

Institutionalizing *Tarbiyah*: An Empirical Model for Sustainable Islamic Character Education in an Integrated Islamic Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

Character education has become a central concern in Islamic education; however, existing studies predominantly examine the effectiveness of religious programs, curriculum integration, or mentoring practices, while limited attention has been given to how these initiatives become institutionalized within the educational system. This study aims to analyze the institutionalization process of Tarbiyah Islamiyah as a holistic Islamic character education system in an integrated Islamic senior high school. Employing a qualitative intrinsic case study, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, Islamic education teachers, extracurricular mentors, and four students, complemented by observations and document analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of institutionalization. The findings reveal that Tarbiyah Islamiyah develops through an interconnected institutional process comprising five major dimensions: institutional foundation, curriculum institutionalization, mentoring system, school culture and value habituation, and character assessment, which collectively foster students' holistic character development across spiritual, intellectual, social, and personal domains. Rather than functioning merely as a religious mentoring program, Tarbiyah operates as an institutional mechanism that integrates organizational values, curriculum, pedagogical practices, and school culture into a sustainable character education system. Based on these findings, this study proposes the Institutionalization of Tarbiyah Model (ITM) as a conceptual framework that explains how Islamic values gain institutional legitimacy, are internalized through educational practices, and are continuously reproduced through organizational culture. The study contributes to the literature by extending the understanding of Islamic character education from program implementation toward the institutionalization of values within educational organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary education as schools face social, cultural, and technological changes that influence students' moral and social development. Character formation cannot be reduced to the transmission of moral knowledge because students develop values through instruction, social interaction, habituation, role modeling, and the institutional environment in which they learn. Berkowitz and Bier, for example, show that effective character education involves not only explicit character instruction but also teacher modeling, interactive pedagogy, classroom management, social-emotional development, and community involvement¹. This suggests that character education is more sustainable when moral values are enacted repeatedly through the everyday practices and culture of educational institutions rather than treated as an additional instructional program.

In Islamic education, this institutional dimension is particularly important because character formation is closely connected to the internalization and practice of Islamic values. Maksudin demonstrates that *morality*, *akhlak*, and *character* are conceptually related but should not be treated as identical, while all three are concerned with the formation of morally responsible human beings². Accordingly, Islamic character education involves more than teaching religious concepts; it requires the translation of Islamic values into habituation, relationships, role modeling, mentoring, and educational culture. Research on hidden curriculum likewise indicates that students acquire values through routines, interpersonal relationships, expectations, and practices that operate alongside the formal curriculum. Recent research in Islamic educational settings confirms that daily routines, relational practices, and school culture can function as important mechanisms for producing students' moral and social dispositions³. Thus, Islamic character education is better understood as a systemic process involving both formal curriculum and the wider institutional environment.

Recent studies have examined various forms of Islamic character education, including curriculum integration, religious habituation, hidden curriculum, and school culture. Fakhurrozi et al., for instance, examined the integration of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* into Islamic education curriculum and extracurricular activities at a vocational high school in Palu. Their findings demonstrate that *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* can be integrated into formal Islamic education and school activities to strengthen students' social character, including

¹ Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2004). Research-based character education. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260082>

² Maksudin. (2023). Uncovering the moral nexus, morality, akhlak, and character in Islamic religious education: A comprehensive conceptual analysis. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 20(1), 119–131. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i1.7028>

³ Solichin, M. M., Hasan, M., Hasan, N., & Siswanto. (2026). Hidden curriculum in Islamic Religious Education: Production of values and social piety in Islamic schools. *Aslama: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.33084/ajpi.v3i1.13012>

obedience, respect, politeness, caring, tolerance, and concern for others⁴. Other studies similarly indicate that Islamic values can be embedded through curriculum, institutional routines, teacher modeling, and hidden curriculum⁵. These studies establish the importance of integrating Islamic values into school practices. However, they largely focus on the implementation, integration, or outcomes of particular educational programs rather than on the organizational process through which such practices become institutionalized and sustained.

This distinction is theoretically significant. A program may be implemented successfully without becoming an enduring part of organizational life. Institutionalization refers to the process through which practices become established, legitimized, routinized, and reproduced within an organization. Tolbert and Zucker conceptualize institutionalization through processes of habituation, objectification, and sedimentation, describing how organizational practices move from emerging arrangements toward relatively stable and taken-for-granted patterns⁶. From this perspective, the central question is not simply whether an Islamic character program exists or produces desirable outcomes, but how its values and practices become embedded in curriculum, organizational structures, routines, relationships, evaluation, and shared expectations. This perspective is particularly relevant to schools because educational organizations operate under multiple institutional pressures and continuously interpret and adapt broader expectations within their local contexts⁷.

The institutional perspective therefore provides an opportunity to extend existing research on Islamic character education from a program-based perspective toward an institution-based perspective. This shift is important because institutionalized practices are not sustained merely through formal policy; they are reproduced through routines, organizational structures, legitimacy, shared meanings, and the participation of organizational members. In this sense,

⁴ Fakhurrozi, H., Minabari, M., Saguni, F., & Nadirah, S. (2023). Integration of Islamic education curriculum to enhance the social character of vocational high school students. *Ta'dib*, 26(1), 171–182. <https://doi.org/10.31958/jt.v26i1.7237>

⁵ Nasukah, B. (2017). Budaya sekolah sebagai *hidden curriculum* pembentuk karakter lulusan lembaga pendidikan Islam. *DINAMIKA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, 2(1), 52–85. <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v2i1.130>; Malahati, F., & Rokhimawan, M. A. (2024). The implementation of hidden curriculum on fifth grade students' character development at Islamic elementary school. *DIDAKTIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.21831/didaktika.v6i2.67252>

⁶ Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. (1996). The institutionalization of institutional theory. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (pp. 175–190). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446218556.n6>

⁷ Diehl, D. K., & Golann, J. W. (2023). An integrated framework for studying how schools respond to external pressures. *Educational Researcher*, 52(5), 296–305. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X231159599>; Fakhurrozi, H., & Dimyathi, M. A. (2025). Humanizing the Classroom: Humanistic Education for Post-Disaster Learning Recovery in Madrasah of Central Sulawesi. *Paedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(1), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.24239/pdg.Vol14.Iss1.991>.

Tarbiyah Islamiyah can be examined not only as a religious mentoring or character-building program but as an educational practice whose institutional status develops through its integration into the organization of schooling.

SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi, Central Sulawesi, provides a distinctive context for examining this process. Established in 2017, the school initially organized *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* primarily through *halaqah* activities outside regular instructional hours. Over time, however, these practices were incorporated into the local curriculum through the Al-Qur'an and Hadith subject and accompanied by a *murabbi* mentoring system, student mentoring groups, monitoring of *amalan yaumiyah*, memorization assessment, and the development of students' *rubiyah*, *tsaqafiyah*, and *jasadiyah* dimensions. These practices are reinforced through a school culture oriented toward *akhlaq* formation. The case therefore offers an opportunity to examine how *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* moves beyond a discrete religious activity toward an integrated educational system.

Based on this gap, the present study examines the institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* in character education at SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi. Rather than focusing primarily on the effectiveness of individual activities, the study investigates how *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* becomes embedded in the school's curriculum, mentoring structure, daily practices, assessment mechanisms, and organizational culture. By placing Islamic character education within an institutional perspective, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how religious educational practices can become established, reproduced, and sustained as part of the institutional identity of an Islamic school.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design to examine the institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* in character education at an integrated Islamic senior high school. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring meanings, experiences, and processes within natural settings⁸, while an intrinsic case study focuses on understanding the particularity and complexity of a specific case⁹. Case study research is also appropriate for examining contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts¹⁰. In this study, the case focused on how *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* has been institutionalized through curriculum, instruction, school culture, mentoring, and character assessment.

The research was conducted at SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The site was purposively selected because the school integrates *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* into the Al-Qur'an and Hadith subject, mentoring,

⁸ Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.; Moleong, L. J. (2018). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Edisi revisi). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

⁹ Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. SAGE Publications.

¹⁰ Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

religious habituation, and character assessment. Participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge and direct involvement in the implementation of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*¹¹. They comprised the principal, teachers, PAI teachers, *Tarbiyah* supervisors, and four students as supporting informants. The inclusion of participants from different institutional roles provided multiple perspectives on the implementation of the program¹².

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' experiences and practices concerning *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*; observations focused on classroom instruction, *balaqah*, religious habituation, *murabbi-mutarabbi* interactions, and character-related practices; and documents included curricula, instructional materials, activity schedules, mentoring guidelines, photographs, and institutional records. The use of multiple sources enabled methodological and source triangulation¹³.

Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis¹⁴. Interview data were transcribed verbatim, repeatedly reviewed, coded, and organized into themes representing key dimensions of the institutionalization process. The analysis was iterative, involving comparison between coded data, emerging themes, the research questions, and evidence from interviews, observations, and documents¹⁵. The themes were subsequently interpreted using Institutional Theory to explain the relationship between organizational structures, educational practices, school culture, and character formation.

Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability¹⁶. Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation and member checking; transferability through contextual description; dependability through systematic documentation of research procedures; and confirmability through an audit trail containing transcripts, field notes, coding records, and documentary evidence. These procedures provided a transparent link between empirical evidence, analysis, and findings¹⁷.

¹¹ Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹² Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹³ Moleong, L. J. (2018). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Edisi revisi). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

¹⁴ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

¹⁵ Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹⁶ Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.

¹⁷ Moleong, L. J. (2018). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Edisi revisi). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

RESULT

Institutional Foundation of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*

The institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* at SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi is rooted in the school's institutional commitment to character formation. The school's vision places *akhlak* development as a central educational objective, which is reflected in its local curriculum, instructional structure, and student development programs¹⁸. As an educational unit under the Wahdah Islamiyah Foundation, *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* is positioned as a core component of the school's educational identity rather than as an additional religious program¹⁹.

Institutional commitment is also reflected in the organization of human resources. Not all teachers are assigned as *murabbi*. Teachers must meet specific requirements, particularly a certain *marhalah* level within the Wahdah Islamiyah cadre-development system. Teachers at earlier stages are not assigned mentoring responsibilities, while those who have reached the required level are entrusted with supervising students²⁰. Thus, the implementation of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* is supported by defined roles and competency requirements within the school organization.

Curriculum Institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*

The institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* developed through a gradual curricular transformation. Initially, *Tarbiyah* was conducted as an extracurricular *halaqah* activity on weekends and focused on religious development and character formation²¹. Because this arrangement did not reach all students consistently, the school subsequently integrated *Tarbiyah* into the local curriculum through the Al-Qur'an and Hadith subject²².

Following this change, *Tarbiyah* was included in the regular timetable and became compulsory for students²³. The school nevertheless retained the mentoring characteristics of the earlier *halaqah* model. When classroom time was insufficient, *murabbi* divided students into smaller groups or extended mentoring sessions beyond regular hours²⁴. Thus, curricular formalization did not replace personalized mentoring but combined formal instruction with sustained *halaqah*-based guidance.

The curriculum covers three principal domains: *tarbiyah ruhiyah*, *tarbiyah tsaqafiyah*, and *tarbiyah jasadiyah*. *Tarbiyah ruhiyah* emphasizes spiritual development through religious practices and Qur'anic activities; *tarbiyah tsaqafiyah* focuses on Islamic knowledge, including *aqidah*, *syahadatain*, *ma'rifatullah*, and *ma'rifatur rasul*;

¹⁸ School document

¹⁹ Principal, personal interview.

²⁰ Murabbi, personal interview;; Teacher, personal interview.

²¹ Principal, personal interview.; Murabbi, personal interview

²² Principal, personal interview

²³ School documents;; Teacher, personal interview

²⁴ Murabbi, personal interview;; Observation findings.

while *tarbiyah jasadiyah* includes physical and outdoor activities designed to support health, independence, and resilience²⁵.

The integration of *Tarbiyah* into the curriculum also strengthened its organizational continuity. The school could formally arrange schedules, assign *murabbi*, develop learning materials, and monitor implementation for all students (School document; Principal, interview). The change therefore established *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* as a regular component of the school's educational system rather than an optional activity.

Mentoring-Based Character Formation

The mentoring system functions as the primary mechanism through which *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* is translated into students' individual development. The system connects *murabbi* and *mutarabbi* through regularly organized mentoring groups and *halaqah* sessions²⁶. Although *Tarbiyah* has become part of the formal curriculum, *murabbi* continue to provide individualized guidance concerning students' academic, spiritual, and behavioral development²⁷.

Halaqah sessions provide opportunities for religious learning, reflection, communication, and discussion of students' academic and personal concerns. When necessary, *murabbi* conduct additional sessions in smaller groups beyond regular instructional hours²⁸. This arrangement allows the formal curriculum to be complemented by sustained interpersonal mentoring.

A distinctive feature of the mentoring system is the monitoring of *amalan yaumiyah*. *Murabbi* monitor practices such as Qur'anic recitation, congregational prayer, voluntary prayer, fasting, and memorization of the Qur'an and hadith²⁹. Monitoring is conducted through regular dialogue between *murabbi* and *mutarabbi*, with guidance and encouragement provided when students have not achieved the expected targets³⁰.

Mentoring also incorporates social activities, including visiting sick friends or their families, collecting donations for disaster victims, sharing food, and other forms of collective assistance (Murabbi, interview; Observation). These activities provide opportunities for students to practice care, cooperation, responsibility, and social solidarity in concrete situations.

School Culture and Internalization of Islamic Values

The institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* extends into the everyday culture of the school. Islamic values are reinforced through routines and practices that students encounter beyond formal classroom instruction and *halaqah*³¹. Daily

²⁵ Principal, personal interview.; School documents.; Teacher, personal interview.; Observation findings.

²⁶ School documents.; Murabbi, personal interview

²⁷ Murabbi, personal interview.; Teacher, personal interview.

²⁸ Observation findings.; Murabbi, personal interview

²⁹ Murabbi, personal interview.; School documents.

³⁰ Murabbi, personal interview

³¹ Observation findings.; Teacher, personal interview

religious practices include Qur'anic recitation, congregational prayer, *dhuba* and *tahajud* prayers, voluntary fasting, *dhiker*, and other obligatory and voluntary religious practices³².

Social responsibility is likewise embedded in school activities. Visiting sick members of the school community, Friday charity activities, collecting donations, sharing food, and responding to community needs are incorporated into mentoring and school activities³³. In some cases, *halaqah* activities are redirected toward social assistance when members of the group or the surrounding community require support³⁴.

The school culture also incorporates physical development through sports and outdoor activities, including futsal, swimming, archery, *rihlah*, and mountain trekking³⁵. According to the informants, these activities are intended to develop physical fitness, independence, resilience, and cooperation. Thus, the everyday enactment of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* encompasses spiritual, social, intellectual, and physical dimensions of student development.

Character Assessment and Holistic Outcomes

Assessment within *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* combines academic evaluation with continuous monitoring of religious practices, behavior, and mentoring outcomes³⁶. Academic assessment includes tests and examinations related to *Tarbiyah* content delivered through Al-Qur'an and Hadith instruction. Non-academic assessment includes monitoring Qur'anic and hadith memorization, daily religious practices, behavioral development, and students' consistency in meeting developmental targets³⁷.

Assessment functions not only to document achievement but also to guide subsequent mentoring. Information obtained from monitoring is used by *murabbi* to provide feedback, motivation, and individualized guidance according to students' developmental needs³⁸. The assessment process therefore operates continuously alongside instruction and mentoring rather than only at the end of a learning period.

Informants reported several behavioral changes associated with the implementation of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, including greater consistency in congregational prayer and other religious practices, adherence to Islamic dress expectations, increased charitable behavior, and greater concern for others³⁹. Students were also described as demonstrating stronger understanding of Islamic

³² Observation findings.; Murabbi, personal interview

³³ Murabbi, personal interview.; Teacher, personal interview.; Observation findings.

³⁴ Observation findings.; Murabbi, personal interview

³⁵ Observation findings.; Murabbi, personal interview

³⁶ School documents.; Murabbi, personal interview.; Teacher, personal interview.

³⁷ Murabbi, personal interview.; Teacher, personal interview.

³⁸ Murabbi, personal interview,

³⁹ Principal, personal interview.; School documents.; Teacher, personal interview.; Observation findings.

teachings, greater caution in responding to unverified information, and improved engagement with social issues and problem-solving activities⁴⁰.

At the social and personal levels, informants reported increased cooperation, responsibility, care for others, independence, and resilience⁴¹. These findings indicate that the character outcomes identified by school actors extend beyond religious observance to cognitive, social, and personal dimensions.

Overall, the findings show that *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* at SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi has been institutionalized through interconnected structures involving curriculum, mentoring, school culture, and assessment. Its implementation is therefore not confined to a particular program or instructional activity but operates across multiple dimensions of students' educational experience.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the institutionalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* at SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi involves a transformation from a religious mentoring activity into an integrated educational system. *Tarbiyah* is no longer confined to extracurricular *halaqah*, but is embedded in the curriculum, organizational roles, mentoring practices, school culture, and assessment. This pattern supports the broader argument that character education is more sustainable when it is implemented as a comprehensive school-wide process rather than as an isolated program. Berkowitz and Bier found that effective character education commonly involves explicit character instruction, teacher modeling, interactive learning, social-emotional development, and community-oriented activities⁴². The findings of this study extend that perspective by showing how these elements can become institutionally interconnected within an Islamic educational framework.

From Religious Program to Institutionalized Educational System

The most significant finding is the transformation of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* from an extracurricular *halaqah* activity into a formally recognized component of the school system. Initially conducted outside regular instructional hours, *Tarbiyah* was subsequently integrated into the local curriculum through the Al-Qur'an and Hadith subject. This transformation changed its organizational status: a practice that had depended largely on particular activities and actors became associated with formal scheduling, designated personnel, curriculum content, and assessment.

This finding is consistent with Fakhurrozi et al.,⁴³ who found that the integration of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* into Islamic education curriculum and

⁴⁰ Teacher, personal interview.; Class teacher, personal interview.

⁴¹ Principal, personal interview.; Teacher, personal interview.

⁴² Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2004). Research-based character education. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260082>

⁴³ Fakhurrozi, H., Minabari, M., Saguni, F., & Nadirah, S. (2023). Integration of Islamic education curriculum to enhance the social character of vocational high school students. *Ta'dib*, 26(1), 171–182. <https://doi.org/10.31958/jt.v26i1.7237>

extracurricular activities could strengthen students' social character. Their study, however, primarily examined curricular integration and character outcomes, whereas the present study focuses on the broader institutionalization process through which *Tarbiyah* becomes embedded in organizational structures and everyday school practices. Fakhurrozi et al. therefore provide an important point of comparison, while the present study extends the discussion from *integration* to *institutionalization*.

The transformation can be interpreted through Tolbert and Zucker's institutionalization framework. Their model distinguishes habituation, objectification, and sedimentation as processes through which organizational practices become increasingly established and institutionalized⁴⁴. In the present case, the initial *halaqah* can be interpreted as a recurring practice developed in response to the school's need for intensive religious and character development. Its subsequent curricular formalization, assignment of qualified *murabbi*, monitoring mechanisms, and integration into school routines indicate increasing organizational legitimacy. The findings therefore suggest that institutionalization is not simply the expansion of a program, but a process through which a practice acquires organizational structure, legitimacy, and continuity.

The movement toward institutionalization is particularly important because formalization did not eliminate the original character of *Tarbiyah*. Instead, the school retained the *halaqah* and mentoring dimensions while incorporating them into the formal educational structure. This indicates that institutionalization in this case involves formalization without displacement: the practice becomes structurally recognized while retaining its relational and religious identity.

Formalization and Relational Mentoring

A second important finding is that the institutionalization of *Tarbiyah* is supported by the formal differentiation of the *murabbi* role. The school does not assign mentoring responsibilities indiscriminately; teachers serving as *murabbi* are required to meet particular organizational criteria associated with the *marhalah* system. Thus, the school institutionalizes not only the activity but also the role responsible for reproducing it.

This finding is important because organizational institutionalization can become overly procedural if formal structures replace interpersonal engagement. In the present case, however, formal structures coexist with close *murabbi-mutarabbi* relationships. The *murabbi* does not merely transmit religious content but monitors students' development, provides motivation, and responds to individual needs. The institutional structure therefore provides continuity, while mentoring provides relational depth.

This pattern is consistent with research showing that effective character education depends substantially on modeling, interpersonal relationships,

⁴⁴ Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. (1996). The institutionalization of institutional theory. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (pp. 175–190). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446218556.n6>

opportunities for practice, and supportive school environments rather than on moral instruction alone⁴⁵. It also resonates with recent research on *halaqah tarbiyah* in the Wahdah Islamiyah context, which identifies the *murabbi* as an important actor in religious character formation through continuous mentoring and value internalization.

The monitoring of *amalan yaumiyah* further connects institutional expectations with students' everyday behavior. Religious practices such as Qur'anic recitation, prayer, fasting, and memorization are followed through mentoring rather than treated solely as academic competencies. The findings therefore suggest a two-level process: institutionalization occurs at the organizational level, while internalization is pursued through repeated participation, interpersonal guidance, and habituation at the student level. This distinction is important because the existence of an institutional structure does not automatically mean that its values have been internalized by every student.

School Culture as the Mechanism of Reproduction

The findings further show that *Tarbiyah* becomes institutionally meaningful when its values extend beyond formal lessons and *halaqah* into everyday school culture. Religious practices, social service, charitable activities, cooperation, discipline, and physical activities create repeated opportunities for students to enact Islamic values. This supports the whole-school perspective in character education, in which character development is strengthened when values are coherently embedded across different dimensions of school life⁴⁶.

The concept of hidden curriculum provides an additional explanation. Students learn not only from formal instructional content but also from routines, expectations, relationships, and behaviors that the school repeatedly models and reinforces. Nasukah argues that school culture in Islamic educational institutions can function as a hidden curriculum that contributes to students' character formation⁴⁷. The present findings extend this argument by showing that, in the case of SMA IT Qurata Uyun, much of the hidden curriculum is not accidental. Religious routines and social practices are deliberately connected to the *Tarbiyah* system and therefore operate as an intentionally structured mechanism of character formation.

An important feature of the case is that the resulting school culture is not limited to religious observance. The integration of *tarbiyah ruhiyah*, *tarbiyah*

⁴⁵ Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2004). Research-based character education. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260082>; Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2007). What works in character education. *Journal of Character Education*, 5(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CE-02-2007-0002>

⁴⁶ Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2007). What works in character education. *Journal of Character Education*, 5(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CE-02-2007-0002>

⁴⁷ Nasukah, B. (2017). Budaya sekolah sebagai *hidden curriculum* pembentuk karakter lulusan lembaga pendidikan Islam. *DINAMIKA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, 2(1), 52–85. <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v2i1.130>

tsaqafiyah, and *tarbiyah jasadiyah*, together with social service and outdoor activities, reflects a holistic conception of Islamic character education. This is also compatible with broader character education research emphasizing that character development involves moral understanding, affective dispositions, social behavior, and opportunities for meaningful practice⁴⁸.

Theoretically, these findings indicate that school culture functions as a reproduction mechanism. Curriculum establishes what should be learned; *murabbi* mentoring translates it into individual guidance; routines provide repetition; and school culture normalizes the practices. Through this process, *Tarbiyah* becomes less dependent on isolated activities and increasingly embedded in students' everyday educational experience.

Assessment, Institutional Maintenance, and Theoretical Contribution

The role of assessment constitutes another important dimension of institutionalization. At SMA IT Qurata Uyun, assessment encompasses religious knowledge, memorization, religious practices, behavioral development, and mentoring progress. Assessment therefore does more than measure learning outcomes; it helps maintain the continuity of institutional expectations.

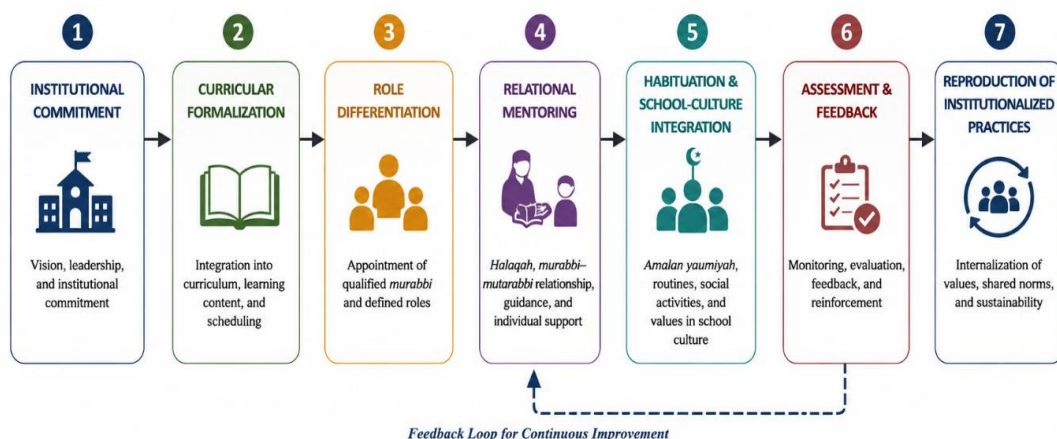
The findings reveal a feedback cycle in which expectations are translated into practice, practices are monitored, monitoring produces feedback, and feedback is followed by further mentoring or reinforcement. An institutional arrangement is unlikely to persist merely because it has been formally adopted; it requires mechanisms through which expectations are repeatedly enacted and reproduced. The assessment system at SMA IT Qurata Uyun provides one such mechanism.

Nevertheless, the reported character changes should not be interpreted as causal effects of the *Tarbiyah* system. Because this study employed a qualitative case study design, the findings describe participants' perceptions and observed practices rather than experimentally established effects. The more defensible interpretation is that the institutionalized *Tarbiyah* system provides organizational mechanisms that support the reproduction of religious and character-oriented practices.

Taken together, the findings allow the institutionalization process to be conceptualized as a sequence of interconnected mechanisms:

⁴⁸ Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2004). Research-based character education. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260082>

Figure 1. Institutionalization Process of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* in Islamic Character Education



Note: The model illustrates the institutionalization process of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* at SMA IT Qurata Uyun Sigi, developed from the findings of this study and interpreted through Tolbert and Zucker's (1996) framework of habituation → objectification → sedimentation.

This configuration extends previous research that has tended to examine *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, Islamic curriculum integration, *halaqah*, or school culture as relatively separate dimensions. Fakhurrozi et al., for example, demonstrate the relevance of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* curriculum integration for social character⁴⁹, while Nasukah emphasizes the role of school culture as a hidden curriculum⁵⁰. The present study connects these dimensions through the concept of institutionalization.

Theoretically, the contribution of this study therefore lies in shifting the analytical focus from character education as a set of programs to character education as an institutional system. The case suggests that *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* becomes institutionally durable when its values are translated into curriculum, organizational roles, mentoring relationships, routines, school culture, and assessment. In relation to Tolbert and Zucker's framework, the trajectory can be read as movement from recurring practice toward organizational legitimacy and increasingly routinized reproduction. The significance of the case is that institutionalization does not erase the religious and relational identity of *Tarbiyah*; instead, those characteristics become embedded within the organizational architecture of the school.

Thus, the central proposition emerging from this study is that Islamic character education becomes institutionally sustainable when religious values are

⁴⁹ Fakhurrozi, H., Minabari, M., Saguni, F., & Nadirah, S. (2023). Integration of Islamic education curriculum to enhance the social character of vocational high school students. *Ta'dib*, 26(1), 171–182. <https://doi.org/10.31958/jt.v26i1.7237>

⁵⁰ Nasukah, B. (2017). Budaya sekolah sebagai *hidden curriculum* pembentuk karakter lulusan lembaga pendidikan Islam. *DINAMIKA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, 2(1), 52–85. <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v2i1.130>

not merely taught but structurally organized, relationally enacted, culturally reproduced, and continuously monitored within the school system. This proposition provides a basis for understanding *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* not merely as a pedagogical program but as an institutional architecture for Islamic character education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* at SMA IT Qurata Uyun has developed beyond a religious development program into an institutionalized system of Islamic character education. Its institutionalization occurs through interconnected processes of institutional commitment, curricular formalization, role differentiation, relational mentoring, habituation and school-culture integration, and assessment and feedback. Together, these mechanisms enable Islamic values to be embedded in the organizational structures, educational practices, and everyday culture of the school and to be continuously reproduced in students' character development.

Based on these findings, the study proposes the Institutionalization of *Tarbiyah* Model (ITM) as an empirical-conceptual framework for explaining how *Tarbiyah* values move from institutional commitment to curricular and organizational formalization, are enacted through relational mentoring and habituation, reinforced through assessment and feedback, and ultimately reproduced as institutionalized practices. In this respect, the study extends previous scholarship that has largely examined *Tarbiyah* as a pedagogical approach, religious mentoring program, or curriculum component by positioning it within an institutional perspective. The contribution lies in showing how Islamic character education can be understood not merely through the activities implemented, but through the organizational processes that make those activities structurally embedded and sustainable.

The findings suggest that the sustainability of Islamic character education depends not simply on the number or intensity of religious programs, but on the extent to which Islamic values are embedded in the structures, relationships, routines, culture, and monitoring mechanisms of the school. Thus, *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* can function as an institutional mechanism that connects the normative vision of Islamic education with the systematic development of students' religious, moral, social, and personal character. As an empirically derived model from a qualitative case study, the ITM provides a conceptual basis for further research examining the institutionalization of *Tarbiyah* and similar Islamic character education systems in different educational contexts.

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