions but can be conveyed through simple actions, such as voluntarily cleaning the environment. Such behaviors prompt students to imitate positive actions without direct orders (personal communication, July 22, 2025).

Students also recognize the role of teachers in shaping their character. Wadinul Ali Fikri stated that teachers often provide advice, motivation, and examples from their own experiences, inspiring students to follow positive behaviors (personal communication, July 24, 2025). Zulaika noted that teachers model punctuality, cleanliness, discipline, and polite behavior (personal communication, July 26, 2025). Nisrina highlighted that expected student behaviors include discipline, diligence in completing assignments, active participation in learning, respect for teachers and peers, and maintaining politeness both inside and outside the classroom (personal communication, July 26, 2025).

Beyond role modeling, teachers guide students through school activities such as ceremonies, character development programs, religious practices, and daily routines. Aprilyadi explained that teachers advise students on various occasions, emphasize adherence to rules, and provide tangible examples, encouraging students to emulate and consistently apply school culture (personal communication, July 24, 2025).

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Overall, the consistent implementation of school culture, combined with teachers' role modeling, has been shown to improve students' discipline, responsibility, self-awareness, environmental concern, and other moral values. Findings indicate that students guided by teachers who demonstrate positive behaviors exhibit stronger learning character, effectively manage their time, complete tasks on schedule, and display polite social behavior with respect toward others.

School culture and teachers' roles are complementary. While school culture provides structure, rules, and daily routines, teachers offer concrete examples and motivate students through direct interaction. The synergy of both elements creates a conducive learning environment for students' character development. Consequently, the application of school culture and teachers' engagement proves effective in fostering disciplined, responsible, and competitive learning character among students at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Enhancing Students' Learning Character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah

The enhancement of students' learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah is influenced by various interrelated factors, including both supporting and inhibiting elements. Analyzing these factors is essential to comprehensively understand the dynamics of character formation within the school environment.

One of the main supporting factors is teacher role modeling. According to an interview with M. Syukron, a student, a frequently encountered challenge is the lack of self-awareness among some students in internalizing character values such as discipline, responsibility, and honesty. Meanwhile, teachers demonstrate positive behaviors, including punctuality, diligent class attendance, and consistent polite speech, which serve as primary drivers for the development of students' learning character (personal communication, July 25, 2025). This is reinforced by Ustadzah Najwa Amirasa, S.Pd., who noted that challenges in character formation include low self-awareness, negative peer influences, low learning motivation, and entrenched bad habits, such as laziness, procrastination, and lack of discipline. Excessive use of gadgets and social media, low self-confidence, and minimal family support are also significant obstacles (personal communication, July 22, 2025).

Ustadz Saopan Idris, S.Pd., added that external barriers include an unsupportive environment, lack of adult role models around students, and exposure to negative content via social media or technology. Dysfunctional family conditions and limited parental attention can further decrease students' motivation to develop good character (personal communication, July 22, 2025). Thus, obstacles in character formation stem from a combination of internal factors, such as low self-awareness and motivation, and external factors, including environmental influences, media exposure, and family support.

Despite these challenges, the consistent implementation of school culture has been shown to foster positive change. Ustadz H. Habibi, S.Pd., stated that students who adhere to a well-structured and positive school culture exhibit traits of a knowledge-seeking generation, enthusiastic about learning, and committed to continuous self-improvement (personal communication, July 21, 2025). Ustadz Ahmad Ramli, S.Pd., emphasized improvements in students' discipline, responsibility, respect for teachers and peers, and compassion toward younger classmates (personal communication, July 21, 2025). Likewise, Ustadz Muhammad Dedi, S.Pd., highlighted that students become more diligent, capable of managing their time, polite, actively participating, and respectful of the learning process once accustomed to school culture (personal communication, July 22, 2025).

From these statements, it can be concluded that the primary supporting factors for enhancing students' learning character are teacher role modeling, habituation of school culture, and consistent guidance. Conversely, inhibiting factors include students' low self-awareness, lack of motivation, negative peer influences, entrenched bad habits, excessive gadget use, and limited family support. The success of character formation depends on the synergy between teachers' exemplary behavior, school culture implementation, and supportive environmental awareness. Therefore, character development at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah is a complex process but can be effectively achieved through consistency, role modeling, and sustained motivation.

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In efforts to enhance students' learning character, school culture plays a pivotal role. A consistent and religiously grounded school culture, such as Qur'an recitation before learning, greeting teachers respectfully, and performing congregational prayers, has become an integral part of students' daily lives. These activities not only enhance spiritual values but also help students maintain mental focus and readiness for learning, allowing them to concentrate and value the learning process. Students are present not only physically but also mentally and emotionally. Practices like greeting teachers before entering the classroom teach humility, respect, and foster positive emotional relationships with teachers. Congregational prayers serve as crucial moments for developing discipline and responsibility, training students to be punctual and habituated to shared routines. During these activities, students also receive guidance from teachers or the principal, reinforcing their motivation to learn. Such practices create a school environment that is religious, calm, and conducive to the development of positive student character, enabling students to learn not only from textbooks but also from daily positive habits.

Teachers at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah play a crucial role in shaping students' learning character. Teachers function not only as educators but also as role models and character mentors. Interviews indicate that teachers significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviors through both concrete actions and verbal guidance. Teachers integrate life values into lessons and even in simple aspects such as speech, attire, and demeanor, students learn by observing teachers' behavior. When teachers demonstrate honesty, discipline, and politeness, students are more likely to emulate these traits. Some teachers emphasize leading by example before instructing students—for instance, picking up trash themselves to encourage cleanliness without lengthy instructions. Such actions have proven more effective than merely giving orders. Teachers also actively provide direct guidance during lessons and extracurricular activities, offering advice, motivation, and support, which makes students feel valued and encouraged. Feeling noticed and supported, students become more receptive and motivated to improve.

Overall, various supporting and inhibiting factors affect the enhancement of learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah. A consistent, religiously grounded school culture—such as morning Qur'an recitation, congregational prayers, and habituated polite behavior—provides strong support for internalizing positive values. These routines reinforce discipline, responsibility, courtesy, and spiritual awareness. Teacher role modeling is equally crucial, as students naturally emulate teachers' behaviors rather than solely relying on verbal advice. Consistency in teachers' honesty, discipline, and politeness provides tangible examples for students. Continuous habituation strengthens character internalization, ensuring that discipline, responsibility, and politeness become ingrained in daily life, forming a solid foundation for personal and academic development.

Equally important is the proactive support of the school principal in fostering students' character. School leaders not only provide guidance but also actively participate in activities that promote character development, such as supervision, motivation, and enforcement of school culture. Supportive leadership creates a conducive learning environment, where students feel noticed and motivated to adhere to the norms and positive values upheld within the school.

On the other hand, several inhibiting factors may reduce the effectiveness of learning character formation. One of the main challenges is students' lack of self-awareness. Some students do not fully recognize the importance of having strong character, focusing instead on academic achievement while neglecting behaviors and attitudes that should be developed. Low self-awareness represents a major obstacle to fostering discipline and responsibility.

Another challenge is an unsupportive peer environment. Students who associate with peers who frequently skip classes, violate rules, or display negative behaviors tend to be influenced accordingly. A negative social environment can impede character development, as bad habits are easily transmitted through daily interactions.

Additionally, entrenched bad habits constitute another barrier. Behaviors such as procrastination, tardiness, or reluctance to study are difficult to change without strong intrinsic motivation. The process of

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behavioral change requires time, patience, and consistent repetition for positive habits to replace previous ones.

Finally, even with the best efforts from teachers and the school, the development of learning character largely depends on students' willingness to change. Intrinsic motivation is key to this process. Without internal drive, character-building efforts will only achieve partial results. Therefore, teacher patience and sustained guidance are crucial to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop positive character comprehensively.

Overall, the success of fostering students' learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah results from the synergy of consistent school culture, teacher role modeling, habitual practices, and principal support, balanced with students' self-awareness and motivation to change.

The findings of this study align with and reinforce previous research. Indriani (2025) demonstrated that school culture activities such as reciting Asmaul Husna, praying together, singing national songs, and greeting others effectively develop character in elementary school students. This corresponds with the findings at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah, where Qur'an recitation, respectful greetings, and congregational prayers positively enhance students' learning character. Research by Lestari and Kuria (2022) also shows that Pancasila education contributes to students' learning character development. Although the focus differs, both studies employ qualitative approaches to examine learning character improvement, providing mutual reinforcement. Similarly, Humaeroh and Dewi (2021) highlighted the role of civic education in shaping students' character in the context of globalization. While the approaches and contexts vary, all studies share the focus on character formation.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the results are consistent with research conducted at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah, indicating that school culture plays a significant role in shaping students' learning character at both elementary and secondary levels.

From an international perspective, this study aligns with findings from various studies showing that positive school culture enhances student character. For instance, research published in PMC indicates that school environments supporting student autonomy and competency development improve academic motivation and learning outcomes. Other studies similarly emphasize the importance of teacher role modeling in character formation.

In conclusion, a consistent, religiously grounded school culture and teacher role modeling are critical factors in enhancing students' learning character. However, challenges such as low student self-awareness, unsupportive peer environments, and entrenched bad habits must be addressed through holistic and sustainable approaches. Support from all stakeholders—including principals, teachers, students, and parents—is essential to create a conducive environment for developing students' character.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings regarding the role of school culture in enhancing students' learning character at MA Madrasatul Qur'aniyah, it can be concluded that school culture has a significant influence on shaping students' learning character. A consistently implemented and religiously grounded school culture—such as reciting the Qur'an before lessons, greeting teachers respectfully, and performing congregational prayers—not only fosters positive habits but also cultivates discipline, a sense of responsibility, and strong motivation to learn. These activities help students engage both physically and mentally, creating a conducive and harmonious learning environment.

The role of teachers as role models is a key factor in character formation. Teachers not only deliver academic content but also demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that students can emulate, such as honesty, discipline, politeness, and responsibility. Teachers' approaches—through concrete actions, direct guidance, motivation, and consistent advice—encourage students to adopt these positive behaviors. Teacher role modeling has proven more effective than mere verbal instruction, as students tend to imitate the real actions they observe daily.

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Furthermore, this study identifies various supporting and inhibiting factors in enhancing students' learning character. Primary supporting factors include the consistency of school culture, teacher role modeling, habitual practices maintained continuously, and proactive support from the school principal. In contrast, inhibiting factors include students' low self-awareness, negative peer influences, entrenched bad habits, and external factors such as excessive gadget use, low motivation, and limited family support. Nevertheless, when students actively engage in a positive school culture, they demonstrate significant improvements in learning character, including enhanced discipline, responsibility, social awareness, and time management skills.

Overall, this study confirms that the success of developing students' learning character heavily depends on the synergy between a consistent school culture, teachers' role modeling, and students' self-awareness and motivation. Through the structured implementation of school culture and active teacher guidance, students can internalize positive values in their daily lives, thereby forming a generation that is not only academically capable but also possesses strong character, responsibility, and ethical integrity.

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