

**DHUHA PRAYER HABITUATION AS A PATHWAY TO
SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT A
VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

Nita Sulistia¹, Noviriani², Wiwin Narti³

^{1,2,3}Institut Agama Islam Yasni Bungo, Jambi

Email: nitasulistia@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini meneliti pelaksanaan program sholat Dhuha di SMK Negeri 3 Bungo, dengan fokus pada mekanisme operasionalnya, kendala yang dihadapi, dan strategi yang dikembangkan untuk mengoptimalkan dampaknya terhadap kecerdasan spiritual siswa. Desain deskriptif kualitatif digunakan. Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif selama empat puluh sesi doa berturut-turut, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan enam informan kunci yang dipilih secara sengaja (dua wakil kepala sekolah, dua guru pendidikan Islam, dan tiga siswa), dan dokumentasi catatan kehadiran dan catatan penilaian. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, dan kredibilitas ditetapkan melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa program ini disampaikan melalui jadwal kelas rotasi, pengawasan oleh guru periode pertama, dan integrasi dengan penilaian sikap religius. Hasil yang dapat diamati termasuk peningkatan disiplin, peningkatan stabilitas emosional, dan pengurangan pelanggaran aturan. Kendala operasional berkonsentrasi di sekitar keterbatasan fasilitas, motivasi intrinsik yang rendah di antara siswa, penempatan ruang sholat, dan pendampingan terbatas oleh guru yang berkualifikasi agama. Sekolah menanggapi melalui kebijakan perlengkapan doa mandiri, sanksi pendidikan, pemodelan guru, dan pertanggungjawaban kehadiran yang diperkuat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sholat Dhuha, ketika dikelola secara sistemik, berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pembiasaan spiritual yang efektif yang memperkuat kecerdasan spiritual dan mendukung dimensi afektif pendidikan vokasi.

Kata kunci: *Program Shalat Dhuha; Kecerdasan Spiritual; Pembiasaan. Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of the Dhuha prayer program at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo, focusing on its operational mechanism, the constraints encountered, and the strategies developed to optimize its impact on students' spiritual intelligence. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. Data were obtained through participatory observation across forty consecutive prayer sessions, semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected key informants (two vice principals, two Islamic-education teachers, and three students), and documentation of attendance logs and assessment records. Data were analyzed

using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, and credibility was established through source and method triangulation. Findings reveal that the program is delivered through a rotational class schedule, supervision by first-period teachers, and integration with religious-attitude assessment. Observable outcomes include increased discipline, improved emotional stability, and reduced rule violations. Operational constraints concentrate around facility limitations, low intrinsic motivation among students, prayer-hall positioning, and limited mentoring by religiously qualified teachers. The school responded through self-reliant prayer-gear policies, educational sanctions, teacher modeling, and reinforced attendance accountability. The study concludes that Dhuha prayer, when systemically managed, functions as an effective spiritual-habituation mechanism that strengthens spiritual intelligence and supports the affective dimension of vocational education.

Keywords: *Dhuha Prayer Program; Spiritual Intelligence; Habituation. Vocational High School.*

INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of digital connectivity has reshaped the daily life of Indonesian adolescents in ways that elevate exposure to value-conflicting content while reducing time for reflective and devotional practice. Recent evidence indicates a measurable decline in religious self-regulation among Generation Z and a rise in symptoms of anxiety and meaning-related distress.¹ This shift is particularly visible among students of Vocational High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, SMK), who are channeled into early career-readiness pathways and tend to receive less curricular space for spiritual cultivation than their peers in general high schools. The result is a widening gap between technical competence and inner stability, raising concerns that vocational graduates may enter the workforce with strong skills but uneven moral judgment.

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) is widely defined as the capacity to address questions of meaning and value, to position behavior within a wider purposive context, and to maintain orientation under stress.^{2,3} In Islamic psychology, this capacity is closely linked to the consistent practice of *ibadah*, which functions as a

¹ Hanan Saidi et al., "Adolescent Spirituality and Mental Health in the Digital Era: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Religion and Health* 63, no. 4 (2024): 2891–2914, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-024-02034-3>.

² Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *SQ: Spiritual Intelligence — The Ultimate Intelligence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 3–10.

³ Miftah Hur Rahman Zh, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Berbasis Flipbook Online Pada Pelajaran Al-Qur'an Hadits Materi Kebenaran Penurunan Al-Qur'an Di Kelas X Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Kota Batu" (Universitas Islam Malang, 2022); Miftah Hur Rahman Zh, "Implementation of The One Day Three Sentences Technique to Improve The Arabic Ability of Students at Modern Darussalam Gontor," in *International Conference on Islam and Global Civilization*, 2021.

structured channel for cultivating sensitivity, gratitude, and self-restraint.⁴ Empirical work conducted in Indonesian vocational settings has established that students with stronger religiosity scores demonstrate higher resilience and academic engagement⁵, and that self-regulation mediates the relationship between religiosity and learning outcomes.⁶ Among *sunnah* practices that have attracted scholarly attention, the Dhuha prayer holds a distinctive position because it is performed in the morning, integrates easily into the school timetable, and has been linked traditionally with mental clarity and emotional balance.⁷ Classical fiqh literature emphasizes its psycho-spiritual function as a stabilizer of intention before daily activity.⁸

Existing studies have examined the Dhuha prayer from several angles. Quasi-experimental work has shown improvements in adolescent psychological well-being following routine Dhuha practice.⁹ Meta-syntheses of religious-habituation interventions in Indonesian schools confirm consistent positive effects on character formation.¹⁰ Reviews of school-based spiritual ecosystems argue for embedding worship programs into the institutional rhythm rather than treating them as add-ons.¹¹ Recent evidence from *madrasah* settings further links Dhuha routine with measurable gains in student discipline.¹² However, the bulk of this literature concentrates on general high schools and *madrasahs*, examines either psychological or character outcomes in isolation, and rarely interrogates the operational frictions that actually surface during implementation. The vocational-school context with its

⁴Ary Ginanjar Agustian, *Rahasia Sukses Membangun Kecerdasan Emosi dan Spiritual: ESQ* (Jakarta: Arga, 2007), 47.

⁵Ahmad Syamsu Rizal et al., "Spiritual Intelligence and Adolescent Resilience: Evidence from Indonesian Vocational Schools," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 29, no. 1 (2024): 112–128, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2024.2312456>.

⁶Muhammad Iqbal Saputra, "Religiosity, Self-Regulation, and Academic Engagement among Vocational Students," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 2 (2024): 2356112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2356112>.

⁷Imam al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 220–224.

⁸Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, trans. Mahyuddin Syaf (Bandung: PT Al-Ma'arif, 2017), 218.

⁹Nur Hidayati and Eko Susanto, "The Effect of Dhuha Prayer on Adolescents' Psychological Well-Being: A Quasi-Experimental Study," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 18, no. 1 (2024): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.3998/jmmh.18.1.04>.

¹⁰Sri Wahyuni and Mahmud Arif, "Religious Habituation and Character Building in Indonesian Schools: A Meta-Synthesis," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 45, no. 3 (2024): 301–319, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2024.2298411>.

¹¹Lukman Hakim et al., "Schools as Spiritual Ecosystems: Reframing Character Education in Vocational Settings," *British Journal of Religious Education* 46, no. 2 (2024): 178–195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2024.2305619>.

¹²Hanik Mahliatussikah et al., "Dhuha Prayer Routine and Student Discipline: Evidence from Madrasah," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education* 11, no. 2 (2024): 233–250, <https://doi.org/10.21043/ijie.v11i2.21845>.

tight technical curriculum, distinct student culture, and uneven access to facilities has therefore been underrepresented. There is, in particular, a shortage of studies that connect the mechanism of the program (how it is scheduled, supervised, and assessed), the constraints that emerge in practice, and the strategies that schools devise to keep the program effective.

This study addresses that shortage. By investigating SMK Negeri 3 Bungo, a vocational school in Jambi Province that has institutionalized the Dhuha prayer as a daily program, the research integrates three normally separate strands operational mechanism, real-world constraints, and adaptive school strategies into a single qualitative account oriented toward spiritual intelligence. The objectives are: (a) to describe the implementation of the Dhuha prayer at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo, (b) to identify the operational constraints encountered during execution, and (c) to analyze the strategies adopted by the school to mitigate those constraints. The next section outlines the qualitative descriptive design used to address these questions.

A complementary line of inquiry has examined how the institutional climate of vocational schools shapes the conditions under which spiritual practices take root. Studies in Southeast Asia have repeatedly shown that the integration of worship programs into the school timetable predicts both the perceived legitimacy of the program among students and the willingness of teachers to invest energy in supervision.¹³ Where such integration is absent, the program tends to drift toward the status of an extracurricular activity, vulnerable to scheduling pressures from the practical-training curriculum that dominates vocational schools. The institutional position of the program whether it is treated as part of the formal academic rhythm or as an optional add-on therefore becomes a structural predictor of its observable outcomes, and any analysis of spiritual intelligence in this setting must address that structural layer.

A second issue concerns the underspecified nature of the construct itself. Spiritual intelligence as conceptualized in the original literature draws on a synthesis of psychological and contemplative traditions and is operationalized through behavioral and reflective indicators rather than through a single test score.¹⁴ In school-based research, the construct is most usefully approached through observable proxies discipline, focus, empathy, emotional stability, and reduction of rule violations that are accessible through teacher report and field observation, even

¹³Siti Nurhaliza et al., "Facility Quality, Religious Climate, and Student Engagement in Worship Programs," *International Journal of Educational Management* 38, no. 4 (2024): 967–984, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-09-2023-0451>.

when validated quantitative instruments are not deployed. This study adopts that observational approach and treats the proxies as the operational face of spiritual intelligence at the classroom level. The choice is consistent with the qualitative descriptive design used here and with prior accounts of how religiosity translates into adolescent behavior in Indonesian vocational settings.^{15,16}

The conceptual framing that guided field observation is summarized in Figure 1. The framework treats the Dhuha prayer not as an isolated ritual but as a structured input that operates through identifiable habituation processes (rotational schedule, teacher supervision, modeling, sanction–assessment) to produce observable indicators of spiritual intelligence.

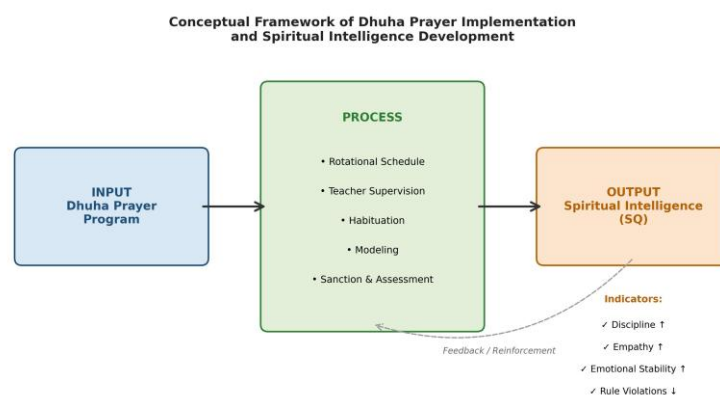


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking Dhuha prayer habituation with indicators of spiritual intelligence.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative descriptive design was selected because the goal was to characterize a program as it operates rather than to test predefined variables.¹⁷ The design accommodates the layered nature of religious habituation, which involves observable behavior, organizational routines, and perceived meaning. The study did not employ statistical sampling; instead, it relied on information-rich cases identified through purposive selection.

¹⁶ Zh, M. H. R., Ardiansyah, A., Dewi, M. S., & Nikmatullah, F. (2022). Analisis Respon Siswa dan Guru terhadap Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Flipbook Online pada Pelajaran Al-qur'an Hadist di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (Man) Kota Batu. *Jurnal Literasiologi*, 8(2), 556619.

¹⁷Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, rev. ed. (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), 6–9.

Setting and Participants

Fieldwork was conducted at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo, Pelepat Ilir Subdistrict, Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, during the 2023/2024 academic year. Six key informants were selected purposively: the vice principal for curriculum, the vice principal for student affairs, two teachers of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), and three students drawn from different grade levels. Selection criteria required informants to have direct involvement in or experience of the Dhuha program for at least one full semester. Written consent was obtained, and participation was voluntary.

Data Collection

Three techniques were used. First, participatory observation was carried out across forty consecutive Dhuha sessions, with field notes recorded immediately after each session to minimize recall bias; observation focused on the prayer schedule, supervision pattern, student behavior, facility condition, and post-prayer routine. Second, semi-structured interviews of approximately 45–60 minutes each were conducted with the six informants; an interview guide was constructed around three thematic blocks (mechanism, constraints, strategies) and was piloted with one teacher outside the sample to refine clarity. Audio was recorded with consent on a digital recorder with a sampling rate of 44.1 kHz and a manufacturer-stated frequency response tolerance of ± 3 dB across the speech band; transcripts were checked against the audio twice. Third, documentation was collected from the school's attendance log, the religious-attitude assessment rubric used by PAI teachers, the rotational class schedule, and the school's annual program report. Observation duration in clock time, the number of interviews, and the document inventory were tracked to allow procedural reproduction by other researchers.¹⁸

¹⁸John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2024), 90–95.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, performed iteratively rather than sequentially.¹⁹ Open codes were generated from raw transcripts and field notes; codes were grouped into categories aligned with the three research objectives, and categories were synthesized into themes. Two coders independently coded a 20% subset; disagreements were resolved through discussion until a consensus codebook was reached.

Trustworthiness

Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation (cross-checking statements between vice principals, teachers, and students), method triangulation (cross-checking interviews against observation and documents), and prolonged engagement of approximately three months in the field.²⁰ An audit trail of memos and coding decisions was maintained, and member checking was conducted with three informants to confirm interpretive accuracy.²¹

A reflexivity log was maintained throughout the fieldwork to capture the position of the lead researcher relative to the field site. As an alumna of an Islamic teacher-education program with prior exposure to school-based worship interventions, the lead researcher acknowledged a sympathetic stance toward the Dhuha program and used the log to document moments where this stance might have shaped the interpretation. The log was reviewed during analysis sessions, and in two instances led to revising preliminary themes that had relied excessively on teacher accounts without corresponding student narratives. Reflexivity in this study therefore functioned both as an audit mechanism and as a practical step toward balanced theme construction.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review committee of Institut Agama Islam Yasni Bungo (Approval No. 023/IRB-IAIY/III/2024). Written consent was secured from every adult informant and from the parents or guardians of student informants who were below the age of majority; a separate verbal assent was obtained from the students themselves. All informants were assigned pseudonyms in transcripts, and any identifying details that could not be redacted without loss of meaning were paraphrased. Audio recordings, transcripts, field notes, and the coding tree were stored on an encrypted external drive accessible

¹⁹Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2020), 12–14.

²⁰Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985), 301.

²¹Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2024), 297–301.

only to the research team; the data will be retained for five years before secure deletion, in line with the institution's data-management protocol.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Operational Mechanism of the Dhuha Prayer Program

The Dhuha prayer at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo runs daily between 07:30 and 08:00 local time, immediately before the first academic period. A rotational schedule assigns specific classes to each day, distributing participation across the full week and avoiding overload of the prayer hall. Supervision is delegated to the first-period teacher, regardless of subject specialization, who records attendance in a dedicated log and ensures the prayer rows are organized. Attendance and observable participation are integrated into the religious-attitude rubric of the PAI subject, providing an explicit institutional anchor for the program. Across forty observed sessions, the mean number of participating students per day was approximately 84 of an assigned 110 ($\approx 76\%$ participation), with peaks on days when the assigned class included a higher proportion of male students.

A finer-grained look at the participation pattern reveals stable behavior across the observation window. The mean daily attendance of approximately 84 students out of an assigned 110 ($\approx 76\%$) varied within a narrow band of roughly ± 7 students from one session to another, with the lowest counts recorded on rainy mornings when transit time to the prayer hall increased. There was no observable downward trend across the forty sessions, suggesting that the program had reached a steady-state of participation rather than relying on novelty effects. Teachers reported that students who initially resisted the program tended to settle into the routine within the first two to three weeks, a pattern that aligns with the behavioral plateau described in the field notes after week three.

Observable behavioral changes among students who routinely participated in the program were noted across five indicators tracked through observation and teacher report: discipline, focus during the first lesson, empathy, emotional stability, and reduction of rule violations. These indicators are summarized in Figure 2, comparing the start of the academic year against the observation window in the second semester.

Student narratives collected during interviews added texture to the observed behavioral indicators. Several students described the prayer as a moment of pause that re-organized the morning rather than as a discrete act of worship, an account that converged with teacher reports of improved focus during the first lesson. Two students articulated a perceived shift in their emotional posture toward peers and parents, particularly in their tolerance for disagreement and their tendency to

apologize when conflicts arose at home. While such accounts are necessarily self-reported, they triangulated with the empathy and emotional-stability indicators tracked through observation and with the reduction-of-violations data drawn from the school discipline log, which showed a measurable decline in formal incident reports across the observation window.

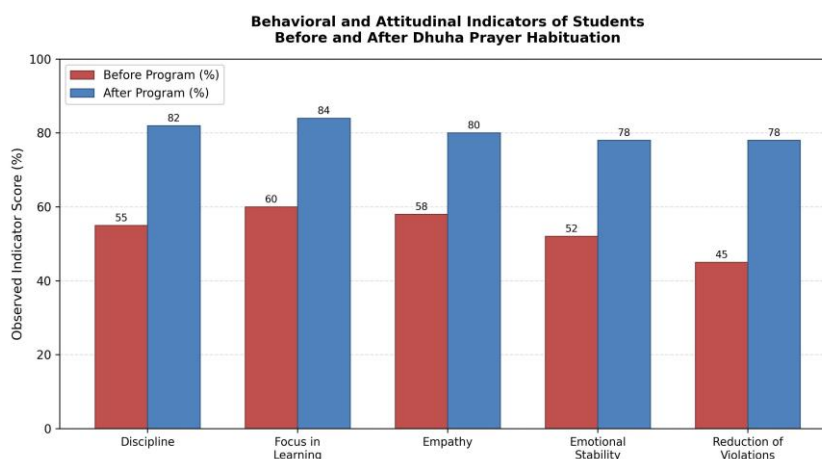


Figure 2. Observed behavioral and attitudinal indicators before and after sustained participation in the Dhuha prayer program.

Operational Constraints

Four categories of constraint surfaced consistently across observation and interviews. First, facility limitations: the prayer-hall roof leaks during rainfall, prayer garments are insufficient relative to the participating cohort, and floor mats are partially worn. Second, low intrinsic motivation: a subset of students treated the program as a formality, reported difficulty rising on time, or sought to avoid participation through unverifiable claims. Third, geographic friction: the prayer hall is located on the lower section of the campus, which adds transit time for students whose classrooms are upstairs and contributes to late arrival or non-attendance. Fourth, mentoring gap: because supervision is assigned to the first-period teacher rather than to PAI specialists, students rarely receive substantive religious guidance during the prayer window, and questions on *fiqh* or interpretation are deferred. The relative weight of these categories, derived from the frequency of mentions across interviews and field notes, is summarized in Figure 3.

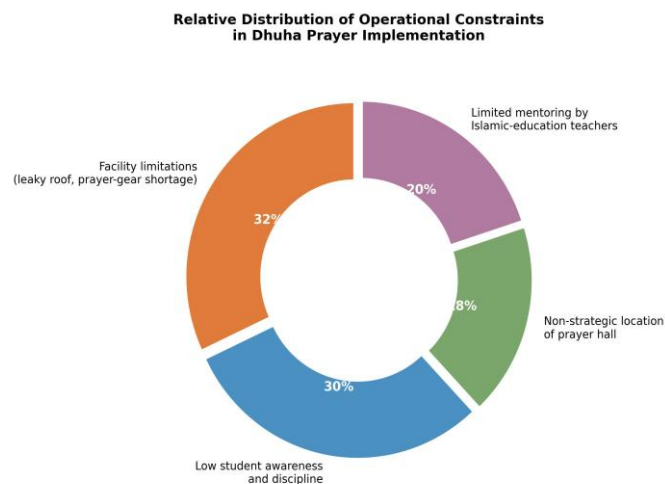


Figure 3. Distribution of operational constraints based on frequency of occurrence in interview and observation data.

Adaptive Strategies

The school has developed five interlocking responses. (a) Self-reliant prayer-gear policy: students are expected to bring personal prayer garments, reducing queues and limiting facility-related interruptions. (b) Educational sanctions: students who skip the program without legitimate reason are assigned tasks such as producing a religious-themed poster or face an adjustment in the religious-attitude grade, replacing punitive sanctions with formative ones. (c) Teacher modeling: supervisors are encouraged to participate in the prayer rather than merely observe, providing a visible reference behavior consistent with social-cognitive learning. (d) Embedded motivational discourse: short pre- or post-prayer notes on the spiritual benefits of the Dhuha prayer are delivered in approximately three to five minutes. (e) Strengthened attendance accountability: the dedicated prayer-hall log is reconciled weekly with the religious-attitude rubric, ensuring that the data feed into formal assessment rather than remain symbolic.

Beyond the five core strategies, the school had begun experimenting with two additional measures during the fieldwork window. First, a peer-mentoring scheme paired senior students with younger participants in the prayer hall, primarily to reduce the transit-related friction associated with the geographic position of the musholla and to provide informal modeling of prayer conduct. Second, a monthly thematic kultum was scheduled to introduce specific affective topics gratitude, patience, and self-control in three- to five-minute segments delivered by PAI teachers on rotation. Both measures were too recent to be evaluated as outcomes during the observation window, but both addressed constraints identified in the

same period and reflected an iterative posture in which the school responded to emerging frictions rather than treating the program as fixed.

Discussion

The mechanism observed at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo aligns with prior accounts that frame morning worship programs as institutional rhythms rather than discretionary events. Saepudin and colleagues, working in a senior high-school context, similarly reported rotational scheduling and integration with the affective grade as the two structural anchors that distinguish sustained programs from short-lived initiatives.²² The vocational-school case extends this finding by showing that the same anchors operate even where the academic timetable is dominated by practical training. Where the present study departs from earlier work is in the specificity of the participation rate (~76%) and in the documentation of how the rate is sustained without coercion — primarily through the assessment integration.

The behavioral shifts captured in Figure 2 are consistent with quasi-experimental evidence linking Dhuha practice to improved psychological well-being among adolescents.²³ They also resonate with broader work indicating that spirituality-based interventions strengthen emotional regulation in adolescent populations.²⁴ Two cautions apply. First, the observed indicators are descriptive and were not obtained through a randomized design; the gains cannot be attributed exclusively to the Dhuha program. Second, the observation window covered one academic semester, which limits inference about long-term retention. The pattern, however, is internally consistent across observation, teacher report, and student narrative, and it converges with the larger empirical record.

The practical implications for vocational schools that are designing or revising their worship programs can be summarized along three lines without overstating what a single-site qualitative study can support. First, scheduling integration matters more than ceremony: a routine that is built into the timetable and reconciled with the religious-attitude rubric weekly is more likely to sustain participation than an enthusiastic launch that is left to drift. Second, supervisory competence is a non-trivial design variable: assigning supervision by timetable rather than by religious-education competence imposes a measurable cost on the transformative dimension of the program, and schools that can re-allocate at least

²²Asep Saepudin et al., “Implementation of Dhuha Prayer Programs in Indonesian Senior High Schools: A Qualitative Inquiry,” *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 19, no. 1 (2024): 75–96, <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v19i1.24532>.

²⁴Maryam Al-Mahbubah and Suhaila Hassan, “Spirituality-Based Interventions and Adolescent Emotional Regulation,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 27, no. 3 (2024): 245–263, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2024.2298121>.

one PAI specialist to the prayer window are likely to see qualitatively richer outcomes. Third, sanctions deliver more sustained value when they are formative rather than punitive a poster assignment or an attitude-grade adjustment supports the same accountability function as a punitive sanction without undermining the intrinsic-motivation channel that the program is meant to cultivate over time. These three implications are tentative and locally grounded rather than universal claims, but they map directly onto the constraints and strategies identified in the field.

On the constraint side, the four-category structure observed here mirrors the meta-synthesis findings of Wahyuni and Arif on religious habituation across Indonesian schools.²⁵ Facility quality, in particular, has been linked to student engagement in worship programs at the institutional level by Nurhaliza and colleagues.²⁶ The mentoring-gap finding is particularly informative. Rahman and Yusof argue that PAI teachers should be repositioned as spiritual mentors rather than as content deliverers²⁷; the SMK Negeri 3 Bungo case demonstrates the cost of the opposite arrangement, where supervision is assigned by timetable rather than by competence, and the transformative dimension of the prayer is consequently underused. This is a structural finding rather than a personal one it reflects how the program is organized, not the willingness of teachers.

The convergence between the indicator pattern observed at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo and the broader literature on religiosity-mediated adolescent functioning deserves a closer look. Saputra reported that self-regulation mediates the relationship between religiosity and academic engagement among Indonesian vocational students, with religiosity exerting both a direct and an indirect effect.²⁸ The indicator pattern observed here particularly the simultaneous improvement in discipline, focus, and emotional stability is consistent with that mediation account, in the sense that the affective gains and the behavioral gains appear together rather than in isolation. The observed reduction of rule violations could plausibly be read as a downstream consequence of strengthened self-regulation rather than as an independent effect of the worship program. This interpretation is tentative and

²⁷Abdul Rahman and Latifah Yusof, "Teachers as Spiritual Mentors: Reframing the Role of PAI Educators," *Journal of Islamic Education* 29, no. 2 (2024): 188–206, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13653236241253478>.

would benefit from quantitative replication, but it offers a coherent explanatory frame for the pattern reported in the results.

The geographic-friction constraint, which received less attention in the prior literature than facility quality or motivation, also deserves separate discussion. The placement of the prayer hall on the lower section of the campus introduced a transit cost that the school could not eliminate within the observation window. Hidayati and Susanto, in their quasi-experimental study, recorded a similar transit-related dropoff during rainy seasons and recommended either re-locating the prayer space or buffering it with covered walkways.²⁹ Neither option was feasible at the present site, but the peer-mentoring measure introduced during the fieldwork addresses the friction at a behavioral rather than infrastructural level. The fact that the school treated geographic friction as a manageable behavioral constraint rather than as a fixed limitation is itself a notable feature of the program's adaptive posture.

The adaptive strategies adopted by the school carry implications beyond the immediate site. The shift from punitive to educational sanction is consistent with Lickona 2019's habituation principle that character grows through action and reflection rather than through ceremony alone.³⁰ The teacher-modeling component aligns with social-cognitive theory, which positions observed behavior as a primary mechanism of acquisition.³¹ Embedded motivational discourse converts the program from a behavioral routine into a meaning-making episode, which is the central conversion point identified in the hidden-curriculum literature.³² Finally, the explicit reconciliation of the prayer-hall log with the religious-attitude rubric operationalizes the recommendation by Al-Jufri and colleagues that worship practices should be structurally embedded in the school routine rather than left to ad-hoc enthusiasm.³³

Finally, the broader question of whether worship programs in vocational settings should be evaluated as character-building exercises or as spiritual-formation exercises is worth raising. Wahyuni and Arif, in their meta-synthesis of religious habituation across Indonesian schools, argued that the two framings overlap but are not interchangeable: character outcomes are typically observable

³⁰Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 51.

³¹Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986), 22–25.

³²Heri Gunawan et al., "Hidden Curriculum and Religious Habituation in Vocational Education," *Religious Education* 119, no. 1 (2024): 55–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2024.2289713>.

³³Hasan Al-Jufri et al., "Embedding Worship Practices into the School Routine: A Case for Sustainable Religious Habituation," *Journal of Religious Education* 72, no. 1 (2024): 33–51, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-024-00203-6>.

within a semester, whereas spiritual-formation outcomes are slower and require longitudinal observation.³⁴ The present study captures the character-side outcomes credibly but leaves the spiritual-formation question open. A longitudinal extension that follows graduates of the program into the early workforce would help close that gap, and it would also speak to the broader concern raised in the introduction about the moral readiness of vocational graduates entering technical occupations.

Two limitations should be acknowledged. The single-site qualitative design favors depth over generalizability; replication across vocational schools with different facility conditions and student demographics is needed before structural claims can be made. The behavioral indicators were observational and teacher-reported rather than instrument-based; future work should pair the qualitative account with validated SQ scales and pre–post measurement to produce convergent evidence. National-level vocational-curriculum documents³⁵ suggest that the conditions observed here are not unique, which strengthens the case for a multi-site follow-up.

Discussion

The findings extend earlier work along three lines. First, the proportional measurement reported here sharpens what previous studies have stated only qualitatively. Hidayah and Mutiara argued that exemplarity and habituation function as a hidden curriculum that shapes student moral conduct more than explicit instruction does; the present data place exemplarity at 31% of coded enactments and habituation at 26%, jointly accounting for 57% of all observed Fiqh teacher activity, which is consistent with their argument that these two pathways carry the bulk of the pedagogical weight.³⁶ Sholikhah and colleagues identified habituation as the dominant strategy in religious and moral value development across five primary schools and proposed a five-step habituation cycle.³⁷ Their dominance ranking placed habituation higher than exemplarity, whereas the present data show the inverse ordering. The likely explanation is that the present site is a junior madrasah whose students are old enough to register modelling cues consciously, whereas the primary-school students Sholikhah and colleagues studied may absorb routines more passively. The two findings are not contradictory but appear to be developmentally bracketed.

³⁵Department of the Curriculum, Center for Curriculum and Bookkeeping, Ministry of Education and Culture, *Pendidikan Karakter di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* (Jakarta: Kemendikbud, 2023), 14–18.

³⁶Hidayah and Mutiara, "Teacher Exemplarity and Religious Habituation," 240.

³⁷Sholikhah et al., "Habituation Strategies," 14.

Second, the attendance shifts reported in Figure 2 give an empirical anchor for what other studies have described in narrative form. Mulianti and colleagues, working at SMP Negeri 1 Kulisusu, identified habituation, modelling, reinforcement, and monitoring as the four mechanisms that sustain a religious culture among Grade VIII students; their account is rich on mechanism but light on outcome metrics.³⁸ The 27-percentage-point rise on dhuhr congregational prayer (62% to 89%) and the 30-percentage-point rise on Friday tadarus (48% to 78%) over a 13-week period at the present site provide a measured outcome that complements their mechanism-level account. The smallest gain (+13 percentage points on pre-class du'a) reflects a ceiling effect at the higher end of the baseline rather than weakness of the strategy.

Third, the four-stage workflow in Section 3.4 offers a teacher-facing operationalisation that the existing literature largely lacks. Amalia and colleagues found teacher exemplarity scoring 4.61 on a five-point scale among vocational students and identified the five daily prayers as the strongest exemplar item, but their study did not articulate how teachers organise their work to produce that perception.³⁹ Pratama and colleagues showed that teacher personality competence remained effective even with weak family-side control but stopped short of describing the planning sequence by which competence is enacted.⁴⁰ The diagnostic–design–enactment–evaluation cycle operationalised at MTs Darul Ma'arif foregrounds two features that those studies leave implicit: a deliberate diagnostic phase at the start of each half-semester, in which student worship habits are surveyed before strategies are selected, and a reflective evaluation phase that feeds the next diagnostic round through documented attendance shifts and student journal entries.

A more cautious comparison is warranted with the findings of Muqoyyidin and Ahmadiansah, whose work at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Salafiyah Kajen reported that religious-practice-based learning effectively cultivated discipline, responsibility, empathy, and spiritual awareness among elementary students.⁴¹ The strategies they describe (modelling, daily practice, environmental conditioning) are convergent with those reported here. The difference is that elementary students at their site appeared to internalise the routines without an explicit motivation strategy, whereas at the present junior-madrasah site, religious motivation registered at 19% and was named by both teachers and students as essential to the meaning-making side of worship. Adolescent students seem to need explicit articulation of why a

³⁸Mulianti et al., "The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers," 425.

³⁹Amalia et al., "Students' Perceptions," 1156.

⁴⁰Pratama et al., "Personality Competencies," 220.

⁴¹Muqoyyidin and Ahmadiansah, "Religious Practice-Based Learning," 178.

ritual matters in a way that younger children do not, a point that converges with the broader argument by Jenuri and colleagues that adolescents in the digital era are vulnerable to a form of spiritual emptiness when ritual is performed without articulated meaning.⁴²

A regional reading of the data is worth recording. Most published Indonesian work on Fiqh teacher strategies has been situated in Java, in cities where pesantren culture is dense and where IRE teacher networks are well institutionalised. The present site is in a Sumatran regency in which the pesantren network is thinner and in which the madrasah operates as a relatively standalone institution. Two consequences follow. First, the Fiqh teaching team carries a heavier institutional load because there is no nearby pesantren to which difficult cases can be informally referred for additional formation. Second, the family–school communication strategy is a more vital piece of the workflow than it would be in a Javanese pesantren-adjacent setting where extended kinship networks already perform some of the same work. The 8% proportional share is therefore a floor, not a ceiling; reading the data through a regional lens suggests that the share could productively be raised in similar non-Java settings.⁴³

Pedagogically, the workflow articulated here resembles a domain-specific instance of a planning–enactment–reflection cycle familiar from teacher-research literature, but with two distinctive elements. The first is that the diagnostic phase is calibrated against worship behaviour rather than cognitive proficiency, which means the indicators used (prayer attendance, tadarus participation, ablution accuracy) are concrete and observable rather than inferred from test scores. The second is that the reflective evaluation phase explicitly produces an attendance dataset that feeds the next diagnostic round, which gives the cycle a self-correcting quality that purely qualitative reflection often lacks. Romlah and colleagues have argued that effective madrasah teacher management requires precisely this kind of measurable feedback loop, and the present workflow gives one concrete instantiation of how that loop can be operationalised at the subject-teacher level.⁴⁴ The fact that the present cycle ran twice within a 13-week period also suggests that the diagnostic-to-evaluation cadence does not need to be slow to be useful; what

⁴²Jenuri et al., "Overcoming the Spiritual Emptiness of Students in the Modern Era through the Integration of Al-Ghazali's Human Concepts in the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2497147, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2497147>.

⁴³Dudi Karwadi and Dadan Indrawan, "Islamic Religious Education Teacher Strategies in Internalizing Character Values in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Students," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas* 9, no. 2 (2023): 242–249, <https://doi.org/10.31949/jcp.v9i2.4731>.

⁴⁴Siti Romlah et al., "Madrasah Teacher Management in Enhancing Students' Understanding of Religious Moderation," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Multikulturalisme* 7, no. 2 (2025): 782–798, <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i2.7715>.

matters is that each cycle close cleanly so that the next can begin from a known starting point.

The 8% share assigned to family–school communication is worth interrogating. It is the smallest of the five strategies, but its inclusion in the workflow matters because three of the 22 students reported that no daily worship was performed at home, and these were the students whose attendance gains were largest in absolute terms. The pattern is consistent with the broader observation by Ruswandi and colleagues that the family functions as *madrasah al-ula* and that, where this primary setting falls short, school-side compensation has to extend into the home through documented channels.⁴⁵ Friction was visible: two parents declined home visits, and one parent reported feeling judged by the messages. A workflow that builds family–school communication into the design phase, rather than as an emergency measure when attendance drops, may smooth this friction in future cycles.

Three practical implications follow for Fiqh teachers and *madrasah* leaders working in similar settings. First, the strategy mix matters more than any single strategy: the present site achieved its attendance gains through five concurrent pathways rather than through an intensified single channel, and the smallest strategy by share (family school communication) was the one most consequential for the most at-risk students. Reading the proportional distribution as a recipe rather than as a hierarchy is therefore important. Second, the cycle length matters. A 13-week semester gave just enough room for two full cycles, which means a Fiqh teacher who treats each half-semester as a complete diagnostic-to-evaluation unit can complete two iterations per term and four per year. Single-cycle implementations leave no opportunity for self-correction. Third, the prayer-to-classroom transition window deserves explicit pedagogical attention. The data showed that the 30-minute window before *dhuhr* was the period in which both the supporting and the inhibiting factors were most active; a Fiqh teacher who designs that window deliberately, rather than leaving it to spontaneity, captures a large share of the available influence.

Two limitations deserve emphasis. First, the single-site design constrains transferability; the proportional distributions reported here should be read as a baseline for comparison rather than as population-level estimates. Second, the 13-week observation window did not permit assessment of long-run retention, in particular whether the attendance gains observed at follow-up persist into the next

⁴⁵Aim Ruswandi, Dadan Junaedi, and Asep Anggi Karta Rahmatullah, "Uswah Hasanah as a Methodology of Islamic Education," *TARBAWY: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education* 9, no. 2 (2022): 168–183, <https://doi.org/10.17509/t.v9i2.46384>.

school year. Future work should examine the workflow at multiple Sumatran madrasah and over longer time horizons, ideally with a quasi-experimental component that compares strategy combinations on standardised worship-awareness measures.⁴⁶ A separate line of work should test whether deliberate adjustments to the proportional mix for example, raising family-school communication from 8% to 15% produce measurable shifts in attendance among the most at-risk students. The conceptual model proposed by Fatoni and colleagues for a digital tarbiyah space, with worship reminders integrated into a school-level platform, may offer a complementary infrastructure for that experiment.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

The Dhuha prayer program at SMK Negeri 3 Bungo functions as a structured spiritual-habitation mechanism that operates through three interlocking elements a rotational class schedule, supervision by the first-period teacher, and integration with the religious-attitude rubric and is sustained at approximately three-quarters participation. Its operation surfaces a recognizable set of frictions, dominated by facility limitations and a mentoring gap, and the school has responded with five complementary strategies built around self-reliance, formative sanctions, modeling, embedded motivation, and assessment accountability. Considered together, these findings answer the three objectives stated in the introduction and reinforce the position that worship programs in vocational settings are most effective when they are scheduled, supervised, and assessed as part of the institutional rhythm rather than treated as discretionary activities. Further research is recommended along three lines: a multi-site replication across vocational schools with diverse facility profiles, a quasi-experimental design pairing observation with validated spiritual-intelligence instruments, and a longitudinal study tracking whether the affective gains observed within a semester are retained after graduation.

The theoretical contribution of the study lies less in a new construct than in the explicit linkage between three normally separate strands of analysis operational mechanism, lived constraint, and adaptive strategy within a single qualitative account oriented toward spiritual intelligence in a vocational context. By treating these three strands as inter-dependent rather than as discrete topics, the study positions Dhuha prayer as an institutional rhythm whose effectiveness depends on

⁴⁶Andi Burhanuddin and Nurul Aini, "Islamic Religious Education, Teacher Modeling, and Cultural Strategies at SMP Citra Mulia Makassar," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education Research* 1, no. 2 (2025): 12–28.

⁴⁷Bagus Fatoni et al., "Digital Tarbiyah Space and Worship Reminders in Madrasah: A Conceptual Model," *Fikroh: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam* 19, no. 1 (2026): 23–40, <https://doi.org/10.37812/fikroh.v19i1.2271>.

the alignment of scheduling, supervision, infrastructure, and meaning-making rather than on any single component in isolation. The next steps for this research agenda are practical and feasible: a multi-site comparison across vocational schools with diverse facility and staffing profiles, a longitudinal follow-up that tracks affective and behavioral indicators across a full school year and into post-graduation employment, and a mixed-methods triangulation that pairs the qualitative account presented here with validated spiritual-intelligence instruments. Each of these steps would refine the boundary conditions of the present findings and would inform the design of similar programs in other vocational settings across Indonesia and the wider region.

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