

The Influence of Grave Visitation Habituation on Students' Morality at MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak

*Surya Fiyana*¹

¹Faculty of Islamic Religion, Universitas Sultan Fatah, Demak - Indonesia

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between grave visitation habituation and students' morality at MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak. A quantitative correlational design with an associative approach was employed. The population consisted of 478 students, with 72 respondents selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires measuring grave visitation habituation and students' morality. Instrument validity and reliability were tested, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. The results showed that grave visitation habituation ($M = 221.88$) and students' morality ($M = 172.74$) were both categorized as very high. A strong and statistically significant positive relationship was found between the variables ($r = .812, p < .001$). Regression analysis indicated that the variables shared 65.9% of variance. These findings suggest that grave visitation habituation is associated with positive moral dispositions; however, morality is a multidimensional construct also shaped by family, school, and social environments. The study highlights the potential of religious habituation practices as part of character education in madrasahs while acknowledging the limitations of self-reported measures in capturing complex moral behavior.

Keywords: *grave visitation habituation; students' morality; Islamic education; religious habituation; character education*

***Corresponding Author:** Surya Fiyana (suryafiyana193@gmail.com), Faculty of Islamic Religion, Universitas Sultan Fatah, Demak - Indonesia



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Introduction

Islamic education has a central responsibility to develop learners who are intellectually capable, spiritually aware, and morally accountable. In the madrasah context, this responsibility is not limited to the transfer of religious knowledge in formal classroom instruction. It also includes the formation of students' daily conduct through religious culture, school routines, teacher modelling, and repeated moral practice. Moral education in Islamic schools therefore requires a learning environment that enables students to internalize values, not merely understand them as concepts. This position is consistent with the view that *akhlak* is a central goal of Islamic education because religious knowledge should guide behavior, social relations, and personal discipline (Ramadhani & Sari, 2022; Wahyuddin, 2001).

The formation of *akhlak* is especially important for students at the junior secondary level. At this stage, students experience rapid social, emotional, and moral development. They begin to build stronger peer relations, test personal autonomy, and encounter wider social influences. In this situation, moral formation cannot rely only on advice or cognitive explanation. Students need structured experiences that train discipline, humility, respect, empathy, and awareness of religious responsibility. Islamic education responds to this need through the integration of instruction and habituation. Through habituation, religious values are repeated in concrete action until they become part of the student's character (Yusuf, 2019; Suyadi, 2017).

The concept of habit provides a relevant theoretical foundation for this study. Skinner (1953) explains that habits emerge from repeated behavior supported by reinforcement. When a behavior occurs repeatedly in a consistent environment, it can develop into a relatively stable pattern of action. Islamic education also recognizes habituation as an important method for forming moral and religious character. In this perspective, repeated religious practices are not merely routines. They are pedagogical mechanisms through which learners practice obedience, self-control, reverence, and social responsibility. Arief, Hermina, and Huda (2022) explain that religious habits can strengthen character because repeated positive actions gradually shape students' awareness and behavior.

One form of religious habituation that remains strong in Indonesian Muslim society is grave visitation, commonly known as *ziarah kubur*. This practice has a long historical and cultural position, particularly in communities influenced by *Nahdlatul Ulama* tradition. *Ziarah kubur* generally refers to visiting graves to pray for the deceased, recite Qur'anic verses, read *dhikr* and *tahlil*, remember death, and reflect on the hereafter. In the Islamic tradition, this practice is understood as a reminder of human limitation and the reality of accountability before Allah. The

hadith tradition also frames grave visitation as a practice that reminds believers of death and the afterlife (Ibn Majah, n.d.; Muslim as cited in Muslih, 1998).

In educational terms, *ziarah kubur* has potential value beyond its ritual dimension. It can function as a reflective learning experience that exposes students to concrete symbols of mortality, human equality, and moral accountability. When students visit graves, they do not only participate in a religious ceremony. They also encounter a setting that invites reflection on life, death, responsibility, and the value of good deeds. Ismawati (2016) explains that grave visitation in Muslim society contains religious, social, and cultural meanings. It can strengthen religious consciousness and social memory. Within a school environment, these meanings can be directed toward moral education when teachers provide guidance before, during, and after the activity.

The relationship between *ziarah kubur* and *akhlak* can also be explained through classical Islamic moral philosophy. Al-Ghazali (2005) views education as a process of purifying the soul and improving moral disposition. In this view, moral excellence does not emerge from knowledge alone. It requires spiritual awareness, self-discipline, and repeated practice. Ibn Miskawaih (1985) also argues that *akhlak* is shaped through habituation and repeated action until good conduct becomes stable in the soul. These perspectives provide a strong basis for viewing regular grave visitation as a possible medium for moral formation, especially when it is linked with reflection, prayer, humility, and remembrance of the hereafter.

Akhlak in this study refers to students' moral conduct that appears in their relationship with Allah, with themselves, and with others. It includes religious obedience, honesty, politeness, responsibility, humility, discipline, respect for teachers and peers, and care for the surrounding community. Al-Ghazali (2005) defines *akhlak* as a stable condition of the soul from which actions arise easily without long deliberation. Ginanjar and Kurniawati (2017) also emphasize that moral education in Islamic learning should lead to the improvement of *akhlak al-karimah* in students' behavior. Therefore, a study on students' morality should not only examine what students know about moral values. It should also examine the practices that may shape those values into consistent behavior.

MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak provides a relevant setting for examining this issue. The school is located in a religious and historical environment where Islamic traditions remain part of institutional culture. One distinctive activity is the regular grave visitation to the tomb of Sultan Fattah, a major Islamic figure in Demak. This activity has become part of the school's religious habituation and involves students and teachers. The practice reflects the integration of local

Islamic tradition and formal Islamic education. It also offers a concrete example of how a madrasah can use religious culture as a medium for character formation.

However, the educational value of *ziarah kubur* should not be assumed without empirical examination. In contemporary practice, grave visitation may be followed as a routine activity without sufficient understanding of its ethical and spiritual meaning. Some students may attend because the school requires it, not because they consciously reflect on its moral message. This condition raises an important academic question. Does the habit of grave visitation have a measurable relationship with students' morality? More specifically, can regular participation in *ziarah kubur* explain variation in students' *akhlak* at MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak? This question is important because religious activities in schools should be evaluated not only by their continuity, but also by their educational contribution.

Previous studies have examined religious habituation and moral formation in several educational contexts. Yusuf (2019) found that religious habituation can support character formation in Islamic elementary schools. Suyadi (2017) discusses religious habituation as a basis for character education. Fuad and Sugianto (2021) also report that *ziarah*-related activities can support students' piety and religious awareness. Other studies have discussed *ziarah kubur* from theological, sociological, and cultural perspectives, including its meaning in Indonesian Muslim communities (Ismawati, 2016; Roshanbahar, 2016). These studies show that religious practices can have moral and spiritual significance, but they do not fully answer the specific quantitative question addressed in this study.

The research gap lies in the limited empirical examination of grave visitation habituation as a predictor of students' morality in a formal madrasah setting. Many studies discuss *ziarah kubur* as a tradition, ritual, or cultural practice. Fewer studies treat it as a school-based religious habituation program that can be measured statistically in relation to students' *akhlak*. This gap is important for Islamic education because madrasah activities often combine curriculum, local tradition, and religious culture. Without empirical evaluation, schools may preserve religious routines without knowing their actual contribution to students' character development.

Based on this background, the present study investigates the influence of grave visitation habituation on students' morality at MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak in the 2025/2026 academic year. The study has three objectives. First, it describes the level of students' grave visitation habituation. Second, it describes the level of students' morality. Third, it tests the influence of grave visitation habituation on students' morality. The study contributes to Islamic education by providing quantitative evidence on the role of a local religious tradition in moral formation. It also

offers practical insight for madrasahs that seek to strengthen character education through planned, reflective, and pedagogically guided religious habituation.

Methods

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational and associative causal design. The design was selected because the study aimed to test the statistical influence of an independent variable, namely grave visitation habituation, on a dependent variable, namely students' morality. Quantitative research is appropriate when data are collected through instruments and analyzed statistically to test hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2009; Arikunto, 2013; Riadi, 2024).

The research was conducted at MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak, located at Jl. Sultan Fatah No. 69, Kauman, Bintoro, Demak, Central Java. The research took place during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from July to December 2025. This site was selected because grave visitation to the tomb of Sultan Fatah is part of the religious culture of the madrasah.

The population consisted of all students of MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak from grades VII, VIII, and IX, totaling 478 students. The sample consisted of 72 students selected through probability sampling using proportionate stratified random sampling. This technique was used because the population consisted of several grade levels and class groups, and each stratum needed proportional representation.

The independent variable was grave visitation habituation. It was measured through five indicators: remembering the afterlife, seeking blessing from Allah, using grave visitation as a means to draw closer to Allah, frequency of participation, and etiquette during visitation. The dependent variable was students' morality. It was measured through six indicators: morality toward Allah, morality toward the Prophet, morality toward oneself, morality toward family, morality toward fellow humans, and morality toward other creatures.

Data were collected using Likert scale questionnaires. The grave visitation habituation questionnaire consisted of 50 items with a score range of 50 to 250. The students' morality questionnaire consisted of 40 items with a score range of 40 to 200. Response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree, scored from 5 to 1. The instruments were tested using item validity and reliability procedures. Validity was assessed through Pearson product moment correlation, while reliability was assessed using split-half reliability. Data analysis used descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression with IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The hypothesis was tested at a significance level of .01.

Table 1.
Research Design, Sample, and Instrument Profile

Aspect	Description	Research function
Design	Quantitative correlational research with an associative causal approach	To test the statistical influence of grave visitation habituation on students' morality
Population	478 students of MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak from grades VII, VIII, and IX	To define the target group of the study
Sample	72 students selected through proportionate stratified random sampling	To obtain proportional representation from student strata
Instrument X	Grave visitation habituation questionnaire, 50 Likert scale items, score range 50 to 250	To measure students' religious habituation related to ziarah kubur
Instrument Y	Students' morality questionnaire, 40 Likert scale items, score range 40 to 200	To measure students' morality based on Islamic moral indicators
Analysis	Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression	To describe variable levels and test the research hypothesis

Results

The descriptive analysis showed that students' grave visitation habituation was in the very high category. The mean score for the grave visitation habituation variable was 221.88 with a standard deviation of 15.27. The students' morality variable was also in the very high category, with a mean score of 172.74 and a standard deviation of 11.28. These findings indicate that students reported a high level of participation, spiritual awareness, and etiquette in grave visitation, and also reported strong moral conduct across the measured Islamic moral dimensions.

Pearson correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between grave visitation habituation and students' morality ($r = .812$, $p < .001$, $N = 72$). This means that higher scores on grave visitation habituation were associated with higher scores on students' morality. Based on the correlation interpretation used in the thesis, the coefficient was classified as very strong.

The simple linear regression result confirmed that grave visitation habituation significantly predicted students' morality. The regression coefficient was positive ($B = .599$, $SE = .052$), with a standardized beta of .812. The t value was 11.620 with a significance value below .001. The R square value was .659, indicating that grave visitation habituation explained 65.9% of the variance in students' morality, while 34.1% was explained by other factors outside the model.

Table 2.
Summary of Descriptive, Correlational, and Regression Results

Analysis	Variable or parameter	Value	Significance	Interpretation
Descriptive	Grave visitation habituation	M = 221.88; SD = 15.27; N = 72	-	Very high
Descriptive	Students' morality	M = 172.74; SD = 11.28; N = 72	-	Very high
Correlation	Pearson r between X and Y	r = .812	p < .001	Very strong positive relationship
Regression	Unstandardized coefficient	B = .599; SE = .052	p < .001	Positive significant predictor
Regression	Standardized coefficient	Beta = .812	p < .001	Strong effect in the model
Regression	t test	t = 11.620	p < .001	Ha accepted
Model summary	Coefficient of determination	R ² = .659; adjusted R ² = .654	-	65.9% of variance explained

Discussion

The findings show that grave visitation habituation had a strong and significant relationship with students' morality. This result supports the theoretical view that repeated religious practice can shape conduct when the practice contains spiritual meaning, moral reflection, and social guidance. Skinner's (1953) habit theory explains that repeated behavior can become stable through reinforcement. In Islamic education, this idea is close to the concept of *pembiasaan*, where repeated religious practices help students internalize values until they become part of daily conduct (Yusuf, 2019; Arief et al., 2022).

The strong association between grave visitation habituation and morality can be explained through the reflective content of *ziarah kubur*. Grave visitation invites students to remember death, pray for the deceased, respect predecessors, control behavior, and reflect on the afterlife. Such reflection may strengthen humility, discipline, gratitude, responsibility, and awareness of moral accountability. This finding aligns with Ismawati (2016), Nurkholis (2020), and Fuad and Sugianto (2021), who emphasize that *ziarah kubur* contains religious and social values that can deepen spiritual awareness.

The result also supports classical Islamic moral theory. Al-Ghazali (2005) and Ibn Miskawaih (1985) argue that *akhlak* is formed when good actions are repeated until they become stable dispositions of the soul. Therefore, grave visitation can function as a moral learning experience when it is not treated as an empty ritual. It becomes educational when teachers explain

its meaning, guide proper etiquette, and connect the activity with moral behavior in school and society.

The regression result showed that grave visitation habituation explained 65.9% of the variance in students' morality. This is a substantial contribution. However, the remaining 34.1% indicates that students' morality is also influenced by other factors. These may include family education, peer interaction, teacher role modeling, school discipline, religious instruction, social media exposure, and broader community culture. This point is consistent with moral education literature, which views character development as a multidimensional process involving school, family, and social environment (Ginanjari & Kurniawati, 2017; Ramadhani & Sari, 2022; Firdaus et al., 2023).

Although the statistical result is strong, the interpretation should remain cautious. The study used cross-sectional questionnaire data and simple regression. Therefore, the term influence should be read as a statistical predictive influence within the research model, not as proof that grave visitation is the only direct cause of students' morality. Future studies should add qualitative observation, interviews, or longitudinal designs to explain how students internalize values during and after grave visitation.

For madrasah practice, the findings suggest that religious habituation should be managed pedagogically. Teachers should prepare students before ziarah, explain the ethical and spiritual purposes of the activity, supervise proper conduct during the visit, and conduct reflection after the activity. In this way, students can understand that ziarah kubur is not only a tradition, but also a medium of moral education.

Conclusion

This study concludes that grave visitation habituation among students of MTs Nahdlatul Ulama Demak was in the very high category, and students' morality was also in the very high category. The statistical analysis showed a strong and significant relationship between grave visitation habituation and students' morality. Simple linear regression indicated that grave visitation habituation significantly predicted students' morality, with an explanatory contribution of 65.9%. These findings indicate that grave visitation can serve as a meaningful religious habituation practice for moral formation when implemented with correct intention, proper etiquette, and reflective guidance from teachers. The study contributes to Islamic education by showing that local religious traditions can support character education in formal madrasah settings. Future research should include additional variables and qualitative methods to examine the internalization process more deeply.

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