

## Strengthening Religious Culture at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah to Prevent Radicalism in Students' Early

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**Abstract:** Radicalism poses a significant challenge to national development and social integration in Indonesia, particularly in education. This article explores concrete strategies for strengthening religious culture to prevent radicalism among students from an early age. The study employs a descriptive qualitative field research method, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. This research examines the implementation of religious culture at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang and identifies strategies for reinforcing religious culture to combat radicalism among students. The findings indicate that practices such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and the instillation of noble moral values play a crucial role in strengthening students' religious identity and shielding them from radical ideology. Despite secular influences and excessive gadget use, support from families, communities, and madrasah policies grounded in spiritual values also contribute to this effort. Therefore, it is essential to enhance educational policies that integrate religious values, promote active family involvement in character development, and adopt adaptive learning strategies that align with digital advancements to ensure the effective and sustainable internalization of spiritual values.

**Keywords:** Religious Culture, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Radicalism, Islamic Education, Prevention of Radicalism.

**Abstract:** Radikalisme menimbulkan tantangan signifikan bagi pembangunan nasional dan integrasi sosial di Indonesia, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi konkret penguatan budaya beragama untuk mencegah radikalisme di kalangan mahasiswa sejak dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian lapangan dengan metode kualitatif deskriptif, memanfaatkan teknik pengumpulan data seperti observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji implementasi budaya beragama di MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang dan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi spesifik untuk penguatan budaya beragama untuk memerangi radikalisme di kalangan siswa. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa praktik seperti sholat berjamaah, pembacaan Al-Qur'an, dan penanaman nilai-nilai moral yang mulia memainkan peran penting dalam memperkuat identitas agama siswa dan melindungi mereka dari ideologi radikal. Dukungan dari keluarga, komunitas, dan kebijakan madrasah yang didasarkan pada nilai-nilai agama juga berkontribusi pada upaya ini, meskipun ada tantangan seperti pengaruh sekuler dan penggunaan gadget yang berlebihan. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk meningkatkan kebijakan pendidikan yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai agama, mempromosikan keterlibatan keluarga aktif dalam pengembangan karakter, dan mengadopsi strategi pembelajaran adaptif yang selaras dengan kemajuan digital untuk memastikan internalisasi nilai-nilai agama yang efektif dan berkelanjutan.

**Kata Kunci:** Budaya Religius, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Radikalisme, Pendidikan Islam, Pencegahan Radikalisme

## INTRODUCTION

At present, the issue of radicalism among the Indonesian population, particularly within the Muslim community, is a significant concern.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is influenced by the introduction of new ideologies propagated by Arab youth from Hadramaut, Yemen, which have also impacted the development of the Muslim community in Indonesia. These ideologies tend to be harsh and intolerant, fostering radical attitudes among Muslims.

In addition to warranting serious attention from Indonesian society, the understanding of radicalism must also be addressed within the educational context, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Research indicates that over 50% of Muslim teachers in Indonesia hold highly intolerant views, which pose a risk of being transmitted to their students.<sup>2</sup> Teachers' tolerance levels can significantly affect students, potentially developing prejudices, stereotypes, and diminished empathy.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, education is crucial in countering radical ideas, mainly Islamic religious education offered at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. By delivering a comprehensive understanding of Islam that emphasizes moderation, tolerance, and peace, religious education can serve as a protective barrier against extremist ideologies.<sup>4</sup>

So far, research examining the strengthening of religious culture in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah to prevent radicalism has been rare. Previous studies have primarily focused on general education, such as cultivating Pancasila values and implementing the Pancasila student profile approach to students.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, research on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah has been limited, with most studies concentrating on public schools, including high schools, junior high schools,

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<sup>1</sup> Andi Iting, Hamzah Harun, and Andi Aderus, "Radicalism in Islam. To identify the root causes of radicalism and how to prevent it." *JRPP: Journal of Education and Teaching Review* 8, no. 1 (2025): 2169–78.

<sup>2</sup> CNN Indonesia team, "Survey: Muslim Teachers Have Intolerant and High Radical Opinions," *cnnindonesia*, 2018, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181018153237-20-339600/survei-guru-muslim-punya-opini-intoleran-dan-radikal-tinggi>.

<sup>3</sup> Mindariati, Aunnurrahman, and Halida, "The Impact of Intolerant Behavior on the Psychology and Character of Students at the High School Level," *Journal on Education* 06, no. 01 (2023): 9564–9572.

<sup>4</sup> Miftahul Ulum, "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Facing the Challenge of Radicalism Among Adolescents," *Kaipi: A Collection of Scientific Articles on Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (March 2023): 30–34, <https://doi.org/10.62070/kaipi.v1i1.31>.

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Kholid Achmad, Hidayatul Laila, and Mawadatun Nisa, "Prevention of Radicalism through Instilling the Value of Pancasila Student Profiles at SMA Muhammadiyah 8 Gresik," *CONSCIENCE: Journal of Research and Community Service* 1, no. 1 (February 2023): 1975–81, <https://doi.org/10.30587/jc.v1i1.5349>.

and vocational high schools.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this research contributes new insights by focusing on strategies to strengthen religious culture in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah to prevent radicalism from an early age. By integrating spiritual values into the curriculum and fostering habits within the educational environment, this study aims to address how religious culture can be optimized to shape the character of tolerant and anti-radical students.

The Theory of Character Education, developed by Thomas Lickona, is particularly relevant for analyzing the strengthening of religious culture in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as a preventive measure against radicalism. In his book *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*, Lickona defines character education as a systematic effort to instill moral values through three main dimensions: *moral knowing*, *feeling*, and *moral action*.<sup>7</sup> This definition emphasizes that character education encompasses transferring knowledge about morals and how tangible actions can be perceived and embodied. In this context, strengthening religious culture in madrasahs plays a crucial role in shaping students' characters to be tolerant and resistant to radicalism. By integrating spiritual values into the curriculum and the educational environment, madrasahs can provide a platform for students to understand, feel, and practice moderate religious attitudes. However, as Lickona emphasized, these efforts must be implemented systematically and continuously to ensure that the values instilled are not only cognitively understood but also become an integral part of the student's personalities in their daily lives.

This study aims to analyze in depth how religious culture is implemented at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang and identify concrete strategies that can be applied to strengthen this culture to prevent radicalism early on. The primary focus of this research is to understand how the habituation of religious culture applied in daily learning activities can contribute to shaping students' characters to foster a moderate and tolerant understanding of religion. Additionally, this research explores the strategies that schools have implemented to instill Islamic values. It examines the extent to which religious culture can safeguard students against the influence of radical ideologies. MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang was chosen as the research location because it has various religious habituation programs integrated into students' daily lives, such as congregational Dhuhur and Dhuha prayers, Muroja'ah of Juz Amma, and the reinforcement of moral

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<sup>6</sup> Fetri Fatorina et al., "PREVENTION OF RADICALISM FOR ADOLESCENTS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL IN MAN PURBALINGGATER," Jubaedah: Indonesian Journal of Community Services and School Education, *Al-Qodiri: Journal of Educational, Social, and Religious* 3, no. Dec. 2022 (n.d): 70-79, <https://doi.org/10.46306/jub.v2i3.88>;

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

values through 3S interactions (Smile, Greetings, Wishes), as well as religious activities that encourage students to practice Islamic values in their everyday lives. These habits are essential for building students' religious awareness and instilling virtuous values that align with Islam's peaceful and inclusive teachings.<sup>8</sup>

This research is essential because the religious culture in the school environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and building their resilience to negative influences, including potential exposure to radicalism from an early age. MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang, an Islamic-based educational institution, has developed various strategies to instill religious values through worship habits, moral and social interactions, and sustainable religious programs. These methods aim to build discipline in worship and strengthen students' understanding of moderate and inclusive Islam.<sup>9</sup>

However, challenges remain in implementing religious culture in schools, particularly ensuring that these values become integral to students' daily lives rather than mere formalities in routine activities. Therefore, this study is relevant for examining the effectiveness of the implemented strategies and exploring the factors that support or hinder their success. By understanding how religious culture is applied at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah and identifying concrete strategies to strengthen it, this research aims to create a conducive educational environment. This environment not only shapes the religious character of students but also fortifies them against the potential influence of radical ideas. Additionally, the findings of this research can serve as a reference for other educational institutions in designing programs aligned with Islamic values, fostering a generation that is moral, moderate, and possesses strong national insights.

## LITERATUR REVIEW

Previous research on implementing religious culture in schools has provided a variety of perspectives in different scopes and objects. Most agree that the habituation of spiritual culture in the educational environment has a very positive impact on the development of student's character, especially in their daily behavior, which is improving, as well as providing solid provisions in their understanding of religion that can ward off various exposures to radicalism. A study conducted by Shafa Salsabila Nusa and Khavisa Pranata in

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<sup>8</sup> Irma Yanti, "Habituation as a Form of Religious Character Application in State Junior High School 4 Logas Tanah Darat," *Lucerna : Journal of Education and Learning Research* 2, no. 2 (November 2022): 41–47, <https://doi.org/10.56393/lucerna.v2i2.993>.

<sup>9</sup> Mutia Sari, Fajri Ismail, and Muhammad Win Afgani, "Habituation of Religious Values as the Key to the Formation of Religious Character," *Adiba: Journal of Education* 3, no. 3 (2023): 380–88.

2023 revealed that religious culture applied in the school environment can strengthen students' critical attitudes and foster students' independence towards consistently implementing worship.<sup>10</sup> Their findings support the significant role of religious culture in schools in developing students' spiritual understanding and becoming a solid and practical fortress to prevent exposure to Radicalism.

Other studies that align with these findings show that the religious culture instilled in students in schools explicitly teaches Islamic principles of tolerance, peace, and harmonious coexistence in a conducive school environment. This has a positive impact on students' attitudes in dealing with religious and cultural differences, which are contrary to the teachings of radicalism, which tend to be harsh and reject criticism of the different views of their group. In line with that, Virgana and Soeparlan Kasyadi revealed in their research that religious and moral education significantly influences efforts to prevent radicalism.<sup>11</sup> In this case, religious culture, which contains moral and spiritual education values, plays an essential role in shaping students' character through the habituation of tolerance, compassion, and respect for differences. These values are the foundation for creating social harmony so students can better recognize and reject radical ideas contrary to moderate religious teachings and humanitarian principles.

Therefore, this study aims to discover the madrasah strategy for preventing radicalism in students by strengthening the religious culture in the madrasah environment. By reviewing relevant literature and adding new knowledge, this study is expected to contribute to and provide insights to policymakers and educational institutions in Indonesia to prevent radicalism in students from an early age.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized descriptive qualitative methods for field research. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, which were subsequently analyzed descriptively. This approach was selected to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Researchers can gather rich and detailed insights into individuals' experiences, perceptions, and views by employing interviews, observations, and document analysis.

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<sup>10</sup> Shafa Salsabila Nusa Shafa and Khavisa Pranata Khavisa, "Religious Character and Culture Education (Case Study at SD Islam Sahabat Ilmu Karawang)," *JIKAP PGSD: Scientific Journal of Education* 7, no. 3 (2023): p. 455, <https://doi.org/10.26858/jkp.v7i3.48515>.

<sup>11</sup> Soeparlan Kasyadi, "Religious and Moral Education as a Tool for Radical Prevention," in *Proceedings of the Indonesian Language Conference of Indraprasta PGRI University* (Jakarta: Indrapasta PGRI University, n.d.), p. 43, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30998/kibar.28-10-2024.7989>.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation involves directly watching the phenomenon or event without intervening or influencing the subjects. The researcher observed Madrasah Ibtaiyah (MI) Miftahul Akhlaqiyah, located at Jl. Beringin Raya No. 23, Tambakaji, Kec. The subjects of this observation included MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang students from grades 1 to 6 and teachers engaged in promoting religious culture within the madrasa. The primary resource person for this study was Mr. Rif'an Ulil Huda, M.Pd, the principal of MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang.

The data analysis in this study was conducted following the model of Miles and Huberman as presented in Sugiyono (1984). According to Sugiyono, qualitative data analysis is an interactive and continuous process that continues until data saturation is achieved. The analysis activities include data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification.<sup>12</sup>

Researchers identify themes and patterns from the collected data during the data reduction. This study stage involved screening and analyzing observation and interview records related to religious and cultural habituation at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah in Semarang City. After data reduction, the next step is data presentation. The data collected, such as interview transcripts, is processed by compiling the transcripts, examining the implicit meanings behind the emerging patterns, and interpreting them. The results of this interpretation are then categorized based on specific themes. Data presentation is analytical and narrative, using detailed, complete, and precise language to convey information systematically.

According to Miles and Huberman, the final stage in data analysis involves drawing and verifying conclusions. At this stage, conclusions are formulated based on the data obtained during the field research. Researchers compare their findings with previously established theoretical references and integrate field findings. This approach aims to produce conclusions that align theory with reality, providing a clear and in-depth understanding of the research focus.<sup>13</sup>

The researcher employed a credibility test in this study to ensure data validity. One strategy used was triangulation, which combines various methods and data sources. Through triangulation, researchers can verify the accuracy of

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<sup>12</sup> Suggestion, *Quantitative, Qualitative, and R&D Research Methods*, 12th ed. (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad Rijali, "Qualitative Data Analysis," *Alhadharah: Journal of Da'wah Science* 17, no. 33 (2019): 94, <https://doi.org/10.18592/alhadharah.v17i33.2374>.

the data by comparing results obtained from different sources, techniques, and times of data collection.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### Implementation of Religious Culture at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang

Religious culture in educational institutions, such as madrasas, is closely linked to every activity. All elements of the madrasa, from the principal and the teachers' council to the administration and the students, engage in dynamic interactions that foster mutually impactful relationships. These interactions shape social dynamics and serve to internalize religious values into daily life.<sup>14</sup>

Each component of an educational institution plays a crucial role in cultivating a religious atmosphere. The principal acts as a leader who provides direction, the teachers' council serves as mentors who instill values through teaching and example, the administration ensures the smooth functioning of operations, and students learn from one another while interacting in a religious environment. Together, these relationships create an educational ecosystem encompassing intellectual and spiritual education, making religious culture the foundation for developing better character and personality in all parties involved.

Research conducted at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Semarang revealed that various religious and cultural practices are incorporated into daily learning activities. These practices demonstrate the institution's commitment to shaping students' character and reinforcing Islamic values. One notable practice is the daily reading of *Asmaul Husna* each morning, which aims to instill Allah's noble qualities into students' everyday lives. Additionally, the school promotes the 3S habits: Smile, Salim (greeting), and Salute every morning to foster a positive attitude and encourage student friendliness.

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<sup>14</sup> Sholikhah, Mar'atus and et al, "Student Character Formation Through Religious Culture at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah NU Salafiyah Kenduren, Wedung District, Demak Regency for the 2023/2024 Academic Year," *Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 01, no. 01 (n.d.): 68.



**Figure 1. 3S Habituation (Smile, Salim, Greetings)**

The activities about Juz Amma revision are conducted regularly, explicitly focusing on the repetition of the memorization of the Qur'an, with particular emphasis on Juz Amma, to enhance both memorization and appreciation of the sacred verses. The Qur'an Reading and Writing Program (BTQ) is implemented to develop students' proficiency in reading and writing the Qur'an, serving as a fundamental element in comprehending Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the congregational Dhuha prayer constitutes an integral part of routine activities designed to embed worship practice beyond obligatory prayers and cultivate discipline in the observance of Sunnah worship.



**Figure 2. BTQ Learning (Reading and Writing the Qur'an)**

Furthermore, congregational Dzuhur prayers are conducted daily to enhance unity and promote solemnity in worship. The tradition of Friday infaq is observed on Fridays, where students are encouraged to engage in charitable giving and nurture social awareness toward others. Additionally, grave

pilgrimage activities are organized to remind students of the afterlife and the significance of performing good deeds throughout their lives.



**Figure 3. Habit of Dhuha and Dzuhur Prayers in Congregation**

This madrasah is also active in commemorating Islamic holidays (PHBI), such as the Prophet's Birthday and Isra' Mi'raj, to introduce the history and spiritual significance of significant events in Islam. Madrasahs try to instill strong religious values in students early on through these various activities.



**Figure 4. Commemoration of Islamic Holidays to Celebrate the Hijri New Year**

Implementing religious activities in madrassas is a practical learning tool for students to carry out their obligations as Muslims. Students gain a theoretical understanding of spiritual teachings through these activities and are trained to apply worship daily. This activity helps form positive habits, such as discipline in prayer, zakat, and other worship, and strengthens good morals.

By participating in structured religious activities in the school environment, students will gradually become accustomed to consistently

practicing Islamic values. This activity serves as a routine and an effort to internalize noble morals, which will be reflected in students' attitudes and behaviors outside the school environment. As a result, students are expected to grow into individuals with good character, discipline, and morals in community life.

### **The Relationship between Religious Culture and the Prevention of Radicalism**

Religious culture is essential in preventing radicalism in society, especially in education. The following is the relationship between religious culture and the prevention of radicalism;

#### ***Instilling Religious Understanding Early***

Madrasah is an educational institution that focuses on teaching religious knowledge and aims to shape students' character through internalizing religious values. Religious activities in madrasas, such as congregational prayers, recitation, and habituation of noble morals, are designed to instill discipline, responsibility, and strong moral values in students.<sup>15</sup> The habit of students in carrying out religious teachings consistently aims not only to increase piety but also as a preventive measure against the influence of radical ideologies. The results of research by Herianto and Munir (2020) show that the understanding of religious moderation among madrasah students is significantly positively correlated with resistance to the influence of radical ideologies and strengthening students' academic achievement and mental health. This reinforces the importance of cultivating a moderate religious culture in the educational environment from an early age.

#### ***Development of Religious Culture***

Developing religious culture in madrasas requires close collaboration between madrasah heads, teachers, and students. This collaboration is realized through a systematically designed strategy and the implementation of spiritual activities that take place regularly. Thus, madrasas can create a conducive educational environment and support strengthening religious values.<sup>16</sup> Of course, this positive and imbued environment full of Islamic values not only

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<sup>15</sup> Fitri Widhi Lestari, "Teachers' Efforts in Instilling Religious Culture for Students at MTs An-Najiyah Lengkong Sukorejo Ponorogo," *Islamic Religious Education, Ponorogo State Islamic Institute* (Department of Islamic Religious Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Ponorogo State Islamic Religious Institute, 2021), 15, [https://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/13923/1/210316203\\_Fitri\\_Widhi\\_Lestari\\_Pendidikan\\_Religion\\_Islam.pdf](https://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/13923/1/210316203_Fitri_Widhi_Lestari_Pendidikan_Religion_Islam.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Taliziduhu Ndraha, *Organizational Culture Theory* (Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta, n.d.), 74.

strengthens students' spiritual identity but also serves as an effective bulwark against the potential entry of radical ideologies into the educational community. By building a strong foundation of religious values, madrassas can create a harmonious atmosphere and protect students from external negative influences.

### ***Collaboration between parents and the community***

Cooperation between madrassas and parents is crucial in developing religious culture among students. According to Fathurrohman (2015), parents play a role in strengthening the religious values taught in madrassas by implementing supervision and habituation at home.<sup>17</sup> This synergy helps students to be more consistent in carrying out religious teachings in their daily lives. In addition, the involvement of the surrounding community also plays a strategic role in strengthening the support network for character education based on religious values. With the support of various parties, the process of internalizing religious values in students will be more solid and sustainable.

### ***Maintaining Harmony Between Religious Communities***

The religious culture taught in madrassas is not only limited to the spiritual aspect but also includes the development of tolerance and respect for differences. This is in line with the statement of M. Imam Sansusi in his research, which states that through instilling the values of harmony between religious communities, madrassas play an essential role in preventing potential conflicts that can trigger radicalization.<sup>18</sup> Education about tolerance and mutual respect is key to building a harmonious and inclusive society. Thus, madrassas create an environment conducive to developing students' character that respects diversity and avoids extremism.

### ***Madrasah Strategies in Preventing Radicalism in Students***

According to Marno and Triyo Supriyanto (2008), as an educational institution with Islamic characteristics, madrassas have an essential role in forming students. With this madrasah education, parents hope their children will have competence in general knowledge (science and technology) and a strong personality and commitment to their religion (IMTAQ).<sup>19</sup> Madrassas play an essential role in early prevention efforts to stop the spread of radical ideology

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<sup>17</sup> Fathurrohman, *Religious Culture in Improving the Quality of Education: A Theoretical Review and Contextualizing Practice of Religious Education in Schools* (Yogyakarta: Kalomedia, n.d.), 48.

<sup>18</sup> M. Imam Sanusi, "The Role of Madrasah in Building Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Alkamalblitar*, 2018, <https://alkamalblitar.com/meneguhkan-islam-dan-budaya-lokal-sebagai-bentuk-pencegahan-radikalisme/>.

<sup>19</sup> Basuki is concerned, "The Role of Madrasah in Building Religious Moderation in Indonesia in the Millennial Era," *Education: Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 1 (2020): 143, <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v1i1.13>.

through various elements in their education system.<sup>20</sup> Strengthening religious culture in madrassas is a strategic step to forming solid religious knowledge by habituating religious values. This habituation process will eventually crystallize into a religious culture inherent in the madrasah environment, which at the same time serves as a preventive effort to prevent the spread of radical ideas among students. The madrassas observed by the researcher have a special strategy to fight radicalism. One of the strategies is to integrate the Aswaja lesson program into classroom subjects, especially in grades 4, 5, and 6. This madrasah is affiliated with LP Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which adheres to the understanding of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah.

*"Our madrasah is affiliated with Ma'arif NU, which is oriented towards Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah. This is evidenced by the Aswaja study program, which is included in the class curriculum, especially in grades 4 to 6. It is one of our efforts to ward off radicalism. (Rif'an Ulil Huda, 2024)"*

NU is a socio-religious organization that actively strengthens the infrastructure of Islamic moderation through its network and supporting institutions. Its contribution to building a model of tolerance in Indonesia is even recognized internationally as an example of inclusive religious practices. As the largest Muslim organization in the country, NU has been at the forefront of promoting a friendly face of Islam, emphasizing the values of harmony and peace in each of its Islamic agendas.<sup>21</sup> Of course, through this Aswaja education, students are expected to have moderate Islamic knowledge that can ward off various radicalisms.

In addition to learning in the classroom, it is also realized through the habituation of religious behavior in students' daily lives. Activities such as congregational dhuha and dzuhur prayers, the recitation of asmaul husna, the reading and writing of the Qur'an, the reading of daily prayers, the reading of tahlil, dhikr, and the habituation of 3S (Smile, Salim, Greeting) are part of the daily routine that strengthens religious practices while forming character. These religious habits have been systematically designed and structured in the madrasah curriculum. The head of the madrasah emphasized that spiritual culture is not just a routine but has become a characteristic inherent in the identity of this madrasah. This aligns with the madrasah's vision and mission of forming students with noble character who can live the values of Islamic teachings daily.

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<sup>20</sup> Concerning, 147.

<sup>21</sup> Eka Prasetyawati, "Instilling Moderate Islam in Efforts to Overcome Radicalism in Indonesia," *Fikri* 2, no. 2 (2017): 548, <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v2i2.152>.

The example of teachers is also very influential. Teachers who show a religious attitude set a real example for students. This is evident when students spontaneously greet and bow their heads when meeting with the teacher, which reflects the internalization of the values exemplified by the teacher.

*"We always get students used to behaving politely in the madrasah environment. For example, students should look down when walking past a teacher or an older person. We teach this as an effort of the madrasah to shape the morals of students because we have the motto 'Morals, Knowledge, and Charity.' From that motto, morality becomes a priority practiced later in daily life. (Rif'an Ulil Huda, 2024)"*

All education elements in madrasas, from principals to teachers to education staff, are firmly committed to taking corrective action if they find indications of students' and educators' behavior that deviates from Islamic principles and anti-radicalism values.

In addition, the madrasah provides an understanding of anti-radical values in extracurricular activities manifested in subjects in the classroom and through religion-based extracurricular activities that play an essential role in strengthening students' religious experience. In Madrasah Ibtidaiyah observed by the researcher, there are extracurricular activities such as tambourine, then qiro'ah, and tahfidz, and social activities based on religious values not only deepen students' knowledge about religion but also build a sense of togetherness and solidarity between students. This activity allows students to support each other in carrying out religious values.

In addition, religion-based extracurricular activities, such as tambourine, qiro'ah, tahfidz, and social activities based on religious values, are also very important in strengthening religious culture in madrasas. These activities deepen students' religious understanding and build togetherness and solidarity among them.



**Figure 5. Qiroah Extracurricular**

Cooperation between the madrasah and the student's guardians is also the key to strengthening religious culture. The head of the madrasah routinely communicates with the student's guardian, especially when there is a student problem. For example, on August 9, 2024, after an argument between students, the BK teacher immediately called the student's guardian for mediation and coaching. Communication in this way helps to ensure that the values of religion-based character education taught in schools are also applied in the family environment. In addition, the madrasah foundation routinely establishes active communication with teachers and guardians through evaluations in monthly meetings and regular meetings organized by the foundation association every three months.

*"Monthly meetings are vital activities for us because, through these meetings, we can absorb aspirations and information about the problems experienced by students and teachers. In addition, we hold meetings every three months, which are carried out through the foundation association and involve students' guardians. In the meeting, we listened to the aspirations of parents so that we could conduct an in-depth evaluation of problems and inputs related to madrasah policies. This activity bridges balanced communication between the madrasah and the guardians of students to establish a harmonious relationship. (Rif'an Ulil Huda, 2024)"*

The use of technology also supports the strengthening of religious values in this madrasah. One is through a library equipped with a smartboard to facilitate various digital learning methods. In addition, social media and online platforms are used strategically to disseminate positive religious content, provide a preventive understanding of the dangers of radicalism, and instill an inclusive perspective in students. Thus, technology not only plays a role as a means of learning in the classroom but also as a medium for strengthening character education and religious values outside the school environment.



**Figure 6. Interactive Learning Using Smart Boards**

Finally, enforcing discipline with a positive approach, such as rewarding students who exhibit religious behavior, also creates an environment that supports the development of students' religious character. This not only encourages other students to follow suit but also prevents negative influences from outside.<sup>22</sup>

## **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Strengthening Religious Culture in Madrasah**

### ***Supporting factors***

#### **a. Family Support**

Family support is essential in strengthening the religious education students receive in madrasahs. Families that apply religious values in daily life and actively support religious learning at home help reinforce the teachings that children receive in madrasahs.

*"I am happy my child can attend school at this madrasah. Because here my child is taught good and religious habits, I hope that my child can recite, pray, understand religion, and, of course, become a righteous child by being able to go to school here" (Guardian of Students, 2024).*

Parents' examples of worshipping and applying religious values are essential in allowing children to internalize these teachings more deeply. This family involvement strengthens the child's spiritual foundation and ensures consistency between education in the madrasah and at home.<sup>23</sup>

#### **b. Madrasah Policy**

Policies that support the strengthening of religious culture, such as worship habituation programs and religious-based extracurricular activities, significantly influence student character formation. Madrasahs that consistently carry out routine activities such as joint prayers, religious recitation, and Islamic holiday celebrations can create an environment conducive to developing religious character. This policy facilitates the habituation of spiritual values in daily life. It shapes students' behaviors and attitudes that align with Islamic

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<sup>22</sup> Tyas Dwi Enggarti, *Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Character Education Strengthening Program at SMP Negeri 1 Bandar Sri Bhawono, East Lampung Regency* (East Lampung, n.d.), 44.

<sup>23</sup> Fitri Nurul Afidah, *Strengthening the Religious Character of Students Through Habituation Activities at SDIT Ahmad Yani, Malang City* (Malang: UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, n.d.), x.

teachings to better face social and cultural challenges outside the educational environment.<sup>24</sup>

### c. Teacher and Student Spirit

The enthusiasm of teachers and students is one of the main factors supporting the strengthening religious culture in madrasas. The active involvement of teachers in teaching religious values, accompanied by their example and demonstrated enthusiasm, motivates students to participate in activities related to strengthening religious character.<sup>25</sup>

*"I am happy to be able to go to school here because here the teachers are good, I am taught well, taught to pray, and others. I am at home, so I often recite because I am used to reciting here"* (Aqila Najwa Ellina, 2024)

From the interview excerpt, it can be understood that when teachers consistently provide examples of good behavior and show commitment to applying Islamic worship and ethics, students will be more motivated to imitate and use these values in their daily lives.

### d. Facilities and Infrastructure

Adequate facilities and infrastructure are essential elements in strengthening religious culture in madrasas. With these facilities, students can more easily carry out worship and other spiritual activities, allowing the values taught to be internalized more deeply and applied consistently.<sup>26</sup>

## ***Inhibiting Factors***

### a. Influence of the External Environment

Social environments that tend to be secular or expose people to radical ideas face significant challenges in strengthening religious culture. Social media, which often spreads information that does not adhere to spiritual values, can affect students' mindsets and weaken the process of internalizing religious teachings.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> S Kurniawan, *Character Education: Its Conception and Implementation in an Integrated Manner in the Family, School, and Higher Education Environment* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, n.d.), 17.

<sup>25</sup> Silvia and Supriadi, "Strengthening Religious Character Education of Elementary School Students Based on School Culture," *Pendas : Scientific Journal of Basic Education* 3058 (n.d.): 3058.

<sup>26</sup> Pridayani Melinda and Ahmad Rivauzi, "Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Implementation of the Program to Strengthen Religious Character Education for Students," *An-Nuba: Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 2 (n.d.): 334.

<sup>27</sup> Nella Merliana, "The Implementation of Religious Character Education in Fostering Good Morals in Junior High School," *Title: Journal of Management and Education* 2, no. 3 (n.d.): 617.

b. Lack of parental supervision

Parents' inactivity in supervising children's behavior at home can result in a lack of support for applying religious values taught in madrasahs. Inadequate supervision can hinder the development of students of spiritual character.<sup>28</sup>

c. Excessive Use of Gadgets

The high dependence on technology, especially the excessive use of gadgets, can distract students from religious activities and learning. Ineffective technology management can reduce the time and quality of student involvement in spiritual activities and the social interactions that support religious education.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that strengthening religious culture in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah through habituation of worship, integration of Aswaja values, and moral development plays a significant role in preventing radicalism from an early age by forming the character of students who are religious, tolerant, and resilient to extreme beliefs. These findings provide important implications for madrasahs to make religious culture the core of school policies, both in the curriculum and daily activities, while strengthening the role of teachers as role models of religious moderation. For policymakers, this study recommends developing educational guidelines based on religious moderation, teacher capacity building through training, and strengthening collaboration with families and communities to strengthen the internalization of tolerance values. Thus, this strategy is effective as an effort to prevent radicalism and is in line with the national policy of strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia.

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