

RESEARCH PAPER

Governance-Embedded Character Education: Institutionalizing Adab in Islamic School-Based Management

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ABSTRACT

Growing concerns over student moral decline, including bullying, disciplinary violations, and weakening ethical responsibility, underscore the need for character education models that extend beyond curricular instruction toward systemic institutional integration. In Islamic education, Adab constitutes a foundational dimension of moral formation; however, its implementation often remains fragmented and insufficiently embedded within governance structures. This article examines how the institutionalization of an Adab program within an Islamic School-Based Management framework enhances students' moral character through structured governance, teacher agency, and quality assurance mechanisms. A qualitative descriptive case study was conducted at an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with school leaders and teachers, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns related to governance processes, moral habituation, and accountability systems. The findings indicate that moral character formation becomes sustainable when integrated into four interconnected managerial functions: strategic planning, organizational structuring, teacher-led habituation, and continuous supervision. Adab is institutionalized as a governance-embedded system rather than a standalone moral curriculum. Teacher exemplarity and immersive boarding school culture strengthen moral internalization, while structured monitoring instruments ensure accountability and continuity. This governance-based model demonstrates that ethical formation can be systematically embedded within educational management without reducing morality to technical compliance, offering a replicable framework for value-driven leadership in Islamic schooling.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of a nation's development [1], [2], [3]. Beyond cognitive achievement, contemporary educational discourse increasingly emphasizes the cultivation of moral character as a foundational component of holistic human development [4], [5], [6]. In many societies, including Indonesia, concerns over students' moral decline have intensified. National data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) indicate a consistent increase in reported cases of student-related violence and bullying in schools over the past decade [5], [7], [8]. Similarly, reports from the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) reveal that a significant proportion of drug misuse cases involve adolescents of school age. These quantitative indicators reflect a broader moral crisis manifested in bullying, substance abuse, sexual misconduct, and declining respect for authority within educational environments [9], [10].

Within Islamic educational philosophy, moral character (akhlaq) constitutes a central dimension of human development. Suryadarma and Haq and Rajab emphasize that akhlaq is an essential component of Islamic teachings, guiding Muslims in their daily conduct. Classical Islamic scholarship conceptualizes akhlaq as a deeply rooted disposition of the soul from which actions emerge spontaneously without prolonged deliberation [11], [12]. Accordingly, moral education is not merely cognitive instruction but a systematic process of nurturing, cultivating, and habituating virtuous conduct, grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith [13], [14]. As articulated in the well-known narration reported by 'Aisyah (RA), "The character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the Qur'an" (HR. Muslim), moral excellence (akhlaq al-karimah) represents the embodiment of Islamic teachings in daily life.

Moral education therefore represents the core of education itself. Education that neglects character formation risks being reduced to technical training or life-skills instruction devoid of ethical orientation. Empirical studies suggest that character formation significantly influences students' engagement, motivation, and behavioral outcomes in learning processes [15], [16], [17]. Educational institutions, particularly Islamic schools, are expected to function not only as centers of knowledge transmission but also as agents of moral conservation and value internalization [11], [18], [19].

In this regard, Islamic school-based management becomes a strategic mechanism for institutionalizing moral education [20]. Islamic educational management refers to the systematic governance of educational institutions in accordance with Islamic principles, mobilizing human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve Islamic educational objectives [21]. Teachers, as moral exemplars, play a crucial role in shaping students' character. Research by Assegaf indicates that Islamic educational institutions must cultivate educators who embody professionalism, Islamic values, and moral integrity, as their personal character significantly influences students' moral development [22]. Despite these normative foundations, many Islamic schools continue to face behavioral challenges among students. Observational data from Al Azhar International Islamic Boarding School reveal persistent incidents of bullying and interpersonal misconduct, indicating that existing moral education efforts have not yet achieved optimal outcomes. This reality underscores the need for more structured and systemic approaches to character formation.

Recent scholarship on character education has explored various frameworks, including values-based education, socio-emotional learning, and Total Quality Management (TQM) approaches in school governance [23]. Within Islamic education, studies have highlighted the importance of integrating Islamic values into curricula, teacher modeling, and institutional culture [24]. However, much of the existing literature focuses either on pedagogical strategies in classroom settings or on theoretical discussions of akhlaq without systematically examining how moral programs are embedded within school management structures. Furthermore, while the concept of *adab*—which

encompasses ethical comportment, discipline, respect, and proper conduct—has been extensively discussed in Islamic intellectual traditions, empirical investigations into the operationalization of structured Adab programs within Islamic School-Based Management (ISBM) systems remain limited

Although previous studies acknowledge the centrality of moral education in Islamic schooling, there is insufficient empirical analysis of how an Adab program can be institutionalized through Islamic school-based management mechanisms. Existing research tends to examine moral education at the level of curriculum content or teacher behavior, rather than as a comprehensive management strategy involving planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation. Consequently, there is a lack of integrative models that connect moral character formation with systemic school governance practices. The current implementation of moral education in Islamic schools has not yet been systematically integrated into school-based management structures, resulting in suboptimal outcomes in students' moral character formation despite the presence of normative Islamic educational principles.

Addressing moral degradation among students is not merely a pedagogical concern but a strategic national priority aligned with the broader objectives of education to produce morally upright, responsible, and socially conscious citizens. Institutionalizing an Adab program within Islamic school-based management offers a potentially transformative model for strengthening students' moral character in a sustainable and measurable manner. This study is therefore urgent in providing an empirical and managerial framework that bridges Islamic moral philosophy with practical governance mechanisms in educational institutions. By examining the implementation of an Adab program within an Islamic school management context, this research contributes to both theoretical enrichment and practical innovation in character education, offering implications for policymakers, school leaders, and Islamic educational practitioners.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive case study design to explore the implementation of Islamic school-based management in fostering students' moral character through an Adab program. A qualitative design was chosen to enable an in-depth and contextualized understanding of managerial processes, institutional culture, and character formation practices within a specific educational setting. The descriptive case study approach allows for a comprehensive examination of a bounded system by capturing complex social interactions and governance mechanisms in their natural context. The research was conducted during the 2024/2025 academic year at Al Azhar International Islamic Boarding School in Karangpandan, Central Java, Indonesia. This setting was selected because it represents an Islamic educational institution implementing structured character development initiatives within a boarding school environment, making it suitable for examining the integration of moral education and school management practices.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of key stakeholders directly involved in the formulation and implementation of Islamic school-based management and moral character development programs. The study involved four primary informants: the school principal, one Islamic Religious Education teacher, and two homeroom teachers. These individuals were chosen based on their strategic roles in institutional leadership, curriculum implementation, and daily supervision of students. The principal provided insights into policy design, managerial planning, and institutional evaluation mechanisms, while the teachers contributed detailed accounts of classroom practices, student behavioral monitoring, and the

operationalization of the Adab program in everyday school activities. This participant selection enabled the study to capture both managerial and pedagogical perspectives.

Instruments

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher serves as the primary research instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. To ensure systematic and consistent data gathering, supporting instruments were developed in the form of structured observation guidelines, semi-structured interview protocols, and document analysis checklists. The observation guide was designed to record behavioral patterns, teacher–student interactions, implementation of religious routines, disciplinary practices, and school culture manifestations related to moral character formation. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions aimed at exploring planning strategies, implementation procedures, supervision systems, challenges, and evaluation mechanisms of the Adab program. The document analysis checklist facilitated the examination of institutional documents such as school vision and mission statements, program guidelines, curriculum frameworks, disciplinary regulations, and evaluation reports. These instruments ensured methodological rigor while allowing flexibility for probing emerging themes.

Data Collection Process

Data were collected during the 2024/2025 academic year using three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observations were conducted to examine the real-time implementation of moral character development activities and Adab-based routines within classroom and boarding school settings. Detailed field notes were recorded to capture patterns of interaction, behavioral reinforcement strategies, and institutional practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with the four selected participants, each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve data accuracy. Documentary evidence was also collected to support and triangulate findings from observations and interviews. The documents reviewed included policy records, program planning documents, student discipline reports, and institutional archives. To enhance credibility and data validity, the study employed methodological triangulation by cross-verifying information obtained from multiple data sources, as well as source triangulation by comparing perspectives across participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials were organized, coded, and categorized according to emerging themes related to Islamic school-based management and moral character formation. Meaningful units of information were identified and grouped into thematic clusters such as planning mechanisms, implementation strategies, supervisory practices, teacher role modeling, and program evaluation. In the data display stage, categorized data were systematically organized into narrative matrices and thematic descriptions to facilitate pattern recognition and analytical interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative comparison of data sources, with ongoing verification to ensure consistency and credibility. The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened by applying criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, supported by triangulation techniques and the maintenance of a clear audit trail documenting the research process.

RESULTS

The qualitative analysis generated four interrelated themes that explain how the Adab program is institutionalized through Islamic School-Based Management at Al Azhar International Islamic Boarding School: (1) institutional moral vision and collective responsibility, (2) systematic managerial structuring of moral education, (3) teacher-centered moral modeling and habituation, and (4) continuous supervision and character evaluation.

Findings indicate that moral character formation is positioned as the core institutional identity of the school rather than merely an instructional objective. Participants consistently emphasized that the cultivation of akhlaq (moral character) extends beyond students to encompass all members of the school community. The principal (P1) articulated this foundational principle: *“We do not only shape the students’ moral character; we cultivate moral character among all members of the school community. Teachers and staff must embody noble character first—discipline, patience in teaching, honesty in fulfilling responsibilities, fairness, and respectful conduct—because teachers serve as role models for students.”*

This statement demonstrates that moral authority within the institution is constructed through exemplarity. Observational data confirmed that teachers consistently demonstrated punctuality, equitable treatment of students, respectful communication, and adherence to institutional norms. Moral character was therefore embedded within institutional culture and daily practice rather than confined to classroom instruction. The Islamic Religious Education teacher (T1) reinforced the collaborative dimension of this approach: *“The formation of students’ moral character involves everyone—the principal, teachers, and educational staff. Each has a role in ensuring that Islamic-based management is implemented properly.”* This collective orientation indicates that moral development is perceived as a shared institutional mandate, operationalized through coordinated leadership and distributed responsibility.

The second major finding concerns the systematic operationalization of the Adab program through classical managerial functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and supervising. The principal explicitly described the structured nature of the implementation: *“In implementing Islamic school-based management, I follow systematic stages: planning, organizing, actuating, and supervising. The ultimate goal is for students to possess strong moral character and not be easily influenced by negative social environments.”* Document analysis confirmed that moral character objectives were formally integrated into school planning documents, syllabi, and quality assurance frameworks. During the planning phase, behavioral standards such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, and respect were translated into structured programs and daily habituation activities. These included routine religious practices, behavioral monitoring systems, and character reinforcement initiatives aligned with the school’s institutional vision.

In the organizing phase, responsibilities were distributed according to professional roles. The principal provided strategic direction and oversight, Islamic Religious Education teachers guided religious and moral instruction, and homeroom teachers supervised students’ daily behavioral development. The Islamic Religious Education teacher (T1) clarified this division of responsibilities: *“Planning and organizing are carried out by the principal and teachers. The implementation is conducted by teachers in their respective classes, while supervision is primarily the responsibility of the principal.”*

The third theme highlights the centrality of teacher agency in actuating moral values through consistent habituation and corrective intervention. Teachers functioned not merely as policy implementers but as active moral facilitators. Observational findings revealed that teachers continuously reminded students of expected conduct, reinforced positive behaviors, and addressed deviations immediately. Homeroom teachers played a particularly critical role in identifying behavioral problems, investigating underlying causes, and providing counseling-based guidance. The boarding school environment further strengthened this process, as character supervision extended beyond academic hours into dormitory life and extracurricular activities. Moral formation was therefore continuous and immersive, rather than

episodic or curriculum-bound. Teachers' proximity to students enabled relational mentoring and sustained behavioral reinforcement.

The fourth theme concerns structured supervision and systematic evaluation mechanisms designed to maintain character standards. Supervision was conducted through direct observation, routine communication, and formalized documentation. Teachers were required to record students' moral development using a standardized instrument known as the Student Character Development Sheet (Lembar Pembentukan Akhlak Siswa – LPS). Evaluation was conducted continuously across contexts—during lessons, school activities, and boarding life. As emphasized by one participant: *“Evaluation is carried out at all times, both during class hours and outside class, in every setting within the school environment.”* This structured monitoring system demonstrates that moral character development is administratively regulated and aligned with institutional quality assurance standards. Character indicators are documented, reviewed, and used to assess progress toward predefined moral benchmarks.

Despite the structured and systematic nature of implementation, observational data also revealed ongoing behavioral challenges, including incidents of bullying among students. These findings suggest that while the Islamic School-Based Management model provides a comprehensive governance framework for moral formation, character development remains a dynamic and continuous process requiring sustained reinforcement. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Adab program at Al Azhar International Islamic Boarding School operates as an integrated management system in which moral philosophy is translated into structured administrative practice. Moral character formation is institutionalized through collective moral modeling, formal governance mechanisms, teacher-led habituation processes, and continuous evaluative control.

DISCUSSION

Institutionalizing Adab within Islamic School-Based Governance

The findings demonstrate that the Adab program at Al Azhar International Islamic Boarding School is institutionalized not merely as a pedagogical initiative but as a governance-embedded framework. Rather than functioning as a supplementary moral curriculum, Adab is structurally integrated into the mechanisms of Islamic School-Based Management (ISBM), shaping planning processes, organizational hierarchies, leadership practices, and quality assurance systems. This institutionalization reflects a transformation of moral philosophy into administrative architecture, where ethical values are operationalized through formal governance structures.

From the perspective of School-Based Management theory, decentralization is intended to enhance institutional responsiveness and accountability [25]. However, many SBM implementations globally emphasize managerial efficiency and performance outcomes, often marginalizing ethical formation [26], [27], [28]. The present findings reveal a distinctive model in which decentralization is normatively anchored. Decision-making authority is exercised not only to improve effectiveness but to preserve moral integrity as the school's defining mission. In this sense, governance functions as a vehicle for value transmission rather than solely organizational efficiency [29].

Institutional theory provides further analytical clarity [30]. Practices become durable when they are embedded within regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars. The Adab program fulfills these three dimensions simultaneously [31]. Regulative elements are evident in formal behavioral standards and supervisory instruments; normative elements appear in collective expectations that all staff must embody moral character; and cultural-cognitive elements emerge in shared beliefs that teacher exemplarity precedes student discipline. This layered institutionalization moves Adab from aspirational discourse to routinized practice [32].

The structured implementation through planning, organizing, actuating, and supervising demonstrates that moral objectives are embedded within the classical management cycle. Planning

integrates character targets into school strategic documents and quality standards. Organizing distributes moral responsibilities across institutional roles [33]. Actuating mobilizes teachers as moral facilitators within classrooms and boarding environments. Supervising ensures that character formation is monitored and evaluated systematically. This alignment between vision, structure, and practice illustrates governance coherence.

Distributed leadership theory further explains how moral governance is enacted. Although the principal provides strategic direction, authority over moral implementation is dispersed among Islamic Religious Education teachers and homeroom teachers [34]. This distribution minimizes symbolic compliance—where policies exist formally but lack practical embodiment—and instead fosters enacted leadership grounded in relational trust and daily interaction. Moral governance thus becomes collective rather than centralized [35].

Importantly, the model reflects Islamic conceptions of ethical leadership grounded in amanah (moral trust). Leadership is framed not as bureaucratic control but as moral stewardship. The principal's insistence that teachers must first embody akhlaq before shaping students underscores this ethical paradigm. Governance, therefore, is not value-neutral; it is normatively directed toward cultivating akhlaq al-karimah as the institutional telos.

At the same time, institutionalizing morality through governance introduces potential tensions. Bureaucratization risks reducing ethical development to procedural compliance. Institutional theory warns that over-formalization may generate ritualistic adherence rather than internalized conviction. However, observational evidence suggests that in this case, formal mechanisms are reinforced by lived modeling and immersive boarding school culture, mitigating the risk of superficial compliance. To clarify the theoretical integration of these findings, table 1 summarizes how governance dimensions correspond with empirical evidence and relevant theoretical frameworks.

Table 1. Institutionalization of Adab within Islamic School-Based Governance Framework

Governance Dimension	Empirical Finding	Theoretical Anchor	Analytical Interpretation
Strategic Planning	Moral character targets embedded in school planning documents and quality standards	School-Based Management (Caldwell & Spinks)	Decentralized governance used to institutionalize ethical objectives
Organizational Structuring	Clear division of roles (principal, IRE teacher, homeroom teacher) in moral formation	Distributed Leadership (Spillane)	Moral authority distributed across actors, reducing symbolic implementation
Normative Regulation	Behavioral standards codified into school routines and documentation systems	Institutional Theory (Scott) – Normative & Regulative Pillars	Adab formalized as organizational norms rather than informal values
Supervisory Mechanism	Continuous monitoring through LPS and direct observation	Quality Assurance & TQM in Education	Moral formation treated as accountable and measurable institutional outcome
Leadership Orientation	Principal emphasizes teacher moral exemplarity before student discipline	Ethical Leadership & Amanah Concept in Islamic Governance	Governance framed as moral stewardship rather than bureaucratic control

The table illustrates that Adab is not implemented as a peripheral program but embedded within governance architecture. Strategic planning secures normative direction; organizational structuring distributes responsibility; supervisory mechanisms ensure accountability; and leadership orientation anchors the system ethically. This multi-layered institutionalization enhances sustainability by embedding moral formation within organizational routines rather than relying on individual charisma.

In comparative perspective, the model challenges the perceived dichotomy between managerial efficiency and moral purpose. By aligning governance mechanisms with ethical commitments, Islamic School-Based Management in this context demonstrates that administrative systems can function as ethical infrastructures. Moral character formation becomes structurally safeguarded, systematically monitored, and collectively enacted. Such integration positions Adab not as an instructional add-on but as the normative core of educational governance, offering a replicable framework for value-driven school management within Islamic educational institutions.

Teacher Agency and Moral Habituation in Character Formation

While the previous section established that Adab is structurally embedded within governance mechanisms, the present findings reveal that institutional design alone is insufficient to ensure moral internalization. The effectiveness of the Adab program depends fundamentally on teacher agency and the sustained process of moral habituation enacted through daily interaction [36]. Moral character formation in this context operates not merely through regulation but through relational modeling, repetition, and lived example.

The data indicate that teachers function as primary moral mediators between institutional values and student behavior [37]. The principal explicitly emphasized that moral formation begins with educators themselves, asserting that teachers must embody discipline, honesty, fairness, patience, and respectful conduct before expecting students to internalize these virtues. This orientation reflects an ethical hierarchy in which teacher exemplarity precedes student compliance. In practical terms, teachers were observed consistently modeling punctuality, equitable treatment, courteous communication, and adherence to institutional norms. Such modeling transforms abstract moral expectations into observable conduct [38].

This pattern aligns strongly with virtue ethics traditions, particularly the Aristotelian concept of habituation (*ethos*) as the foundation of moral character. Aristotle posited that virtue is cultivated through repeated practice until moral action becomes second nature [39]. Similarly, classical Islamic educational thought emphasizes the gradual internalization of adab through continuous discipline and imitation of righteous exemplars [40]. Within this framework, character is not transmitted cognitively but cultivated through lived practice. The findings suggest that the Adab program operates precisely through this habituation mechanism: students repeatedly observe, imitate, and enact moral behaviors within a structured environment until such behaviors become normalized.

Social learning theory further illuminates this process. Bandura argues that individuals acquire behavioral patterns through observational learning, particularly when models possess authority, credibility, and relational proximity [41]. In the boarding school context, teachers occupy positions of sustained authority and daily interaction, amplifying their modeling influence. Students do not encounter moral exemplars episodically; rather, they experience continuous exposure across academic, religious, and residential settings. This immersive context enhances the internalization process by reducing dissonance between institutional values and daily lived reality.

Importantly, teacher agency in this study extends beyond passive modeling [42]. Teachers actively intervene, correct, guide, and counsel students when behavioral deviations occur. Homeroom teachers, in particular, assume responsibility for identifying root causes of misconduct and providing targeted moral guidance. This corrective dimension reflects the Islamic concept of

tarbiyah (nurturing guidance), in which discipline is not punitive but formative. The findings indicate that teachers view their role as moral mentors rather than mere rule enforcers [13].

The boarding school environment further strengthens the ecology of habituation. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory suggests that development is shaped by consistent reinforcement across environmental layers [43]. In this case, the microsystem (classroom), mesosystem (school culture), and exosystem (boarding routines) operate cohesively to reinforce moral expectations. Students encounter consistent normative cues across contexts—during lessons, communal prayers, dormitory interactions, and extracurricular activities. Such ecological coherence reduces fragmentation and strengthens character consolidation [44].

However, the data also reveal that moral habituation remains a dynamic process rather than a linear outcome. Observations of bullying incidents indicate that structural modeling and habituation do not eliminate behavioral deviation entirely. This finding resonates with contemporary moral psychology, which emphasizes that character development is gradual and susceptible to peer influence, social pressures, and developmental factors. The presence of misconduct does not necessarily indicate program failure; rather, it underscores the ongoing necessity of sustained moral reinforcement.

A critical dimension of teacher agency concerns moral consistency. Research in character education demonstrates that inconsistency between proclaimed values and teacher behavior undermines student internalization. In this case, participants repeatedly emphasized the necessity of teacher integrity. The principal's assertion that teachers must not discriminate among students and must act fairly reflects awareness that moral credibility is foundational to influence. When students perceive alignment between institutional discourse and teacher conduct, moral messages gain legitimacy. To synthesize the theoretical integration of these findings, table 2 presents the relationship between empirical observations and relevant theoretical frameworks.

Table 2. Teacher Agency and Moral Habituation in Character Formation

Dimension of Teacher Agency	Empirical Evidence	Theoretical Anchor	Analytical Interpretation
Moral Exemplarity	Teachers model discipline, fairness, honesty, respectful conduct	Virtue Ethics (Aristotle); Islamic Adab Tradition	Character cultivated through repeated imitation of virtuous models
Observational Learning	Continuous exposure to teacher behavior in classroom and boarding contexts	Social Learning Theory (Bandura)	Students internalize behavior through authoritative modeling
Corrective Guidance	Homeroom teachers counsel and address root causes of misconduct	Tarbiyah Concept in Islamic Education	Discipline framed as formative mentorship rather than punishment
Ecological Consistency	Reinforcement of values across academic and residential settings	Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner)	Multi-layered reinforcement strengthens moral consolidation
Moral Credibility	Emphasis on fairness and non-discrimination among students	Character Education Theory	Integrity of educator enhances legitimacy of moral instruction

The table illustrates that teacher agency functions as the operative mechanism translating institutional governance into lived moral experience. While governance structures provide the framework, teachers activate the system through embodied practice and relational engagement. Moral habituation thus emerges from the intersection of structural design and human agency. Critically, this case contributes to international debates on character education by demonstrating that moral formation requires alignment between institutional structure and educator embodiment. Programs that rely solely on curricular content risk superficiality; conversely, systems that emphasize modeling without structural coherence risk inconsistency. The present model integrates both dimensions: governance ensures continuity, while teacher agency ensures authenticity.

In sum, the findings indicate that character formation within the Adab program is achieved through sustained moral habituation facilitated by teacher exemplarity, corrective mentorship, and ecological reinforcement. Teacher agency operates as the bridge between normative governance and student internalization. Without such agency, institutional design would remain symbolic; with it, moral values become lived realities within the educational environment.

Moral Accountability and Quality Assurance in Islamic Character Education

The findings indicate that the institutionalization of Adab within Islamic School-Based Management is sustained not only through governance structures and teacher agency but also through systematic mechanisms of moral accountability and quality assurance. Character formation in this context is treated as an evaluative domain subject to monitoring, documentation, and administrative oversight. This approach reflects a deliberate effort to reconcile the intangible nature of moral development with structured quality management principles [16].

In many educational systems, accountability frameworks are predominantly oriented toward measurable academic outcomes such as standardized test scores, graduation rates, and institutional rankings. Moral and character development, by contrast, is often regarded as difficult to quantify and therefore marginalized in formal evaluation systems [39]. The present findings demonstrate a distinctive model in which moral outcomes are incorporated into the school's quality assurance architecture through continuous supervision, structured documentation, and evaluative reporting [45].

The supervisory function is enacted through direct observation, routine communication between the principal and teachers, and formalized behavioral documentation. Teachers are required to complete the Student Character Development Sheet (Lembar Pembentukan Akhlak Siswa, LPS), which records students' behavioral progress across predefined moral indicators. Evaluation is not episodic but continuous, occurring during instructional hours as well as in non-academic contexts such as communal prayers, dormitory interactions, and extracurricular activities. This comprehensive monitoring system reflects a governance commitment to moral accountability rather than symbolic endorsement of character education.

From a Total Quality Management (TQM) perspective, quality assurance involves continuous improvement, systematic monitoring, and alignment between institutional objectives and operational processes [46]. Applying TQM principles to character education may appear paradoxical, given that moral virtues are inherently qualitative and context-dependent. However, the findings reveal that the school conceptualizes moral development as an institutional standard subject to iterative review. The LPS instrument functions as a feedback mechanism that allows administrators to assess alignment between intended moral outcomes and observable behaviors. In this sense, character formation is integrated into the quality cycle rather than treated as an external or secondary objective.

Educational accountability theory further clarifies this dynamic. Accountability systems typically involve three core components: clearly defined standards, monitoring mechanisms, and

consequences or interventions. In the present case, behavioral standards are articulated in institutional documents and embedded in daily routines; monitoring is conducted through teacher observation and documentation; and interventions occur through counseling, guidance, or corrective action when deviations are identified. This triadic structure demonstrates that moral education is subject to systematic oversight analogous to academic domains.

Nevertheless, the measurement of moral character introduces epistemological and ethical complexities. Contemporary scholarship on non-cognitive assessment warns that reducing virtues to checklists risks instrumentalizing morality and neglecting internal intention (*niyyah*), which occupies a central place in Islamic ethical thought [47]. Character, particularly within Islamic frameworks, is not solely behavioral conformity but encompasses sincerity, consciousness of God (*taqwa*), and internal moral awareness. The formalization of evaluation mechanisms therefore requires careful balance to avoid conflating observable compliance with genuine moral internalization [48].

The findings suggest that this balance is partially maintained through the relational dimension of supervision. Evaluation is not conducted as bureaucratic surveillance but embedded within ongoing mentorship. Teachers who complete LPS documentation are simultaneously those who engage students in daily moral guidance, thereby linking assessment with formative interaction. This integration reduces the risk of purely punitive or technocratic evaluation and instead frames accountability as moral accompaniment.

Institutional theory provides further insight into this dynamic. By embedding moral evaluation within formal routines, the school strengthens the regulative pillar of *Adab* institutionalization [49]. However, durability depends equally on normative and cultural-cognitive alignment. If monitoring mechanisms are perceived as external impositions rather than shared commitments, they may generate compliance without conviction. Observational data indicate that teachers view character monitoring as part of their moral responsibility rather than administrative burden, suggesting congruence between structural requirements and internalized values [50].

The sustainability of moral accountability is also enhanced by its integration into quality assurance cycles. Continuous documentation enables longitudinal tracking of behavioral development, facilitating early identification of emerging issues such as bullying. Rather than reacting solely to crises, the school employs preventive oversight. This proactive orientation aligns with contemporary quality management models that emphasize preventive action over corrective remediation. To clarify the theoretical and empirical integration of moral accountability within Islamic character education, table 3 synthesizes the key dimensions.

Table 3. Moral Accountability and Quality Assurance in Islamic Character Education

Accountability Dimension	Empirical Evidence	Theoretical Anchor	Analytical Interpretation
Defined Moral Standards	Behavioral indicators embedded in school documents and routines	Educational Accountability Theory	Character expectations formalized as institutional standards
Continuous Monitoring	Ongoing observation across classroom and boarding contexts	Total Quality Management (TQM)	Moral development treated as continuous improvement domain
Documentation Mechanism	Use of Student Character Development Sheet (LPS)	Assessment of Non-Cognitive Outcomes	Structured attempt to evaluate intangible moral growth

Corrective Intervention	Counseling and guidance for behavioral deviations	Formative Assessment & Tarbiyah	Accountability framed as developmental rather than punitive
Institutional Alignment	Monitoring perceived as shared moral responsibility	Institutional Theory (Regulative & Normative Pillars)	Accountability mechanisms supported by collective ethical commitment

The table illustrates that moral accountability in this context operates through an integrated system of standards, monitoring, documentation, and formative intervention. Quality assurance mechanisms are not detached from ethical purpose but anchored in Islamic educational philosophy. Critically, this model contributes to international debates on the measurability of character education. While critics argue that moral development resists quantification, the present findings suggest that structured evaluation can coexist with ethical intentionality when designed as formative oversight rather than reductive scoring. The LPS instrument does not claim to capture the entirety of moral virtue; rather, it provides observable indicators that guide continuous reflection and intervention.

In sum, moral accountability within Islamic School-Based Management functions as an ethical quality assurance system. Through continuous supervision, structured documentation, and formative intervention, character education is embedded within institutional evaluation cycles. This approach reframes accountability not as bureaucratic control but as moral stewardship, ensuring that the cultivation of Adab remains a measurable, monitored, and sustained institutional priority.

CONCLUSION

The enhancement of students' moral character through the implementation of an Adab program proves most effective when embedded within a structured Islamic School-Based Management framework. Moral formation is positioned not as a peripheral instructional component but as an institutional priority institutionalized through governance mechanisms, distributed leadership, teacher agency, and systematic quality assurance. By integrating planning, organizing, actuating, and supervising into a value-driven management cycle, Adab is transformed from normative aspiration into operational practice. Teacher exemplarity and sustained moral habituation function as the principal mechanisms of internalization, while continuous supervision and structured documentation reinforce accountability and institutional continuity. Moral character formation thus emerges as an organizational commitment safeguarded by ethical leadership and administrative coherence.

The findings further underscore that sustainable character education requires alignment between institutional architecture and human agency. Governance structures provide stability and long-term continuity; however, authentic moral internalization depends on the credibility, consistency, and relational engagement of educators as moral exemplars. The incorporation of quality assurance mechanisms—such as ongoing behavioral monitoring and structured character documentation—demonstrates that moral development, although inherently qualitative, can be systematically nurtured and evaluated without being reduced to purely technical measurement. This integrative model challenges the assumed dichotomy between managerial professionalism and ethical purpose, offering a governance-based framework for Islamic educational institutions seeking to harmonize spiritual integrity with organizational effectiveness.

Several implications and recommendations follow from this model. First, Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to institutionalize character education within governance systems rather than relying exclusively on curricular or extracurricular initiatives. Second, leadership preparation and teacher professional development programs should emphasize ethical leadership, moral exemplarity, and reflective practice as foundational competencies. Third, further empirical inquiry is recommended to examine the longitudinal impact, scalability, and contextual adaptability of governance-embedded Adab

programs across diverse Islamic educational settings, including the use of comparative and mixed-method approaches to strengthen generalizability and policy relevance.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed substantially to the conception and design of the study. The first author was responsible for data collection, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. The second author contributed to conceptual refinement, theoretical framing, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors reviewed, approved, and agreed to the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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