



ASWAJA-ORIENTED SCHOOL CULTURE AND THE FORMATION OF STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS CHARACTER

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Abstract: This study aims to examine how *Aswaja*-oriented school culture shapes students' religious character in a madrasah context. School culture plays a crucial role in cultivating moral, spiritual, and social development beyond formal academic instruction. In Islamic education, religious character formation requires not only doctrinal teaching but also habituation, institutional consistency, and daily value internalization. This study employed a qualitative case study design in an Islamic junior secondary school. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal three main mechanisms of *Aswaja*-oriented character formation. First, social and spiritual habits, including greetings, smiles, salutations, and congregational prayer, foster respect, discipline, politeness, and social harmony. Second, collective prayer and *istigasah* strengthen students' spiritual awareness, moderation, humility, and reliance on Allah in facing life challenges. Third, structured Qur'an Reading Guidance develops patience, seriousness, tajwid accuracy, self-awareness, and the principle of *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*. This study contributes an integrated framework for understanding *Aswaja*-based school culture as a living curriculum for religious character formation. It recommends that madrasahs systematically design, coordinate, and evaluate *Aswaja*-oriented cultural routines to cultivate spiritually aware, disciplined, tolerant, and socially responsible students.

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INTRODUCTION

School culture plays a pivotal role in contemporary education, transcending mere academic instruction to encompass moral, spiritual, and social development essential for navigating complex and pluralistic societies (Huang, 2023; Udemba, 2024). In Islamic educational settings, the cultivation of students'

religious character is equally critical, as learning extends beyond doctrinal knowledge to embodied practice, habituation, and value internalization (Kulsum et al., 2024; Lahmar, 2020). Institutional routines, such as greeting teachers, collective prayer, maintaining cleanliness, and Qur'anic reading, are subtle yet powerful mechanisms for shaping attitudes, habits, and dispositions (Khofsah et al., 2025; Muttaqin et al., 2024). Madrasah culture, as an institutionalized set of values and practices, forms a distinct identity for educational communities, guiding behaviour and interpersonal interactions in ways that promote discipline, respect, and communal harmony (Mantau & Buhungo, 2024; Sulaiman et al., 2024). Establishing and sustaining such a culture is socially significant, as it supports the development of students who are morally grounded, spiritually aware, and socially responsible, thus contributing positively to both immediate and broader societal contexts.

The importance of this study is underscored by prevailing concerns regarding adolescent moral and religious conduct. Contemporary students often encounter challenges such as peer pressure, declining motivation to learn, engagement in deviant behaviours, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency (Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024; Filkin et al., 2022). These phenomena highlight the insufficiency of cognitive religious knowledge alone in fostering ethical behaviour. Habituation and consistent moral guidance are required for students to practice religious teachings in daily life effectively. Essential qualities, including honesty, justice, humility, discipline, altruism, and future-oriented behaviour, must be systematically nurtured through school-based practices (Ansori et al., 2024; Rozi et al., 2025). Consequently, madrasahs are tasked with creating cultural environments that integrate religious knowledge with lived experience, enabling students to internalize Islamic values as principles that inform their interactions with God, peers, and society at large.

Prior research has documented the role of school culture in supporting religious moral development. Anisah (2023) and Retnasari et al. (2023) investigated the implementation of school culture in enhancing religious moral education, emphasizing the facilitating and constraining factors. Burga & Damopolii (2022) and Metcalfe et al. (2024) highlighted school culture as a vehicle for cultivating religious morals, focusing on social values embedded in institutional practices. Similarly, Rahayu et al. (2024) and Saryanto et al. (2023) examined environmentally oriented school culture in shaping students' ethical character concerning environmental stewardship. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that school culture provides a structured context for moral education, bridging institutional values, habitual practices, and student behaviour. While informative, these studies predominantly address general moral education, social values, or environmental concern, and often lack focus on school culture explicitly grounded in specific Islamic frameworks such as *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* (*Aswaja*).

The existing literature also underscores limitations in addressing how *Aswaja*-based principles moderation, tolerance, balance, justice, and ethical engagement can be systematically embedded in school culture. While strategies for fostering religious values in madrasahs have been proposed, including

leadership-driven initiatives, persuasive formation of community norms, and codified habit formation, empirical evidence remains sparse regarding their integration into coherent cultural systems. Moreover, school culture functions as an educational identity that must align institutional goals with community expectations (Fisher, 2021; Sailin et al., 2024). The lack of research on explicitly *Aswaja*-oriented cultural implementation constitutes a significant gap, as such orientation is particularly relevant for cultivating moderate, inclusive, and ethically robust students capable of navigating religious and social pluralism.

This study advances the field by focusing on *Aswaja*-oriented school culture as an integrated mechanism for character formation. Unlike prior research that examines discrete activities or broad moral education, this research emphasizes a systematic approach in which *Aswaja* principles guide institutional vision, cultural programs, and daily practices. Specific activities such as salutations (S3), congregational prayer, joint *istigasah*, and structured Qur'anic reading are analyzed not merely as rituals but as components of a cohesive cultural framework designed to cultivate religious character. By conceptualizing school culture as an operationalized embodiment of *Aswaja* principles, the study provides theoretical and practical insights into how moderate Islamic values are institutionalized, habituated, and internalized in educational practice. This approach extends the state of the art in research on Islamic character education, offering a model for systematic, value-driven pedagogical practice.

The research problem guiding this study centers on understanding how *Aswaja*-oriented school culture is planned, executed, and reflected in the religious character of students. The central argument posits that religious character cannot be instilled solely through doctrinal teaching but requires continuous engagement with institutional culture that integrates vision, leadership, coordinated activities, and daily habituation. When *Aswaja* values are embedded within school culture, students are expected to develop respectful interpersonal interactions, disciplined worship practices, spiritual reliance on God, Qur'anic literacy, and balanced ethical decision-making. This study posits that the effectiveness of school culture depends on structured, participatory, and consistent implementation, ensuring that moral and religious dispositions become part of daily experience rather than abstract ideals.

Ultimately, this study aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enhances the understanding of school culture as a vehicle for shaping religious character within Islamic education, highlighting the operationalization of *Aswaja* principles. Practically, it offers a model for madrasah leaders and teachers to design, coordinate, and implement cultural activities that systematically nurture moral and spiritual development. By integrating planning, implementation, and reflective evaluation, the research demonstrates how school culture can foster students who are not only academically competent but also ethically grounded, socially responsible, and spiritually aware. This integrative approach reinforces the transformative potential of Islamic schooling in cultivating well-rounded individuals who embody moderate, inclusive, and principled religious character.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of how *Aswaja*-oriented school culture is planned, implemented, and reflected in the formation of students' religious character within a natural educational setting. Rather than measuring variables statistically, this study explored meanings, practices, interactions, institutional values, and habituation processes embedded in everyday school life. The case study approach was selected because the phenomenon under investigation was context-bound and required a detailed examination of a specific educational institution that systematically integrates *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* values into its school culture. Case study research is particularly suitable for exploring complex social and educational phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are closely interrelated (Candra Susanto et al., 2024; Weyant, 2022). Through this design, the researcher was able to examine cultural practices, leadership roles, program implementation, and character-building processes holistically.

The research was conducted at MTs Raudlatul Ulum Karangploso, a madrasah that implements *Aswaja*-oriented school culture as part of its institutional identity and character education program. This location was selected purposively because the madrasah has explicitly incorporated *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* values into its vision, educational activities, and daily cultural practices. These values are manifested through various school-based programs, including greetings, smiles, and salutations; congregational prayers; *istigasah* and collective prayer; and Qur'an reading guidance. The selection of MTs Raudlatul Ulum Karangploso was also based on its relevance to the research focus, as it provides a suitable and information-rich context for examining how moderate Islamic values are institutionalized in school culture and internalized by students through repeated practices. Thus, the research site was not chosen merely for accessibility, but because it represented a meaningful case for understanding the relationship between *Aswaja*-based school culture and the formation of students' religious character.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine the implementation of school culture in daily activities, particularly how religious routines were organized, performed, and experienced by students and teachers. Interviews were carried out with relevant school stakeholders, including the head of the madrasah, teachers, and members of the school culture coordination team, to obtain detailed information regarding the planning, implementation, and perceived outcomes of *Aswaja*-based cultural programs. The interviews enabled the researcher to explore participants' interpretations, experiences, and reflections on the role of school culture in shaping students' religious character. Documentation was used to complement and validate the data obtained from observation and interviews. The documents examined included school vision and mission statements, cultural program schedules, activity records, photographs, and other institutional documents

related to religious character formation. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation, which strengthens the credibility and validity of qualitative research findings (Henriksen et al., 2022; Mbanaso et al., 2023).

The data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Asipi et al., 2022). Data condensation was conducted by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing relevant information obtained from field notes, interview transcripts, and documentation. This stage enabled the researcher to identify data related to the planning, implementation, and outcomes of *Aswaja*-oriented school culture. The next stage was data display, in which the condensed data were presented in narrative descriptions, thematic categories, tables, and visual representations to support systematic interpretation. Through data display, patterns and relationships among institutional vision, cultural activities, and students' religious character formation could be identified more clearly. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by interpreting the meaning of the data in relation to the research focus. Verification was conducted continuously by comparing data from different sources and techniques, thereby ensuring that the findings were credible, coherent, and grounded in the empirical context of the study. In addition, attention to credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability was maintained to strengthen the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis (Janis, 2022; Nyirenda et al., 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings indicate that the implementation of *Aswaja*-oriented school culture is rooted in the institutional vision and mission of the madrasah. The vision emphasizes the formation of an Islamic generation grounded in *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* values, knowledge, noble character, and positive self-development. Meanwhile, the mission translates this vision into educational practices by promoting Islamic education based on *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah*, strengthening religious internalization, practising Islamic teachings, and developing students' creativity through curricular and extracurricular activities. This institutional foundation shows that *Aswaja* values are not treated as supplementary religious activities, but as an organizing principle that guides the school's cultural programs and character formation process.

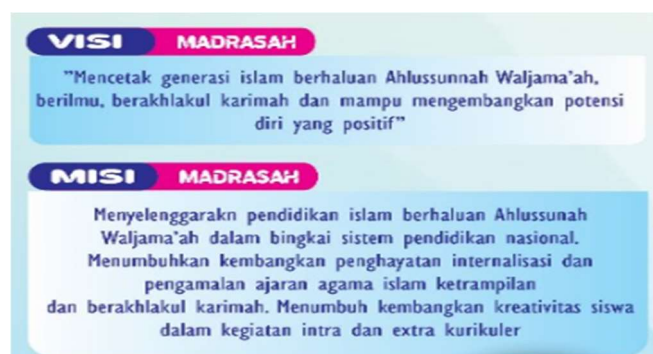


Figure 1. The integration of School Vision into the *Aswaja*-based school culture

Social and Spiritual Habits: Greetings, Smiles, and Congregational Prayer

Social and spiritual habits in this finding refer to the institutionalized practices through which students are habituated to perform respectful social interaction and disciplined worship as part of *Aswaja*-oriented school culture. These habits are operationally manifested in two main programs: the culture of greetings, smiles, and salutations (S3), and congregational prayer, particularly *Dhuha* and *Dhuhur* prayers. The S3 culture is practiced through daily interpersonal encounters between teachers and students at the school gate, where students are welcomed with greetings, smiles, handshakes, and brief personal interaction. Meanwhile, congregational prayer is implemented through scheduled worship activities that involve students, teachers, and the school culture coordination team. Together, these practices represent a combination of social ethics and spiritual discipline. They are not merely ceremonial routines, but structured habituation processes intended to cultivate *tasamuh*, respect, discipline, responsibility, and social harmony within the school environment.

The first interview finding shows that S3 culture was organized as a daily morning practice involving the active presence of the school culture coordination team. One informant from the S3 coordination team explained that the team arrived at school earlier than the students to ensure that teachers were ready at the gate before students entered the school area. The informant stated, "Initially, the coordination team arrives at 06.00 to ensure that all members on duty are already at the school gate before the students arrive. From 06.20 to 06.40, students begin to arrive, and during that time teachers greet them by shaking hands, offering greetings, asking about their condition, and smiling." This statement indicates that S3 culture is not spontaneous or incidental, but deliberately planned and consistently performed. The researcher interprets this practice as a form of affective moral education, in which students learn respect, warmth, politeness, and social sensitivity through direct interaction with teachers.

The second interview finding relates to the implementation of congregational prayer as a structured spiritual habit. An informant from the congregational prayer coordination team explained that *Dhuha* prayer was conducted after the morning welcoming activity, while *Dhuhur* prayer was carried out after learning activities. The informant stated, "*Sunnah* and obligatory prayer activities in this school include *Dhuha* and *Dhuhur* prayers in congregation. *Dhuha* prayer is held from 06.40 to 07.00 after welcoming students at the gate. Meanwhile, *Dhuhur* prayer is conducted at 12.30 to 13.00 after learning activities. Usually, the coordination team announces the prayer time through the school speaker. After that, students perform ablution, while the coordination team chants prayers, and when everyone has gathered, the congregational prayer begins." This statement demonstrates that congregational prayer is implemented through a clear sequence of activities: announcement, preparation, ablution, collective gathering, and prayer. The researcher interprets this pattern as an institutional mechanism for training students in time discipline, worship awareness, collective responsibility, and spiritual obedience.

The observation data further confirm that the S3 culture and congregational prayer were embedded in students' daily routines. In the morning, the coordination team stood at the school gate to welcome students as they arrived. Students responded by shaking hands, greeting teachers, smiling, and interacting politely before entering the school area. This repeated encounter created a welcoming atmosphere and encouraged students to begin the school day with positive social behaviour. After the welcoming activity, students participated in *Dhuha* prayer, followed later in the day by *Dhuhur* prayer in congregation. The announcement through the school speaker functioned as a collective reminder, while the queue for ablution trained students to wait, follow order, and prepare themselves before worship. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that school culture operates through repetition, coordination, and symbolic interaction. Social behaviour and worship discipline are formed not through instruction alone, but through daily embodied practice.

Restating the data, the finding indicates that S3 culture and congregational prayer serve as two complementary mechanisms in shaping students' religious character. S3 culture emphasizes the social dimension of religiosity by habituating students to show respect, politeness, friendliness, and harmony in their interactions with teachers and peers. Congregational prayer emphasizes the spiritual dimension of religiosity by training students to perform worship on time, follow collective religious discipline, and understand prayer as an essential part of daily life. Both practices are coordinated by teachers and the school culture team, showing that character formation depends on institutional consistency, teacher modelling, and students' repeated participation. In this sense, religious character is not treated as an abstract moral concept, but as a visible pattern of behaviour practiced in school routines. Students gradually learn that being religious involves both ethical interaction with others and disciplined devotion to God.

The data show a consistent pattern in which *Aswaja*-oriented school culture integrates social ethics and spiritual practice into a single character-building process. S3 culture reflects the principle of *tasamuh* because it promotes mutual respect, friendliness, and peaceful interaction among school members. Congregational prayer reflects discipline and balance because it trains students to organize their time, prioritize worship, and participate in collective religious life without neglecting their learning activities. The pattern that emerges from the data is therefore not merely one of routine implementation, but one of value internalization. Teachers act as role models, the coordination team ensures program continuity, and students become active participants in repeated practices. Through this process, tolerance, respect, discipline, and harmony become embedded in the everyday culture of the madrasah.

Table 1. Interview Data on Social and Spiritual Habits

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Coordinator of Greetings, Smiles, and Salutations (S3)	“Initially, the coordination team arrives at 06.00 to ensure that all members on duty are already at the school gate before the students arrive. From 06.20 to 06.40, students begin to arrive, and during that time teachers greet them by shaking hands, offering greetings, asking about their condition, and smiling.”	Structured habituation of respectful interaction, politeness, teacher modelling, and social harmony
Coordinator of Congregational Prayer	“Sunnah and obligatory prayer activities in this school include <i>Dhuha</i> and <i>Dhuhur</i> prayers in congregation. <i>Dhuha</i> prayer is held from 06.40 to 07.00 after welcoming students at the gate. Meanwhile, <i>Dhuhur</i> prayer is conducted at 12.30 to 13.00 after learning activities. Usually, the coordination team announces the prayer time through the school speaker. After that, students perform ablution, while the coordination team chants prayers, and when everyone has gathered, the congregational prayer begins.”	Structured worship discipline, time awareness, collective responsibility, and spiritual habituation

Table 1 demonstrates that the formation of students’ religious character is supported by two interconnected forms of habituation: social habituation and spiritual habituation. The S3 coordinator’s statement shows that respectful interaction is deliberately cultivated from the beginning of the school day. The teachers’ presence at the gate is not only administrative supervision, but also a symbolic and pedagogical practice. Through greetings, smiles, and handshakes, students encounter a model of Islamic social ethics that emphasizes warmth, respect, and relational harmony. This practice creates an affective environment in which students are encouraged to recognize teachers not merely as academic instructors, but also as moral exemplars. The indicator that emerges from this data is the habituation of respectful interaction, which is central to the formation of *tasamuh* and social harmony.

The second interview excerpt shows that congregational prayer functions as a structured mechanism for cultivating spiritual discipline. The use of scheduled time, public announcement, ablution preparation, collective gathering, and teacher-led prayer indicates that worship is embedded in the institutional rhythm of the madrasah. This practice trains students to associate prayer with discipline, order, and responsibility. The researcher interprets this pattern as a form of spiritual socialization, where students learn that religious commitment must be practiced collectively and consistently. The prayer routine also strengthens the balance between academic life and worship, showing that school culture can integrate religious obligation into the daily educational process. Thus, the ideal influence of these practices lies in their ability to transform repeated routines into internalized values.

Overall, the pattern emerging from the data shows that social and spiritual habits are developed through planning, coordination, repetition, and teacher

modelling. The S3 culture establishes the social atmosphere of the school by nurturing respect, friendliness, and harmony, while congregational prayer strengthens students' discipline, responsibility, and awareness of worship. These two practices reinforce each other: respectful interaction prepares students to live harmoniously with others, while congregational prayer directs them toward spiritual obedience and self-discipline. The finding therefore confirms that *Aswaja*-oriented school culture shapes religious character through everyday practices that are simple in form but significant in moral and spiritual meaning.

Collective Prayer and *Istigasah* Practices

Collective prayer and *istigasah* practices refer to the structured religious activities in which students participate in group supplications, guided recitations, and spiritual reflection sessions. Operationally, these activities are organized as small-group or whole-school events led by the school culture coordination team. Students are grouped to ensure active participation, and teachers guide the recitation of prayers while monitoring students' engagement. The practice is designed to strengthen students' spiritual awareness, reinforce the principles of moderation (*tawasuth*), and cultivate reliance on Allah in daily life challenges. These activities are deliberately scheduled within the school timetable, complementing individual worship routines and other aspects of the *Aswaja*-oriented school culture, such as greetings, smiles, salutations, and congregational prayers.

The first interview with an informant from the *Istigasah* coordination team highlighted the structured guidance provided to students. The informant explained, "The implementation of *Istigasah* begins after *Dhuha* prayer. Students are divided into small groups to ensure focused recitation, and teachers guide them through each step. This arrangement allows each student to actively participate, ask questions, and reflect on the meaning of the prayers." The researcher interprets this statement as evidence that *istigasah* is not a passive activity but a carefully coordinated practice emphasizing spiritual engagement, group moderation, and reflective learning. By dividing students into small groups, the madrasah ensures that every student internalizes the spiritual principles of *Aswaja* and develops the habit of consistent prayer and reflection.

A second interview, conducted with the school culture coordinator overseeing collective prayers, emphasized the integration of these practices into daily school life. The informant stated, "Our goal is to teach students that asking for Allah's help is essential, recognizing human limitations, and always seeking guidance. By practicing collective prayers daily, students understand the importance of spiritual dependence while remaining balanced in worldly responsibilities." The researcher interprets this data as demonstrating that collective prayer functions as a bridge between spiritual awareness and practical moderation (*tawasuth*), aligning students' internalization of faith with their social and academic responsibilities. The structured coordination reinforces both religious discipline and the communal ethos of the madrasah.

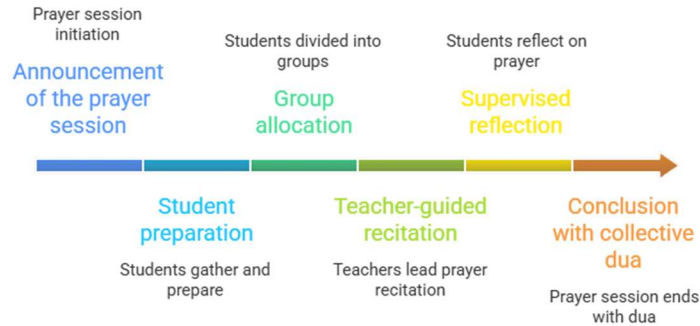


Figure 2. Flow of Collective Prayer and Istigasah Practices

Observational data further support the findings from interviews. Students were observed participating actively in group recitation sessions, asking questions, and following teachers’ guidance attentively. The coordination team ensured that students maintained focus and reflected on the meaning of the prayers. This observation confirms that collective prayer and *istigasah* practices contribute to both discipline and spiritual maturity, while fostering a sense of community and shared moral responsibility. The researcher interprets these observations as empirical evidence that *Aswaja*-oriented school culture successfully combines habituation, guidance, and reflection to shape students’ religious character.

Restating the data, collective prayer and *istigasah* practices represent an integrated pedagogical approach in which group worship, guided recitation, and teacher supervision combine to cultivate spiritual awareness, moderation, and dependence on Allah. Students learn to recognize their human limitations, engage in reflective prayer, and internalize principles of balance and ethical conduct. These practices are institutionalized, consistently implemented, and coordinated by both teachers and the school culture team, ensuring that the activities are sustainable and meaningful.

The pattern emerging from the data shows a structured cycle: announcement → preparation → group recitation → teacher guidance → reflection → collective dua. This cycle reflects the school’s intentional design to embed *Aswaja* principles into students’ daily experience. Social moderation is reinforced through group organization, spiritual awareness is cultivated through guided reflection, and reliance on Allah is strengthened through repeated practice. The data indicate that these activities do not occur in isolation but are systematically integrated into the school’s cultural and religious framework, producing students who are spiritually grounded, moderate, and collectively oriented.

Table 2. Interview Data on Collective Prayer and Istigasah Practices

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
<i>Istigasah</i> Coordinator	“The implementation of <i>Istigasah</i> begins after <i>Dhuha</i> prayer. Students are divided into small groups to ensure focused recitation, and teachers guide them through each step. This arrangement allows each student to actively	Small-group engagement, guided reflection, active participation, internalization of <i>Aswaja</i> principles

<p>Collective Prayer Coordinator</p>	<p>participate, ask questions, and reflect on the meaning of the prayers.” “Our goal is to teach students that asking for Allah’s help is essential, recognizing human limitations, and always seeking guidance. By practicing collective prayers daily, students understand the importance of spiritual dependence while remaining balanced in worldly responsibilities.”</p>	<p>Spiritual awareness, reliance on Allah, moderation (<i>tawasuth</i>), integration with social and academic responsibilities</p>
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Table 2 demonstrates that collective prayer and *istigasah* are deliberately structured to ensure both individual and group engagement. The *Istigasah* coordinator’s excerpt shows a pedagogical design that fosters focused attention, reflective practice, and internalization of spiritual principles. The collective prayer coordinator’s statement emphasizes balancing spiritual dependence with worldly responsibilities, highlighting that the madrasah integrates moderation into practical student life. Together, these indicators reveal a coordinated approach to moral and spiritual education, in which structured activities, teacher guidance, and student participation reinforce *Aswaja* values.

The data suggest a recurring pattern where structured guidance, repeated practice, and small-group interaction systematically produce students who are spiritually conscious, moderate, and dependent on divine guidance. The cyclical and institutionalized nature of these practices ensures that religious and ethical habits are continuously reinforced, demonstrating the efficacy of *Aswaja*-oriented school culture in shaping collective prayer, reflection, and spiritual maturity among students.

Structured Qur’an Reading Guidance (BBQ)

Structured Qur’an Reading Guidance, locally referred to as BBQ, refers to a systematic Qur’anic literacy program designed to guide students in reading, correcting, and improving their Qur’an recitation under the supervision of the school coordination team. In the field, this activity is operationalized through several stages: students take turns presenting their assigned Qur’anic readings, the coordination team listens carefully to their recitation, evaluates technical aspects of reading, and provides feedback before deciding whether the student may continue to the next surah or verse. The evaluation focuses on the accuracy of *makharijul ḥurūf*, *ṣifatul ḥurūf*, and *tajwid*. Beyond technical mastery, BBQ functions as a religious character-building activity that trains students to be patient, disciplined, careful, and responsible in learning the Qur’an. It also reflects the *Aswaja* principle of *Amar Ma’ruf Nahi Munkar* by encouraging students to approach the Qur’an properly, avoid incorrect reading practices, and internalize Qur’anic values as guidance for daily conduct.

The first interview finding shows that BBQ was implemented as a scheduled and structured activity following the morning religious routines. The coordinator of Qur’an Reading Guidance explained, “BBQ activities or Qur’an reading guidance are carried out after the *istigasah* activity, namely from 07.00 to 07.30. Initially, students take turns submitting the recitation of surahs or verses that have

previously been assigned to them. After finishing the reading, students are given an evaluation of the reading results. Later, the teacher decides whether the student may continue to the next page or remain on the same page. The decision is based on whether the student can read according to *makharijul* letters, *şifatul* letters, and *tajwid* in the surah or verse that has been read." This statement indicates that BBQ is not conducted as a general reading activity, but as a guided, evaluative, and progressive learning process. The researcher interprets this data as evidence that Qur'an reading is used as a medium for developing discipline, accuracy, patience, and sustained commitment to religious learning.

The second interview finding emphasizes the impact of BBQ on students' religious character. The Qur'an Reading Guidance coordinator stated, "With habituation through Qur'an reading guidance activities, this will have a positive effect on the formation of students' religious character. These activities can foster students' enthusiasm for learning and reading the Qur'an every day, as well as strengthen their spiritual relationship with God. In addition, this activity also trains students not only to focus on worldly and materialistic life, but to prioritize religious values, increase self-awareness, and make religion a guideline in every aspect of their lives." This statement shows that BBQ is intended not only to improve recitation competence, but also to cultivate spiritual consciousness and moral orientation. The researcher interprets this finding as an indication that BBQ contributes to the formation of students who are not merely technically able to read the Qur'an, but also more aware of religion as a moral compass in everyday life.

The structured activities of S3, congregational prayer, study circle and group prayer, and Qur'an Reading Guidance are coordinated through several student and teacher-supported teams, as illustrated in Figure 3. The figure shows that BBQ is positioned as one component of a broader *Aswaja*-oriented school culture system. While S3 strengthens respectful interaction, congregational prayer cultivates worship discipline, and *istigasah* develops collective spirituality, BBQ reinforces Qur'anic literacy, religious discipline, and moral awareness. The visual structure also demonstrates that these activities are not isolated programs, but interconnected routines that work together to support student development. In particular, the BBQ section shows that students take turns reading to the coordination team, the team monitors students' recitation, and the team provides a reading score for each student. The researcher interprets this visual flow as evidence of systematic coordination, where Qur'anic learning is carried out through supervision, evaluation, and continuous habituation within the broader framework of *Aswaja*-based character education.

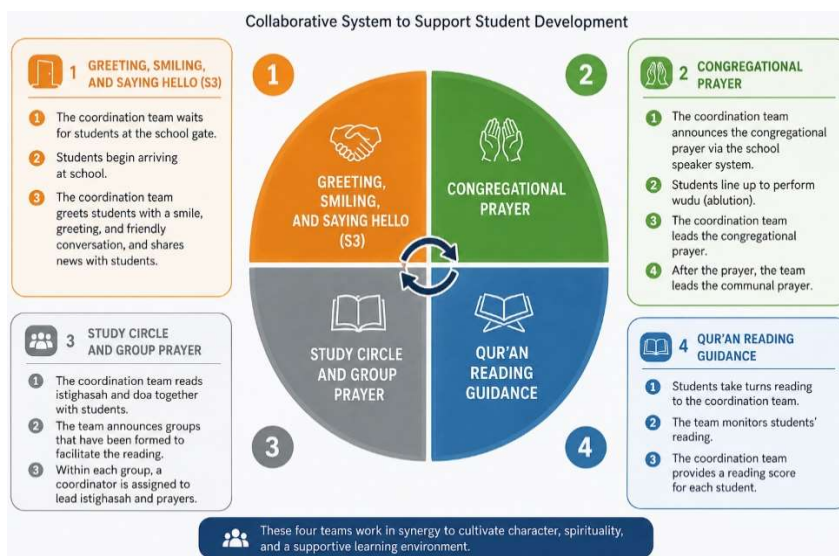


Figure 3. Student Coordination Teams and Their Roles in Supporting Aswaja-Oriented School Culture

Observation data confirm that BBQ was implemented through direct student participation, teacher supervision, and continuous correction. During the activity, students came forward individually or in turns to read assigned Qur'anic verses before the coordination team. The teachers listened attentively, corrected pronunciation errors, assessed the accuracy of *tajwid*, and provided immediate feedback. Students who had not yet read correctly were asked to repeat or remain on the same reading section, while those who demonstrated sufficient accuracy were allowed to proceed. This observation indicates that the program trains students to accept correction, practise patiently, and develop precision in religious learning. The researcher interprets this activity as a form of embodied Qur'anic pedagogy, where students learn not only through explanation, but also through repetition, correction, evaluation, and disciplined practice.

Restating the data, BBQ is a structured Qur'an reading program that integrates technical, spiritual, and moral dimensions of religious character formation. Technically, it trains students to read the Qur'an according to correct pronunciation and *tajwid*. Spiritually, it encourages students to maintain a close relationship with the Qur'an as a source of guidance. Morally, it develops patience, discipline, responsibility, and awareness of good conduct. The program also reflects *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar* because it guides students toward proper Qur'anic reading and prevents careless or incorrect engagement with the sacred text. In this sense, BBQ becomes an important mechanism within *Aswaja*-oriented school culture because it connects Qur'anic literacy with character formation. Students are not only taught to recite, but also to respect the Qur'an, accept guidance, improve themselves, and place religious values as a foundation for everyday life.

The pattern emerging from the data shows that BBQ operates through a recurring cycle of assignment, recitation, evaluation, correction, and continuation. This cycle creates a disciplined learning environment in which students are repeatedly trained to improve their Qur'anic reading. The figure further shows

that BBQ is part of a larger coordinated system of student development, alongside S3, congregational prayer, and *istigasah*. Therefore, the pattern is not merely technical Qur'an learning, but integrated religious habituation. The coordination team functions as a facilitator and evaluator, students function as active participants, and the school culture functions as the institutional framework that sustains the activity. Through this pattern, BBQ strengthens students' seriousness in learning, patience in receiving correction, discipline in following procedures, and commitment to practising religious values. The data therefore demonstrate that structured Qur'an reading guidance contributes significantly to the formation of students' religious character within an *Aswaja*-oriented madrasah culture.

Table 3. Interview Data on Structured Qur'an Reading Guidance (BBQ)

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Qur'an Reading Guidance Coordinator	"BBQ activities or Qur'an reading guidance are carried out after the <i>istigasah</i> activity, namely from 07.00 to 07.30. Initially, students take turns submitting the recitation of surahs or verses that have previously been assigned to them. After finishing the reading, students are given an evaluation of the reading results. Later, the teacher decides whether the student may continue to the next page or remain on the same page. The decision is based on whether the student can read according to <i>makharijul</i> letters, <i>şifatul</i> letters, and <i>tajwid</i> in the surah or verse that has been read."	Structured Qur'an reading, <i>tajwid</i> accuracy, teacher evaluation, disciplined learning, gradual progression
Qur'an Reading Guidance Coordinator	"With habituation through Qur'an reading guidance activities, this will have a positive effect on the formation of students' religious character. These activities can foster students' enthusiasm for learning and reading the Qur'an every day, as well as strengthen their spiritual relationship with God. In addition, this activity also trains students not only to focus on worldly and materialistic life, but to prioritize religious values, increase self-awareness, and make religion a guideline in every aspect of their lives."	Qur'anic enthusiasm, spiritual awareness, self-awareness, religious values, moral orientation

Table 3 shows that BBQ has two major dimensions: procedural discipline and religious character formation. The first excerpt emphasizes the technical and procedural structure of the activity. Students are not simply asked to read the Qur'an collectively; rather, they are required to submit readings individually, receive evaluation, and improve their recitation based on specific criteria. This process shows that the madrasah positions Qur'anic learning as a disciplined and measurable practice. The indicators of *tajwid* accuracy, teacher evaluation, and gradual progression demonstrate that the activity trains students to learn carefully, accept correction, and develop consistency. In this sense, BBQ supports the formation of disciplined learners who understand that religious learning requires effort, precision, and continuous improvement.

The second excerpt reveals the deeper spiritual and moral significance of BBQ. The activity is expected to foster students' enthusiasm for reading the Qur'an, strengthen their relationship with God, and increase their self-awareness of religion as a life guide. This finding indicates that BBQ is not limited to improving reading competence, but also aims to form students' moral orientation. Through repeated Qur'anic engagement, students are encouraged to prioritize religious values and avoid being dominated solely by materialistic or worldly concerns. The ideal influence of BBQ therefore lies in its capacity to connect Qur'anic literacy with *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*: students are guided toward goodness through correct reading, spiritual reflection, and moral awareness, while being prevented from careless engagement with religious teachings.

Overall, the data show a consistent pattern in which structured Qur'an Reading Guidance becomes a medium for integrating technical competence, spiritual formation, and moral discipline. Students experience a repeated process of reading, correction, evaluation, and improvement, while teachers and coordinators ensure that the process remains systematic and meaningful. The visual figure strengthens this pattern by showing that BBQ works in synergy with other school culture programs, forming an integrated *Aswaja*-oriented system. Thus, the contribution of BBQ to students' religious character is not only found in the ability to read the Qur'an correctly, but also in the development of patience, seriousness, discipline, self-awareness, and commitment to making religious values a guide for life.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *Aswaja*-oriented school culture functions as an institutional mechanism for transforming religious values into daily student behaviour. This finding is consistent with Bleazby, (2020) and Jordan (2023), who argue that character education becomes more effective when moral values are embedded in the school's everyday practices rather than delivered only through formal instruction. Similarly, (Retnasari et al., 2023b) found that religious character can be cultivated through school culture when planning, implementation, and evaluation are organized systematically. The present study supports this view by showing that the madrasah does not treat *Aswaja* values as supplementary religious symbols, but as an organizing principle that shapes its vision, mission, coordination teams, routines, and student habituation. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that school culture is not merely a general moral environment, but a structured *Aswaja*-based cultural system that integrates *tasamuh*, *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, and *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar* into concrete practices. The novelty of this study lies in its empirical model of religious character formation through three interconnected mechanisms: social-spiritual habits, collective prayer and *istigasah*, and structured Qur'an reading guidance. This contributes to character education scholarship by showing how moderate Islamic values can be operationalized through coordinated, repeated, and observable school routines.

The first finding, which concerns greetings, smiles, salutations, and congregational prayer, aligns with studies emphasizing that character

development requires both social modelling and opportunities for moral action. Kurniawati & Sunarso (2019) found that school culture contributes to character formation when values are transformed into institutional habits and collective life. Dowling & Barry (2020) and Takizawa et al. (2023) also showed that structured school-based programs can improve students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviour when consistently implemented. The present study confirms these perspectives by showing that S3 culture develops respect, politeness, and social harmony, while congregational prayer cultivates discipline, responsibility, and worship awareness. Unlike studies that discuss school culture mainly as a broad institutional climate, this research specifies how affective social interaction and worship discipline work together within an *Aswaja* framework. The theoretical implication is that religious character formation should be understood as a multidimensional process involving social ethics and spiritual discipline. Practically, the finding suggests that madrasahs can strengthen students' religious character by designing simple but consistent routines, such as teacher-student greeting practices and scheduled congregational prayer, as deliberate pedagogical interventions rather than informal traditions.

The second finding, related to collective prayer and *istigasah*, strengthens the literature on religious moderation and spiritual habituation. Latif et al. (2023) found that *Aswaja* values such as *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, and *tasamuh* contribute to strengthening religious moderation among students, while Alabdulhadi (2019) highlights the importance of religious education in fostering tolerance and preventing narrow or exclusionary religious attitudes. This study supports those arguments by showing that *istigasah* and collective prayer are not only ritual activities, but also pedagogical spaces for cultivating spiritual awareness, humility, and dependence on Allah while maintaining balance in worldly responsibilities. The finding is also in line with Ashoumi & Hidayatulloh (2022), who show that *Aswaja*-based religious moderation education encourages mutual respect and the ability to respond wisely to differences. The contribution of this study is its emphasis on *istigasah* as a communal formation process: students are not only taught to pray, but are guided to participate, reflect, and internalize moderation through group-based religious practice. The impact of this finding is significant for Islamic education because it shows that collective spirituality can become a preventive and formative strategy against individualism, moral negligence, and religious rigidity.

The third finding, concerning Structured Qur'an Reading Guidance (BBQ), corresponds with previous research on the importance of teacher modelling, gradual correction, and structured Qur'anic learning. (Zulhasif Hermawan & Mochammad Asnawi (2023) found that teacher modelling and step-by-step guidance are crucial for improving tajwid mastery and Qur'anic recitation quality. Similarly, Fahrurrozi et al. (2025) found that *Aswaja* values, including moderation, tolerance, balance, and social responsibility, can be systematically internalized through school culture and daily student interactions. The current study confirms these insights but adds a more specific contribution by showing that Qur'an reading guidance functions simultaneously as technical instruction, spiritual

habituation, and moral formation. BBQ does not only train students to read according to *makharijul ḥurūf*, *ṣifatul ḥurūf*, and *tajwid*; it also develops patience, seriousness, responsibility, and awareness of the Qur'an as a life guide. Theoretically, this expands the concept of Qur'anic literacy from a purely textual skill into a character-forming practice. Practically, the study suggests that madrasahs should not separate Qur'anic competence from character education, because structured recitation, correction, evaluation, and progression can become an effective medium for strengthening *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar* in students' daily lives.

Overall, this study contributes a new conceptual and practical model of *Aswaja*-oriented school culture by showing how institutional vision, coordination teams, teacher modelling, repeated practices, and student participation operate as an integrated system of religious character formation. This finding is consistent with Shiddiq et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of Islamic school culture in developing students' character, and Azizah et al., (2025), who show that religious school culture positively contributes to discipline, spiritual awareness, Qur'anic memorization, and Islamic learning outcomes. Nevertheless, the novelty of this study lies in its integrated framework: social interaction, congregational worship, collective supplication, and Qur'anic guidance are not treated as separate programs, but as mutually reinforcing cultural practices grounded in *Aswaja* values. The theoretical implication is that school culture should be conceptualized as a living curriculum through which religious moderation, ethical conduct, and spiritual discipline are continuously rehearsed. The practical implication is that madrasah leaders and teachers need to institutionalize character education through clear vision alignment, coordination mechanisms, routine scheduling, teacher exemplarity, and continuous evaluation. The broader impact is that *Aswaja*-oriented school culture can serve as a replicable model for Islamic schools seeking to cultivate students who are religiously committed, socially respectful, spiritually aware, disciplined, tolerant, and capable of living moderately within plural societies.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that *Aswaja*-oriented school culture effectively integrates social, spiritual, and Qur'anic learning practices to shape students' religious character. The most significant finding is that structured daily routines such as greetings, smiles, salutations (S3), congregational prayer, collective *istigasah*, and Qur'an reading guidance (BBQ) function as mechanisms for habituating respect, patience, discipline, spiritual awareness, and ethical consciousness. These activities collectively reinforce *Aswaja* principles of moderation, balance, tolerance, and *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*. The practical lesson derived from this research is that character education in Islamic schools can be operationalized through coordinated, observable, and repeatable practices rather than relying solely on doctrinal instruction, highlighting the importance of deliberate institutional design in cultivating moral and spiritual development.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study provides a novel conceptual and practical framework demonstrating how *Aswaja*-oriented culture can be systematically implemented in madrasahs. By combining social-spiritual habituation, collective prayer, and Qur'anic literacy guidance into an integrated system, the study advances the understanding of character formation as a multidimensional and context-specific process. The research also identifies a limitation: the study was conducted in a single madrasah, which may limit generalizability to other educational contexts or cultural settings. Future research could expand this framework by applying it across multiple schools, comparing the effectiveness of *Aswaja*-based practices with alternative pedagogical approaches, and exploring longitudinal impacts on students' character development and ethical behaviour over time. Such studies would further validate the practical and theoretical contributions of *Aswaja*-oriented school culture in Islamic education.

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