

# Charitable Habituation as Transformational Character Education: Forming Students' Islamic Character

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## Abstract

Character education in madrasahs frequently remains ceremonial, leaving a persistent gap between the regular delivery of religious activities and their internalisation in students' daily conduct. This study examines the implementation of the *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* (GAS, or Righteous Deeds Movement) at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, with the aim of understanding how the program is organised, how it contributes to the formation of students' Islamic character, and what factors support and hinder its implementation. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, teachers, the student organisation chairperson, and students, and were analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman with source and methodological triangulation. The findings reveal that the program operates as an integrated system in which transparent habituation of *infaq*, teacher role modelling (*uswah hasanah*), and the genuine delegation of responsibility move students gradually from external compliance toward the internalisation of sincerity, trustworthiness, social awareness, and discipline, with charitable habits extending beyond the madrasah into the home. Its principal implication lies in reconceptualising charitable habituation as a form of transformational education and learning, in which routine moral practice becomes the mechanism for a durable transformation of disposition, motivation, and moral agency, offering educators a replicable model for cultivating Islamic character through transparently designed and authentically modelled philanthropic practice.

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## INTRODUCTION

Character education in madrasahs constitutes a foundational effort to shape students' personalities upon Islamic values, and at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang this effort is embodied in the *Amal Sholeh* (Righteous Deeds) Movement. Through structured religious activities such as charity (*sadaqah*), voluntary almsgiving (*infaq*), worship habituation, and various socio-religious practices, the madrasah seeks to make virtuous conduct an integral part of its institutional culture. In practice, however, a discernible gap persists between the regular delivery of these activities and their internalisation in students' daily lives, as reflected in recurring problems of discipline and limited social concern (Mareta & Muhammad, 2022; Mustofa, 2024). This tension between programmatic intent and behavioural outcome raises a question that merits careful examination, namely the extent to which the implementation of the *Amal Sholeh* Movement genuinely contributes to the formation of students' Islamic character within the madrasah environment.

The strengthening of character and moral values has become a central concern of contemporary education systems worldwide, yet integrating such values into students' lived practice remains a persistent challenge across diverse educational contexts (Guzman & Keltner, 2025; Suciati et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the reinforcement of character education, including its

religious dimension, has been positioned as a national curricular priority, although its realisation at the institutional level has not yet been fully optimised (Marhadi, 2024). Within the framework of Islamic education, the *Amal Sholeh* Movement is widely regarded as an effective avenue for cultivating Islamic character through the habituation of virtuous values (Ikhwanul Abrori et al., 2024; Ma'arif et al., 2024). Even so, religious activities in schools frequently remain ceremonial in character and exert limited influence on students' actual conduct, which underscores the need for a closer, evidence-based investigation of how such programs operate in genuine educational settings (Scholes, 2022; Skoretz, 2023).

Scholarly discussion of character formation in Islamic education has produced a substantial body of work that informs the present study (Al Majali, 2020; Dermawan & Kenichi Purbayanto, 2022). Theoretically, Islamic character education emphasises habituation (*ta'wid*) and exemplary conduct (*uswab hasanah*) as primary means of shaping behaviour, proceeding from the conviction that Islamic values must be internalised through practice rather than transmitted cognitively alone (Mahrus, 2025; Ruswandi et al., 2022). Empirical studies have shown that religious education grounded in values and devotional practice can strengthen students' religious and social attitudes, while research on activities such as *sadaqah*, *infaq*, and worship habituation has demonstrated their capacity to cultivate discipline, responsibility, and social awareness (Alam et al., 2022). These insights resonate with established frameworks of character education that locate moral growth in the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, a perspective particularly pertinent to a movement that foregrounds practical deeds as the vehicle of value formation (Choo & Chua, 2025; Lu, 2025; Van Fossen et al., 2022).

This literature also reflects the social ethic that animates the *Amal Sholeh* Movement, especially the Qur'anic principle of mutual assistance (*ta'awun*) in righteousness articulated in Surah Al-Ma'idah, which establishes cooperation in goodness and piety as a collective religious obligation. Within this ethical horizon, righteous deeds are understood not merely as acts of individual devotion but as expressions of social solidarity, compassion, and responsibility toward others. Such a framing is significant because it positions charitable practice as a bridge between vertical devotion to God and horizontal concern for fellow human beings, thereby situating the *Amal Sholeh* Movement within a broader moral vision in which personal piety and social commitment are understood as mutually constitutive dimensions of a student's developing Islamic character.

Despite this rich scholarship, important gaps remain. Much of the existing research has concentrated on the conceptual and normative dimensions of Islamic character education without closely examining how religious programs are enacted in real educational settings. Studies of *Amal Sholeh* activities, in particular, have tended to describe them as routine devotional practices rather than to analyse their concrete effects on character development, and empirical inquiry situated within specific madrasah contexts remains comparatively scarce. At MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, moreover, the program continues to face practical constraints, including implementation that can become formalistic, predominantly normative teaching strategies, limited instructional time, and the absence of character-based evaluation mechanisms, all of which complicate any assessment of its effectiveness and have yet to be examined in a sustained, field-based manner.

In response to these gaps, the present study foregrounds the *Amal Sholeh* Movement as a practical and sustainable strategy for cultivating students' Islamic character within the madrasah, rather than treating character education as a general or purely theoretical concern. Its novelty lies in analysing the direct implementation of religious activities such as *sadaqah*, *infaq*, and worship habituation as concrete instruments of character formation, grounded in field research conducted at a specific institution. By offering a contextual and empirically informed account of how these practices are organised and experienced, the study advances a perspective that links religious practice and character development in an integrated manner, thereby addressing the scarcity of situated, in-depth analyses of habituation-based character education in madrasah settings.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine comprehensively how the *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* (GAS) Program is implemented at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, encompassing activities such as *infaq*, *sadaqah*, worship habituation, and other socio-religious practices, and how teachers and administrators integrate these values into classroom learning and the wider school culture. It further seeks to understand the extent to which the program contributes to the development of students' Islamic character, including social concern, responsibility, trustworthiness (*amanah*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), discipline, and religious commitment, while also identifying the factors that support and hinder its implementation. The central argument advanced here is that the *Amal Sholeh* Movement, when sustained through transparent organisation and authentic exemplarity, functions not as a ceremonial routine but as a transformative pedagogy for nurturing durable Islamic character.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* (Righteous Deeds Movement) in fostering students' Islamic character at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang. The phenomenological approach was chosen because the study sought to comprehend the lived experiences and meanings that members of the madrasah attributed to their participation in the program, rather than to measure variables or test hypotheses (Bordogna, 2021; Englander & Morley, 2023; Williams, 2021). The object of the study was the implementation of *amal sholeh* activities within the madrasah environment, examined as a situated educational and social practice embedded in the everyday life of the school community.

The research participants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in and knowledge of the program, and comprised the principal, the Vice Principal for Curriculum, an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, a Qur'an and Hadith teacher, the Chairperson of the Student Organisation (OSIM), and students participating in the program. This range of participants was intended to capture the perspectives of policymakers, implementers, and beneficiaries, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of the program from complementary vantage points. The composition of the informants and their corresponding sources of data is summarised in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Research Participants and Sources of Data

No.	Participant	Role in the Program	Primary Data Source
1	Principal	Policymaker and program leader	In-depth interview
2	Vice Principal for Curriculum	Coordinator of implementation	In-depth interview
3	PAI Teacher	Implementer and role model	In-depth interview, observation
4	Qur'an and Hadith Teacher	Implementer and supervisor	In-depth interview
5	OSIM Chairperson	Student coordinator	In-depth interview
6	Students	Program participants	Interview, observation

*Source: Authors' elaboration based on field data.*

The data sources consisted of primary data obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation, together with secondary data derived from school documents, activity programs, and supporting archives. Data were collected through three complementary techniques, namely participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, which were applied concurrently to ensure the acquisition of comprehensive, contextual, and reliable information. The use of multiple techniques allowed the researcher to observe charitable practices as they occurred, to explore the meanings participants attached to them, and to corroborate these accounts against documentary evidence such as *infaq* records, activity reports, and attendance lists.

The data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which comprises three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, conducted systematically throughout the research process. Data reduction involved

selecting and focusing the raw material relevant to the research objectives; data display organised the condensed information into coherent thematic descriptions; and conclusion drawing entailed interpreting these patterns and verifying them against the data. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed, allowing information obtained from different participants and through different techniques to be cross-checked, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the research results.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Implementation of the GAS (Gerakan Amal Sholeh)

The implementation of the *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* (GAS, or Righteous Deeds Movement) Program at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang has been conducted in a structured and sustainable manner. The principal explained that the program is not a new initiative but one that predates her tenure and has been deliberately maintained as part of the everyday culture of the madrasah rather than as an occasional activity.

*"This program is not a new initiative designed during my leadership. It had already existed before I assumed the position of principal, which means that it was established during the administration of the previous principal"* (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

The program encompasses daily charity (*sadaqah*), weekly *infaq* contributions, congregational prayers, and various socio-religious activities. The principal emphasised that its success depends on the collective commitment of the entire school community in cultivating a religious culture, so that charitable practice becomes an internalised disposition rather than a temporary obligation.

*"We have made righteous deeds part of the school culture rather than merely a temporary activity. The aim is to accustom students to performing good deeds in their daily lives"* (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Technically, the madrasah has developed a simple yet orderly collection system designed to be regular and accountable, with clearly assigned responsibilities that allow participation to be sustained without administrative complexity.

*"In terms of technical implementation, infaq is collected from students twice a week, specifically on Mondays and Fridays. The collection takes place in each classroom, with the class treasurer responsible for gathering contributions from all students. The collected funds are then submitted to the designated officer at the madrasah's duty desk, where they are recorded and managed for further use"* (Interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

To clarify how the program operates in practice, its principal components are summarised in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Mechanism for the Implementation of the GAS Program at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang

Component	Description
Core activities	Daily <i>sadaqah</i> , weekly <i>infaq</i> , congregational prayer, and socio-religious activities
Collection schedule	Twice weekly, on Mondays and Fridays
Collection point	Each classroom, then the madrasah duty desk
Person in charge	Class treasurer, then the designated madrasah officer
Fund management	Recorded and administered by madrasah officers through a cash book
Utilisation of funds	Rewards for high-achieving students, extracurricular support, and motivational facilities

*Source: Authors' elaboration based on interview and documentation data.*

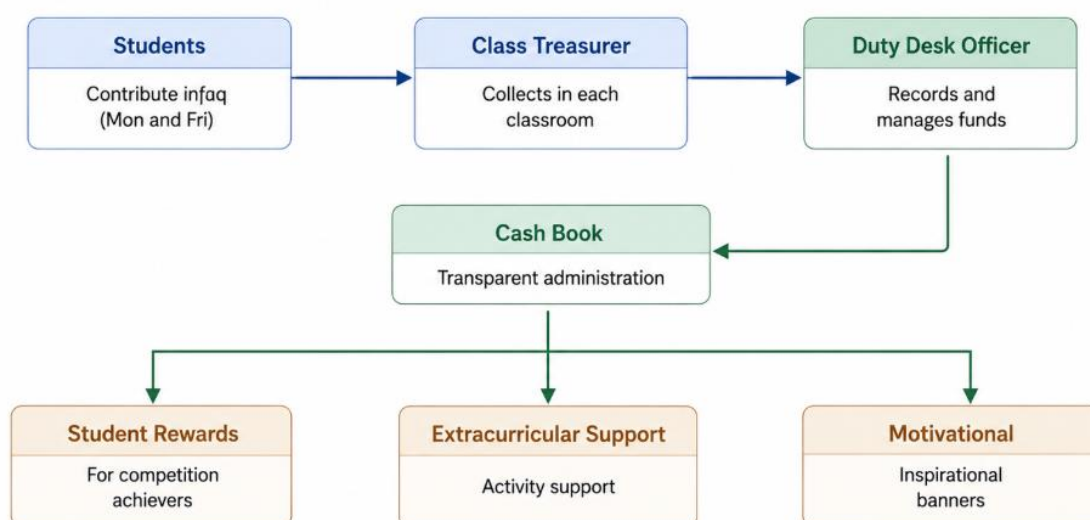
**Table 2** shows that the program is governed by a clear operational structure rather than spontaneous impulse. The regular schedule, the explicit chain of responsibility from class treasurer to madrasah officer, and the documented management of funds collectively indicate that students

encounter charity as a predictable, transparent, and verifiable practice, while the visible utilisation of funds reinforces their trust and willingness to participate consistently.

The principal further explained that a primary objective of the program is to support madrasah activities that cannot be fully financed through the School Operational Assistance Fund (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah*, BOS), indicating that the program serves both as a medium of character formation and as a practical means of sustaining school activities.

*"The funds collected from students' infaq contributions are used to support various madrasah activities, such as providing rewards to students who excel in competitions and bring recognition to the school. The funds are also used to support other educational and motivational initiatives, such as producing banners with inspirational messages that encourage students' enthusiasm for learning"* (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

The Chairperson of the OSIM (Student Organisation) added that the *infaq* funds are also used to reward high-achieving students and support extracurricular activities, allowing students to observe the tangible benefits of their contributions. This complete circulation of funds, from contribution through to utilisation, is depicted in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** Flow of *Infaq* Fund Management in the GAS Program

**Figure 1** shows that *infaq* funds follow a closed and accountable cycle in which every stage carries an educational function. The chain from student to class treasurer to duty desk officer allows each transaction to be recorded through the cash book, while the cycle returns visibly to students as rewards and facilities. This circularity lets students perceive a direct link between their giving and its communal outcomes, converting routine contribution into an exercise in trust and collective ownership.

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher explained that the program is integrated into both learning and daily habits, with teachers not only delivering knowledge but also modelling exemplary behaviour through their own conduct.

*"We do not merely teach students about righteous deeds; we also habituate them to practise these deeds, such as through charitable giving and congregational prayer. The role modelling of teachers is extremely important in this regard"* (Interview with a PAI Teacher of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Interviews with students corroborated this, as they acknowledged that the *Amal Sholeh* activities had positively influenced their behaviour, making them more disciplined in worship and more accustomed to giving, to the point that its absence felt like a deficiency.

"We have become accustomed to giving charity. If we do not take part, it feels as though something is missing" (Interview with a Student of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Documentary evidence, including records of daily activities, weekly *infaq* recapitulation reports, and attendance lists for congregational prayers, corroborated the observational findings and confirmed that these activities are carried out regularly with broad participation. The documentation also revealed periodic monitoring of students' progress and systematic efforts to instil exemplary values through teacher involvement. Nevertheless, the researcher found that students' consistency varied, with some participating mainly because of school regulations rather than personal conviction, indicating that value internalisation remains effective but uneven and still requires further strengthening.

### The Role of the GAS Program in Shaping Students' Islamic Character

Beyond raising funds, the program has contributed to transforming students' attitudes and behaviour. The principal stated that it was designed to balance *habl min Allah* (the relationship with Allah) and *habl min al-nas* (the relationship among human beings), framing character formation in holistic terms that integrate devotion with social responsibility.

"We hope that our students will develop a strong relationship with Allah as well as with other people. The program is therefore concerned not only with worship but also with cultivating concern and care for others" (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

The values targeted, including compassion, responsibility, trustworthiness (*amanah*), and obedience in worship, are reinforced through the routine practice of *infaq*. Observations indicated emerging behavioural change, as many students contributed voluntarily without strict supervision, suggesting a gradual shift from compliance toward genuine internalisation.

"Students willingly set aside a portion of their pocket money and submit it to their homeroom teachers or to the GAS implementation team" (Interview with a Teacher of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

The value of sincerity (*ikhlas*) is evident in the madrasah's deliberate refusal to standardise donation amounts, shifting the emphasis from the quantity of giving to the intention behind it and protecting students of differing economic backgrounds from comparison.

"Differences in the amount contributed are not a problem, because what is emphasised is the sincerity and the intention behind the act of giving" (Interview with the Vice Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Responsibility and trustworthiness are reflected in the role of student class administrators who record, collect, and submit funds openly, an arrangement through which *amanah* is learned experientially rather than through exhortation. Social awareness also improved, as the researcher observed classmates voluntarily fundraising and offering support when a peer faced hardship. The principal Islamic values cultivated, together with their observable behavioural manifestations, are presented in **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Islamic Character Values Cultivated through the GAS Program and Their Behavioural Manifestations

Character Value	Behavioural Manifestation Observed
Social awareness and compassion	Students remind peers to contribute and assist classmates facing hardship
Responsibility and trustworthiness ( <i>amanah</i> )	Class administrators record and manage <i>infaq</i> funds openly and honestly
Sincerity ( <i>ikhlas</i> )	Variation in donation amounts accepted; emphasis placed on intention
Discipline and religious commitment	Increased regularity in worship and consistent participation in activities
Generosity and the habit of sharing	Charitable habits extend beyond school into the home environment

Source: Authors' elaboration based on interview, observation, and documentation data.

**Table 3** shows that the program's character outcomes are anchored in concrete, observable conduct rather than abstract ideals. Particularly significant is the final entry, the migration of charitable habits into the home environment, which signals that the values formed within the madrasah are beginning to transcend institutional boundaries and to take root as a transferable moral disposition. Interviews with students offered more personal insight into this development. The Chairperson of the OSIM acknowledged growing awareness of the importance of giving, while candidly admitting that occasional reminders from teachers remained necessary, illustrating that internalisation occurs incrementally.

*"I have now become more aware of the importance of giving, because this activity is carried out regularly at school and has gradually become a habit. There are still times, however, when I need reminders from the teachers"* (Interview with the OSIM Chairperson of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Another student reported that the habit of giving had begun to extend into the home environment, providing direct evidence of value transfer beyond the school and an emerging affective and reflective dimension to charitable practice.

*"Yes, Sir. The habit of giving that I learned at school has started to carry over into my life at home, although I do not practise it consistently all the time. It feels very satisfying, relieving, and rewarding, because I know that I have done something good. Giving also makes me more grateful for what I have, because I realise that there are still many people who need help"* (Interview with a Student of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Teachers confirmed gradual yet genuine improvements in students' attitudes, while the madrasah's internal evaluation documents indicated that behavioural change emerges not instantly but through continuous educational effort involving advice, the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), and behavioural modelling (*uswah hasanah*).

*"Since the implementation of the Gerakan Amal Sholeh Program, changes in students' behaviour have gradually become visible, although the changes have not occurred uniformly among all students. Students have become more accustomed to giving and have shown more positive attitudes in their daily lives. This can be seen in their growing awareness of the importance of sharing, their increased discipline in participating in activities, and their greater appreciation for the religious programs of the madrasah"* (Interview with a Teacher of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

The madrasah's policy documents further treat character education as the shared responsibility of the entire school community, reflecting an awareness that durable character formation depends on synergy among the school environment, teachers, and educational staff in maintaining a conducive ecosystem.

### **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the GAS Program**

The program is sustained by several supporting factors, the foremost being collaboration among all stakeholders. The principal attributed its smooth operation to the cooperation of every party and the active role of teachers in guiding students and providing positive examples.

*"Alhamdulillah, this program has been able to run well because of the cooperation of all parties involved. Teachers also play a significant role in guiding students and providing positive examples for them"* (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

A well-structured implementation system is a further support, functioning not merely as administrative convenience but as an educational instrument through which students learn social concern, financial responsibility, and the habit of regular giving.

*"The existence of a structured implementation system, such as class treasurers, financial record-keeping procedures, and clear fund-collection mechanisms, contributes greatly to the smooth operation of the GAS Program. With an organised system, program implementation becomes more systematic and easier to monitor"* (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Parental support reinforces the values cultivated at school, while teachers observed that peer influence operates as a powerful motivational force, strengthened by consistent encouragement and example.

*"Yes, peers have a strong influence. When friends contribute infaq, others tend to follow. Teachers frequently remind and motivate students to participate regularly. In addition, teachers provide direct examples through their attitudes and behaviour, enabling students to imitate and follow them"* (Interview with a Teacher of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

Several challenges nonetheless persist. The principal acknowledged that students' awareness is uneven; the Vice Principal for Curriculum noted that economic differences affect participation, and the Qur'an and Hadith teacher observed that absenteeism reduces collected contributions.

*"The main challenge we face is that students' levels of awareness are not the same. Some students are already accustomed to participating, while others still need frequent reminders"* (Interview with the Principal of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

From the perspective of facilities, the researcher observed that *infaq* boxes were not available in every classroom, though this posed no major obstacle given collection through class treasurers. A more substantive limitation concerned transparency, as no dedicated media such as notice boards or posters communicated the use of funds.

*"In my opinion, it would be better if the benefits of the program and the use of the funds were explained more frequently. I hope that information regarding fund allocation can be communicated more openly, so that students clearly understand where the money is being used"* (Interview with a Student of MTsN 2 Deli Serdang, 2026).

The supporting and inhibiting factors identified throughout implementation are consolidated in **Table 4**.

**Table 4.** Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the GAS Program

Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Collaboration among all school stakeholders	Uneven levels of student awareness
Structured and transparent implementation system	Differences in students' economic backgrounds
Parental support and endorsement	Absenteeism reducing collected contributions
Teacher role modelling ( <i>uswab hasanah</i> )	Limited <i>infaq</i> facilities in classrooms
Positive peer influence	Insufficient media for fund-use transparency

*Source: Authors' elaboration based on interview and observation data.*

**Table 3** reveals a symmetry between the program's strengths and its obstacles, indicating that its limitations are largely operational rather than foundational. The supporting factors are predominantly structural and relational, whereas the inhibiting factors derive chiefly from individual variability and resource constraints. Notably, the limitations concerning transparency and facilities correspond directly to identifiable supporting mechanisms, implying that modest improvements could convert present weaknesses into additional strengths.

The documentation study finally revealed that the long-term vision of the program is oriented toward transforming students' character from outward compliance into genuine internal awareness, with habituation deliberately designed to foster empathy and social responsibility as part of the hidden curriculum rather than focusing solely on the funds collected. In summary, the program's success rests upon collaborative commitment, structured management, parental involvement, teacher role modelling, and positive peer influence, while challenges relating to awareness, economic disparity, attendance, and transparency mark the areas requiring continued attention. The *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* thus operates as an integrated system in which structured practice, exemplary conduct, and institutional commitment jointly cultivate students' Islamic character, demonstrating considerable effectiveness as a sustainable medium for embedding moral

and religious values within the daily life of the madrasah, even as the depth of internalisation remains uneven.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* (GAS) Program at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang functions not as an isolated charitable routine but as an integrated mechanism of Islamic character formation, in which structured practice, exemplary conduct, and institutional commitment operate in concert. This discussion interprets the three principal findings, namely the program's implementation, its role in shaping students' Islamic character, and the factors that support and inhibit it, by situating them within the broader scholarly conversation on habituation-based character education (Ginanjar et al., 2025). In doing so, it seeks to explain not merely what the program achieves but how and why it produces the moral dispositions observed among students within the madrasah environment.

The first finding, concerning the structured and sustained implementation of the program, affirms that the habituation of *infaq* every Monday and Friday operates as a deliberate pedagogical strategy rather than a mere administrative routine (Rahman et al., 2022) and (Gavaz et al., 2021). This interpretation is consistent with (Phelps & Brown, 2023) and (Han, 2024), who, drawing on the thought of Ibn Miskawayh, argues that character is formed through moral habituation, the exemplary conduct of educators, self-discipline, and a supportive social environment. The regularity and transparency documented at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang provide the structural conditions under which such habituation can take root, transforming an abstract moral aspiration into a predictable and verifiable practice (Dewi et al., 2022). The orderly management of funds, in particular, demonstrates that the durability of character programs depends as much on disciplined organisational design as on moral exhortation.

This structured habituation also corroborates the work of (Heryati et al., 2023), both of whom found that Friday *infaq* activities effectively cultivate philanthropic values, responsibility, and social sensitivity. The present study extends their conclusions by showing that the effectiveness of such programs is amplified when the collection system itself is designed to be transparent and accountable. The visible circulation of funds, returning to students in the form of rewards and facilities, allows participants to perceive a direct relationship between their giving and its communal outcomes. This perceptible reciprocity, less emphasised in prior studies, emerges here as a significant condition strengthening students' trust and their willingness to participate consistently over time.

The second finding, concerning the program's role in shaping Islamic character, reveals that habituation gradually moves students from external compliance toward genuine internalisation. The voluntary contributions, the peer reminders, and the migration of charitable habits into the home environment collectively indicate that the values cultivated within the madrasah are becoming transferable dispositions. This observation resonates with (Mudzakkir et al., 2024), who reported that the *Jumat Amal* Program instilled religiosity, social awareness, responsibility, and discipline through routine practice supported by the collective involvement of principals, teachers, and parents. The convergence of these studies suggests that character formation is most durable when it is embedded in a coherent moral ecosystem rather than confined to discrete instructional moments.

A particularly salient dimension of this finding is the centrality of teacher role modelling, or *uswah hasanah*, which the data identify as a decisive mechanism of value transmission. The credibility of charitable practice in the eyes of students depended substantially on teachers' personal participation, confirming that values are transmitted most effectively when educators embody them. This experiential cultivation of trustworthiness (*amanah*) through the genuine delegation of responsibility to student administrators further indicates that character is learned through enactment rather than instruction alone. The madrasah's deliberate refusal to standardise

donation amounts, foregrounding sincerity (*ikhlas*) over quantity, demonstrates a pedagogically sophisticated attempt to protect intention as the moral core of the practice.

The third finding, concerning supporting and inhibiting factors, situates the program within the practical realities of school life. The supporting factors, namely stakeholder collaboration, a structured system, parental endorsement, teacher modelling, and peer influence, align with (Irwin & Posselt, 2022), who demonstrated that systematically managed *infaq* movements can serve as a medium for Islamic philanthropic education. The inhibiting factors, however, including uneven student awareness, economic disparity, absenteeism, and limited transparency media, reveal the boundaries of institutional control. The concern regarding fund-use transparency corroborates (Tanno et al., 2025) and (Ramadan & Morshed, 2024), who emphasised that financial transparency and information media are crucial to sustaining trust and ensuring the effectiveness of school-based charity programs.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the uneven depth of internalisation observed among students is not a failure of the program but a characteristic feature of habituation-based moral education, which advances incrementally and unevenly across individuals. The symmetry between the program's strengths and its limitations suggests that its principal weaknesses are operational rather than foundational, and therefore remediable through targeted improvements in transparency and facilities. This interpretation reframes the program's imperfections as developmental thresholds rather than deficiencies, positioning the madrasah's charitable habituation as a maturing rather than a static system of character formation.

The principal contribution of this study lies in reconceptualising charitable habituation as a vehicle of *transformational education and learning*, in which routine moral practice becomes the means through which students undergo a gradual transformation of disposition, motivation, and identity. Whereas prior studies have largely documented the affective outcomes of *infaq* programs, this research specifies the transformational mechanism that produces them: the deliberate alignment of transparent structure, embodied exemplarity, and reflective meaning converts external routine into internalised conviction, and individual habit into transferable character that extends beyond the school into the home. In this sense, the GAS Program exemplifies transformational learning by moving students from compliance through habituation toward autonomous moral agency. The study thus offers educators and policymakers a concrete, replicable model in which philanthropic routine, when designed transparently and modelled authentically, operates as a transformative pedagogy for cultivating durable Islamic character and sustained social responsibility within and beyond the madrasah.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *Gerakan Amal Sholeh* Program at MTsN 2 Deli Serdang operates as an integrated system of Islamic character formation in which structured practice, exemplary conduct, and institutional commitment function in concert. Through the transparent and sustained habituation of *infaq*, reinforced by teacher role modelling (*uswah hasanah*) and the genuine delegation of responsibility, students gradually move from external compliance toward the internalisation of sincerity, trustworthiness, social awareness, and discipline, to the extent that charitable habits extend beyond the madrasah into the home. Its principal contribution lies in reconceptualising charitable habituation as a form of transformational education and learning, in which routine moral practice becomes the mechanism for a durable transformation of disposition and moral agency. As the study was confined to a single madrasah, future research should examine the program across diverse contexts using longitudinal or mixed-methods designs.

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