

**THE ROLE OF AQIDAH AKHLAK TEACHERS AS MORAL ROLE MODELS IN IMPROVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR OF STUDENTS AT MTSN 1 TANAH DATAR**Edrizal<sup>1</sup>, Lena Yunita<sup>2</sup>, and Nurkaenah<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Tanah Datar, Indonesia<sup>2</sup> Mahmud State Islamic University Batusangkar, Batusangkar, Indonesia<sup>3</sup> Indonesian School Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia**Corresponding Author:**

Edrizal,

Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Tanah Datar, Sumatera Barat.

Email: [edrizal08@gmail.com](mailto:edrizal08@gmail.com)**Article Info**

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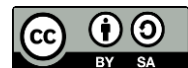
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**Abstract**

Student behavior in madrasah environments today shows alarming trends, including declining politeness, reduced respect for teachers, and lack of discipline. Although Akidah Akhlak is formally taught, moral values have not been fully internalized in students' conduct. This study aims to describe the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers as moral exemplars at MTsN 1 Tanah Datar, analyze how their exemplarity influences students' positive behavior, explore student behaviors that reflect moral role modeling, and identify the challenges teachers face in fulfilling this role. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving three Akidah Akhlak teachers, one vice principal, six students, and two homeroom teachers selected purposively. The findings reveal that teachers' consistency in attitude, speech, and behavior significantly influences student behavioral change both inside and outside the classroom. Students became more polite, disciplined, and showed greater interest in religious activities. This study demonstrates that teachers' role as moral models is not only effective in character formation but also in shaping a positive social climate within the school. The research contributes significantly to strengthening character education based on exemplarity in madrasah settings.

**Keywords:** Akidah Akhlak, Exemplary Teacher, Student Behavior

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## INTRODUCTION

The behavior of students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah today shows concerning tendencies, such as a lack of politeness in speech, declining respect toward teachers, and increasing disciplinary violations in learning activities (Arifah dkk., 2024; Ni'mah, 2024; Putri dkk., 2024). Although the subject of Akidah Akhlak—which contains Islamic moral and ethical teachings—is formally taught in classrooms, reality shows that this learning has not fully succeeded in shaping students' character according to those values. This indicates that the internalization of moral values has not deeply rooted in students' daily behavior. In this context, Akidah Akhlak teachers hold a strategic position not only as educators but also as moral role models who are expected to exemplify the values they teach. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of teachers as moral figures remains a critical issue that needs to be explored further.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of teachers as moral agents in Islamic education, yet most focus remains on pedagogical approaches and teaching methods. Classical theories such as Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes behavioral modeling, and character education frameworks, have not specifically addressed the dynamics of Akidah Akhlak teachers as role models in madrasah settings (Masruhim dkk., 2025). Some literature suggests that the success of moral education heavily depends on the teacher's personal example, yet few studies explore the real-life modeling aspect in depth. Therefore, a gap persists between theoretical concepts and empirical practices regarding how Akidah Akhlak teachers' role modeling concretely affects student behavior. This underscores the need for further research that connects field realities with moral education approaches in Islam.

Based on this background, the purpose of this research is to describe the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers as moral role models at MTsN 1 Tanah Datar. This study also aims to analyze how the teacher's conduct, speech, and daily attitudes influence the development of positive student behavior. Additionally, the research seeks to explore the types of student behavior that reflect the influence of teacher role modeling, whether directly or indirectly. Equally important, this study intends to identify the various challenges Akidah Akhlak teachers face in fulfilling their role as moral exemplars, including internal challenges like time constraints and external factors such as students' social environments.

Given the background and objectives described, this research is essential in contributing to the strengthening of moral education in madrasah settings. By examining in depth the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers as moral exemplars, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of effective strategies for shaping positive student character. The main hypothesis proposed in this study is that the stronger the moral role modeling demonstrated by Akidah Akhlak teachers, the higher the tendency of students to imitate such positive behavior in their daily lives. Therefore, this research holds significant urgency as an effort to address real challenges in moral instruction within Islamic schools.

A role model teacher is an educator who not only delivers academic material but also displays behavior and attitudes worthy of imitation by students in daily life (Cahya dkk., 2024; Nuzli dkk., 2021; Suryadi, 2022). In the context of Islamic education, a role model teacher is one who emulates the morals and character of the Prophet Muhammad as the foundation for teaching and conduct (Assyfa & Yuniarti, 2023; Herwati, 2024; Utami & Sabililhaq, 2023). The concept of role modeling in education emphasizes the importance of teachers being living examples, as real behavior is more easily accepted and emulated than mere verbal instruction. Role model teachers have a strong influence in shaping students' character because their personalities reflect the values they teach. Therefore, the presence of exemplary teachers is inseparable from the success of character education, especially in nurturing noble behavior among students in madrasahs.

The manifestation of a role model teacher can be categorized into several aspects, including spiritual, moral, social, and professional dimensions. Spiritually, the teacher reflects piety and sincerity in carrying out duties. Morally, the teacher demonstrates honesty,

responsibility, and consistency between words and actions (Nababan & Sihombing, 2021; Pangaribuan dkk., 2025). Socially, the teacher builds harmonious relationships with students, colleagues, and the community. Professionally, the teacher exhibits pedagogical competence, subject mastery, and ethical conduct in teaching (Ali, 2022; Prayoga dkk., 2024; Risdiany, 2021). These categories reinforce the idea that being a role model is not only about academic excellence but also about personal integrity. Thus, a teacher who exemplifies such traits plays a crucial role in creating a positive learning climate and fostering moral behavior in students.

Akidah Akhlak is a branch of Islamic education that aims to instill correct beliefs (akidah) and cultivate noble character (akhlak) within students. Conceptually, akidah refers to the foundation of faith that connects a person to God, while akhlak is the practical manifestation of that faith in the form of attitudes and behavior (Basuki, 2024). Akidah Akhlak learning in madrasahs is not merely theoretical; it also seeks to instill moral values that can be practiced in everyday life. Therefore, Akidah Akhlak is a fundamental aspect of Islamic character education because it combines both belief and application. Understanding this concept is essential for ensuring that the learning process embeds deep values within students.

The manifestation of Akidah Akhlak can be seen from two perspectives: internalization of values and real-life application. Internalization is reflected in a firm belief in the principles of faith, such as monotheism, belief in angels, scriptures, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree. Meanwhile, the practice of akhlak includes good behavior toward others, the environment, and all living beings, such as honesty, trustworthiness, patience, humility, and responsibility. In practice, Akidah Akhlak learning must foster student awareness that every moral act reflects their religious belief. In other words, the quality of a person's character becomes the measure of the successful internalization of akidah values they have learned.

Student behavior refers to all forms of actions, attitudes, and habits demonstrated by students within the educational environment, both inside and outside the classroom (Nuronia, 2025; Prayogi & Najiyah, 2023; Ramadhan dkk., 2022). This behavior reflects the values students have received, understood, and internalized through education and social interaction. In educational studies, student behavior is an indicator of the success of character development, as it reveals the extent to which positive values have taken root in the students' lives. It also reflects the learning environment they experience, including the influence of teachers, family, and the surrounding community. Therefore, understanding the concept of student behavior is essential for assessing the effectiveness of moral education in madrasahs.

The categorization of student behavior can be divided into two types: positive behavior and negative behavior. Positive behavior includes actions such as politeness, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for teachers and peers. In contrast, negative behavior includes truancy, verbal aggression, rule violations, and a lack of responsibility. These behaviors are influenced not only by internal student factors but also by social environments, teacher roles, and the teaching methods applied. Teachers who serve as role models are more capable of encouraging positive student behavior because students tend to imitate figures they admire. Therefore, classifying student behavior is important to ensure that character development can be carried out in a focused and effective manner.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this research is the behavior of students in the Madrasah Tsanawiyah environment, which currently shows a concerning trend. These issues include a lack of politeness, declining respect for teachers, and increasing undisciplined behavior during learning activities. Although the subject of Akidah Akhlak has been formally taught, reality shows that the internalization of moral values has not been fully embedded within students. In this context, Akidah Akhlak teachers should not only act as instructors but also as moral role models who

demonstrate exemplary behavior in everyday life. However, the effectiveness of teachers in fulfilling this role remains a critical issue that requires deeper investigation.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design. The phenomenological approach is chosen to explore and interpret the lived experiences of individuals related to the moral behavior of students and the role of teachers as role models. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with informants who are directly involved with the phenomenon. These interviews focused on understanding student behavior that indicates a moral crisis, as well as the teachers' efforts in guiding and modeling positive conduct. Secondary data were gathered from relevant literature, including books, journals, and official documents that support the study of the main concepts: role model teachers, Akidah Akhlak, and student behavior.

Participants in this study were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research context. Informants included three Akidah Akhlak teachers at MTsN 1 Tanah Datar who actively teach and engage with students, one vice principal in charge of student affairs who is familiar with overall student behavior dynamics, six students from grades VII, VIII, and IX selected for their active involvement in religious activities and behavior that reflects moral values, and two homeroom teachers who provided additional insights into student behavioral changes in the classroom. This selection aimed to obtain diverse, in-depth, and representative data about the studied phenomenon.

Data collection in this study employed three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore the informants' understanding and experiences related to the moral role of teachers and student behavior. Observation was conducted to directly witness interactions between teachers and students within the madrasah environment and to record emerging behavioral patterns. Documentation included school activity records, rulebooks, and other relevant documents. These techniques were used in a triangulated manner to ensure the completeness and validity of the collected data.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification (Recker, 2021; Weng & Wirda, 2025). During data collection, field editing and phenomenological notation were also conducted to preserve the authenticity of the informants' lived experiences. The validity of the data was examined through four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The data were analyzed reflectively to uncover the meaning behind the informants' experiences regarding the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers as moral exemplars in enhancing students' positive behavior. The phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to grasp the essence of these experiences rather than merely describing them.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews with Akidah Akhlak teachers at MTsN 1 Tanah Datar revealed their strong awareness of the importance of moral exemplarity in shaping students' character. The teachers strive to demonstrate positive behavior in all aspects of school life, from neat dressing and polite speech to fair conflict resolution. One teacher noted that students tend to imitate actual behavior more readily than merely listening to verbal advice. Classroom observations showed that teachers not only delivered content but also embedded moral values through stories, discussions, and personal engagement. Documentation from teacher journals also recorded consistent character development activities both inside and outside the classroom.

The consistency of teachers in providing exemplary behavior emerged as a prominent pattern in the interview and observation data. Teachers modeled not only during lessons but also in daily interactions such as greeting students kindly, showing concern for their personal issues, and maintaining composure in handling conflicts. This role modeling was further

reinforced through teachers' involvement in religious activities such as morning sermons, communal prayers, and character-building programs. Documentation of these activities noted that teacher participation influenced students' enthusiasm to behave in accordance with moral values.

Findings related to teacher exemplarity showed a strong connection to the research problem. Amid declining student respect and discipline, the presence of morally exemplary teachers appeared as a significant positive influence. Teachers as role models emerged as a practical response to the ineffective moral internalization through conventional teaching. The data indicated that the consistent and actively engaged presence of teachers had a direct impact on student behavioral changes, particularly in the areas of discipline, politeness, and responsibility.

The Akidah Akhlak learning process at MTsN 1 Tanah Datar is conducted using a contextual and habituation-based approach. Teachers not only deliver textbook-based content but also relate it to students' real-life situations. During teaching sessions, teachers often incorporate stories of the Prophet and his companions, linking them to students' daily behavior at school. Documentation revealed designated schedules for moral development activities, such as weekly ethics discussions and character-themed class projects. Classroom observations also showed that teachers encouraged students to analyze real-life situations from an ethical perspective.

Interviews and documentation revealed that teachers utilize Akidah Akhlak lessons not only to deliver theoretical concepts but also to instill practical moral values. Teachers emphasized the importance of honesty, responsibility, and tolerance in daily life. They also facilitated post-lesson reflections to assess students' understanding of the moral content taught. This strategy provided students with opportunities to reflect on their own behavior and relate it to the values they learned.

The data on Akidah Akhlak learning indicate that teachers' contextual and practical approach serves as a counterbalance to the weak moral internalization resulting from conventional methods. When students fail to grasp the importance of ethics through lectures or memorization alone, applying values in daily contexts becomes an effective solution. This relationship highlights that Akidah Akhlak instruction, when executed appropriately, plays a strategic role in addressing students' moral challenges in madrasah.

Observation and documentation data revealed a notable change in student behavior following increased involvement of Akidah Akhlak teachers in moral development. Students showed improvements in discipline, active participation in religious activities, and more respectful social interactions. Interviews with homeroom teachers and the vice principal also indicated that students with closer ties to Akidah Akhlak teachers tended to be more responsible and respectful of rules. Records of disciplinary violations showed a decline in tardiness and ethical misconduct since teachers began intensively promoting character education.

Interview explanations suggested that changes in student behavior were not solely due to content delivery but were largely influenced by emotional involvement and teacher exemplarity. Students felt valued and cared for by teachers, fostering respect and a desire to emulate them. This was reinforced by observations of students consciously imitating teachers' speech and demeanor in various situations. This relationship highlighted that moral exemplarity and strong emotional bonds significantly contribute to students' overall behavioral transformation.

The relationship between students' behavioral changes, teacher exemplarity, and Akidah Akhlak teaching methods closely ties to the core issue of this research. Students who previously lacked discipline and respect gradually showed positive behavioral shifts. This data reinforces the notion that morally exemplary teachers and practical teaching approaches in Akidah Akhlak offer a solution to the weak internalization of moral values among students.



These findings provide an essential empirical foundation for developing effective character education strategies. Below, the researcher presents research findings in the form of a table based on research objectives.

Table 1. Research Findings

No.	Research Objective	Research Findings
1	To describe the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers as moral exemplars at MTsN 1 Tanah Datar	Akidah Akhlak teachers consistently model moral behavior through their attitudes, speech, and actions. They are actively involved in religious and moral development programs.
2	To analyze how teacher exemplarity influences students' positive behavior	Teacher exemplarity significantly enhances student politeness, discipline, and enthusiasm for religious activities and other forms of positive behavior.
3	To explore forms of student behavior that reflect the influence of teacher exemplarity	Students imitate teachers' respectful speech, obey school rules more consistently, and actively participate in religious activities like sermons and group prayers.
4	To identify the challenges faced by teachers in their role as moral role models	Teachers face challenges such as lack of family support, negative social media influences, and heavy administrative workloads.

The research findings indicate that Akidah Akhlak teachers serve a strategic role as moral exemplars with a significant impact on the formation of students' positive behavior. This exemplarity is evident in the teachers' consistent personal conduct, the integration of moral values into lessons, and the emotional connection established with students. These three dimensions foster a learning environment that is not only instructional but also transformative. In essence, the teachers' presence transcends content delivery, positioning them as agents of value internalization.

Compared to previous studies, the strength of this research lies in its holistic approach to understanding the teacher's role as a moral exemplar, extending beyond formal classroom instruction. Earlier research tended to focus on the effectiveness of teaching methods or curriculum impact on student character. In contrast, this study reveals the interconnectedness of teachers' personal conduct, social interactions within the school, and participation in religious activities as an integrated force influencing student behavior. Therefore, this research offers a novel contribution to the understanding of comprehensive teacher exemplarity.

A reflection on the research findings reveals that teacher exemplarity holds considerable potential as an authentic and sustainable tool for character development. When students observe and experience moral values being consistently practiced by teachers, the process of internalization becomes more natural and meaningful. This addresses the limitations of character education that often rely on formalistic approaches without concrete exemplars. Hence, the objectives of this research gain reflective grounding that reinforces the teacher's role in moral education.

The implications of these findings point to the critical need for strengthening teachers' capacity as moral role models, not merely as content deliverers. Madrasahs must reorient teacher development programs to focus not only on enhancing pedagogical skills but also on reinforcing personal integrity and social sensitivity. Teacher exemplarity has been shown to be a key factor in fostering a school culture that supports student character formation. Therefore, these results provide a basis for designing character education policies that are more humanistic and praxis-oriented.

These research outcomes can be explained by the fact that students at the madrasah tsanawiyah level are in an affective developmental stage where they are highly influenced by authoritative figures in their immediate social environment. Teachers, in this context, become central figures whose behavior is observed and emulated. When teachers demonstrate consistency between words and actions, students not only gain understanding but also develop attitudes. Therefore, the effectiveness of teacher exemplarity in this study stems not just from instructional strategies but from the teacher's embodiment of the values being taught.

Based on the findings of this study, strategic actions should include the development of support programs for teachers to cultivate moral exemplarity. These could involve reflective training, peer mentoring, and value habituation through school activities. Additionally, a non-formal evaluation system should be designed to qualitatively assess teachers' contributions to student character development. Such actions are essential to ensure that the teacher's role as a moral exemplar is not incidental but becomes an integral part of the educational institution's culture.

## CONCLUSION

Surprisingly, this study reveals that the moral exemplarity of Akidah Akhlak teachers not only shapes students' academic and spiritual behavior, but also exerts a tangible impact on the overall social climate of the school. Teachers' consistent conduct—in actions, speech, and daily demeanor—proves to be a powerful driver of student behavioral change toward more positive patterns, even without authoritarian approaches. This finding suggests that the moral influence of a teacher far exceeds the normative expectations traditionally associated with instructional duties.

This study offers significant contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it reinforces the character education approach grounded in exemplarity as a transformative strategy for shaping students' morality. Practically, the findings serve as a foundation for formulating teacher development policies and curriculum designs that place exemplarity at the core of the educational process, rather than as a complementary aspect. In this way, the study bridges the gap between moral discourse and practical implementation in educational settings.

Although this study has uncovered the vital role of teachers as moral exemplars, its contextual scope—limited to a single madrasah—should be noted as a boundary. However, this limitation opens avenues for further research with broader contexts, involving various types of educational institutions and different educational levels. Future studies may also integrate quantitative approaches to enrich the existing qualitative insights, thereby yielding a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of teacher exemplarity in the educational landscape.

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