

MORAL DECLINE AND EFFORTS TO FOSTER STUDENTS' CHARACTER THROUGH THE ROLE OF AKIDAH AKHLAK TEACHERS IN ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Submitted: 01/05/2025

Revised: 22/07/2025

Accepted: 24/08/2025

Published: 30/08/2025

Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers in addressing moral decline among students at State Madrasah Tsanawiyah 2 in Jambi City, including the forms of moral decline as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors encountered in their prevention efforts. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. Data were collected through observations and interviews involving school administrators, teachers, and students. Data analysis focused on identifying patterns related to the teachers' roles, student behavior, prevention efforts, and factors influencing these processes. The findings indicate that moral degradation among students is reflected in behaviors such as using inappropriate language, showing disrespect toward teachers, violating school rules, being late, skipping school, and disrupting peers. Teachers of the Akidah Akhlak subject address these behaviors through setting a good example, providing individual guidance, offering persuasive advice, fostering moral development, monitoring behavior, enforcing discipline, and promoting positive habits. Religious activities and collaboration among teachers, madrasahs, and parents also support these efforts. However, their implementation faces challenges related to peer influence, external social environments, students' use of cell phones and social media, differences in student characteristics, and limited parental involvement. This study concludes that the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers is carried out continuously through preventive, corrective, and developmental efforts. Effective moral guidance requires consistent teacher involvement and closer cooperation between madrasahs, students, families, and the surrounding social environment.

Keywords

Akidah Akhlak, Moral Degradation, Teachers, Student Guidance, Islamic Education.



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INTRODUCTION

Moral degradation among students is an issue that requires attention in the educational process, particularly at the junior high school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) level, which corresponds to the adolescent developmental phase (Alhafidz & Mustofa, 2025). At this stage, students undergo changes in social and emotional aspects as well as in their interaction patterns; consequently, the family environment, school, peers, and technological advancements can influence the formation of their behavior. Moral decline can be observed through rude behavior, a lack of respect for teachers and parents, violations of school rules, truancy, inappropriate language, and disruptive behavior toward peer (Laurentius et al., 2025).

Ideally, education is not only directed toward the attainment of academic abilities but also toward the development of students' character, moral values, and sense of responsibility. Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System affirms that the national education system serves to develop abilities while simultaneously shaping the character and civilization of a dignified nation. This objective indicates that the development of faithful, God-fearing, and noble-character individuals is an essential part of the educational process (Indonesia, 2020). Thus, the role of teachers extends beyond merely conveying instructional content; they also serve as educators who model exemplary behavior, provide guidance, foster habit formation, and supervise students' behavioral development.

In the context of Islamic education, teachers of Akidah and Akhlak hold a significant position because the instruction they provide is directly related to the formation of students' beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Saribun, 2024). The moral values learned in the classroom need to be embodied in daily habits through attitudes such as respecting teachers, valuing peers, speaking politely, maintaining appropriate social interactions, practicing discipline, and engaging in religious activities. Research on the role of teachers from an Islamic educational perspective also indicates that teachers have a responsibility to provide religious understanding while guiding students so they can apply these values in their daily live (Haslina & Sinambela, 2025).

At MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi, observation records identified behavioral concerns including impolite language, disrespect toward teachers, rule violations, tardiness, truancy, and disruptions to classmates. These concerns did not characterize all students. In an interview conducted in February 2026, the Akidah Akhlak teacher explained that students' conduct was generally good, although some required repeated guidance concerning politeness, discipline, and peer interactions.

Interviews with five students provided specific accounts: S2 admitted to talking back when advised, S4 described delaying compliance with the teacher's instructions, and several students reported teasing or arguing with classmates. All five denied personally using physical violence against peers. The teacher identified peer influence, environments outside the madrasah, mobile phone and social media use, differences in student characteristics, and limited involvement of some parents as challenges to guidance. These accounts identify reported contextual influences rather than independently established causes. The academic concern, therefore, lies in how the madrasah responds to recurring behavioral difficulties when students understand expectations but do not consistently follow them.

The Akidah Akhlak teacher was selected as the research focus because the subject explicitly addresses faith, moral values, and appropriate conduct. At the same time, the field data documented the teacher's involvement in responding to student behavior. The teacher reported using role modeling, advice, reprimands, personal approaches, and supervision. Students' accounts supported this involvement: S1 described assistance in resolving disagreements calmly, S3 reported reprimands during teasing or disputes, and S5 described reminders about manners. Nevertheless, character development remains a shared responsibility involving the principal, other teachers, families, and students. Focusing on the Akidah Akhlak teacher enables the study to examine how subject-related moral instruction translates into guidance in everyday interactions within that wider responsibility (Ghani et al., 2026). The research consequently asks how the teacher responds to specific behavioral concerns, how students experience this guidance, and what conditions support or hinder its implementation, without attributing responsibility for students' character exclusively to one teacher.

Issues regarding students' moral development also cannot be separated from factors outside the madrasah environment. The influence of peers, the community, and family, as well as the use of cell phones and social media, poses challenges in shaping adolescent behavior. Research on moral degradation caused by social media shows that technological advancements can affect adolescent behavior if not accompanied by adequate guidance and supervision (Waty et al., 2020). Meanwhile, family attention and supervision are also closely linked to the formation of a child's character and morals; therefore, the responsibility for addressing moral degradation cannot be entirely placed on schools (I. G. A. Y. Rahmawati & Tirtayani, 2021).

Under these circumstances, Akidah Akhlak teachers need to play a broader role than simply delivering instructional content. Teachers can serve as role models through their daily behavior, offer persuasive guidance, adopt a personalized approach, instill moral values, monitor student behavior, and foster positive habits. The results of observations in this study indicate that guidance is provided through setting a good example, offering advice, monitoring, enforcing discipline, and fostering religious practices such as greeting others, smiling, and saying hello. A personalized approach is also employed so that students do not feel humiliated when they commit infractions and can understand their mistakes.

Previous studies have examined student moral development and the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers from several perspectives. (Naseh & Khofifah, 2021) investigated character development at MTs Negeri 7 Bantul during the COVID-19 pandemic. They identified advice, guidance, motivation, and warnings as teacher practices, as well as the importance of cooperation among schools, parents, and students. (Muttaqin et al., 2023) examined student misconduct at MTs Al-Fatah Songgon, Banyuwangi, and reported on teacher practices involving role modeling, communication, discipline, positive habits, supervision, and individual approaches. (Fitriani et al., 2026) examined Islamic behavior among madrasah students and highlighted teacher role modeling and religious activities, including Qur'an recitation and congregational prayer, while acknowledging remaining behavioral concerns. (Izzati et al., 2026) explored moral development among six junior high school students using Kohlberg's framework. Their findings identified preconventional and conventional patterns, including personal-benefit considerations, social conformity, and responsibility toward social norms. (Syaputra & Yusuf, 2026) examined how school counselors address students' disciplinary problems through individual and group counseling, classroom guidance, and collaboration with homeroom teachers and parents to support greater awareness and more positive disciplinary behavior.

These studies provide complementary foundations but differ in their scope. (Naseh & Khofifah, 2021) examined guidance under pandemic learning conditions, leaving everyday face-to-face interactions outside that specific context. (Muttaqin et al., 2023) emphasized teacher roles and intervention practices, providing a basis for further examination of how students experience and respond to those practices. (Fitriani et al., 2026) highlighted role modeling and religious routines, whereas the present study examines guidance during particular incidents involving speech, discipline, and peer relationships. (Izzati et al., 2026) analyzed students' moral-development

patterns rather than the implementation of Akidah Akhlak teacher guidance. (Syaputra & Yusuf, 2026) examined behavioral concerns, contributing factors, and teacher efforts, closely overlapping with the present study's focus. Consequently, the contribution of this research cannot rest solely on the examination of similar variables at a different location.

The present study builds on these findings by connecting observed behavioral concerns with the teacher's guidance practices and students' accounts of receiving that guidance at MT Negeri 2 Kota Jambi. Its contextual contribution lies in examining advice, reprimands, personal approaches, role modeling, and supervision alongside students' reported responses, such as apologizing, following instructions, or resolving disagreements through discussion. It also distinguishes observed incidents and personal experiences from students' general definitions of moral decline. This approach allows character guidance to be examined through specific interactions without assuming that misconduct characterizes all students or that immediate compliance establishes lasting moral improvement. Accordingly, this study aims to describe student behaviors identified as manifestations of moral decline at MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi, examine the role of the Akidah Akhlak teacher in addressing these behaviors, and identify supporting and hindering factors in the guidance process. The findings are expected to clarify how character guidance operates in everyday madrasah interactions and inform cooperation between teachers, the school, students, and families.

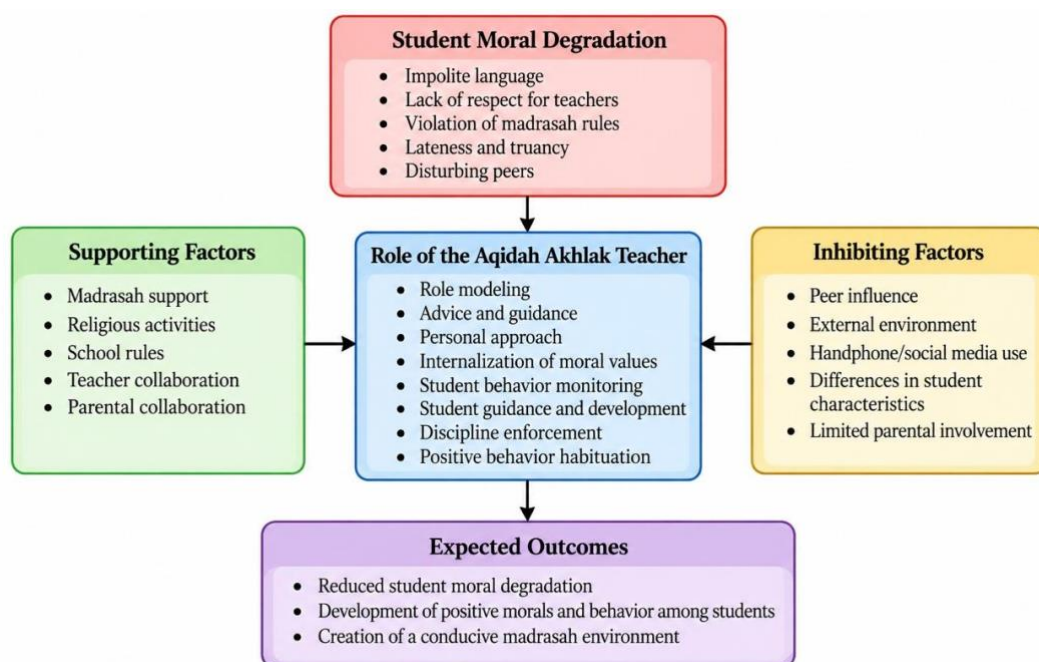
METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative design (Creswell, 2016) at MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi to examine students' behavioral concerns, the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers in character guidance, and the supporting and hindering factors. Informants were purposively selected for their involvement in student guidance and included the madrasah principal, an Akidah Akhlak teacher, and five students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in February 2026. The principal was interviewed about school policies and support for character development; the teacher about behavioral concerns, guidance practices, and implementation challenges; and students about their interactions, experiences receiving guidance, and responses to advice or reprimands. Observations were conducted from 15 January 2026 to 26 February 2026, recording students' speech, interactions with teachers and peers, compliance with school rules, and teachers' responses to inappropriate behavior. Primary data comprised interview accounts and observation records. Supporting documentary data included school rules and documents concerning guidance and religious

activities.

Data analysis followed data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, (Milles & Huberman, 2014). Interview accounts, observation records, and documents were grouped into three themes: teachers' roles in character guidance, student behaviors requiring guidance, and supporting and hindering factors. Within these themes, the researcher identified practices such as role modeling, advice, reprimands, personal guidance, and supervision, as well as concerns about impolite speech, discipline, and peer interactions. Findings were displayed in tables with brief descriptive narratives. Conclusions were checked by comparing the teacher's accounts with students' experiences, observed behavior, and relevant documents. Students' general examples of moral decline were distinguished from behaviors they personally reported or that were observed. Reported responses, such as apologizing or following instructions after advice, were described as immediate responses to guidance rather than evidence of lasting behavioral improvement.

Figure 1. Research Framework



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings describe student behavioral concerns and the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers in character development at MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi. Observation and interview data are organized into three themes: teachers' roles, forms of behavior requiring guidance, and supporting and hindering factors. G1 identifies the Akidah Akhlak teacher, while S1–S5 identify student

participants.

The Role of Akidah Akhlak Teachers in Addressing Moral Decline Among Students

The teacher described character guidance through role modeling, advice, reprimands, personal approaches, and supervision. Students reported receiving reminders and assistance in resolving disagreements. Table 1 summarizes these accounts and the corresponding observation evidence.

Table 1. Teachers' Roles in Student Character Development

No	Role	Interview evidence	Observation evidence
1	Role modeling and habit formation	G1 reported demonstrating appropriate behavior and encouraging positive daily habits.	Role modeling and habit formation were recorded as guidance practices.
2	Advice and reminders	G1 described reminding students about moral values. S1, S2, and S5 reported receiving advice about mistakes and manners.	Teachers provided advice when inappropriate behavior occurred.
3	Reprimands and discipline	S3 described immediate reprimands during teasing or disputes; S5 reported reprimands intended to prevent repetition.	Teachers reprimanded students for inappropriate behavior.
4	Personal guidance	G1 reported approaching students individually to understand the circumstances underlying their behavior.	Teachers provided direct guidance to students requiring support.
5	Conflict resolution	S1 reported that teachers helped resolve — disagreements through calm discussion.	
6	Supervision	G1 described supervising students and following up on their behavior.	Teachers monitored student behavior after providing guidance.

Source: Observations and interviews with G1 and S1–S5. A dash indicates that the corresponding observation evidence was not specified.

Table 1 records guidance extending beyond subject instruction. Both the teacher and student accounts described advice, reprimands, and behavioral direction. S2 reported apologizing after recognizing a mistake, while S4 reported following instructions after receiving advice. These are reported responses to guidance rather than evidence of lasting behavioral change.

Forms of Moral Decline Among Students

Observations identified concerns involving language, respect, discipline, and peer interactions. Student interviews also included definitions of moral decline and accounts of personal experiences. Table 2 distinguishes these sources.

Table 2. Student Behaviors Identified as Requiring Guidance

No	Area	Observation or teacher evidence	Student interview evidence
1	Impolite language	Observations and G1 identified impolite speech among some students.	Students identified harsh or inappropriate language as an example of moral decline.
2	Respect teachers	for Observations and G1 identified instances of disrespect.	S2 admitted talking back when advised; S4 reported occasionally delaying compliance with instructions.
3	Discipline and rule compliance	Observations identified rule violations, tardiness, and truancy. G1 also reported lateness and inattention.	Students identified rule-breaking and lack of discipline as examples of moral decline.
4	Peer interactions	Observations identified disruptive behavior toward peers; G1 reported classmates being disturbed.	S1–S4 described joking or teasing; S3 and S5 described arguments or disputes.
5	Relations with parents	No direct observation of home behavior was reported.	Students identified parental disrespect as an example of moral decline, while generally reporting efforts to respect their parents.
6	Physical violence	No verified physical incident was specified in the supplied findings.	S1–S5 denied personally using physical violence against classmates.

Source: Observations and interviews with G1 and S1–S5. Students' examples of moral decline are distinguished from admissions or observed incidents.

Table 2 shows that the recorded concerns primarily involved speech, discipline, respect, and peer interaction. G1 stated that these behaviors did not characterize all students and that students' conduct was generally good. The interviews contained accounts of teasing and arguments, but no participant admitted personally committing physical violence.

Supporting and Hindering Factors

Observation records identified both school and family support, as well as challenges to guidance. G1 described differences in students' responses and influences beyond the madrasah. Table 3 presents these factors with their sources.

Table 3. Supporting and Hindering Factors in Character Development

No	Category	Factor	Recorded or reported evidence
1	Supporting Teacher supervision	guidance and	Observations recorded advice, reprimands, and supervision; students described receiving reminders and conflict-resolution guidance.
2	Supporting Madrasah activities, and rules	Madrasah support, religious	Observation records identified these as supporting guidance practices.
3	Supporting Communication parents	Communication with	Observation records identified parent communication as a supporting factor.
4	Supporting Family reminders	Family reminders	S3 reported parental reminders to behave politely toward older people.
5	Supporting Students' responses	Students' responses to	S2 reported apologizing after a mistake; S4 reported complying

	guidance	after advice; S1, S3, and S5 described efforts to follow guidance.
6	Hindering Differences in student characteristics	G1 reported that some students responded promptly, while others required repeated guidance.
7	Hindering Peer and external environmental influences	G1 identified peer influence and environments outside school as challenges.
8	Hindering Mobile phones and social media	G1 reported concerns about access to content inconsistent with educational values.
9	Hindering Limited involvement of some parents	Observation records identified suboptimal parental involvement; individual cases were not detailed.

Source: Observations and interviews with G1 and S1–S5. External influences are presented as reported concerns rather than independently established causes.

Table 3 records support from teachers, school practices, families, and students' willingness to respond. Reported challenges included repeated needs for guidance and influences beyond school supervision. The available data describe these conditions without establishing their frequency or relative influence on student behavior.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers in addressing the moral decline of students at MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi is not limited to delivering instructional content but is manifested through setting a good example, providing guidance, issuing reprimands, adopting a personalized approach, exercising supervision, fostering positive habits, and providing ongoing guidance. These findings demonstrate that moral guidance becomes more meaningful when ethical values are applied in daily interactions between teachers and students. Teachers not only explain what constitutes good and bad behavior but also set examples, guide students when they make mistakes, and monitor changes in their behavior. This pattern indicates that moral guidance in madrasahs functions as an educational process that is both preventive and corrective (Asmaiyah et al., 2026; Hidayat & Yusuf, 2026; R. Rahmawati & Hang, 2025; Suleymanova, 2020).

These findings align with research bNurbela & Munawaroh (2022), who, in a review of several studies, found that the exemplary behavior of Islamic Religious Education teachers is not only related to the delivery of subject matter but also to the cultivation of habits that foster akhlakul karimah in students. Research findings at MTs Negeri 2 in Jambi City reveal a more concrete form: teachers' exemplary behavior is accompanied by advice, reprimands, a personal approach, and supervision of student behavior. Thus, these findings suggest that Akidah Akhlak teachers need to integrate their own behavior into the learning process, as the moral values being taught will be more easily understood when students observe their application in real life (Djafar et al., 2026; Ermadani

et al., 2025; Hakim & Syukri, 2026; Nuraini et al., 2025).

Regarding moral guidance, this study also indicates that consistent practice and advice are necessary, particularly since not all students respond the same way to guidance. G1 explained that while some students immediately correct their behavior after receiving advice, others require repeated guidance. These findings indicate that moral change cannot be understood as the result of a single reprimand or a single learning activity but rather requires a continuous process. These results align with Junita's (by Field, Junita, (Junita, 2023) at MIN 1 Curup, which found that moral guidance is carried out through habit formation, advice, setting a good example, question-and-answer sessions, and the imposition of punishment or disciplinary measures. This similarity reinforces the notion that moral guidance requires a combination of various educational approaches, not merely verbal advice.

The research findings also show that Akidah Akhlak instruction has implications for behavior formation when the values learned are applied in daily life. This is evident from the statements of students in grades S1–S5, who generally understand the importance of respecting teachers and parents. However, certain mistakes are still observed, such as failing to follow the teacher's instructions immediately, joking excessively, teasing one another, or arguing with peers. This situation indicates a gap between the understanding of moral values and the consistency of their application. These findings align with research by (Nabilah & Masnawati, 2024), which found a gradual improvement in moral behavior after Akidah Akhlak instruction was applied in daily life at the State Islamic Junior High School. The difference lies in the study at MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi, which places greater emphasis on applying these values through direct interactions between teachers and students, particularly by setting a good example, issuing reprimands, offering advice, and providing behavioral supervision.

The forms of moral degradation identified in this study primarily relate to impolite language, a lack of respect for teachers, indiscipline, rule violations, and peer interactions such as taunting and arguments. However, data from interviews S1–S5 indicate that students do not admit to committing physical violence against peers. Thus, the study's findings must be interpreted proportionally: the moral issues identified primarily involve everyday behaviors related to politeness, compliance, discipline, and social relationships, rather than predominantly physical violence. This is important because moral guidance is not only aimed at addressing serious violations but also at preventing minor behaviors from escalating into more problematic patterns (Cahyani et al., 2026; Firmin et al.,

2019; Jumra et al., 2025; Khayati, 2025).

Peer influence emerged as another key finding. The results indicate that students in grades S1–S5 all described instances of teasing, taunting, or arguments in their interactions with peers, even though they did not admit to committing physical violence. These findings suggest that the peer environment can influence students' moral behavior. These results are supported by a study by Faulintya, Nurmalisa, and Mentari (2025) on students at SMP Negeri 1 Belitang, which found that peer interactions influence students' moral actions; the study reported a 33.2% contribution from this factor, with the remainder attributed to other factors (Faulintya et al., 2025). Although that study employed a quantitative approach and this study uses a qualitative approach, both indicate that peer interactions are an aspect that must be considered in fostering students' moral development.

In addition to peers, this study found that the use of cell phones and social media, as well as the environment outside the madrasah, pose challenges for teachers. G1 explained that students can access various information and content that may not necessarily align with educational values. These findings imply that moral guidance is not sufficient if it is limited to supervision while students are within the madrasah environment. Teachers and madrasahs need to strengthen students' abilities to select information, control their behavior, and use technology responsibly. This finding also broadens the scope of the research, as students' moral issues are not only related to the teacher-student relationship but also to the social and digital environments that shape students' habits (Chen & Shih, 2025; Gao et al., 2024; R. Jiang et al., 2018; S. Jiang et al., 2019).

In terms of supporting factors, the study shows that teachers, madrasah administrators, religious activities, school rules, and communication with parents provide opportunities for moral guidance. Habit-forming and religious activities can serve as a means of connecting learned values to daily behavior. This aligns with the research by (Fadil et al., 2023) on the practice of reciting the Qur'an before lessons, which positions the habit of engaging in religious activities as part of fostering students' *akhlakul karimah*. In the context of this study, religious activities do not stand alone but are part of a nurturing environment supported by teachers' exemplary behavior, school rules, supervision, and communication with parents (Akmalludin et al., 2025; Marlina et al., 2025; Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022; Nudin, 2020).

Overall, the research findings indicate that addressing moral degradation at MT Negeri 2 in Jambi City is best understood as an ongoing guidance process rather than a one-time response to student infractions. Akidah Akhlak teachers serve as role models, mentors, advisors, supervisors,

and guides who help students improve their behavior. At the same time, the success of this guidance is influenced by the students' circumstances, their peers, the environment outside the madrasah, the use of technology, and family support. The practical implication is that madrasahs need to provide consistent, personalized guidance. At the same time, cooperation with parents must be strengthened so that the values instilled at the madrasah are sustained within the family environment. These findings also show that Akidah Akhlak instruction will be more meaningful when the values taught are translated into exemplary behavior, habit formation, supervision, and concrete actions in students' daily lives.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that discussions about the moral decline of students at MTs Negeri 2 Kota Jambi cannot be separated from the interrelationships among the educational process, students' circumstances, and the environment that shapes their behavior. This study illustrates that moral guidance is an integral part of implementing Akidah Akhlak education; therefore, the role of teachers must be understood in the context of education occurring both inside and outside the classroom. The scope of the study also highlights the involvement of the madrasah and the family in supporting the continuity of the guidance process. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of creating an educational environment that maintains continuity among the values students learn, the behavior they exhibit, and the guidance they receive from those around them. Thus, strengthening moral guidance in madrasahs must be positioned as part of a continuous educational process that takes into account student characteristics and the relationships among madrasahs, families, and the social environment. This approach is expected to serve as a foundation for madrasahs to develop consistent, contextually appropriate moral guidance tailored to students' needs.

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