

The Role of School Culture Based on Islamic Values in Shaping Students' Character at Pratheep Vittaya School Narathiwat Thailand

Rahmah Suaibah*¹, Darliana Sormin², Adek Kholijah Siregar³

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan; rahmahsuaibah3@gmail.com

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan; darliana.sormin@um-tapsel.ac.id

³ Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanulil Selatan; kholijah@um-tapsel.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of school culture in shaping the character of students at Prateep Vittaya School, Thailand. This study uses a qualitative approach with a field study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of school culture based on Islamic values. Data collection techniques include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with teachers and students as key informants. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn, as well as testing the validity of the data through triangulation. The results of the study show that school culture plays an important role in shaping students' character, especially in the dimensions of religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and independence. This is reflected in routine activities such as congregational prayers, the implementation of the 5S culture (smile, greeting, greetings, manners), disciplined learning, maintaining cleanliness environment, and managing social interactions in accordance with Islamic principles, and life skills culture. The application of school culture based on Islamic values has proven to be consistently effective in shaping student character holistically and can become a paradigm for other educational institutions.

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Corresponding Author:

Rahmah Suaibah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan; rahmahsuaibah3@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious effort to guide and prepare the younger generation to be able to face life well. Through education, a person not only learns knowledge but is also taught how to behave, act, and make the right decisions in daily life. Education is an important provision for a person to live life with a clear direction and purpose. From an Islamic perspective, education plays an important role because it helps people understand their true identity as creatures of Allah SWT. Humans are not only expected to be intelligent but also have good faith and morals. Furthermore, humans also have a responsibility as caliphs on earth, namely to protect, manage, and provide benefits to the surrounding environment. Therefore, through education, it is hoped that individuals will emerge who are not only knowledgeable but also have noble morals, are able to live in society, and make a positive contribution to the nation and state. (Epifani et al., n.d.)

The world of education lately shows a reality that is quite concerning, namely the emergence of various forms of behavioral deviation among students that are very worrying. This condition raises the assumption that educational institutions seem to have not succeeded optimally in shaping

and fostering the character of students. Therefore, character development needs to continue to be improved, considering the changes and progress of the times as well as the rapid development of technology that has a great influence on the development of students' character. This condition requires educational institutions to not only focus on the cognitive aspect, but also strengthen the affective and spiritual dimensions of students in an integrated manner. Therefore, strengthening character education is urgent and needs to be carried out systematically and sustainably through various approaches, one of which is by implementing a school culture based on Islamic values (Lawolo et al., 2024)

School is one of the means to develop a human person who is responsible for himself and the surrounding community. Human beings are responsible by knowing, living, and implementing moral values. School plays a role in the formation of intellectual abilities, personality, character, disposition, and character. To form these abilities, schools need a school culture which is the beliefs and values used to deal with school problems and at the same time becomes the foundation of the attitude, mindset, and behavior pattern of everyone in the school (Puspitasari & Syaefudin, 2025)

School culture is the sum total of values, norms, habits, and traditions that are applied consistently in the educational environment. From the perspective of Islamic education, school culture based on Islamic values is a pattern of smell, habits, rules, and traditions that are developed in the school environment by making Islamic teachings the main foundation. This culture is reflected in daily activities, such as habituating greetings, joint prayers, time discipline, respect for teachers, maintaining cleanliness, and regular worship implementation. Al-Ghazali emphasized that the formation of morals must be carried out through the process of habituation (riyadhah) and example (uswah) continuously. Research shows that religious habits in schools, such as congregational prayer and reading the Qur'an, contribute significantly to the improvement of students' religious character and discipline (Lawolo et al., 2024)

Character is defined as a collection of values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior that characterize an individual, which is reflected in daily thoughts, behaviors, and actions. In the perspective of Islamic education, character is synonymous with morality, which is behavior based on the values of Islamic teachings. Thus, character formation is the main goal of education, because it not only produces intellectually intelligent individuals, but also has integrity, responsibility, and behavior in accordance with religious and social values. (Shakila Putri Suhara et al., 2024)

The formation of character in Islam has a strong foundation, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah 2:43, which emphasizes the importance of worship and togetherness in good deeds. The values contained in this verse show that the practice of worship has a dimension of character education, such as discipline, responsibility, and obedience to the rules. Empirical studies have also shown that students who violently participate in religious activities in school have higher levels of self-control and prosocial behavior than students who do not participate in such activities (Islam et al., n.d.).

In a global context, Islamic education in Thailand develops in a predominantly Buddhist society, while Muslims constitute a minority group, comprising about 10% of the total population, mostly concentrated in southern regions such as Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Satun (Hilmin, Dwi Noviani, Lisdaleni, 2023). This situation puts Islamic educational institutions in a strategic position, not only as formal educational institutions but also as a means of preserving Muslim religious and cultural identity in a pluralistic society. Islamic education in Thailand has evolved through two main forms: traditional institutions such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and modern institutions such as madrasas, which integrate religious and public curricula. These institutions have undergone a process of modernization since the 1960s (bustari, 2025). Therefore, Islamic schools in Thailand have a significant responsibility to inculcate religious values and shape the character of students as part of efforts to maintain Islamic identity in minority environments.

One of the educational institutions in Narathiwat, Southern Thailand that implements a school culture based on Islamic values is Pratheep Vittaya School. Based on initial observations, the school features various school cultural practices such as congregational prayer, 5S (Smile, Greeting, Polite, and Virtuous Behavior), close relationships between teachers and students that uphold manners, and social interactions that maintain boundaries between men and women in accordance with

Islamic values. This situation is interesting to learn more, especially regarding the role of school culture in shaping student character.

Various studies have examined the role of school culture in shaping student character. Researchers (Khusna, 2020) stated that school culture plays an important role in instilling character values through sustainable practices and exemplary practices in the school environment. Similarly (Islam et al., n.d.). Stating that the implementation of a school culture, such as regular activities, discipline, and positive social interactions, can shape students' character leading to greater responsibility and positive social attitudes. Furthermore, another study (Mubin & Moh. Arif Furqon, 2023) shows that the success of school culture is greatly influenced by the involvement of the entire school community, especially teachers as the main role models for students.

Most of this research focuses on the Indonesian educational context. Studies on the role of school culture in shaping students' character in the overseas education environment, particularly in Thailand, are relatively limited. In fact, different social contexts, such as in Thailand, where the majority of Buddhists are Buddhist, provide their own dynamics in the application of Islamic values in the educational environment. Differences in cultural backgrounds and educational systems also allow for variations in the application of school culture and its impact on student character development. Therefore, this research was conducted to provide a more contextual picture of the role of school culture in shaping the character of students at Prateep Vittaya School in Thailand. This research has novelty because it focuses on integrating school culture based on Islamic values in the context of Muslim minority education in Thailand. The study not only examines the cultural practices of schools in general, but also highlights how Islamic values are internalized in a multicultural environment, thus making a new contribution to the study of Islamic Religious Education in a global context.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the role of school culture based on Islamic values in the formation of student character at Prateep Vittaya School, Thailand. This research is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic Religious Education studies and serve as a practical reference for educational institutions in implementing school culture as a means of shaping student character.

Therefore, this study is considered urgent in light of the increasingly complex challenges of student character development in the era of globalization, particularly within multicultural societies that may gradually erode religious values. In addition, this study offers novelty by specifically examining the implementation of school culture based on Islamic values within the context of Muslim minority education in Thailand, which remains relatively underexplored. This research not only fills a gap in the existing literature at the international level but also provides a new perspective on how Islamic values can be internalized adaptively within a pluralistic social environment, thereby contributing both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic character education in a global context.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a descriptive approach, which is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written and oral words from people and observed behaviors, data preparation and collection, then analyzed and interpreted about the data obtained. This qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to gain a deeper understanding of educational phenomena, especially the role of school culture in shaping student character. This phenomenon cannot be measured by quantitative data alone, but rather through the interpretation of the meaning, process, and experience of the research subject. (Safrudin et al., 2023) Field research allows researchers to directly observe the social and cultural realities that occur in the school environment in their natural context. Through this approach, researchers can uncover the application of school culture in daily life and its influence on the development of students' character.

This research was conducted at Prateep Vittaya School Thailand, a private waqf-based Islamic educational institution located in the Narathiwat region, Southern Thailand. Prateep Vittaya School Thailand has several other names, namely Mahad Mesbah El-Ulum (in Arabic), Sekolah Mesbah El-

Ulum (Malay/Indonesian), and in Thai it is called *โรงเรียนพระที่ปริทยา*. In its education system, this institution has three types or streams of education, namely the school stream (pesantren) which focuses on the recitation of the Qur'an and classical books, the religious education stream (religious), and the academic education stream (general) that follows the Thai government curriculum. The level of education in this institution is divided into two main paths, namely religious education pathways which include Ibtidaiyah (elementary school equivalent), Mutawassitah (junior high school equivalent), and Sanawiyah (high school equivalent), as well as academic education (general) pathways consisting of Mathayum 1–3 (junior high school or junior high school equivalent) and Mathayum 4–6 (high school or high school equivalent).

The study lasted for approximately two months, during which the researchers participated directly by living and teaching in a school setting. The direct involvement of researchers in school activities allows for the collection of more in-depth and contextual data related to school culture and student behavior. (Ramadhan & Lestari, 2025) The research subjects include students and teachers at Prateep Vittaya School. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a selection technique based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. The main informants were Ustadz Halim, Ustad Budiman Mayokaseh who is a teacher and educational figure at the school, along with several students who are active in school cultural activities.

Data collection techniques include participant observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation provides an opportunity for researchers to witness phenomena firsthand, even those that are not discovered through interviews. Observation can be participatory, with the researcher participating in the activity, or non-participatory, with the researcher being the observer only. Observation is also able to capture non-verbal data in the form of facial expressions and body language that add richness to meaning. Participant observation was carried out by directly observing students' daily activities, such as morning ceremonies, flag raising ceremonies, teaching and learning processes, mandatory congregational prayers, social interaction between teachers and students, and the role of student councils in enforcing school discipline. This observation is carried out continuously while the researcher is on site, resulting in natural and authentic data (Samsu, 2023)

Interviews are used to obtain information about the implementation of school culture and its impact on student character development. Interviews with teachers emphasize school policies, cultural implementation goals, and the role of teachers in character development. Meanwhile, interviews with students aim to explore their experiences and understanding of the school's culture. Documentation is used as supporting data, including school activity records, learning schedules, school regulations, and related visual documentation. This documentation serves to strengthen the findings from observations and interviews, thereby increasing the scientific validity and accountability of the data (Priang, 2023)

The data analysis adopts Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis model (Spradley & Huberman, 2024) which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation are reduced by selecting elements relevant to the focus of the research. The data is then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding, followed by drawing conclusions based on the patterns and findings identified. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses triangulation, both source and method triangulation. Observational data is confirmed through interview data and documentation, resulting in valid and credible data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on observation and analysis of documents, the school culture at Pratheep Vittaya School in Thailand shows characteristics that are based on Islamic values. This private Islamic educational institution, located in the Narathiwat region of Southern Thailand, was founded in 1976 and was officially recognized by the Thai Ministry of Education in 1983. The integrated education system that is implemented combines the religious curriculum (pondok/madrasah) with general education, facilitating the integration of Islamic values into all learning activities. The results of the study show that the school culture at Pratheep Vittaya School is not only symbolic, but has been internalized in

the daily lives of students through various real practices. This internalization occurs through the process of habituation, modeling, and social reinforcement that is carried out consistently by all school residents. Thus, school culture functions as a living value system that shapes students' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors in a sustainable manner.

1. Religious Culture (Religious)

Based on the results of observations and interviews, Religious Culture is one of the most dominant elements in the school culture of Pratheep Vittaya School, Narathiwat Southern Thailand. This culture emphasizes the habit of worship and the spiritual closeness of students to Allah, one of which is congregational prayer. All students, both male and female, are required to carry out five congregational prayers as an integral part of religious habits that are integrated in the dynamics of school life. The prayers are structured and supervised directly by the teacher, thus fostering discipline and order in student behavior. At certain times, such as the Isha prayer, the imam is chosen from among the teachers who also give religious advice or sermons, while the Fajr prayer is led by the principal. For other prayers, students are given the opportunity to take turns acting as imams, muezins, or dhikr leaders after prayers reflecting their active involvement in the practice of worship.

Furthermore, based on field findings, there is an adjustment of prayer times to accommodate the school learning schedule. For example, during the Zuhur prayer which begins at around 12.15 pm, while the class continues until 12.30 pm, the prayer is not performed immediately after the call to prayer is sounded. Instead, the prayer is postponed for a few minutes until all students finish the lesson. After that, they carried out congregational prayers together. The same applies to the Asr prayer, where the azan resounded at around 15.45, and the students only left the class at 16.00, so the prayer was delayed for about 10-15 minutes so that all students could carry out the congregational prayer. This adjustment shows the school's efforts to balance academic activities with religious worship. Although there is a slight delay from the beginning of the prayer, it is still within reasonable limits and does not detract from the meaning of the prayer itself. In fact, this practice reinforces the values of discipline, togetherness, and responsibility among students, as all students can perform congregational prayers after completing their study obligations. Thus, the culture of worship in this school not only emphasizes the ritual aspect, but also shapes the character of students through regular and directed habits.

In addition to congregational prayers, dhikr and joint prayer activities are also routine routines after prayers, which are followed by all students with great earnestness, as a manifestation of collective spirituality. In addition, the reading of the Quran every day and especially on Friday, reading surah al-kahfi is carried out regularly in the morning together with the aim of instilling love for the Quran and fostering religious habits in the daily lives of students. According to an interview with Ustadz Halim, this worship routine serves as the main means of developing students' religious character, thanks to its consistent and sustainable implementation in the school environment. A similar view was expressed by Ustadz Budiman Mayokase, who emphasized that student participation in worship activities is not only an obligation, but rather an educational process to internalize the values of responsibility and leadership.

Furthermore, interviews with students revealed that this worship activity has been internalized as a habit that is embedded in their lives. Samirah stated that the habituation at school has improved her discipline in worship, while Nurimani revealed that the daily routine of reading the Quran has strengthened her relationship with the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, Zainuddin shared that the experience of being an imam or muezin has built his confidence. This shows that this practice is in line with the principle of *tarbiyah* in Islamic education, where habituation of religious behavior shapes morality from an early age (Tarbiyah et al., 2025).

The participation of students as imams, muezins, or dhikr leaders provides hands-on experience that supports the development of leadership and responsibility, according to Kolb's theory of experiential learning and Lickona's character education. According to Lickona, character education not only teaches moral values theoretically but also emphasizes real experiences of good behavior. Leadership activities in worship together provide opportunities for students to "do good,"

namely applying religious values and ethics in daily actions, while developing a sense of responsibility and social awareness (Rizky & Huda, 2026).

The results of the study show that worship activities do not only function as religious or spiritual routines but also function as a means of character formation through student experiences. The results of this study can be analyzed using the perspective of character education theory and experiential learning, one of which is the theory from Kolb. Kolb emphasizes the importance of experiential learning. Kolb's learning cycle from concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, to active experimentation—occurs when students lead worship or commemoration. They experience leadership practices, reflect on the process, understand the values, and apply them in new situations, effectively internalizing spiritual values and character (Akbar, 2025). The routine of reading the Quran also strengthens students' spirituality (*taqwa*) and ethical awareness (Tarbiyah et al., 2025). In addition, the practice of collective worship fosters social solidarity, in line with Durkheim's (Sayono, 2024) view of the social function of religion.

2. Culture of Discipline

The culture of discipline in Islam is an important part of the character development of a Muslim. Discipline does not only mean obeying the rules, but also reflects obedience to Allah SWT and the ability to control oneself. This is clearly seen in the implementation of religious obligations, such as prayer, which are carried out on time, as stated by Allah in Surah An-Nisa verse 103, which states that prayer is an obligation with predetermined times. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) also emphasized the importance of consistency in good deeds through a hadith, which states that the most beloved deeds of Allah are those that are done consistently, even if small. Thus, discipline in Islam includes firmness, responsibility, and self-control, which are reflected in daily life, including in the educational environment (Ninda Halimatus Sa'diyah & Ikfi Khouilita, 2024).

The culture of discipline at Pratheep Vittaya School is evident in the implementation of structured and consistent teaching and learning activities. Observations show that all teaching and learning activities are carried out according to the predetermined schedule, starting at 08.00 and ending at 16.00. Each change of subject occurs on time, and students are required to attend before the activity starts. This indicates a well-organized system and consistent enforcement of rules in the school environment. In practice, students seem to get used to following the flow of activities without significant delays. Teachers also carry out the learning process according to the predetermined time, creating an orderly and conducive learning environment. Furthermore, students are required to complete academic assignments within the predetermined time limit, indirectly growing their responsibility for study obligations.

According to an interview with Ustadz Budiman Mayokaseh, the culture of discipline applied in schools aims to foster the habit of respecting time as part of the Islamic character. He explained that discipline is not only applied in the academic aspect, but also in all student activities, including worship and other daily activities. According to him, the consistent cultivation of discipline will foster a sense of responsibility and commitment in students. As a student, Firadau Bosu revealed that a regular schedule of activities has helped him manage his time better. He stated that arriving on time and completing tasks on schedule has made him more disciplined and less procrastinating. Furthermore, she feels that an orderly school environment helps her focus more on her learning.

The discipline culture at Pratheep Vittaya School reflects the formation of students' character through a combination of timing, structured routines, and teacher supervision, which is in line with the principles of Tarbiyah and Adab in Islamic education (Warsah et al., 2024). Academic and worship activities that are carried out on time foster student responsibility, obedience, and self-management. From the perspective of students learning discipline through *modeling*, i.e. imitating the behavior of teachers and peers, while Piaget and Vygotsky emphasize the importance of social interaction in internalizing moral values, so that discipline becomes part of their ethical and social understanding (Salsabilai et al., 2025). This practice also supports the development of empathy and moral awareness, as described by Hoffman because students learn to be responsible for themselves and the environment through everyday experiences (Aisyah Leonia & Irafa Candra, 2025).

3. 5S Culture

The 5S culture (smile, greeting, greeting, politeness, manners) is one of the real examples of the implementation of a school culture based on Islamic values at Pratheep Vittaya School. This school culture not only serves as a social ethic in daily interactions, but also has a strong theological foundation in Islamic teachings as well as being relevant to various modern theories of character education. Smiles, for example, are an important part of social interaction in the school environment. Students are accustomed to showing friendly expressions to teachers and fellow friends. In the Islamic perspective, a smile has the value of worship as mentioned in the hadith: "Your smile to your brother is almsgiving." (HR. Tirmidhi), as well as other hadiths that state, "Do not despise any of goodness, even if it is only with a radiant face when you meet your brother" (HR. Muslim). This shows that this simple act is not just an emotional expression, but also a form of good deeds that are worth the reward. Thus, the habit of smiling at school is an internalization of the value of *ihsan* (doing good). In theory, this habit is in line with the theory of behaviorism which emphasizes the formation of behavior through habituation. In addition, in the theory of emotional intelligence, smiling reflects the ability to manage emotions and build positive social relationships (Damayanti, 2021).

The culture of saying greetings (*Assalamu'alaikum*) has become a mandatory practice in interaction at school, both between students and teachers and between fellow students. This is evident when students cross paths with the teacher, the student will say greetings, and vice versa, the teacher will also not hesitate to say greetings to the students first. When entering class, students also greet each other. In Islam, the admonition to say *salam* is affirmed in the hadith: "The right of a Muslim over another Muslim is six... If you meet him, say hello." That is why we have to be careful not to let our guard This hadith shows that *salam* is a form of respect that is recommended in Islam. Coupled with the verse of the Qur'an in QS An-Nisa: 86 about the obligation to reciprocate greetings better or as much as equal Thus, the practice of greeting in Islamic perspective is not one-way, but rather becomes a collective responsibility that involves reciprocal interaction. At Pratheep Vittaya School, this practice strengthens the Islamic *ukhuwah* and builds a religious atmosphere. From a theoretical point of view, the practice of greeting is related to the theory of social interaction which emphasizes the importance of communication in building harmonious relationships. In character education, greetings reflect the value of peace and appreciation between individuals. (Najili et al., 2022)

Greetings are a form of interpersonal communication that shows concern and concern for others. Students are accustomed to greeting teachers and friends in a friendly manner. In Islam, the admonition to establish good relations is affirmed in the hadith: You will not enter heaven until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another (HR. Muslim). *Sapa* is the starting door for the creation of harmonious and affectionate social relationships. This culture reflects the value of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) in Islam. In theory, this is relevant to the theory of social constructivism which emphasizes that social interaction plays an important role in the formation of individual behavior and development (Lestari et al., 2024).

Politeness refers to outward behavior that appears in the form of speech and actions that are in accordance with social norms. Such as speaking in good language, not speaking rudely, and respecting people in communication. Politeness in speaking and behaving is the main value instilled in the school environment. Students are taught to respect teachers, not to speak rudely, and to maintain ethics in communication. This is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an: "So speak to him with gentle words." (QS. Thaha: 44) This verse shows the importance of speaking politely even to different parties. This is also reinforced by the hadith that states that a person should say good or it is better to be silent. At Pratheep Vittaya School, this value is part of the formation of students' morals. In the theory of character education, manners are included in the category of moral behavior that must be habituated through real practice, not only taught theoretically (Rizky & Huda, 2026).

Manners are related to gentleness of attitude, respect for others, and the ability to maintain ethics in various situations. In the hadith of the Prophet PBUH it is stated: "Indeed, the person I love the most among you is the one who has the best morals." (HR. Bukhari), as well as other hadiths that

affirm, "Indeed, gentleness is not in anything except to adorn it, and it is not taken away from something except to make it bad." This shows that manners are the main indicator of noble morals in Islam. The culture of manners in schools reflects the success of internalizing Islamic values in students' daily lives. Theoretically, the value of courtesy is in line with the concept of the hidden curriculum, which is the values that are instilled through culture and daily interaction, not just through the formal curriculum (Anam et al., 2024).

The implementation of the 5S culture is evident in the daily lives of students in the school environment, including in the morning activities after the ceremony. Students consistently show greeting behavior, as well as displaying a friendly attitude through smiles. This practice does not only occur at certain moments, but continues to take place in various situations, whether in classrooms, school yards, or other environments. This shows that 5S culture has become an inherent habit in students, not just a formal routine.

The results of an interview with one of the teachers, Ustadz Sufi, showed that the 5S culture is part of the school's efforts to instill noble morals in students through a habit-forming approach. He explained that values such as greeting, being polite, and respecting others are the basic teachings of Islam that must be instilled from an early age. He believed that when students become accustomed to this behavior, Islamic values are not only understood theoretically but also put into practice in their daily lives. As stated in the Qur'an: "And speak to people with good words" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 83), as well as the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH who advocated greetings and friendship as the basis of social relations.

Theoretically, 5S culture at Pratheep Vittaya School represents a concrete form of internalizing Islamic values through a habitual approach. From the perspective of Islamic education, this approach is in line with the concept of ta'dib, which is the process of developing good manners through repetitive and exemplary practice (Rachmawati & Purwandari, 2022). From the perspective of character education theory, 5S culture can be analyzed through Bandura and Social Learning theory, where students learn the values of manners, mutual respect, and positive interaction through observation and hands-on practice (Hikmatuzzohrah, 2026). This consistent practice also supports the development of social awareness, empathy, and self-control, as described by Hoffman about the internalization of moral values through emotional experiences and social interactions (Aisyah Leonia & Irafa Candra, 2025). This is further reinforced by interviews with the students. Arifah revealed that the habit of giving greetings and being friendly made it easier for her to interact with friends and teachers. Meanwhile, Farda said that the habit of being polite has made her more respectful of others in various situations. Another student, Suhaimi, stated that the 5S culture makes the school environment feel more comfortable, harmonious, and creates a sense of family.

Thus this shows that the 5S culture at Pratheep Vittaya School not only functions as a social ethic but also as a means of internalizing Islamic values in the lives of students. Through consistent practice, this culture plays a role in shaping students' character, which includes being friendly, polite, respectful, and having a high level of social awareness in interacting with the surrounding environment

4. Culture of Social Interaction

In addition, character formation through one of the school cultures, namely social interaction within the school community, reflects the strict boundaries between male and female students, which are consistently enforced in daily life. These boundaries are an integral component of the school's culture, which is rooted in Islamic values. In Islam, the principles of haya' (shame and respect) and iffah (maintaining purity and moral boundaries) are the basis of social ethics that are not only doctrinal but can also be applied in the school environment (Zahira et al., 2024).

In practice, male and female students are prohibited from making physical contact, such as shaking hands, except with same-sex or mahram. This rule also applies to interactions between teachers and students, where students are not allowed to shake hands with teachers of the opposite sex. The researchers' observations showed that every morning after the ceremony, male students only shook hands with male teachers, while female students shook hands with female teachers.

Meanwhile, interaction with teachers of the opposite sex is maintained by maintaining physical distance and showing respect without direct contact.

This practice reflects the internalization of Islamic values, especially in maintaining *hifz al-'irdh* (maintaining self-respect) and the application of the principle of *iffah* (maintaining purity and self-control) in social interactions. This is in line with Allah's command in Surah An-Nur, verses 30-31, which commands men and women to keep their gaze down and maintain their honor, as well as to limit interactions that can lead to *fitnah*. Furthermore, in Surah An-Nur, verses 30-31, and Surah Al-Isra' verse 32, Allah commands us not to approach adultery, showing the importance of maintaining boundaries in interaction with the opposite sex as a preventive measure. This hadith also emphasizes the importance of maintaining physical boundaries, as the Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: "It is better for one of you to be pierced in the head with an iron needle than for a woman who is not his mahram." (Narrated by Thabrani). Another hadith mentions that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) did not shake hands with non-mahram women when reciting *baiat*, giving a direct example of maintaining physical interaction between men and women.

In addition, this culture also reflects the value of *haya'* (positive shame), which in Islam is part of faith, as the Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: "Shame is part of faith." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). Thus, these rules on the restriction of physical contact are not only normative but also serve as a means of character education, fostering moral awareness, discipline, and responsibility in students in maintaining social boundaries in accordance with Islamic values.

Furthermore, this restriction of interaction is manifested in the arrangement of space and activity. Classes for boys and girls are separated, so learning takes place in separate rooms. In the canteen, students don't mingle freely, but take turns buying to minimize excessive interaction. The researchers also noted that students maintain communication etiquette, such as subduing glances, talking only about important things, and avoiding irrelevant chatter.

These restrictions are even more visible during worship in school mosques, with separate entrances and prayer places; Male and female students use different doors, and pray on different floors-the first floor for boys and the second floor for girls. This shows that the principle of restriction of interaction is applied comprehensively, covering social and religious activities.

An interview with Ustadz Budiman Mayokaseh revealed that this restriction aims to maintain *iffah* (self-esteem) and foster awareness of social ethics in accordance with Islamic teachings. He emphasized the importance of instilling strong self-control from an early age, stating, "These restrictions are not intended to restrict social interaction in a narrow sense, but to maintain ethics and shape the character of students to be more focused and in line with Islamic values."

A similar view was expressed by Firhana, a student, who stated that the regulation increases her prudence in interacting with the opposite sex and reinforces polite attitudes and speech. He noted that the school environment facilitates the development of respectful behavior and social distancing. Meanwhile, Solihin argues that these restrictions foster self-control and understanding of communication ethics, with communication remaining effective as long as it is done politely and effectively.

This consistent restriction of interaction is in line with Contemporary Character Education Theory, specifically the approach of Character Education as a Structured Environment, which emphasizes the importance of rules and social structures in shaping students' moral behavior. Interaction restrictions are not interpreted as a prohibition on communication, but as a social ethical pattern that teaches self-regulation, namely the ability to control oneself in accordance with moral and situational norms, so that students learn to respect boundaries (Ridho et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic education, this reflects the orientation of *maqashid sharia*, which is to maintain honor, dignity, and social harmony. Contemporary studies also show that the internalization of Islamic values through the practice of gender habituation and ethics can form a strong moral character and minimize behavior that deviates from current Islamic social norms (Hardianto & Rachmawan, 2025).

Despite the restrictions on interaction and the prohibition of physical contact, harmony and familiarity in the school environment are maintained. Observations show a close but polite and respectful teacher-student relationship; Teachers are friendly, open, and non-authoritarian, so

students feel comfortable interacting and expressing their opinions. Students also maintain good manners, politeness, and obedience to the teacher's instructions. This culture of closeness within these boundaries creates a conducive learning atmosphere, where students do not feel pressured but are aware of their teacher's role as educators. This suggests that limiting interactions does not hinder social relationships but instead fosters healthy, ethical, and respectful patterns of interaction.

The social interaction at Pratheep Vittaya School is built on Islamic values, which not only set boundaries but also foster togetherness through various shared activities. One of the activities observed in the field is the direct involvement of the principal, or teachers who often invite students to eat together. The activity takes place in a warm and familial atmosphere, where students sit together, share food, and interact in good standing with teachers and school leaders. In this atmosphere, there is no rigid distance, but rather a close relationship that maintains Islamic ethics. In the teachings of Islam, feeding and entertaining others is a highly recommended practice. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, "O people, spread greetings, give food, maintain good relations, and pray at night when people are sleeping, surely you will enter Paradise safely." (HR. Tirmidhi). This hadith shows that giving food is part of the main practice in Islam that can strengthen social relationships and bring blessings (Kurniasih & Qodriatinnisa, 2024).

Through this activity, strong emotional bonds are established between leaders, teachers, and students. Students view teachers not only as authority figures but also as caring and close individuals. From this habit, various positive character traits emerge, such as a sense of brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), mutual help (*ta'awun*), humility (*tawadhu'*), and respect for teachers and parents. Furthermore, eating together fosters social awareness, empathy, togetherness, and responsibility in maintaining good behavior during interactions. This practice shows that limiting the interaction between boys and girls in schools does not hinder the creation of harmonious relationships. On the contrary, with a focused approach based on Islamic values, social relations remain positive, harmonious, and meaningful. This shows that the school culture at Pratheep Vittaya School successfully combines the application of Islamic principles with the development of religious, social, and moral character in students.

5. Cleanliness Culture

Cleanliness has a very high status and is an important part of the life of a Muslim. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said that Allah is Holiness and loves beauty, and emphasized that "cleanliness is part of faith" (HR. Muslim). This hadith shows that maintaining cleanliness is not only a daily habit, but also a form of obedience to Allah SWT. Allah also states in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 222, that He loves those who repent and purify themselves. These values are an important foundation for a Muslim to always maintain cleanliness, both personal and environmental. The habit of clean living not only fosters neat and healthy behavior, but also instills spiritual awareness that cleanliness is a form of devotion to Allah and concern for fellow Muslims and the environment (Ahmadi, 2022).

The culture of cleanliness and neatness is a habit that is consistently instilled in all students, both men and women. This culture is not only recommended, but has become part of the daily routine, mandatory for students as a form of shared responsibility towards the school environment. Every morning before class starts, students are seen doing scheduled cleaning activities. Male and female students take turns cleaning the school grounds, such as sweeping the field, collecting garbage, and tidying up the classroom environment. Further, each class has a daily assignment schedule, where students are responsible for cleaning the classroom, sweeping the floor, cleaning desks and chairs, and ensuring that the class stays neat and comfortable for learning. Cleanliness is not limited to classes; The responsibility also extends to other facilities, such as the school mosque.

Based on the researchers' observations, students are actively involved in maintaining the cleanliness of places of worship, such as sweeping the floor, tidying up prayer mats, and ensuring that the mosque environment remains clean and tidy. This shows that the value of cleanliness is not only applied in a general context, but also in places of worship that have spiritual value. Cleaning activities are carried out consciously without the need for constant supervision from teachers. Students seem to be used to carrying out their respective tasks, even reminding each other if there are classmates who do not pay attention to cleanliness. This situation shows that the culture of

cleanliness has evolved from just a rule to a habit that is rooted in students. Furthermore, researchers also observed that neatness is an important part of this culture. Students not only maintain a clean environment but also tidy up study equipment, arrange tables and chairs, and keep clothes neat in accordance with school regulations. A clean and tidy classroom environment creates a comfortable and conducive learning atmosphere for students.

The culture of cleanliness and neatness implemented in schools not only aims to create a clean environment but also plays a role in shaping the character of students. This is in line with contemporary character education, promoting cleanliness in schools serves as a form of experiential moral education that not only instills hygiene habits but also fosters the values of self-discipline, responsibility, and concern for the social environment. (Dewi, 2024) Research shows that accustoming students to maintaining a clean school environment can foster environmentally conscious behavior, responsibility, and discipline (Iqbal & Alam, 2024). Students' conscious involvement in cleaning activities is also associated with the development of a strong collective awareness of the environment, which is in line with other research findings that routine practices such as classwork or mutual cooperation foster character and social concern (dewi, 2024).

6. Life Skills Culture

Student independence is a top priority in character development through a dormitory-based education system. The school not only focuses on the mastery of religious knowledge, but also structurally instills life skills that strengthen students' independence in daily activities. In practice, students are trained to take care of their personal needs independently. Researchers observed that students did their own laundry, made beds, and kept their rooms clean without relying on the help of others. Students are responsible for their personal belongings and study needs, such as providing books, keeping closets tidy, and dividing their time between studying, praying, and resting. In addition, students are actively involved in various daily tasks scheduled by the school. These activities include cleaning the environment, managing the dormitory area, and participating in group activities such as preparing meals or religious activities. Students carry out these tasks responsibly and in turns, without showing excessive dependence on teachers or caregivers. The dorm lifestyle also trains students to manage their time independently. Students are used to a strict schedule, starting from waking up early, carrying out worship, studying, to night routines. In this situation, students are required to adapt and manage their time effectively so that all activities run smoothly.

This practice is in line with Islamic values that emphasize the importance of independence and responsibility. Allah SWT says in Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 11 that Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition, which shows the importance of effort and independence (Putri et al., 2025). In addition, Surah An-Najm verse 39 emphasizes that humans only get what they strive for. The Prophet PBUH also said that a person who works with his own hands is better than a person who asks (HR. Bukhari), who emphasized the value of hard work and self-reliance in Islam. This value is also related to the concepts of amanah (responsibility) and endeavor (earnest effort) in the life of a Muslim (Panggabeas, 2023).

From the perspective of educational theory, this practice is in harmony with behaviorism, which emphasizes the formation of behavior through habituation and repetition of daily activities. Students' habits of taking care of themselves and doing tasks independently are the result of a continuous habituation process (Cahyani & Ahmad, 2024).

In an interview with Ustazah Halim, he stated that independence education is an important element of the vision of school education. He explained that students are deliberately accustomed to doing various activities independently to prepare them for future life. He added, "Independence cannot be taught only through theory, independence must be instilled through daily routines so that it becomes part of the student's character". A similar view was expressed by the student, Samihah who stated that life in the dormitory had taught her to do everything on her own. He admits that it was challenging at first, but over time, he got used to it and felt more independent. Hamidah also added that the daily routine at school has helped her learn to be responsible and reduce dependence on others.

These findings show that life skills education in schools is not only an add-on, but an important component in shaping students' character. Through consistent practice, students successfully develop independence, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to manage themselves in daily life. Therefore, the culture of independence instilled in Pratheep Vittaya School is the main foundation for developing students who are ready to face the challenges of life independently and with noble character.

Overall, the findings of this study show that the success of school culture in shaping students' character is inseparable from the integration of values, practices, and environment. School culture is not only taught as a concept, but is realized through concrete and repetitive activities. This is in line with the concept of hidden curriculum, which is the values that students learn indirectly through the environment and social interaction at school (Sukiyanto & Maulidah, 2020). In this context, Pratheep Vittaya School has succeeded in making school culture a medium for internalizing Islamic values that is effective and sustainable. Furthermore, this success is also influenced by the consistency of rules and exemplary behavior of teachers as central figures in the educational process. Teachers not only play the role of teachers but also role models, directly showing how Islamic values are applied in daily life. Thus, the process of character formation is not only instructive, but also transformative.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research through direct observation and interviews at Prateep Vittaya School Thailand, it can be concluded that school culture plays an important role in shaping the character of students. School culture that is applied regularly and consistently, such as the 5S culture (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Politeness, Manners), time discipline, five-time congregational prayers, teacher-student familiarity, environmental cleanliness, social boundaries according to Islamic teachings, plus strengthening independence, have been proven effective in shaping students' character comprehensively and holistically. Thus, the school culture based on Islamic values at Prateep Vittaya School can be an effective and sustainable model for student character development.

The implications of this study show that school culture based on Islamic values can be one of the effective ways to deal with the problem of moral crisis in the modern era. The school culture applied at Pratheep Vittaya School can be used as an example and applied in other educational institutions, by adjusting the conditions and needs of each school, both at home and abroad. Therefore, cooperation and commitment from all parties involved in education are needed to build a school culture that not only focuses on academic achievement, but also on the formation of student character based on spiritual and moral values.

LIMITATIONS

The study has some limitations to consider. First, the sample size is limited to students and teachers at Pratheep Vittaya School, so the findings may not be fully generalizable to other schools with different cultural, religious, or educational system contexts. Second, the data collection methods used, such as interviews and observations, are susceptible to subjective bias from respondents and researchers. Self-reported student attitudes toward discipline, responsibility, and empathy may be influenced by a desire to give "good" answers, thereby reducing the validity of the data. Third, these studies are context-specific and temporal, reflecting only the cultural practices of discipline and character formation over a specific period. Future changes in school policy, educational technology, or social dynamics may affect the relevance of the findings. Further, the study's focus on linking school practices to the theories of Tarbiyah, Bandura, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Hoffman limits the exploration of theories or other variables that may also play a role in character formation, such as family factors or digital media. However, these limitations do not diminish the value of the study's contribution; rather, these limitations serve as critical reflections that open up opportunities for future research. Future studies could expand the respondent population, compare practices in various Islamic-based schools in different countries, or incorporate quantitative methods to reduce

subjective bias and assess the influence of additional factors on the formation of student character and discipline.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Contributions to this research were provided by RS and DS. RS was responsible for research design, field data collection, and data analysis. DS contributes to providing conceptual direction, validation of research methodology, development of theoretical frameworks, AK plays a role in strengthening data analysis, refining writing structures, and final revision of manuscripts before publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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