

Integrating Islamic Value-Based Management and Malay Wisdom to Strengthen the Character of Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of management based on Islamic values and Malay local wisdom in enhancing students' character at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri* (MAN) in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation as data collection methods. The findings reveal that Islamic values such as trustworthiness, justice, and responsibility, along with Malay cultural values such as politeness, mutual cooperation, and respect for elders and teachers are synergistically integrated into madrasah policies and programs. These values are implemented through visionary leadership, habituation in learning activities, and active collaboration with the surrounding community. Furthermore, the *madrasah* demonstrates the capacity to address internal and external challenges through innovation and cross-sector collaboration. The study concludes that a managerial approach combining Islamic values and local culture is effective in holistically and contextually shaping students' character. This model is therefore relevant as a reference for developing character education management in other *madrasahs*.

Keywords: *Islamic Value-Based Management, Malay Local Wisdom, Student Character, Madrasah, Islamic Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central focus in the field of education, particularly in *madrasahs*, which are tasked with harmonizing students' intellectual and spiritual development (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Through an educational management approach grounded in Islamic values, students' character can be holistically shaped, encompassing religious, moral, social, and emotional dimensions (Syarnubi et al., 2021). Emphasis on the management process, which includes planning, implementation, and evaluation, plays a significant role in ensuring the effective achievement of character education goals (Mas'ud et al., 2019; Pasaribu et al., 2024).

In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the challenges facing Islamic education have grown increasingly complex, requiring a careful balance between technological advancement and adherence to Islamic values (Khotimah et al., 2024). This demands a responsive and innovative educational management approach to character formation (Kuntoro, 2019). Islamic values embedded through effective educational governance can serve as a moral shield for students in navigating the currents of globalization (Afandi & Mustajab, 2019).

The formation of student character has become a focal concern in educational governance globally, with international frameworks and regional reforms increasingly holding school leaders accountable for moral alongside academic outcomes, thereby necessitating deliberate planning, resourcing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation akin to any institutional objective (Bush, 2020; Hallinger et al., 2025). Educational systems in the Global South, particularly Indonesian and Islamic schools, confront the dual pressures of maintaining cultural and religious identity amid rapid urbanization, diminished intergenerational transmission, and institutional constraints (Khotimah et al., 2024; Pasaribu et al., 2024; Mas'ud et al., 2019; Syarnubi et al., 2021).

The local Malay wisdom flourishing in Langkat Regency encompasses many noble values such as mutual cooperation, politeness, respect for elders, social harmony, and collective responsibility, all of which hold significant potential for integration into character education in *madrasahs*, as they are closely aligned with Islamic teachings that emphasize morality, ethics, discipline, honesty, and social responsibility. The combination of Islamic values and local wisdom has proven to provide a strong moral foundation for students, fostering responsible, respectful, and disciplined behaviour in both school and community life. However, despite the importance of these values, a notable conceptual and empirical gap remains in the existing literature regarding the integration of Islamic values and Malay local wisdom in character education (Muhammad et al., 2021). Conceptually, most previous studies tend to address Islamic character education and local wisdom separately, without developing an integrative framework that systematically explains how Islamic

teachings and Malay cultural values interact and complement each other in strengthening students' character within the *madrasah* (Idris & Mesiono, 2019).

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that culturally grounded methods, incorporating local wisdom and indigenous practices, foster more durable character development than generic moral instruction (Yusuf, 2023; Sakti et al., 2024; Yani et al., 2025). Concurrently, research on Islamic educational leadership reveals that religious commitments uniquely shape leadership practices beyond Western paradigms (Arar et al., 2022; Alazmi & Bush, 2024), collectively underscoring that values within schooling contexts require active managerial processes rather than mere transmission.

Studies on local wisdom in education often address integration solely as a pedagogical or curricular matter, neglecting the managerial components such as planning, supervision, evaluation, and partnership frameworks (Fathurrochman et al., 2026; Muhammad et al., 2021). Conversely, research on Islamic educational management frequently treats religious values as universal normative principles while overlooking the specific ethnic-cultural contexts in which these values are enacted (Arbain Nurdin et al., 2024; Prasetyo et al., 2023). This dichotomy creates a critical knowledge gap: while both religious values and local culture are acknowledged as influential, there is limited understanding of how school leadership integrates these elements into a coherent management system, or why such integration might enhance outcomes (Kosim et al., 2021).

Langkat Regency in North Sumatra exemplifies a unique context for addressing this gap. In the Malay community, where customary law and Islamic doctrine have been harmonized over centuries under the principle *adat bersendikan syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah* (custom based on sharia, and sharia based on the Quran) religion and culture operate as nested, not competing, normative orders (Maryam, 2018). A Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in this setting, therefore, serves as a critical case for investigating integrated value-based educational management.

Recent scholarship increasingly recognizes the importance of integrating indigenous cultural values, or local wisdom, into education, particularly emphasizing traits such as politeness, cooperation, and respect inherent in the Malay culture of North Sumatra, which enrich students' cultural identity and learning experiences. However, current research on Islamic value-based educational management tends to focus on academic and administrative domains, without adequately examining how these values integrate with local cultural norms to shape student character (Arbain Nurdin et al., 2024) (Ekaningrum et al., 2018).

This neglect highlights a critical research gap regarding the complementary application of Islamic values and Malay local wisdom in educational management policies and practices. Moreover, despite an expanding body of work on values-based management, studies that systematically integrate Islamic and local wisdom

frameworks within madrasahs, especially those rooted in Malay ethnicity, remain scarce; most investigations address these dimensions separately rather than within a unified management model.

Given the importance of synergy between Islamic values and local wisdom in education, this study aims to examine in depth the implementation of management based on Islamic values and Malay local wisdom in *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri* in Langkat Regency. This research is expected to contribute scientifically to the development of a relevant and sustainable character education management model.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore how Islamic values and Malay local wisdom are integrated to shape student character at a Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, a community noted for the alignment of traditional Malay customs with Islamic principles (Sugiono, 2018). Participants, including school leaders, teachers, students, and community figures, were purposively selected for their direct involvement in implementing value-based educational management (Ahmadi, 2014). Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation review, focusing on social interactions, educational practices, and institutional records. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model encompassing data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing to distill key patterns (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 2014). To ensure validity, triangulation of sources and methods was employed alongside member checking to confirm interpretive accuracy (Moleong, 2014). Ethical protocols included obtaining informed consent from all participants, with parental consent for minors. This methodical approach provides a comprehensive understanding of culturally embedded educational management, contributing both theoretically and practically to contextualized Islamic education that is responsive to local cultural dynamics.

Three instruments were developed: an interview guide, an observation protocol and a document-analysis matrix. Content validity was established through expert review by (3) specialists in Islamic educational management and Malay cultural studies, whose feedback led to the removal of leading items and the addition of probes on disconfirming experience. Instruments were piloted with (2) informants at a comparable madrasah outside the study site; pilot data were excluded from analysis. In qualitative inquiry, reliability is reframed as dependability and validity as credibility, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Table 3 documents the specific procedures adopted against each criterion.

Table 1. Trustworthiness strategy

Criterion	Procedure	Evidence produced
Credibility	Source triangulation (leaders, teachers, students, parents, elders); method triangulation (interview, observation, document); prolonged engagement; member checking with (8) participants; active search for disconfirming cases	Convergence matrix; member-check memoranda
Transferability	Thick description of setting, roles and routines; explicit statement of scope conditions for the proposed framework	Contextual narrative; boundary-condition statement
Dependability	Coding by two analysts; codebook versioning; inter-coder agreement on (20)% of transcripts (Cohen's $\kappa = (0.81)$); reflexive journal	Audit trail; codebook v1–v(3)
Confirmability	Verbatim quotation anchoring for every theme; separation of participant claim from analyst inference in memos; external audit by an uninvolved colleague	Analytic memos; audit report

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies two key themes in the integration of Islamic values and Malay local wisdom within educational management at the case school. First, value codification occurs through the explicit incorporation of religious and customary values into institutional documents, such as the vision, mission, and annual work plans. This codification is intentional, enabling values like *amanah*, *ukhuwah*, and *ta'awun* to function as institutional commitments referenced in supervisory discourse. The Malay principle "*adat bersendikan syarak*" is embedded in operational guidelines, serving as an internal mediator between customary and religious norms. Distinctively, values are operationalized as observable indicators in lesson plans, and planning is participatory, involving department heads and teacher representatives through *musyawarah*, fostering collective ownership.

Second, value habituation is embedded in daily curricular and cultural routines. Religious practices, including congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, and observance of the Islamic calendar, structure the school day. At the same time, Malay cultural elements such as oratory, dance, and traditional literature are incorporated extracurricular and pedagogically within classrooms. These parallel practices reinforce each other, supporting repeated behavioral rehearsal necessary for value internalization. Consequently, students reported that polite speech and respect for elders became automatic, evidencing deeply embedded normative behaviors rather

than performed acts. This value architecture aligns religious principles with local customs and manifests through measurable indicators institutionalized across school activities.

Table 2. Value congruence architecture: religious value, customary counterpart and institutional indicator

Islamic value (<i>syarak</i>)	Malay customary counterpart (<i>adat</i>)	Shared moral content	Observable institutional indicator
<i>Amanah</i> (trustworthiness)	<i>Pantang berdusta</i> (integrity of word)	Reliability of speech and undertaking	Honesty in assessment; return of found property; task completion records
<i>Adl</i> (justice)	<i>Berlaku adil sesama</i> (equity among kin and neighbour)	Non-partiality in treatment	Transparent selection for programmes; consistent sanction application
<i>Ihtiram</i> (respect)	<i>Hormat kepada orang tua dan guru</i>	Deference to elders and teachers	Greeting and <i>tradisi cium tangan</i> ; classroom address forms
<i>Ta'awun</i> (mutual assistance)	<i>Gotong royong</i> (collective labour)	Voluntary contribution to collective need	Participation in group clean- ups and social programmes
<i>Shura</i> (consultation)	<i>Musyawarah mufakat</i> (deliberative consensus)	Decision by inclusive deliberation	Student council procedures; staff deliberation minutes
<i>Adab</i> (comportment)	<i>Budi bahasa</i> (refinement of speech and manner)	Restraint and courtesy in interaction	Speech register in school; conduct observations
<i>Ihsan</i> (excellence)	<i>Elok budi</i> (goodness enacted)	Doing well beyond obligation	Voluntary service; quality of student work

Managerial planning at Madrasah systematically integrates Islamic values and Malay local wisdom through its vision, mission, and institutional goals grounded in these traditions. Core values such as *amanah*, *ukhuwah*, and *ta'awun* are operationalized in annual plans and embedded in programmatic and curricular designs, reflecting contextually grounded, spiritually oriented educational management. The Malay principle "*adat bersendikan syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah*" institutionalizes the alignment of local culture with Islamic identity, resolving normative tensions. Teachers actively incorporate character indicators linked to religious and cultural values into lesson plans, demonstrating participatory planning practices. This integration is supported by prior studies that underscore the role of integrating Islamic teachings with local wisdom in character development. Positive engagement from parents and community members further evidences the efficacy of value-based management in reinforcing students' religious and cultural identities within the madrasah context.

MAN Langkat systematically integrates Islamic teachings and Malay local wisdom into student character formation through structured daily religious practices, including congregational prayer, morning remembrance (*dzikir*), and Qur'anic recitation, alongside the celebration of key Islamic events such as Maulid Nabi and *Isra Mi'raj*, which function as platforms for religious and cultural character education. Core virtues like honesty, discipline, and respect are cultivated through habituation and teacher exemplification, positioning educators as pivotal agents in the transmission of values. The preservation of Malay cultural heritage is facilitated through extracurricular activities, traditional speech, dance, *nasyid*, and syair that reinforce the values of courtesy, cooperation, and deliberation, seamlessly intertwined with Islamic principles.

Curriculum integration further contextualizes character education by incorporating students' socio-cultural environments, enhancing relevance and internalization. Empirical observations demonstrate notable improvements in student behavior, including increased politeness, peer empathy, and religious participation, as well as a reduction in disciplinary infractions. Daily communal practices, such as greeting, smiling, and collaborative cleanliness initiatives, substantiate the enduring impact of this dual-framework approach, confirming the efficacy of combining Islamic and local cultural values to foster moral development within madrasah education.

The principal functions as a strategic leader who integrates Islamic values and Malay local wisdom into institutional strategies, program coordination, and the cultivation of an ethical school culture. The principal's participatory leadership ensures these core values permeate teaching practices and daily activities while fostering partnerships with community leaders and parents to strengthen value-based management. Teachers act as moral and spiritual mentors, embedding religious and cultural values within pedagogy through contextualized lessons and serving as behavioral exemplars that promote empathy and respect. This complementary leadership and teaching dynamic creates an educational ecosystem in which values, culture, and behavior are mutually reinforcing, enhancing students' receptiveness to character development. Collaboration between educators and parents further consolidates a synergistic framework that transcends formal policy, making value integration the essence of education at MAN Langkat.

The evaluation and monitoring of value-based programs grounded in Islamic teachings and Malay local wisdom are conducted systematically and comprehensively by a collaborative team comprising the principal, vice-principals, teachers, and administrative staff. Utilizing methods such as observation, structured reflection, appraisal meetings, behavior log analysis, and classroom observation, the process assesses the internalization of values in learning, student engagement in character development activities, and instructional consistency.

Monitoring occurs on a weekly and monthly schedule, with senior teachers and vice-principals dedicated to observing daily practices and providing ongoing oversight. The principal supplements this with regular performance evaluations and professional feedback to enhance teaching efficacy. This reflective and iterative evaluation fosters a culture of continuous improvement, heightens communal awareness, promotes adaptive instructional strategies among educators, and increases student motivation.

The implementation of value-based management rooted in Islamic teachings and local wisdom has had a significant and observable impact on student character development at MAN Langkat. Based on observations and interviews with teachers and students, meaningful changes in students' attitudes and behaviors have emerged, changes that authentically reflect both religious principles and Malay sociocultural values. Students have become noticeably more polite, honest, and responsible in their daily practices. They demonstrate mutual respect, a spirit of helpfulness, and active participation in religious and social activities. These character traits arise naturally from consistent habituation, the role modeling provided by teachers, and the nurturing environment of the school.

Students have also shown marked improvements in discipline and personal responsibility. This is evident in higher attendance rates, timely submission of assignments, and active involvement in various school programs. Values such as responsibility, cooperation, and modesty have become integral to their everyday conduct. Teachers and homeroom mentors report that this value-based approach is more effective in shaping positive behavior than conventional disciplinary methods. Supporting this finding, Fitriani (2023) affirms that character education grounded in local and spiritual values produces long-term effects on students' behavior and moral development.

These positive outcomes are also recognized and appreciated by parents and the broader community. They observe meaningful changes in how their children behave at home and in public – becoming more respectful towards elders, more appreciative of their parents, and more actively engaged in community religious activities. Parents express that the *madrasah* has succeeded not only as a formal educational institution but also as a center for character development deeply rooted in Islamic principles and local culture. Thus, the implementation of value-based management at MAN Langkat not only strengthens student character internally but also enriches their social relationships within the wider community.

Discussion

Value-Based Educational Management Planning and Implementation with Islamic Values and Local Wisdom

The planning of educational management grounded in Islamic values and local wisdom in *madrasahs* represents a strategic framework step toward cultivating students of noble character. In this planning process, the school principal and the management team collaboratively formulate a vision, mission, and institutional goals that are aligned with Islamic values and the local culture of the surrounding community. This is consistent with research demonstrating that integrating Islamic values into educational planning can effectively shape students' positive attitudes and behaviour (Azhari, 2024).

Furthermore, comprehensive planning encompasses curriculum development that embeds character values across all subjects. Teachers are actively involved in designing lesson plans that incorporate specific character indicators to be achieved. Such active teacher participation is essential to ensure that the promoted values are effectively translated into the learning process (Ngadiyono & Sukidjo, 2019) (Prasetyo et al., 2023).

Community and parental involvement also constitute an integral component of value-based management planning. Through community discussions and school committee meetings, various stakeholders are able to provide meaningful input and support for the programs being designed. This collaborative engagement creates a strong synergy between the *madrasah* and its surrounding environment in shaping students' character in accordance with Islamic values and local wisdom (Ariza & Tamrin, 2021).

The analysis reveals that the formal codification of values in planning documents often exceeds teacher capacity, with some educators reproducing values superficially as slogans rather than integrating them into instructional tasks. This finding aligns with research identifying teacher competence as the primary barrier to the effective incorporation of local wisdom (Fathurrochman, 2019). It corroborates Indonesian studies highlighting difficulties in transitioning from traditional to value-based pedagogy (Pavlou & Castro-Varela, 2024). The discrepancy in more uniformly positive single-site madrasah reports likely stems from differences in study design, as selective sampling masks implementation variation.

Theoretically, this reflects a loose coupling between policy and practice, wherein formal structures confer legitimacy while practical enactment remains uneven and discretionary (Bush, 2020; Mota & Scott, 2014). Managerially, these insights advocate for supervision focused on task design rather than on mere policy articulation, and for recognizing value integration as a professional competence that necessitates targeted capacity development. From a policy perspective, imposing value statements without

accompanying support mechanisms predictably yields only superficial documentation compliance rather than substantive changes in practice (Fadlin et al., 2024).

The implementation of character education programs grounded in Islamic values and local wisdom is carried out through a range of curricular and extracurricular activities. In classroom learning, teachers integrate character values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance into subject content and instructional materials. Extracurricular activities, including scouting, cultural arts, and religious events serve as practical and experiential means of reinforcing these values (Banurea & Marpaung, 2019) (Marpaung et al., 2025).

The establishment of a school culture that reflects Islamic values—such as greeting, smiling, and respect—is a key strategy in character formation. Programs such as Best Practice Timepak at *Madrasah Aliyah Persiapan Negeri 4 Medan* demonstrate that intentionally nurturing school culture can significantly enhance students' character and ethical conduct (Syarifuddin, Amiruddin Siahaan, 2024).

The teacher's role as a role model is equally critical in the implementation of these programs. Teachers do not merely deliver academic content; they also embody and demonstrate behaviours that reflect the values being promoted. In this way, students are inspired to emulate the positive attitudes and conduct exemplified by their teachers in everyday life (Ami Latifah, 2023).

Evaluation and Monitoring of Value-Based Program Implementation

The evaluation and monitoring of value-based character education programs are conducted periodically to ensure their ongoing effectiveness. Evaluations are carried out through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis to assess the extent to which programs achieve their intended goals. At *Madrasah Aliyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Ibnu Aqil*, evaluation findings indicate that teachers actively consistently integrate character values into the learning process (Laila Salsabina S et al., 2024)

Monitoring is conducted by the school management team through direct observing of classroom activities and teacher-student interactions, ensuring the consistent application of character values. The findings are subsequently used to refine and improve programs for improved outcomes (Azhari, 2024).

Parental and community involvement in the evaluation and monitoring process is equally essential for gathering constructive feedback. Through discussion forums and school committee meetings, stakeholders provide valuable input on program implementation and offer suggestions for improvement. This collaborative engagement helps create a supportive environment and accountable environment conducive to the success of character education programs (Ngadiyono & Sukidjo, 2019).

Monitoring at MAN functions primarily as a developmental learning routine rather than a control mechanism, attributed to the integration of value-integration criteria within professional appraisal tools and the delivery of feedback as coaching. This approach aligns with meta-analytic findings that leadership influences outcomes indirectly through teacher attitudes and professional processes (Sin, 2022) and with Indonesian evidence emphasizing the role of systematic evaluation in character education (Azhari, 2024). Theoretically, making value work visible through coaching circumvents the pitfalls of invisibility-induced neglect and punitive compliance, fostering true internalization. Managerially, this underscores the need for assessable, developmental evaluation of value integration, while policy reforms should prioritize supervision frameworks that incorporate explicit developmental protocols over mere compliance checklists.

The Impact of Value-Based Management Implementation on Student Character

Empirically, existing research has predominantly focused on general character education practices and broader educational settings, while studies specifically examining the contextual implementation of Malay local wisdom in Langkat Regency as part of madrasah-based character education remain scarce. Moreover, there is still insufficient empirical evidence regarding how these cultural and religious values are internalized through school culture, teacher practices, daily habituation, and student interactions in fostering sustainable character development. Therefore, this study is both significant and relevant, as it seeks to address these conceptual and empirical gaps by offering a more comprehensive, contextual, and integrative understanding of character education rooted in the synergy between Islamic values and Malay local wisdom in *madrasahs* (Ekawati, 2018; Maryam, 2018).

Educational management strategies that integrate Islamic values with local wisdom have been shown to enhance character development among students. In the context of learning, this approach not only fosters religious adherence but also nurtures an appreciation for local culture (Suryadi S., 2017). The synergy between these two value systems produces a more meaningful and contextually grounded educational process.

Value-based management significantly enhances public perception of madrasahs as holistic centers for character development rather than solely academic institutions, thereby increasing community trust and interest in enrollment (A. I. Hasibuan et al., 2019). Empirical findings indicate that integrating Islamic teachings with local cultural values notably improves students' attitudes toward respect, honesty, and responsibility, which are cultivated through consistent habituation in the school environment (Pohan & Siregar, 2022). Furthermore, this integration fosters a

spiritually grounded school culture conducive to the internalization of noble values, strengthening local cultural resilience in the face of globalization ([Hadijaya, 2017](#)).

Effective character education requires systematic management that encompasses planning, implementation, and evaluation, rooted in an institutional commitment to religious and national values. Despite extensive research on character education, a critical gap persists in the comprehensive integration of Islamic values and local wisdom into management frameworks ([Silitonga et al., 2019](#)). Continuous evaluation is essential for sustaining successful character development, underscoring the necessity for an adaptive and culturally relevant educational management model.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Value-Based Management

The implementation of value-based management in madrasahs faces challenges, including limited teacher capacity to integrate Islamic and local values pedagogically and insufficient facilities to support character-building programs ([Siregar et al., 2021](#)) ([Nasution & Fauzie, 2022](#)). To mitigate these, targeted teacher training and strengthened collaboration with school committees and local government have proven effective in sustaining program success and reinforcing madrasahs as centers of youth character development ([Siahaan et al., 2021](#)). Islamic values such as trustworthiness, justice, and compassion remain foundational to the enhancement of students' spiritual and moral growth ([M. Hasibuan, 2004](#)). However, practical models that integrate these values with local wisdom – particularly in culturally rich settings like Langkat Regency – are scarce. This study addresses this gap by investigating the synergistic integration of Islamic and Malay values within educational management and their observable impact on student character. Central to successful implementation is visionary madrasah leadership, which fosters a religious culture and ethical environment essential for character formation ([Prasetyo et al., 2023](#)) ([Sholeh, 2022](#)). The daily embodiment of core values within madrasah life thus provides tangible experiences that solidify students' character development ([Amin, 2019](#)) ([Rais & Rubini, 2022](#)).

Islamic education grounded in local wisdom plays an important role in strengthening students' cultural identity and character development, as it integrates moral values with Malay cultural wisdom such as mutual cooperation, politeness, respect for elders, and social harmony. These values are closely aligned with Islamic teachings on ethics, discipline, responsibility, and brotherhood, enabling students to internalize religious and cultural values in their daily lives. A curriculum that integrates local cultural elements can strengthen students' sense of identity, foster pride in their cultural heritage, and support moral development amid the pressure of globalization. Nevertheless, previous studies tend to address Islamic education and local wisdom separately, with limited attention to how both can be systematically integrated to shape students' character within the *madrasah* context ([Ghafar et al., 2024](#);

Tanjung et al., 2022). Through this strategy, education is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward nurturing students who value and take pride in their homeland and culture.

Additionally, this research contributes to the broader literature on culturally responsive management approaches in Islamic schools or *madrasah*. Most existing models continue to rely on generic management strategies that fail to account for Indonesia's diverse local cultures. By highlighting the context of Malay culture in Langkat, this study offers a new approach that can be adapted for other regions with distinct cultural characteristics, thus making a significant contribution to the advancement of value-based educational management in Indonesia.

This study reveals a critical engagement asymmetry: partnerships with families well aligned with *madrasah* values are robust, whereas those whose values diverge exhibit minimal participation, counterintuitively prioritizing those least in need. This self-selection effect qualifies the extant literature on community involvement in Indonesian character education by emphasizing the necessity of actively extending value congruence beyond homogeneous groups. From a managerial perspective, this necessitates strategic, elder-facilitated outreach and home visits to engage underrepresented families. At the same time, policy evaluation should shift from mere attendance metrics to measures of participation coverage and distribution.

Additionally, the research identifies a boundary condition for effective integration: where religious doctrine and customary practices are formally reconciled, integration operates multiplicatively, as mutual legitimacy obviates conflict and streamlines leadership coordination. Conversely, in contested contexts, integration is merely additive or even subtractive, requiring negotiation due to competing authorities. This inductively derived proposition constitutes the study's primary theoretical contribution, delineating the conditions under which the synergistic framework of Islamic values and Malay local wisdom most effectively shapes student character.

The *madrasah*'s environmental management involves active collaboration among parents, the school committee, and community leaders through meetings and deliberative forums to co-design and review programs. The school intentionally aligns behavioral expectations with those upheld at home and in the village, fostering value congruence that parents and community elders perceive as an extension of customary moral authority rather than institutional competition. This alignment mitigates normative dissonance, a critical factor enabling effective value internalization beyond program intensity.

However, implementation varies due to three principal constraints: disparities in teacher capability, with some limiting their focus to slogans rather than curricular integration; resource limitations that affect the frequency of cultural and religious

programs amid competing academic priorities; and uneven engagement, most effective among families already aligned with madrasah norms but weakest where alignment is lowest. These constraints and corresponding adaptive strategies are documented, highlighting challenges to uniform integration within the value-based management framework.

Cross-case display of the five themes yields the managerial instrument summarised in Table 3. The matrix crosses the four managerial functions observed with the three integration mechanisms, populates each cell with the institutional practice found in the data, and attaches a verification indicator distinguishing substantive from declarative integration.

Table 3. The Character Value Integration Matrix

Managerial function	Codification	Habituation	Exemplification
Planning	Values named in vision, mission and annual work plan; indicators embedded in lesson-plan templates. <i>Verify</i> : values traceable from vision to lesson indicator	Routine calendar designed with religious and cultural cycles; time protected in timetable	Leadership team publicly commits to named behavioural standards. <i>Verify</i> : standards apply to staff, not students only
Implementation	Programme guidelines cite the <i>adat-syarak</i> warrant; behavioural expectations published	Daily worship, courtesy routines, collective labour and Malay arts practised without negotiation. <i>Verify</i> : frequency logs, not intention statements	Teachers model target values in observable conduct; cultural analogy used in instruction
Monitoring and evaluation	Value-integration criteria written into supervision instruments. <i>Verify</i> : criteria carry weight in appraisal	Observation of routines, not only of lessons; behavioural log review	Leaders' own practice included in review; feedback given as coaching
Partnership	Shared behavioural expectations documented with committee and <i>adat</i> leaders	Joint school–community events on the customary and religious calendar	Principal brokers between institutional and customary authority. <i>Verify</i> : elders can state school

Managerial function	Codification	Habituation	Exemplification
			priorities in their own terms

The study identifies that student character development at the case school correlates more strongly with the consistency of moral signals transmitted across school, home, and community environments than with the sheer volume of character education programs. By extending the analysis beyond school boundaries to include familial and communal contexts, the research confirms prior findings that behavioral habituation and culturally grounded engagement are more effective than didactic methods ([Sakti et al., 2024](#); [Yani et al., 2025](#); [Yusuf, 2023](#)).

Importantly, it refines prior literature by emphasizing cultural coherence as the critical determinant, rather than cultural content alone. This perspective is theoretically supported by social learning theory and community-of-practice frameworks, which posit that repeated modeling by influential adults within coherent value systems fosters identity formation rather than mere compliance ([Bandura, 1977](#); [Wenger, 1998](#)), while organizational theory ([Schein, 2017](#)) explains how values become embedded through consistent validation.

Managerially, these findings advocate shifting leadership focus from expanding character programs to harmonizing moral messages across institutions and households. From a policy standpoint, evaluation methods should prioritize assessing system-wide coherence over quantifying discrete educational activities, thereby realigning character education measures with the mechanisms that underpin effective moral development.

This study makes three theoretical contributions: first, it introduces value congruence as an operationalizable mediator between value-based management and student character outcomes, refining the often vague premise that cultural familiarity drives program effectiveness. Second, it extends the culturally responsive school leadership framework beyond contexts of institutional-community tension to congruent environments, where self-reflection manifests as custodianship and community engagement shifts from advocacy to coordination. Third, it localizes Islamic-oriented educational leadership by demonstrating that religious leadership values are enacted through vernacular cultural practices rather than abstract principles, and by proposing that ummah-level constructs function as a shared normative stratum expressed variably through cultural repertoires—the concept of leadership as cultural brokerage encapsulates this mechanism, emphasizing culture’s explanatory role alongside religion.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic values and local Malay wisdom-based management has made a significant contribution to enhancing student character at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri* in Langkat Regency. Through an integrative and contextual managerial approach, noble values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, politeness, and tolerance have been effectively internalized in students' daily practices. Islamic values function as the primary foundation in managing educational activities within the *madrasah*. Principles such as trust (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), and discussion (*musyawarah*) are reflected in school governance, learning activities, and students' daily religious practices, contributing to the development of moral and disciplined character. Malay cultural values emphasizing respect, politeness, and communal cooperation have been integrated into the school environment through cultural activities, daily interactions, and collaboration with the local community. These values strengthen students' social awareness and cultural identity while supporting character education grounded in local wisdom.

The successful implementation of value-based management is closely linked to the school principal's leadership and the collaborative efforts of teachers, parents, and the community. Their synergy has created a supportive educational environment that promotes religious, humanistic, and character-oriented learning. Although the *madrasah* faces challenges such as limited resources and varying levels of teacher understanding, these obstacles have been addressed through training programs, enhanced collaboration, and improved communication. This indicates that the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom can be successfully implemented to support sustainable character development in educational institutions. This study reveals that integrating Islamic values and local Malay wisdom in *madrasah* management is a relevant, adaptive, and solution-oriented strategy for shaping the character of the younger generation. This model is worth adopting as a reference for other *madrasah*, particularly in contexts where character education is grounded in local culture and aligned with universal Islamic values.

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