

THE ROLE OF FIQH TEACHERS IN FOSTERING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS CHARACTER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AN ISLAMIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN EAST KALIMANTAN

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ABSTRACT

Religious character formation is a central objective of Islamic schooling, yet the specific contribution of Fiqh teachers — whose subject concerns the very practice of worship — remains underexplored, particularly in non-Javanese contexts. This qualitative descriptive study examined how Fiqh teachers foster students' religious character at MTsN 4 Kutai Kartanegara, a state Islamic junior secondary school in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the headmaster, the Fiqh teacher and ten students, complemented by observation of religious activities and documentary analysis. Data analysis followed the interactive model of data condensation, display and conclusion drawing, and trustworthiness was addressed through source triangulation. The findings reveal five interrelated teacher roles — educator, mentor, motivator, exemplar and habit-former — whose effectiveness rests on the performative character of Fiqh instruction: religious values are transmitted through supervised practice of worship, such as ablution and prayer, rather than through explanation alone. Religious character formation is further sustained by a structured habituation programme, including morning welcome, salat Duha, Qur'an recitation, congregational prayer, memorisation and student-led religious speeches, with the headmaster's periodic evaluation operating as a quality-control loop. Supporting factors include scheduled programmes, teacher involvement and a supportive school environment; hindering factors include diverse student characters and limited family reinforcement. The study integrates instruction, exemplary modelling and ritual within a single analytical framework for the madrasah context, with practical implications for programme design and parent engagement.

Keywords: Character Education; Habituation; Madrasah; Religious Formation; Teacher Roles

ABSTRAK

Pembentukan karakter religius merupakan salah satu tujuan utama pendidikan Islam. Namun, kontribusi spesifik guru Fiqh—yang mata pelajarannya berkaitan langsung dengan praktik ibadah—masih belum banyak dikaji, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan di luar Jawa. Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana guru Fiqh membentuk karakter religius siswa di MTsN 4 Kutai Kartanegara, sebuah madrasah tsanawiyah negeri di Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur dengan kepala madrasah, guru Fiqh, dan sepuluh siswa, serta dilengkapi dengan observasi terhadap kegiatan keagamaan dan analisis dokumentasi. Analisis data

menggunakan model interaktif yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya lima peran guru yang saling berkaitan, yaitu sebagai pendidik, pembimbing, motivator, teladan, dan pembentuk kebiasaan. Efektivitas peran tersebut bertumpu pada karakter pembelajaran Fikih yang bersifat performatif, yaitu nilai-nilai keagamaan ditanamkan melalui praktik ibadah yang dilakukan secara langsung dan berada dalam pengawasan guru, seperti wudu dan salat, bukan hanya melalui pemberian penjelasan secara teoritis. Pembentukan karakter religius juga diperkuat melalui program pembiasaan yang terstruktur, meliputi penyambutan siswa pada pagi hari, salat Duha, membaca Al-Qur'an, salat berjamaah, hafalan, dan ceramah keagamaan yang disampaikan oleh siswa. Evaluasi berkala yang dilakukan oleh kepala madrasah berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pengendalian mutu untuk memastikan keberlangsungan program tersebut. Faktor pendukung meliputi program yang terjadwal, keterlibatan guru, dan lingkungan madrasah yang kondusif, sedangkan faktor penghambat mencakup keragaman karakter siswa dan keterbatasan penguatan nilai-nilai keagamaan dari lingkungan keluarga. Penelitian ini mengintegrasikan pembelajaran, keteladanan, dan praktik ritual keagamaan dalam satu kerangka analitis untuk konteks madrasah, serta memberikan implikasi praktis bagi perancangan program dan peningkatan keterlibatan orang tua.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Karakter; Pembiasaan; Madrasah; Pembentukan Karakter Religius; Peran Guru.

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a defining concern of contemporary schooling worldwide, on the premise that academic knowledge alone is insufficient for the formation of responsible citizens (Lickona, 1991). Lickona's foundational account of character as the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action has shaped both policy and practice across educational systems, and more recent work has translated this vision into concrete transformation models for schools (Dewi & Alam, 2020). Within this global agenda, the formation of religious character occupies a distinctive place in faith-based education, where the cultivation of virtue is inseparable from the practice of worship. Governments and religious institutions alike have invested in character initiatives, and schools are increasingly evaluated not only on academic outcomes but also on the dispositions they cultivate in students.

In Indonesia, the religious character of students is a central objective of Islamic schooling, particularly in madrasah, which combine the national curriculum with religious formation. Research has shown that teachers' personality and exemplary conduct are decisive in strengthening character education (Lukman et al., 2021), and that structured Islamic habituation in primary education fosters religious character (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024). The national character education policy (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*) has further institutionalised these efforts across formal and religious schooling, making the role of religious education teachers a matter of sustained scholarly interest.

Within the madrasah, the Fiqh teacher occupies a distinctive position. Fiqh — Islamic jurisprudence — is the subject through which students learn the rules and procedures of worship: purification (*taharah*), ablution (*wudu*), prayer (*salat*) and related practices. Unlike subjects that remain largely conceptual, Fiqh is inherently performative: it must be practised to be learned. This makes the Fiqh teacher's role potentially central to religious character formation, yet the specific contribution of this subject and its teachers has received far less attention than that of religious education teachers in general. In the Indonesian madrasah tradition, Fiqh teachers are conventionally expected to enact five roles — educator, mentor, motivator, exemplar and habit-former — yet the empirical reality of how these roles operate in daily practice remains largely unexamined.

The formation of religious character cannot, however, be assumed to occur automatically. Students enter madrasah with diverse dispositions; some internalise religious habits quickly, while others require repeated guidance and reminders. Family environments do not always reinforce the habits cultivated at school, and many Islamic schools in regions outside Java operate with limited research attention despite serving large student populations. East Kalimantan, for instance, hosts a growing number of state madrasah whose religious formation practices have been documented neither in national surveys nor in qualitative scholarship. Understanding how Fiqh teachers actually contribute to character formation in such settings — and which factors support or hinder their efforts — is therefore both a practical and a scientific concern.

Existing scholarship has documented the role of Islamic education (PAI) teachers in religious character formation extensively, particularly through habituation methods (Isnaini, 2024; Rozak, 2023), motivational roles (Romi et al., 2024), and habituation-based instructional approaches (Triyono & Subando, 2025). This body of work, however, is dominated by descriptive qualitative studies conducted in formal schools in Java, and it treats religious education teachers as a largely undifferentiated category. Few studies foreground the subject-specific demands of Fiqh instruction, and fewer still examine how its performative dimension — the supervised practice of worship — translates into character formation.

International scholarship offers theoretical resources for such an analysis. Social learning theory explains why exemplary teacher conduct (*teladan*) is effective: students acquire behaviour partly by observing and imitating significant models (Bandura, 1977). School culture research shows

that recurring rituals and routines shape student behaviour over time (Deal & Peterson, 1999), and studies of effective teachers confirm that personality and consistent modelling strengthen character education (Lukman et al., 2021). These mechanisms — modelling, ritual and consistency — map directly onto the habituation practices observed in Indonesian madrasah, and they provide a theoretically grounded vocabulary for the present study.

The literature thus presents a notable gap. While the role of PAI teachers in character formation is well documented, the specific contribution of Fiqh teachers — whose subject concerns the very practice of worship — remains underexplored, particularly in non-Javanese contexts such as East Kalimantan. Internationally, the emerging literature on Fiqh education has concentrated on higher-order skills such as *ijtihad* among undergraduates (Khalil & Mohd Razif, 2024), leaving the character-forming potential of Fiqh at school level largely unexamined. Moreover, no study has integrated teacher roles, habituation, exemplary modelling and school culture within a single analytical framework for the madrasah context. This gap is significant because Fiqh instruction, if understood properly, may constitute one of the most direct and culturally embedded vehicles for religious character formation available to Islamic schooling.

The present study addresses this gap through a qualitative descriptive investigation at MTsN 4 Kutai Kartanegara, an Islamic junior secondary school in East Kalimantan. Three research questions guide the inquiry: (1) how do Fiqh teachers foster students' religious character; (2) what school activities support this formation; and (3) what factors support or hinder the process? The novelty of the study lies in its subject-specific lens (Fiqh), its integrative analytical framework, and its under-researched regional context. The following sections elaborate the theoretical framework and methodology.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher roles in Islamic education

The teacher occupies a central position in Islamic education, functioning not only as a transmitter of knowledge but as an educator, mentor, motivator and exemplar for students. Empirical studies of Islamic education teachers in Indonesia have documented these roles in religious character formation: teachers act as habituation agents through structured routines (Isnaini, 2024; Rozak, 2023), as motivators who cultivate students' awareness of worship (Romi et al., 2024), and as designers of habituation-based instructional approaches that develop both religious character and

discipline (Triyono & Subando, 2025). Within this literature, the five-role conception — educator, mentor, motivator, exemplar and habit-former — is widely used to describe the religious education teacher's work. However, existing studies treat religious education teachers as a largely undifferentiated category: the subject-specific enactment of these roles, and particularly the situation of the Fiqh teacher whose subject concerns the performance of worship, has not been examined as an analytical lens in its own right.

2.2 Religious character and character education

Character education scholarship conceptualises character as the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action (Lickona, 1991), and reviews of effective programmes emphasise school-wide, systematic approaches that combine instruction with practice and modelling (Berkowitz & Bier, 2008). Within Islamic education, religious character refers to attitudes and conduct that reflect obedience to religious teachings, expressed both in the performance of worship and in everyday behaviour such as courtesy, honesty, discipline and responsibility. Recent research confirms that teachers' personality and consistent exemplary conduct are decisive in strengthening character education (Lukman et al., 2021), and that character education can be operationalised through explicit transformation models at school level (Dewi & Alam, 2020). These accounts provide the theoretical vocabulary for examining how a specific subject teacher contributes to the moral-action component of character formation.

2.3 Habituation and exemplary modelling

Habituation (*pembiasaan*) — the deliberate repetition of activities until they become part of daily routine — is a central mechanism of character formation in Indonesian Islamic education. Empirical studies have shown that habituation through regular religious activities shapes students' religious character (Astutik et al., 2024; Hasyim & Najibah, 2022; Saidah & Falah, 2023), that structured instruments such as daily religious journals strengthen religious habit and discipline (Kurniawan, 2021), and that the internalisation of religious and national values is achieved through habituation combined with exemplary modelling based on school culture (Wahendra & Parmadi, 2022). International evidence similarly documents the effectiveness of Islamic habituation in primary education (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024) and through extracurricular religious programmes (Siregar et al., 2020). The effectiveness of modelling itself is explained by social learning theory: students acquire behaviour partly by observing significant models, which is why teacher participation in religious activities matters (Bandura, 1977).

2.4 School culture and Fiqh instruction

School culture — the shared values, rituals and routines of an institution — shapes student behaviour over time (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Studies of Indonesian schools confirm that a religious school culture, expressed through recurring activities, supports the formation of students' religious character (Arimbi & Minsih, 2022; Lutfiana et al., 2021). Fiqh instruction is potentially the most direct curricular vehicle for this formation, because its material concerns the rules and procedures of worship; research on the implementation of Islamic religious education indicates that learning which connects subject matter to religious practice contributes to students' religious character (Rina, 2021). Internationally, however, scholarship on Fiqh education has concentrated on higher-order jurisprudential skills among university students (Khalil & Mohd Razif, 2024), leaving the character-forming function of Fiqh at school level largely unexamined. The present study therefore adopts an integrative framework in which the five teacher roles operate through three mechanisms — instruction, modelling and ritual — to shape students' religious character, with supporting and hindering factors moderating the process (Figure 1).

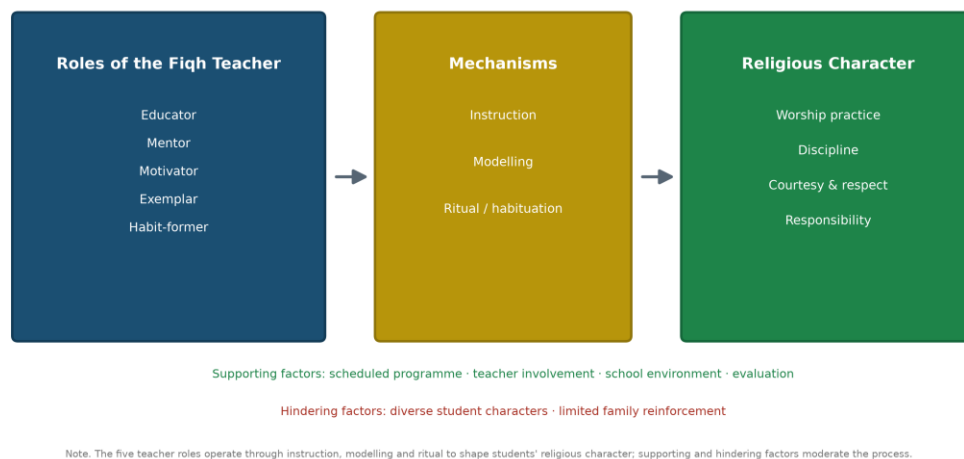


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: the five roles of the Fiqh teacher operate through instruction, modelling and ritual to shape students' religious character; supporting and hindering factors moderate the process.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, selected to provide an in-depth account of how Fiqh teachers foster students' religious character within a single Islamic junior secondary school. Qualitative research is appropriate when the aim is to understand the meanings, practices and experiences of participants in their natural setting rather than to test hypothesised relationships (Creswell, 2013). Within the qualitative tradition, a descriptive design was chosen because the study's purpose is to document and interpret an existing social practice — the role of the Fiqh teacher and the religious habituation programme of the madrasah — as experienced by the headmaster, the teacher and the students themselves. The design is consistent with the descriptive orientation of the research questions, which seek to characterise roles, activities and contextual factors rather than to compare conditions or evaluate outcomes. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher functions as the primary instrument of data collection, which allows flexible responsiveness to emerging insights in the field (Creswell, 2013). A descriptive design was further preferred over a case-study approach because the aim was not to analyse a bounded system in depth across multiple sources over time, but to provide a systematic descriptive account of a practice that has received little empirical attention.

3.2 Participants and setting

The study was conducted at MTsN 4 Kutai Kartanegara, a state Islamic junior secondary school in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The school was selected purposively because it operates a structured religious habituation programme — including morning salat Duha, Qur'an recitation (tadarus), memorisation, congregational salat Zuhur and student-led religious speeches (kultum) — together with a documented emphasis on religious character formation, making it directly relevant to the research problem. Participants comprised three groups of informants selected purposively to represent distinct vantage points on the phenomenon: the headmaster, who is responsible for school policy and programme evaluation; the Fiqh teacher, who enacts the roles under investigation; and ten students, who experience the instruction and habituation practices directly. Table 1 summarises the informant matrix. The inclusion of multiple informant groups was intended to enable source triangulation, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The school is situated in East Kalimantan, a region whose Islamic schooling practices have been largely absent from national scholarship, which remains

concentrated on Java. Students at the junior secondary level are typically 13–15 years of age, an important developmental window for the internalisation of religious habits. The ten student informants were selected with attention to variation across year levels and gender where possible [Data pending: konfirmasi variasi sampel siswa].

Table 1. Informant matrix

Code	Informant	Focus of data
KM	Headmaster	Policy, habituation programme, evaluation
GF	Fiqh teacher	Teacher roles, instructional practice, obstacles
S1–S10	Ten students	Learning experience, response to activities

3.3 Data collection

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews, observation and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the headmaster, the Fiqh teacher and each of the ten students, guided by interview protocols tailored to each informant group; the headmaster was asked about school policy and programme design, the Fiqh teacher about the enactment of his or her roles and the challenges encountered, and students about their experiences of Fiqh instruction and religious activities. Observation was carried out during religious habituation activities and Fiqh lessons to verify and contextualise the interview accounts, while documentation — including programme schedules and records of religious activities — served as supporting evidence. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Bahasa Indonesia, the language familiar to all participants, and were guided by protocols that had been reviewed by the supervising institution. Field notes were maintained throughout observation sessions to record not only the activities themselves but also the interactions between teachers and students during religious practices. [Data pending: durasi penelitian lapangan, rentang waktu wawancara/observasi, dan lokasi spesifik observasi — konfirmasi penulis.]

3.4 Data analysis and trustworthiness

Data analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative data analysis, comprising three concurrent activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interview transcripts, observation notes and documents were first condensed by selecting, simplifying and grouping data according to the focus of each research

question; the condensed data were then organised thematically and displayed systematically; finally, conclusions were drawn and verified against the full data set. The trustworthiness of the findings was addressed through source triangulation, in which information obtained from the headmaster, the Fiqh teacher and the students was compared to identify convergence and divergence, thereby increasing confidence in the interpretations (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a further check on interpretation, the researcher reviewed the preliminary themes against the observation notes and documents, and where accounts diverged between informant groups, both versions are reported in the findings to preserve the complexity of the phenomenon. The analysis proceeded iteratively, moving back and forth between the condensed data and the full transcripts, until the four thematic clusters stabilised. Ethical safeguards were observed throughout: permission was obtained from the madrasah administration, informed consent was secured from parents or guardians of the student informants, participation was voluntary, and the identity of informants was protected through the use of codes (KM, GF, S1–S10) in all reporting [Data pending: dokumentasi etika riil — surat izin dan formulir informed consent].

4. Findings

This section presents the findings in four thematic clusters corresponding to the three research questions. The first cluster addresses RQ1 by examining the role of the Fiqh teacher; the second addresses RQ2 by describing the school's religious habituation programme; the third documents the religious character of students as experienced and reported by the informants; and the fourth addresses RQ3 by analysing the factors that support and hinder the formation of religious character. Taken together, the four clusters describe a school in which character formation is deliberately engineered through instruction, ritual and example. Table 2 maps each theme to its evidence base.

Table 2. Theme–evidence map

Theme	Sub-themes	Primary evidence
4.1 Role of the Fiqh teacher	Five roles; practice-based instruction; repeated guidance	Interview GF; observation of Fiqh lessons
4.2 Religious habituation programme	Morning routines; congregational prayers; kultum; memorisation	Interview KM; observation; documentation
4.3 Students' religious character	Positive response; habituation of	Interviews S1–S10; observation

	worship; prosocial behaviour	
4.4 Supporting and hindering factors	Scheduled programmes; teacher involvement; family support	Interviews KM, GF, S1–S10

4.1 The multi-faceted role of the Fiqh teacher

The findings indicate that the Fiqh teacher at MTsN 4 Kutai Kartanegara enacts five interrelated roles in fostering students' religious character: as educator, mentor, motivator, exemplar and habit-former. As educator, the teacher instils religious values and explains the importance of practising Islam; as mentor, the teacher guides students to understand and perform worship correctly; as motivator, the teacher provides repeated encouragement and counsel; as exemplar, the teacher models religious conduct through participation in the school's religious activities; and as habit-former, the teacher directs students towards regular religious practice so that religious values become part of their daily routines [GF].

The five roles were not performed in isolation. The teacher reported that character formation requires continuous direction because students' backgrounds differ; accordingly, the same lesson served simultaneously as instruction (educator), correction (mentor), encouragement (motivator) and demonstration (exemplar), with the regularity of the practice itself performing the habit-forming function. This simultaneity distinguishes the Fiqh teacher's work from a purely cognitive transmission of religious knowledge. The performative dimension of Fiqh instruction was particularly evident. In teaching purification (*taharah*) and ablution (*wudu*), for example, the teacher first explained the procedure, intention and supplication, and then directed students to practise it, so that students would not merely understand the material theoretically but be able to perform the worship correctly [GF]. Because students differ in character and disposition, the teacher also provided guidance and counsel repeatedly; some students followed instructions quickly, while others required continuous reminders and support [GF]. This pattern confirms that the teacher simultaneously functions as educator, mentor and motivator, consistent with studies of Islamic education teachers' roles in religious character formation (Isnaini, 2024; Rozak, 2023). In addition, the teacher served as a role model by participating in the school's religious activities, enabling students to observe religious conduct directly rather than receiving instructions through words alone. The motivational role was exercised through repeated counsel and through the teacher's own visible engagement; informants suggested that students were more inclined to participate in worship when they saw the teacher performing the same practices [GF; S1–S10]. Observation confirmed that lessons on purification were organised so that explanation was

immediately followed by demonstration and supervised practice, with the teacher correcting posture and sequence during student performance [observation]. [Data pending: sisipkan 1–2 verbatim kutipan dari transkrip — mis. pernyataan GF tentang praktik wudu dan nasihat berulang.]

4.2 Structured religious habituation programmes

Beyond classroom instruction, the formation of religious character at MTsN 4 Kutai Kartanegara operates through a structured set of religious habituation activities that have become part of the school's daily rhythm. According to the headmaster, the programme begins in the morning, when students are welcomed by teachers at the school gate; before lessons begin, students perform salat Duha and recite the Qur'an (tadarus). At midday, students perform congregational salat Zuhur, and the school runs a Qur'an memorisation programme alongside rotation-based student religious speeches (kultum), in which students take turns delivering religious messages to their peers [KM].

The kultum activity deserves particular attention: it not only deepens students' religious understanding but also trains their courage and sense of responsibility, as each student must prepare and deliver a message before an audience [KM; observation]. The morning routine is significant not only for its religious content but for its consistency: the welcome at the gate, the Duha prayer and the recitation form a fixed sequence that students internalise as the natural beginning of the school day. The memorisation programme similarly operates on a submission-and-review cycle in which students deposit new memorisation and review previous material under teacher supervision [KM; documentation]. The routine character of these activities indicates that the school deliberately seeks to make religious values part of students' everyday lives rather than confining them to the classroom. The programme is not limited to students: the headmaster reported that teachers and other school staff participate in the religious activities, so that character formation proceeds through the school culture as a whole rather than through Fiqh instruction alone [KM]. Teachers and staff participate in the same activities as students — praying, reciting and, where relevant, supervising — so that the school models religious practice as a collective norm rather than an obligation imposed on children [KM; observation]. The headmaster further reported conducting periodic evaluation of the programme to monitor teacher involvement and to inform improvement [KM]. These findings are consistent with studies demonstrating that habituation through regular religious activities shapes students' religious

character (Astutik et al., 2024; Hasyim & Najibah, 2022). [Data pending: sisipkan verbatim KM tentang jadwal kegiatan dan evaluasi.]

4.3 Students' religious character in practice

Student informants responded positively to Fiqh instruction and to the school's religious activities. Students reported that lessons felt enjoyable and were easier to understand when accompanied by practice, and that beyond worship material they learned about speaking well, tolerance and good behaviour [S1–S10]. Students also reported that the religious activities helped them become more accustomed to performing worship, indicating that instruction and habituation provided direct experience in applying religious values [S1–S10]. Several students noted that they preferred lessons accompanied by practice because the meaning of the material became concrete; for example, learning the sequence of ablution while performing it fixed the procedure in memory more effectively than memorising it from a textbook [S1–S10].

The religious character cultivated at the school is expressed not only in the performance of worship but also in everyday conduct: discipline, courteous speech, tolerance, respect for others and responsibility were repeatedly mentioned by informants as expected outcomes of the school's religious formation [S1–S10; observation]. The character outcomes described by informants correspond closely to the values the madrasah's programme explicitly targets, suggesting that the programme's intended values are being received by students. These accounts align with research showing that regular religious school culture supports the formation of students' character (Saidah & Falah, 2023). [Data pending: sisipkan verbatim 2–3 siswa — mis. pernyataan tentang salat Duha/tadarus dan pembelajaran praktik.]

4.4 Supporting and hindering factors

Several factors were found to support the formation of religious character at the school. First, the religious programme is scheduled and implemented routinely, giving students repeated opportunities to engage in religious activities until these become habitual. Second, the involvement and role modelling of teachers and school staff reinforce the programme. Third, the school environment itself — including the physical setting and the shared expectations of the school community — supports religious practice. Fourth, the headmaster's periodic evaluation helps maintain consistency and quality [KM]. The evaluation function is worth emphasising: the headmaster uses periodic review not only to check teacher involvement but also to adjust

scheduling and to identify activities that need reinforcement, thereby treating character formation as a managed programme rather than an informal routine [KM].

Conversely, two factors were reported as hindrances. First, students differ in character and in prior religious habits: some students were already accustomed to worship, while others required more intensive guidance. Second, family environments often do not reinforce the religious habits cultivated at school, and because students spend most of their time outside the school, the lack of home-based religious habituation weakens the continuity of the formation process [GF]. These findings imply that the formation of religious character requires sustained collaboration among teachers, the school, students and families, so that habituation at school is complemented by habituation at home [GF; KM]. The family factor was repeatedly identified as the decisive external condition: students whose families maintained religious routines at home sustained their school-formed habits, whereas students without such support tended to regress outside school hours [GF; S1–S10]. [Data pending: sisipkan verbatim GF tentang hambatan keluarga.]

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of key findings

This study examined how Fiqh teachers foster students' religious character in a state Islamic junior secondary school in East Kalimantan. The findings portray the Fiqh teacher as a multi-role agent whose effectiveness rests on the integration of instruction, modelling and habituation: the five roles identified — educator, mentor, motivator, exemplar and habit-former — were enacted simultaneously rather than sequentially, and they converged on a single pedagogical logic. That logic is the performative character of Fiqh itself. Because the subject concerns the rules and procedures of worship, its values are taught through supervised practice — students do not merely learn about ablution or prayer; they perform them under guidance until the practice becomes routine. The habit-forming function of the Fiqh teacher is therefore not an add-on to instruction but its natural extension, a finding that gives concrete shape to the claim that Fiqh instruction may be one of the most direct vehicles for religious character formation available to Islamic schooling. It is also worth noting that character formation at this madrasah is not delegated to a single subject: the school's culture-wide programme means that Fiqh instruction, religious rituals and staff modelling reinforce one another, so that the Fiqh teacher's contribution

is amplified rather than isolated. This systemic quality may explain why the informants consistently described character formation as a whole-school undertaking.

5.2 Comparison with previous studies

The findings corroborate the established literature on Islamic education teachers' roles in religious character formation, including the role of PAI teachers as habituation agents (Isnaini, 2024; Rozak, 2023) and as motivators (Romi et al., 2024), as well as the effectiveness of habituation-based instructional approaches (Triyono & Subando, 2025). The present study extends this literature in two respects. First, it focuses on the Fiqh teacher specifically, demonstrating that the performative demands of the subject shape how the generic teacher roles are enacted — most visibly in the habit-former role, which is realised through supervised practice of worship rather than through generic classroom routines. Second, the study's location in East Kalimantan provides evidence from a non-Javanese context that the existing literature has largely overlooked.

The habituation findings are consistent with studies showing that regular religious activities shape students' religious character (Astutik et al., 2024; Hasyim & Najibah, 2022; Saidah & Falah, 2023), that structured instruments such as daily journals strengthen religious habit and discipline (Kurniawan, 2021), and that Islamic habituation operates effectively in primary education (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024) and through extracurricular religious programmes (Siregar et al., 2020). The school-culture dimension of the findings echoes studies of religious school culture (Arimbi & Minsih, 2022; Lutfiana et al., 2021) and of the internalisation of religious and national values through habituation and exemplary modelling based on school culture (Wahendra & Parmadi, 2022). Notably, the headmaster's periodic evaluation function — a quality-control loop within the habituation programme — has received little attention in prior studies and represents a promising avenue for further research. At the same time, the finding that this evaluation functions as a quality-control loop is a nuance absent from most previous accounts, which tend to describe habituation programmes as static arrangements; the present data suggest that deliberate monitoring and adjustment may be part of what makes such programmes effective.

5.3 Theoretical implications

The findings speak to three theoretical traditions. First, in Lickona's (1991) terms, the study illustrates the moral-action component of character formation: while Fiqh instruction provides

moral knowing (knowledge of worship rules) and motivation supports moral feeling, the supervised practice of worship operationalises moral action, the component most difficult to cultivate in conventional schooling. Second, in social learning terms (Bandura, 1977), the exemplar role of the teacher functions as a modelling mechanism: students acquire religious conduct partly by observing a significant model enact it, which explains why the teacher's participation in school religious activities was perceived as central. Third, in school-culture terms (Deal & Peterson, 1999), the recurring rituals of the madrasah — salat Duha, tadarus, congregational prayer and kultum — function as carriers of shared values, shaping behaviour through routine and expectation. The study's contribution is to integrate these three mechanisms within a single analytical framework for the madrasah context, complementing an international Fiqh-education literature that has concentrated on higher-order jurisprudential skills among undergraduates (Khalil & Mohd Razif, 2024) rather than on character formation at school level. The integrative framework also clarifies a boundary condition: the three mechanisms are not interchangeable. Modelling works through identification with a person, ritual works through repetition in context, and instruction works through understanding; a programme that relies on only one of these mechanisms is likely to produce thinner character formation than one that combines all three. Future work could test this proposition directly by comparing madrasah with different programme configurations. The finding is also consistent with evidence that teachers' personality and consistent modelling strengthen character education (Lukman et al., 2021).

5.4 Practical implications

For madrasah practice, the findings suggest three actionable directions. First, the structure and consistency of the religious habituation programme should be protected as a core component of character formation: the scheduled, repetitive character of the activities — not their occasional performance — is what converts values into habits. Second, the role of the Fiqh teacher should be explicitly recognised and supported, including through professional development that helps teachers enact the habit-former and exemplar roles deliberately, and through timetabling that protects practice-based Fiqh instruction. Third, the family dimension should be addressed systematically: because home reinforcement was identified as a key hindering factor, madrasah should design structured parent engagement, such as home-based worship logs or family religious routines, so that habituation at school is continued at home. Given the identified role of family support, madrasah policy should treat parents as partners in the habituation process — for

example, by communicating the weekly religious routine and inviting families to report home practice — rather than assuming that school-based formation alone is sufficient. The evaluation practice already employed by the headmaster should be retained and formalised as a quality loop for the programme.

5.5 Limitations and future research

Several limitations qualify the findings. The study is a single-site qualitative description; its contribution is depth and contextual specificity rather than generalisability, and the patterns identified should be examined across other madrasah in East Kalimantan and beyond. Second, the study documents roles, activities and perceived outcomes but does not measure change in students' religious character; conclusions about effectiveness remain inferential. Third, the accounts are based primarily on self-report, although source triangulation across headmaster, teacher and students, complemented by observation, mitigates this concern. Fourth, the analysis treats the five teacher roles analytically, whereas in practice they overlap; future work might examine role conflicts or the conditions under which particular roles dominate. Finally, the study did not examine students' home environments directly; the family factor is reported from the school's perspective, and future research should include parents as informants. Future research should therefore pursue comparative multi-madrasah designs, longitudinal studies tracing character development over the junior secondary years, mixed-method studies that combine qualitative accounts with measures of religious behaviour, and investigations of the family factor, including how home–school collaboration moderates the persistence of religious habits.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how Fiqh teachers foster students' religious character at a state Islamic junior secondary school in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The findings show that the Fiqh teacher enacts five interrelated roles — educator, mentor, motivator, exemplar and habit-former — whose effectiveness rests on the performative character of the subject itself: because Fiqh concerns the rules and procedures of worship, religious values are transmitted not only through explanation but through supervised practice, so that habits are formed in the very act of learning. The school's structured religious habituation programme — morning welcome, salat Duha, Qur'an recitation, congregational prayer, memorisation and student religious speeches —

extended this formation beyond the classroom, while the headmaster's periodic evaluation operated as a quality-control loop sustaining the programme's consistency.

The study contributes to scholarship on Islamic education in three ways. Theoretically, it integrates instruction, exemplary modelling and ritual within a single analytical framework for the madrasah context, showing that these mechanisms reinforce one another rather than operate in isolation. Empirically, it provides evidence from a non-Javanese context that the religious-education literature has largely overlooked, and it documents a quality-control mechanism — programme evaluation — that previous accounts of habituation have left unexamined. Practically, it offers madrasah administrators a concrete picture of how the Fiqh teacher's role, the school's routines and family support interact, and where interventions are most likely to be effective.

These conclusions are bounded by the study's scope: a single school, a descriptive design, and accounts based primarily on informant reports. Future research should compare multiple madrasah, trace students' religious character over time, and investigate the family factor directly, including parents as informants. Within these limits, the study offers a clear message for Islamic schooling: the formation of religious character is most robust when a subject that teaches the practice of worship, a school culture that ritualises that practice, and families that sustain it work in concert.

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- Note.* Page ranges for several entries (Dewi & Alam, 2020; Berkowitz & Bier, 2008; Siregar et al., 2020) were compiled from Crossref records; the end page of Lukman et al. (2021) is pending verification from the official IJERE PDF before submission. Canonical books without DOIs (Bandura, 1977; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lickona, 1991) are cited with publishers, with existence confirmed via published reviews.