

## IMPLEMENTATION OF ISTIGHATSAH ROUTINE ACTIVITIES IN FOSTERING CHARACTER EDUCATION VALUES OF MADRASAH ALIYAH STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*Character education is essential in shaping students' behavior and values. Schools play a vital role in instilling these values through structured activities, such as the routine Friday istighosah at MA Banyu Kholiel, which is expected to develop students' character. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Friday istighosah activities in fostering the values of discipline and responsibility among MA Banyu Kholiel students. This qualitative study employed a case study design. Data were collected from four key informants: the school principal, teachers, students, and alumni of MA Banyu Kholiel. Data collection methods included observation of the istighosah activities, in-depth interviews with informants, and documentation review of relevant school records. Data analysis consisted of data reduction by focusing on relevant information, data display by organizing data into categories of discipline and responsibility, and verification through triangulation across sources to ensure validity. The findings reveal that routine Friday istighosah activities effectively foster the values of discipline and responsibility. Students exhibited punctuality and adherence to schedules, indicating internalized discipline. Additionally, habituation of participation in these activities increased students' sense of responsibility, as they actively engaged and completed the activities conscientiously. Routine Friday istighosah activities at MA Banyu Kholiel play a significant role in developing students' discipline and responsibility, highlighting the potential of habitual religious activities to support character education in schools.*

**Keywords:** *Istighatsah; Character Education; Madrasah Aliyah*

### A. Introduction

In recent years, strengthening character education has become a national priority in Indonesia. Amid rapid technological, social, and cultural developments, there is growing concern over the decline in moral values among the younger generation. Education is therefore not only responsible for academic knowledge transfer but also for instilling core character values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and cooperation. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia emphasizes that character education must be integrated into learning activities and school culture to produce individuals who are intellectually competent, morally sound, and socially responsible (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Character education is understood as the internalization of values that shape students' personalities and guide their everyday behavior. These values should be taught through formal education, supported by informal and non-formal environments such as family and the wider community (Badiryah, 2023; Indramawan, 2020). However, the practical

implementation of character education in schools often remains suboptimal, especially when it comes to integrating students' spiritual experiences and cultural practices.

In the context of Islamic education, particularly in madrasahs, the integration of religious activities and character development has great potential. Madrasahs have a distinctive advantage as they not only provide general education but also emphasize religious values rooted in Islamic teachings. One such activity routinely practiced in madrasahs is *istighosah*, a collective prayer to seek divine help, which also serves as a moment of reflection and spiritual reinforcement. When carried out consistently, *istighosah* can be an effective medium to instill values such as discipline and responsibility.

This aligns with the teachings of the Qur'an, which emphasize the importance of nurturing piety and strong moral character. Allah SWT states in the Qur'an:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا"

"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire..." (Surah At-Tahrim: 6)

This verse highlights the responsibility of educating and safeguarding oneself and one's family, including in moral and spiritual aspects. Furthermore, values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility are aligned with the goals of Islamic education, as emphasized in Luqman's advice to his son:

"يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ ۖ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ"

"O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, all that is of the matters requiring determination." (Surah Luqman: 17)

However, research on the effectiveness of religious activities like *istighosah* as a medium for character building in madrasahs is still limited. Most existing studies focus on curricular approaches, while religious habituation and spiritual practices as methods of character formation remain underexplored (Zahroa et al., 2017; Rosita et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of routine Friday *istighosah* activities at MA Bany Kholiel in fostering the character values of discipline and responsibility among students. This research is expected to fill the existing gap and provide practical insights into integrating spiritual habituation into character education strategies in the madrasah environment.

## **B. Method**

This study employs qualitative methods using an ethnographic approach, chosen to provide a deep and contextual understanding of the implementation of *istighasah* as a religious practice that plays a role in fostering students' character education (Murdiyanto, 2020). Ethnography is particularly appropriate for exploring lived experiences, ritual practices, and social interactions within a specific community – in this case, a school that regularly holds *istighasah* as part of its educational and spiritual programming.

To align with the core characteristics of ethnography, the researcher engaged in prolonged engagement and immersion at the research site for two months, from January to February 2025. The researcher actively participated in the *istighasah* sessions, observed classroom dynamics before and after the ritual, and interacted informally with students and

teachers. This approach allowed the researcher to produce a thick description that not only detailed observable activities during *istighasah*—such as the rhythm of prayers, students' expressions, and group dynamics—but also the cultural meanings and values embedded in these practices.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: participatory observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to directly experience and document the interactions and emotional atmosphere during the *istighasah* rituals. Field notes were written immediately after each session to capture rich contextual details.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including Islamic education teachers, the school principal, and selected students who regularly participated in *istighasah*. The interview questions were open-ended, such as: "In your opinion, how does *istighasah* influence student behavior inside and outside the classroom?"; "Can you describe any changes in students' attitudes or discipline after regularly participating in *istighasah*?"; and "What values do you think are internalized through this spiritual practice?" All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and thematically analyzed. Document analysis was employed to complement and strengthen the data, involving review of school program reports, attendance logs of *istighasah* participants, students' reflective journals, photographs of the activities, and internal communication documents highlighting the integration of spiritual activities within the school curriculum. The data analysis process followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Emzir, 2011), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, the researcher transcribed recordings, reorganized field notes, and coded significant data, grouping them into themes such as "discipline formation," "emotional regulation," and "spiritual motivation." Irrelevant or repetitive data were discarded.

In the data display stage, findings were visualized using thematic matrices and narratives that connected observed behaviors, participant statements, and supporting documents. For example, a matrix was created to compare students' reports of emotional changes with teachers' observations and attendance records. In the final stage of conclusion drawing and verification, the researcher interpreted patterns in the data to reveal the meaning and role of *istighasah* in shaping student character. Validity was ensured through data triangulation and member checking with key informants to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

### **C. Finding and Discussion**

This study examined how routine *istighasah* activities at MA Baniy Kholiel foster the development of two fundamental character values among students: discipline and responsibility. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documentation, two primary themes emerged, which are analyzed here with reference to relevant character education theories from both Islamic and modern educational paradigms.

### **Formation of Discipline Values**

The findings indicate that the weekly *istighasah* sessions effectively cultivate a disciplined mindset in students. Participants reported consistent punctuality and preparedness for the activity, as exemplified by a student who remarked, “I always arrive early for *istighasah* because it helps me organize my time and prepare myself spiritually” (Student A, personal communication, 2024). This habituation of disciplined behavior through repeated engagement in religious ritual aligns closely with the framework proposed by Lickona (1991), who argues that character virtues develop primarily through consistent practice and habituation. Lickona emphasizes that discipline is not an innate trait but a cultivated habit shaped by ongoing, structured experience within supportive environments.

From an Islamic pedagogical standpoint, this finding resonates profoundly with al-Ghazali’s (1996) theory of moral formation, which highlights the role of *mujahadah* (spiritual struggle) and *riyadah* (training or discipline) in shaping ethical character. Al-Ghazali contends that habitual spiritual practices—such as prayer, remembrance (*dhikr*), and supplication (*istighasah*)—serve as tools for purifying the *nafs* (self), thereby enabling the individual to internalize virtues like self-control, patience, and discipline. The repeated *istighasah* ritual at MA Baniy Kholiel serves as a concrete embodiment of this process, offering students a disciplined framework to cultivate spiritual and behavioral regulation. In addition, the role of discipline as a protective factor against deviant behavior is supported by Wuryandani et al. (2019), who highlight the importance of fostering discipline to reduce youth delinquency.

The disciplined participation observed in *istighasah* indicates that the ritual not only promotes internal self-regulation but also aligns students with institutional norms and social expectations, thereby reinforcing both individual and communal order. Moreover, the disciplined character nurtured through *istighasah* reflects Bandura’s social learning theory (1977), which posits that behaviors are acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social contexts. In this case, students learn discipline by observing peers and teachers who consistently uphold the ritual, receiving positive reinforcement from the school community. This social dimension enhances the internalization of discipline beyond individual effort, embedding it in the shared culture of the school.

### **Cultivation of Responsibility Values**

The research also revealed that the value of responsibility is strongly cultivated through *istighasah*. Students exhibited a clear sense of accountability toward their religious and social duties. For instance, a teacher noted, “Those who regularly participate in *istighasah* demonstrate responsibility not only in religious activities but also in their school tasks and interactions” (Teacher B, personal communication, 2024). This finding reflects Ibn Miskawayh’s (2002) classical moral philosophy, which emphasizes *amanah* (trustworthiness) as a central principle of moral education. According to Ibn Miskawayh, moral growth entails training the intellect and soul to fulfill responsibilities toward oneself, others, and the Divine with sincerity and commitment. In contemporary terms, Zubaedi (2013) defines responsibility as an individual’s conscious awareness and commitment to fulfilling obligations toward self, society, environment, and God. The findings suggest that *istighasah* acts as a medium that

fosters this awareness, as students learn to consistently honor the collective commitment to the ritual, respect rules, and accept consequences for non-compliance.

Responsibility in this context also relates to Kohlberg's stages of moral development (1981), where moral reasoning matures from obedience to authority toward principled conscience. Through *istighasah*, students appear to move beyond mere compliance, cultivating an intrinsic sense of duty rooted in spiritual values and social expectations. The internalization of responsibility through religious ritual is further supported by the concept of *tarbiyah* in Islamic education, which involves holistic nurturing of a student's moral, spiritual, and intellectual capacities (Hashim & Othman, 2016). The *istighasah* routine, therefore, serves as a *tarbiyah* tool, integrating religious instruction with character education that promotes social responsibility and ethical awareness.

### **Integration with Character Education Frameworks**

The integration of these findings with established theories underscores the powerful synergy between Islamic spiritual practices and modern character education approaches. Lickona (1991) argues that character formation is effective when cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and behavioral practice occur simultaneously. The *istighasah* ritual accomplishes this by engaging students cognitively through understanding its religious significance, emotionally through spiritual connection, and behaviorally through disciplined participation. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on habituation (*tadrib*) complements Lickona's model by providing a spiritual and ethical dimension to repeated practice, where character development is not merely about behavior but the purification of intention (*niyyah*) and soul (*qalb*). Similarly, Ibn Miskawayh's ethical framework grounds responsibility within a metaphysical context that links moral duties to divine accountability.

This study's findings also align with the modern psychopedagogical understanding of character education as a social-emotional learning process, where values like discipline and responsibility are cultivated through supportive relationships, meaningful experiences, and consistent practice (Elias et al., 1997). In conclusion, the routine *istighasah* activities at MA Baniy Kholiel provide a structured, spiritually rich environment conducive to the development of key character values. The blend of Islamic moral education and modern character formation theories highlights the multidimensional process by which students develop discipline and responsibility, which are essential for their personal growth and social functioning.

### **E. Conclusion**

This research has successfully revealed how routine *istighasah* activities at MA Baniy Kholiel foster key values of character education, particularly discipline and responsibility. Discipline, understood as behavior that reflects obedience and compliance with established rules, and responsibility, defined as actions grounded in a sense of accountability for one's duties, emerged as the most dominant character values cultivated through these activities. Beyond identifying these values, this study contributes meaningfully to the broader theory of character education by demonstrating the integration of spiritual rituals as effective mediums

for character formation. The findings support the notion that habituation through religious practices, such as *istighosah*, not only nurtures moral virtues but also aligns closely with established frameworks of character development like Lickona's theory of habituation and al-Ghazali's concept of moral training. This enriches contemporary character education discourse by illustrating the synergy between Islamic pedagogical approaches and modern psychopedagogical theories. Practically, the study offers valuable insights for madrasah education policy and character habituation strategies. Incorporating routine *istighosah* or similar spiritual practices can serve as a structured, culturally relevant, and sustainable method to instill discipline and responsibility among students. Educational policymakers and school administrators can leverage these findings to design holistic character education programs that blend religious traditions with pedagogical rigor, thus fostering well-rounded students with strong moral foundations. Furthermore, these insights are transferable beyond MA Baniy Kholiel and can inform character education practices in other madrasahs or Islamic schools seeking effective strategies for moral development. Embedding ritualized habituation in school routines may help cultivate positive behaviors and attitudes essential for academic success and social harmony, thereby addressing challenges related to student discipline and accountability in diverse educational settings. In summary, this study not only confirms the potency of *istighosah* in character building but also provides a theoretical and practical framework that can enhance the design and implementation of character education programs in madrasah contexts and beyond.

## G. References

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