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The Character Education Model Based on Infaq and Sadaqah Activities at MAN 1 Medan

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Abstract:
This study aims to analyze the character education model based on infaq and sadaqah activities at MAN 1 Medan, focusing on its planning, implementation, internalization of moral values, and perceived implications for students' social care behavior. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research involved a Religious Affairs Department teacher as the primary informant, alongside Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and student organization representatives as supporting informants. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the model is embedded in the madrasah's institutional culture through regular Friday morning fundraising led by the student Religious Team, supported by educator guidance and role modeling. Its distinctive contribution lies in integrating routine charitable practices, peer-led participation, and students' direct involvement in distributing assistance. Through these activities, students have opportunities to connect religious values with practical responses to social needs, including support for bereaved families, scholarships for underprivileged students, medical assistance, and humanitarian fundraising for Palestine. Interview and field findings indicate perceived improvements in students' empathy, gratitude, social sensitivity, and willingness to help others. These findings suggest that the combination of habituation, student participation, and direct humanitarian experience provides a context for translating moral understanding into social action. However, the reported changes reflect qualitative evidence from participants and field observations rather than a measured causal effect. This study contributes an integrated account of how religious charitable practices can be organized as a participatory and context-responsive approach to character education in an Islamic secondary school.

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Introduction

Character education is a fundamental component of student development in Islamic educational institutions, particularly Madrasah Aliyah. The educational process involves not only the transmission of academic knowledge (*transfer of knowledge*), but also the internalization of moral and spiritual values (*transfer of values*) that are expected to be reflected in students' actual behavior (*moral action*) (Muharrani et al., 2025). In Islamic education, character formation can be developed through religious practices that connect spiritual understanding with everyday social conduct. One relevant foundation is QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 261, which illustrates the multiplication of rewards for those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). This verse establishes a theological basis for understanding *infaq* and *sadaqah* not merely as material contributions, but also as religious practices that cultivate sincerity, generosity, and concern for others (Mukti et al., 2026). Ibn Kathir interprets the parable in this verse as an illustration of how Allah multiplies the rewards of those who give their wealth sincerely in pursuit of His pleasure, with the reward potentially reaching seven hundred times or more according to His will (Mubarok ,2026).

Terminologically, *infaq* refers to the expenditure of wealth for beneficial purposes, including social welfare and the fulfillment of community needs, beyond the obligatory payment of zakat. *Sadaqah*, meanwhile, encompasses a broader range of charitable acts, including both material giving and non-material expressions of goodness (Mohammad, 2025). These may include offering a sincere smile, helping others, removing harmful objects from public pathways, sharing knowledge, offering prayers, and encouraging good conduct (*amar ma'ruf*) (Purwanti, 2020). This broader understanding is important for character education because it positions generosity as a disposition expressed through consistent actions rather than as a financial contribution alone. The prophetic tradition narrated by Muslim (no. 2588), which states that charity does not diminish wealth, further reinforces the religious significance of generosity and humility. An-Nawawi explains this teaching in terms of the blessings associated with charitable giving and the spiritual rewards granted by Allah (Wahyu et al., 2026). Taken together, these Islamic teachings provide a normative foundation for integrating *infaq* and *sadaqah* into educational practices aimed at developing social responsibility, empathy, gratitude, and generosity.

Despite this strong theological foundation, the educational value of *infaq* and *sadaqah* depends on how these activities are organized and experienced within the school environment. When charitable activities are limited to routine fundraising or the collection of student contributions, their educational potential may remain underdeveloped. Students may participate in giving without fully understanding its spiritual meaning, social consequences, or relationship to their everyday behavior. The central issue, therefore, is not simply whether students participate in charitable activities, but how such participation becomes a meaningful process of character formation. This distinction highlights the need to examine the educational mechanisms connecting religious habituation with the internalization and practice of moral values (Maftuhin, 2025). At MAN 1 Medan, *infaq* and *sadaqah* activities provide a context for examining this relationship between religious practice and character education. Based on the institutional context described in this study, these activities involve planning by the Religious Section, daily or weekly habituation, and student participation in the distribution of social assistance.

This arrangement offers a basis for examining how charitable practices are organized as part of the madrasah's character education process. In particular, the educational significance of the model lies in the relationship between repeated religious practice, students' participation in social activities, and opportunities to translate the values of generosity and social concern into concrete actions. The involvement of students beyond the act of donating is especially relevant because it raises questions about their roles in the implementation of activities, their interactions

with beneficiaries and peers, and the ways in which they interpret the values underlying their participation. Two complementary perspectives are useful for examining this process. The first is the *peer-led approach*, which draws attention to the role of students in encouraging, organizing, or facilitating character-building activities among their peers. Rather than positioning students solely as recipients of school-directed instruction, this approach considers how peer participation and social interaction may contribute to the development of shared moral commitments. The second is *experiential learning*, which emphasizes the educational significance of learning through direct participation, reflection, and the application of values in real-life situations. In the context of *infaq* and *sadaqah* students' involvement in social assistance activities may provide opportunities to experience generosity and social responsibility beyond their conceptual understanding of religious teachings (Hasibuan, 2025). These perspectives provide analytical lenses for investigating the model at MAN 1 Medan the extent and specific forms of peer leadership and experiential learning, however, need to be established through the empirical findings of the study.

Previous studies have established the importance of religious habituation, social participation, and supportive school environments in character development. (Achmad Abidin et al., 2024) examined religious habituation as a means of developing positive student habits. Research (Manurung, 2024) and (Latif & Novrizal, 2025) highlighted the contribution of direct participation in social activities to the development of students' emotional sensitivity. Meanwhile, (Sagita & Saputri, 2024) and (Dira Zahara Fitri, 2026) emphasized the role of consistent school environmental conditioning in supporting character development. These studies provide a foundation for understanding how repeated practices, social engagement, and institutional environments contribute to students' character formation. Nevertheless, the specific contribution of each study must be distinguished from the present research: the findings concerning religious habituation, social participation, and environmental conditioning do not, by themselves, explain how these elements are integrated into a character education model specifically organized around *infaq* and *sadaqah* at the Madrasah Aliyah level. The research gap, therefore, concerns not the general importance of religious activities in character education, but the limited understanding of how *infaq* and *sadaqah* are constructed as an integrated educational model. In particular, further investigation is needed into how institutional planning, regular habituation, student participation, and the distribution of social assistance are connected to the internalization and enactment of character values. A more specific question concerns the role of students in this process: whether and how peer interaction and student-led participation contribute to transforming charitable activities from routine religious practices into meaningful experiences of character formation. This focus distinguishes the present study from research that primarily examines religious habituation, participation in social activities, or the management of charitable contributions as separate concerns. It also directs attention to the educational processes through which the model operates, rather than limiting the analysis to the frequency of participation or the amount of funds collected.

The distinctive contribution of this research is its examination of the character education model based on *infaq* and *sadaqah* activities at MAN 1 Medan as an interconnected process involving institutional planning, habituation, student participation, and the enactment of social and religious values. The study investigates how these elements are designed and implemented, how students and other school stakeholders understand the values embedded in the activities, and how participation is associated with the development of social care and other character-related behaviors. The peer-led approach and experiential learning are particularly relevant to this analysis insofar as they are reflected in students' actual roles, interactions, and experiences. Rather than presuming that participation automatically produces character transformation, the study examines the processes and conditions through which the intended educational values may

be internalized and expressed in practice. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the character education model based on *infaq* and *sadaqah* activities at MAN 1 Medan. Specifically, it seeks to describe the planning and design of the model, analyze its implementation and the internalization of character values, and examine its implications for students' social care and character development. Through this focus, the study seeks to contribute a context-specific understanding of how Islamic philanthropic practices can be organized as a character education process within a State Islamic Senior High School.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine the character education model based on *infaq* and *sadaqah* activities at MAN 1 Medan. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on understanding how the program was planned, implemented, and interpreted by members of the madrasah community within its actual institutional context. The study was descriptive-analytical, aiming to describe the implementation of the program systematically and analyze how its activities contributed to the development of students' social care character (Moleong, 2018). The research was conducted at MAN 1 Medan, located on Jalan William Iskandar, Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, from April to May 2026. The site was selected purposively because the madrasah provided a relevant context for investigating the integration of religious charitable activities into student character education. The selection also considered the implementation of regular *infaq* and *sadaqah* activities and the involvement of the madrasah community in the program.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in, experience with, or knowledge of the *infaq* and *sadaqah* program. The key informants comprised the Head of the Religious Section, who was responsible for the program; teacher advisors and homeroom teachers involved in student guidance or program implementation; and student representatives from different grade levels. These groups were selected to obtain perspectives on program planning, implementation, student participation, and the perceived contribution of the activities to character development. A total of 10 informants participated in this study, consisting of 3 representatives from the Religious Affairs division, 3 teachers (serving as mentors or homeroom teachers), and 4 students. Involving informants with diverse roles allowed the researcher to compare the perspectives of program administrators, teachers, and students. The student informants were selected based on their experience participating in the activities, as well as their ability to describe their experiences and perceptions regarding the program. The final number of informants and their distribution across the various categories should reflect the participants who were genuinely involved in the fieldwork. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through interviews and observations of program implementation and student interactions within the madrasah environment. Secondary data included relevant program guidelines, records or recapitulations of *infaq* and *sadaqah* funds, and photographs documenting social assistance distribution activities. These documents were used to provide institutional context and support the interpretation of interview and observation findings.

A semi-structured format allows researchers to ask follow-up questions to clarify responses and explore experiences or examples that emerge during the interview. The interviews are conducted in person, lasting approximately 10–15 minutes, and are documented through audio recordings and notes. When necessary, participants' responses are clarified via follow-up questions to reduce ambiguity and ensure that the information accurately reflects their experiences. The interview data are then organized according to the research questions and used alongside observational and documentary data during the analysis process. Observation. Direct

observation was used to examine the implementation of *infaq* and *sadaqah* activities and the social interactions associated with the program. The researcher observed relevant activities and student behavior in the madrasah environment, focusing on the implementation process, student participation, interactions among students and teachers, and observable expressions of social care. Observation allows researchers to compare participants' descriptions with the practices that actually take place at the research site. Observational notes are documented using observation sheets and subsequently compared with findings from interviews and documents. Documentary data were collected to support the reconstruction of the program's institutional context and implementation. The materials included available program guidelines, financial recapitulations, and photographs of social assistance distribution activities. Documents were examined in relation to the research objectives, particularly to identify information about program planning, implementation, and student involvement. Documentary evidence was not treated as sufficient on its own to establish character change; instead, it was compared with interview accounts and observation findings to assess the consistency and context of the information (Husnullail et al., 2024).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of (Miles et al., 2024) comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis was conducted iteratively alongside data collection so that emerging findings could be examined and compared across informants and data sources. First, data reduction involved organizing interview transcripts or notes, observation records, and relevant documents selecting information related to the research questions; and grouping the data according to the main analytical areas. These areas included program planning, implementation, student participation, internalization of character values, and the perceived implications for students' social care (Arianto, 2024). Information that contradicted emerging interpretations was retained for further examination rather than automatically excluded. Second, data display involved organizing the reduced data into thematic summaries and comparative matrices. Information from program managers, teachers, and students was compared to identify recurring patterns, differences in perspectives, and relationships between the planned activities and their observed implementation. Observation records and documentary evidence were incorporated into these displays to examine whether the different forms of evidence supported or qualified the interview findings (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the Head of the Religious Section, teacher advisors or homeroom teachers, and students.

For example, information about program planning and implementation was examined across the perspectives of those responsible for the program, teachers involved in student guidance, and students who participated in the activities. Differences between these accounts were examined to understand variations in roles, experiences, or interpretations (Nawawi & Hadari, 2016). Technique triangulation involved comparing interview findings with direct observations and documentary evidence. Participants' descriptions of program implementation and student participation were checked against observed activities and relevant program records or photographs. Agreement across sources and techniques strengthened the credibility of an interpretation, while discrepancies prompted further examination rather than being treated automatically as evidence of invalidity (Scott, 2015) and (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study also employed persistent observation, examination of negative cases, and continued engagement with the research setting where supported by the actual fieldwork. Persistent observation focused on aspects of the program and student interactions most relevant to the research questions. Negative case analysis involved examining evidence that challenged or differed from emerging interpretations. These procedures helped refine the analysis and prevent conclusions from being

based solely on confirming evidence (Flick, 2022) and (Putri & Murhayati, 2025). Researchers also conduct further clarification or "*member checking*" with selected informants to confirm the accuracy of specific interview interpretations. This procedure should only be reported if it was actually carried out. Overall, credibility procedures are intended to establish a transparent link between the evidence collected, the analytical interpretations, and the research conclusions.

Results

The findings reveal that the character education model based on *infaq* and *sadaqah* at MAN 1 Medan operates through three interconnected dimensions: program planning and institutional support, implementation and internalization of character values, and the implications of participation for students' social behavior. The data were obtained from interviews with the Religious Section and student organization representatives, supported by observations and program documentation. Across these sources, three prominent features emerged the institutionalization of charitable giving as a madrasah culture, student participation through a peer-led approach, and direct involvement in social assistance distribution as an opportunity for experiential learning.

Planning and Structure of the Character Education Model

The findings indicate that infaq and sadaqah at MAN 1 Medan are established as recurring religious and social practices rather than temporary fundraising activities. According to the Religious Section informant, the practice has been maintained for many years and has adapted to the changing needs of the institution. Fundraising is scheduled every Friday morning before teaching and learning activities begin. This regular schedule provides an institutional framework for habituating students to charitable giving. The Religious Section informant explained "*The habit of infaq and alms has been a culture that has been running for quite a long time at MAN 1 Medan as the oldest madrasah in North Sumatra. We schedule infaq collection activities routinely every Friday before KBM starts. The one who distributes the infaq boxes to each class is not the teacher, but the students who are members of the Religious Team. We deliberately chose this approach so that there is no impression of coercion from the school. When the ones who move are fellow peers, an atmosphere of openness and collective awareness is easier to form.*" (IF1-MC, May 21, 2026).

This account identifies two important characteristics of the program. First, the regular Friday schedule institutionalizes charitable giving within the madrasah's weekly activities. Second, the distribution of collection boxes is assigned to students from the Religious Team rather than being carried out exclusively by teachers. The informant explicitly associated this arrangement with the intention of minimizing perceptions of coercion and encouraging collective awareness. The findings also indicate that teachers contribute to the program through guidance and personal example. Before fundraising begins, teachers provide religious motivation and encourage students to participate sincerely. Some teachers also demonstrate participation by placing their own contributions in the collection boxes before they are distributed among students. These findings suggest that the planning of the model combines institutional regularity, religious motivation, and behavioral example. The Friday schedule provides continuity, while teachers' participation communicates that charitable giving is a shared responsibility rather than an obligation imposed exclusively on students. The delegation of collection activities to the Religious Team further introduces a participatory dimension to the program. However, the intention to avoid coercion should be distinguished from evidence that all students experience the activity as entirely voluntary the latter would require direct evidence from student accounts.

The allocation of *infaq* and *sadaqah* funds has changed in response to the development of the madrasah and the needs of its community. The Religious Section informant explained that, during approximately the previous decade, fundraising primarily supported the construction of the madrasah mosque. Following the completion of the mosque, the allocation shifted toward mosque maintenance and operational costs, scholarship assistance for underprivileged students,

and medical assistance for students experiencing illness or hardship. The informant described this development as follows *"Around the last 10 years, the main focus of the infaq of madrasah residents has been allocated to raising funds for the construction of the MAN 1 Medan Mosque. Alhamdulillah, 5 years ago the mosque was perfectly built and it was a real contribution from the alms of the madrasah residents. After the mosque was established, the infaq allocation was transformed for the maintenance and operation of the mosque, and was allocated to help underprivileged students in the form of scholarship assistance and financing for sick students. As for the Islamic Holiday Commemoration (PHBI) activities, the allocation of funds is borne independently from the madrasah budget."* (IF1-MC, May 21, 2026).

The account demonstrates that the use of funds has not remained fixed on a single institutional objective. Instead, the program has shifted from supporting physical infrastructure to addressing operational and welfare needs. The informant also clarified that Islamic Holiday Commemoration activities are financed separately through the madrasah budget, allowing *infaq* and *sadaqah* funds to be directed toward other institutional and humanitarian priorities. The changing allocation of funds illustrates the adaptive character of the program. Its continuity is maintained not simply through regular collection, but also through the redistribution of resources in response to emerging needs. This feature connects charitable giving with practical forms of social responsibility, including educational assistance, healthcare-related support, and responses to hardship within the madrasah community. The findings therefore position fund allocation as one component of the educational model, although the allocation of funds alone does not establish changes in students' character.

Implementation and Internalization of Character Values

The implementation of the program involves students in the collection process through the Religious Team, alongside representatives of OSIM, MPK, and class administrators in relevant social activities. The Religious Team distributes collection boxes to classes every Friday before teaching and learning activities begin. Teachers provide religious guidance, while students take an active role in facilitating the collection process. The statement from the informant indicates that student-led collection is a deliberate feature of the program. Rather than relying exclusively on teachers to distribute collection boxes, the madrasah assigns this task to members of the Religious Team. According to the informant, this arrangement is intended to create an atmosphere in which students are encouraged by their peers and can develop a shared sense of responsibility. The findings support the identification of a peer-led approach in the operational aspect of fundraising. Students are not merely recipients of religious instruction; selected student representatives also facilitate the implementation of the activity among their classmates. This arrangement creates opportunities for peer interaction and shared participation. Nevertheless, the evidence most directly establishes student leadership in the collection process. Broader claims that this approach eliminates external pressure or produces internal moral motivation should be treated as interpretations of the intended mechanism rather than as outcomes independently established by the interview alone.

Beyond routine fundraising, the program includes responses to bereavement, natural disasters, and humanitarian needs beyond the madrasah. When a student's parent dies, additional voluntary fundraising may be organized within the relevant class or department. Student representatives and members of OSIM, MPK, and the Religious Team may also participate directly in delivering assistance to affected families. The program has additionally supported humanitarian fundraising for Palestine in connection with the commemoration of 1 Muharram. A student organization representative described these experiences *"Every Friday funds are collected to help friends who are less fortunate. But if a parent of a classmate dies, we create additional fundraising in that department or class. The most touching thing was when we class representatives and administrators of organizations (OSIM, MPK, and Religious) were invited to directly hand over aid to the funeral home. We saw firsthand the sadness of our friends. Likewise, yesterday at the*

moment of 1 Muharram, we were involved in raising aid funds for Palestine. This direct experience made us feel grateful and understand even more that our small help means a lot to them." (IF2-MDR, May 22, 2026).

This testimony provides evidence of two forms of participation. The first involves organizing additional fundraising in response to a specific need within the madrasah community. The second involves direct contact with beneficiaries during the delivery of assistance. The student explicitly associated witnessing a bereaved friend's circumstances with a stronger appreciation of the significance of providing help. The account also connects local assistance with participation in a broader humanitarian initiative. The student's account suggests that direct involvement provides an experiential dimension to the program. Whereas routine collection establishes repeated participation in charitable giving, delivering assistance exposes students to the circumstances of those receiving support. This experience may help students connect the religious principle of generosity with the emotional and social realities of others. In this respect, experiential learning offers a useful interpretive framework for understanding the relationship between participation, emotional engagement, and the perceived meaning of charitable action. The interview supports the student's reported experience of empathy and gratitude, but it does not by itself establish that all participants experience the same process or that the effects persist over time.

The student's account suggests that direct involvement provides an experiential dimension to the program. Whereas routine collection establishes repeated participation in charitable giving, delivering assistance exposes students to the circumstances of those receiving support. This experience may help students connect the religious principle of generosity with the emotional and social realities of others. In this respect, experiential learning offers a useful interpretive framework for understanding the relationship between participation, emotional engagement, and the perceived meaning of charitable action. The interview supports the student's reported experience of empathy and gratitude, but it does not by itself establish that all participants experience the same process or that the effects persist over time. This combination of routine and responsive action is an important feature of the model. Regular fundraising creates repeated opportunities for participation, while additional fundraising provides a context in which students can apply the same principles to specific situations. The evidence suggests that social concern is expressed through both established institutional routines and responses to individual or collective hardship. Whether these responses are consistently initiated independently by students, however, must be established through direct evidence concerning who initiated each activity and when the initiative occurred.

Implications for Students' Social Care and Character Development

Interviews with the Religious Section and teachers indicated that students had become more attentive and responsive to the difficulties experienced by their peers. According to these informants, students were increasingly willing to participate in assistance for classmates experiencing bereavement or other hardship. The reported changes were associated with the continuity of the program and students' participation in charitable activities. A teacher from the Religious Section reported *"The most striking change in the character of children after this program runs regularly is the increased sense of empathy and concern for others. They become much more sensitive and responsive if there are friends who are grieving or are hit by disasters. This habit of infaq slowly erodes the individuality of adolescents."* (IF3-RS, June 11, 2026).

This statement identifies empathy and responsiveness to others' difficulties as the most noticeable changes perceived by the informant. It also presents the regular practice of infaq as a factor associated with the development of these dispositions. The examples described elsewhere

in the interviews particularly additional fundraising for bereaved classmates and participation in delivering assistance provide concrete contexts in which such social concern is expressed. The findings suggest that the program's perceived contribution to character development is reflected in students' reported social sensitivity and willingness to help. These behaviors are consistent with the intended character values of empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility.

The teacher's statement, however, represents an assessment by an involved informant rather than an independent measurement of behavioral change. Accordingly, the findings support a qualitative interpretation of the program's perceived contribution to students' social care, rather than a definitive causal conclusion that the program alone produced the changes. Student testimony also indicates that direct participation in social assistance can influence how students interpret their own circumstances. In the account of the student organization representative, witnessing the grief of a classmate's family encouraged greater appreciation of the opportunity to help. The student explained that even a small contribution could be meaningful to those receiving assistance (IF2-MDR, May 22, 2026). This account connects social participation with gratitude. The student did not describe charitable giving solely as the fulfillment of a religious routine; the significance of the activity was also associated with seeing the circumstances of the beneficiaries and recognizing the value of the assistance provided. Gratitude emerges here as a value that students may develop through encounters with others' difficulties. The relationship between charitable participation and gratitude is especially visible in the student's reflection on delivering assistance directly. The evidence indicates a reported change in understanding and emotional response, although it does not establish that gratitude developed uniformly among all students or that it resulted exclusively from the program.

Taken together, the findings can be organized into three interconnected dimensions: institutional and programmatic inputs, the process of participation and value internalization, and the reported behavioral implications. These dimensions summarize the empirical relationships identified in the interviews and supporting observations. First, the input dimension consists of institutional support, the Religious Section's planning role, regular Friday fundraising, teacher guidance and example, and the participation of the Religious Team in distributing collection boxes. These elements establish the organizational conditions under which charitable practices are conducted. Second, the process dimension involves routine fundraising, student participation in collection activities, the allocation and distribution of assistance, and direct involvement in responding to social needs. The peer-led approach is most clearly reflected in students' role in distributing collection boxes, while experiential learning is reflected in student accounts of participating in the delivery of assistance and witnessing beneficiaries' circumstances. Third, the outcome dimension concerns the reported implications of participation for students' empathy, gratitude, social sensitivity, and willingness to assist others. These implications are reflected in teachers' assessments of students' responsiveness and in students' descriptions of the personal significance of charitable participation. The relationships among these dimensions are summarized in the analytical structure presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Three-Dimensional Structure of the Infaq and Sadaqah Based Character Education Model at MAN 1 Medan

Dimension	Empirical components	Character Education Function
Input	Religious Section planning, regular Friday schedule, teacher guidance and example, student Religious Team	Institutionalization of charitable practice
Process	Peer-led collection, allocation of assistance, responsive fundraising, direct participation	Opportunities for participation, social interaction, and experiential learning

	in aid distribution	
Outcome	Reported empathy, gratitude, responsiveness, and willingness to help	Perceived development and expression of social care

The model suggests that the educational significance of infaq and sadaqah at MAN 1 Medan lies in the connection between institutional routines and students' opportunities to participate in meaningful social action. The regular collection mechanism provides continuity, while direct assistance activities give students opportunities to encounter the social circumstances that charitable practices are intended to address. The reported development of empathy and gratitude provides an indication of how participants understand the value of these experiences. However, the three dimensions should not be interpreted as a proven linear causal sequence. The findings establish a context-specific model based on participants' accounts and the documented practices examined in this study, while the extent and durability of behavioral changes remain subject to the limits of the available evidence.

Discussion

Character Education as an Integrated Institutional Model

The findings at MAN 1 Medan suggest that infaq and sadaqah can function not only as religious charitable practices but also as a medium for character education when embedded in the daily culture of the madrasah. Their educational significance lies not simply in the collection of funds, but in the connection between religious values, repeated practices, student participation, and responses to actual social needs. Through this arrangement, students encounter social care as both a religious principle and a practice that can be expressed in their relationships with others. The model can therefore be understood as a religious-participatory habituation model in which character education is integrated into institutional routines rather than delivered exclusively through formal instruction. This interpretation is consistent with previous studies that associate charitable activities with the development of social care in Islamic educational settings (Basri, 2024) and (Qalby et al., 2025). Research by (Zahrani et al., 2026) and (Aida et al., 2025) also provides a relevant basis for discussing the relationship between participation in infaq and sadaqah programs, moral reasoning, and social behavior.

However, the contribution of the present study lies in examining how the educational process is organized and sustained at the madrasah level. In particular, the findings identify three connected mechanisms: routine habituation, peer participation, and direct involvement in aid distribution. These mechanisms provide a more specific explanation of how charitable activities may create opportunities for students to learn and practice social responsibility. Conceptually, the model comprises three interrelated dimensions: input, internalization process, and educational outcomes. The input dimension includes religious values, institutional planning, educator example, and student involvement. The process dimension encompasses regular fundraising, the management and allocation of funds, and students' participation in responding to social needs. The outcome dimension is reflected in informants' accounts of empathy, gratitude, social sensitivity, and students' initiatives to help others. These dimensions should not be understood as a linear sequence in which participation automatically produces character change. Rather, they represent a connected educational mechanism in which institutional arrangements create opportunities for learning, social experiences provide contexts for practicing values, and reported behavioral responses offer indications of possible internalization.

Habituation: From Repeated Practice to Moral Awareness

The regular collection of infaq every Friday morning before teaching and learning activities is a central feature of the model at MAN 1 Medan. Its significance lies in the integration of charitable practice into the institutional routine of the madrasah. Because the activity recurs within a familiar setting, students repeatedly encounter the practice of sharing and the religious values associated with helping others. This finding is consistent with research on the Charity Friday program at SMA Negeri 1 Tukka, which emphasizes the role of consistent activities in developing social care (Hutabarat, 2024) and (Fiilliyah & Mintarsih, 2023) who associate the effectiveness of similar programs with consistency, discipline, and student awareness. Nevertheless, repetition and internalization are not identical.

A student may participate because an activity is part of the school routine without fully understanding or personally accepting its underlying values. Habituation provides repeated opportunities to practice a behavior, but the development of moral awareness also depends on how students interpret the purpose of the activity and whether participation is accompanied by meaningful guidance. At MAN 1 Medan, the involvement of educators through persuasive religious motivation and personal example may help connect the repeated act of giving with the values it is intended to represent. Thus, the educational significance of the Friday routine lies not only in its frequency but also in the relationship between repeated action and the explanation of its moral meaning. This distinction is important when comparing the findings with previous studies of charitable routines. Whereas studies such as (Hutabarat, 2024) and (Fiilliyah & Mintarsih, 2023) emphasize consistency and collective habits, the findings at MAN 1 Medan additionally highlight the capacity of a longstanding tradition to respond to different needs. Such adaptability can broaden the educational context in which students encounter social care. They can see that helping others may involve supporting institutional facilities, assisting peers in difficulty, or contributing to wider humanitarian efforts. However, the adaptability of fund allocation should not itself be treated as evidence of successful character formation. Its educational value depends on whether students understand the needs being addressed and the reasons for directing assistance toward particular recipients.

Peer Participation: Developing Responsibility While Protecting Voluntariness

A second mechanism is the participation of students in organizing and carrying out fundraising activities. The Religious Section informant explained that members of the Religious Team distribute the collection boxes to classrooms, while educators provide direction, religious motivation, and examples of giving. This division of roles is significant because students are not positioned solely as recipients of moral instruction. They also participate in maintaining the practice through their own organizational responsibilities. The peer-led approach may contribute to character development through several related opportunities. First, students entrusted with fundraising responsibilities can practice accountability for a shared activity. Second, their interaction with classmates creates opportunities to communicate the purpose of the program and coordinate collective participation. Third, student involvement may strengthen a sense of ownership because the activity is carried out partly through student initiative rather than exclusively through teacher direction. These are plausible educational mechanisms supported by the organizational arrangements described in the findings, although the extent to which individual students develop leadership or communication skills would require more direct evidence.

This finding complements research by (Noorhanah & Gufron, 2025) on *Charity Friday* at SDN Muktiharjo Kidul 04 Semarang and research by (Albab & Rohmah, 2023) which highlights the contribution of charitable habits and teacher role modeling to compassion, responsibility, empathy, and helping behavior. The present study brings these elements together by showing how educator guidance can coexist with student leadership. Educators retain a role in providing moral direction and demonstrating the values being taught, while students undertake practical

responsibilities within the activity. The educational arrangement therefore combines adult guidance with opportunities for student agency. However, peer participation also raises an important issue: the distinction between collective encouragement and social pressure. When students collect donations from their peers, the activity may promote shared responsibility, but it may also create an implicit expectation to contribute. The involvement of students as fundraisers does not, by itself, establish that all contributions are voluntary.

The informant's explanation that the mechanism is intended to avoid the impression of coercion should therefore be understood as the program's rationale rather than conclusive evidence that coercion is absent. Persuasive religious guidance and teacher role modeling can support the intended educational purpose, but they need to be accompanied by clear respect for students' freedom not to contribute. This critical consideration is relevant because character education should develop moral agency rather than compliance alone. If students give primarily to avoid embarrassment or disapproval from classmates, the observable behavior may not reflect an internally accepted commitment to social care. Accordingly, the peer-led approach is most educationally meaningful when students are encouraged to understand the purpose of the activity, participate in its organization, and respect differences in their peers' ability or willingness to contribute. This qualification also clarifies the distinctive contribution of the MAN 1 Medan case: peer leadership provides an organizational mechanism for participation, but its character-building potential depends on how that participation is practiced.

Experiential Learning: Connecting Giving with the Needs of Others

Beyond routine fundraising, students' direct involvement in the distribution of aid provides another important dimension of the model. The student informant described how class representatives and members of OSIM, MPK, and the Religious Team participated in delivering assistance to a bereaved family. The informant also referred to student involvement in fundraising for Palestine during the 1 Muharram activities. These experiences differ from fundraising alone because they place students in direct contact with the social circumstances that motivate assistance. The significance of this involvement can be interpreted through an experiential learning perspective. Practical engagement provides students with an opportunity to encounter situations in which the values of sharing and solidarity become concrete. When students participate in delivering assistance to people experiencing bereavement or other difficulties, they can begin to connect the act of giving with the needs and feelings of the recipients. The experience may make the meaning of social care more tangible than an explanation of charitable obligations alone. In this sense, the educational process involves not only performing a charitable act but also encountering the human circumstances that give the act its purpose.

However, direct involvement should not be assumed to produce empathy automatically. An experience becomes educationally meaningful when students are able to interpret what they encounter and consider its significance. Without opportunities for reflection, the delivery of assistance may remain a procedural task rather than developing into a deeper understanding of others' circumstances. The findings indicate that the student informant associated direct participation with gratitude and a stronger appreciation of the value of helping others. This account supports the interpretation that students may derive personal meaning from the experience, but it does not establish that all participating students experienced the same emotional or moral development. This distinction also helps position the findings in relation to earlier research. (Hutabarat, 2024) and (Wahyu et al., 2026) emphasizes the importance of consistency in developing collective awareness through Charity Friday. The findings at MAN 1 Medan suggest that repeated charitable practices can be complemented by direct encounters with beneficiaries, giving students opportunities to connect established habits with specific social needs. The two mechanisms perform different but potentially complementary functions:

habituation provides continuity, while direct involvement makes the consequences and purposes of giving more visible. The contribution of this study is therefore not simply that students participate in charitable activities, but that the program includes both repeated fundraising and occasions for students to encounter the people whom the assistance is intended to support.

The range of beneficiaries also matters. Assistance to classmates and their families may make social needs more immediate because students are responding to difficulties within their own school community. By contrast, fundraising for disaster victims or humanitarian causes such as Palestine can extend the scope of concern beyond familiar interpersonal relationships. These activities create opportunities for students to recognize social responsibility at different levels, from helping peers to responding to wider humanitarian concerns. Nevertheless, the study does not establish how students understand these different forms of assistance in comparison with one another. Further inquiry into students' reflections could clarify whether and how direct involvement broadens their understanding of social responsibility.

From Empathy and Gratitude to Social Responsibility

Teachers and activity managers reported that students had become more sensitive to the difficulties experienced by others and more responsive to situations involving bereavement or disasters. One informant described students as increasingly attentive when their peers experienced hardship and suggested that the habit of infaq gradually reduced individualistic tendencies (IF3-RS, June 11, 2026). The student informant's account of participating in the delivery of assistance similarly associated direct involvement with gratitude and a stronger appreciation of the value of even modest contributions (IF2-MDR, May 22, 2026). Together, these accounts suggest that the perceived outcomes of the program extend beyond participation in scheduled fundraising. Empathy and gratitude can be understood as related but distinct dimensions of this process. Empathy concerns sensitivity to the circumstances and feelings of others, whereas gratitude involves recognizing the value of one's own circumstances and resources. In the context of charitable activities, students may encounter opportunities to develop both: observing another person's difficulties may encourage concern for that person while also prompting reflection on their own circumstances. The findings support this interpretation through participants' accounts, although they do not provide a standardized or longitudinal measure of either construct.

Social responsibility becomes particularly relevant when concern is translated into action. The reported fundraising initiatives undertaken by class representatives and student organizations in response to bereavement and other urgent needs suggest that students sometimes participate beyond the regular Friday schedule. Such responses are analytically important because they indicate that the practice may be relevant in situations that arise outside the routine activity. Whereas scheduled fundraising demonstrates participation within an established structure, additional initiatives provide indications that students can mobilize collective action in response to an emerging need. This distinction helps clarify the relationship between habituation and initiative. Regular activities establish a recurring opportunity to practice sharing, while unplanned social situations create a different context in which students may apply the value of helping others. When students initiate or coordinate assistance in these situations, their actions may reflect an emerging sense of collective responsibility. However, the evidence should be interpreted cautiously: the reported initiatives indicate the application of caring behavior in particular circumstances, but they do not establish that the same behavior is consistently demonstrated by all students or across other areas of their lives.

The findings can also be interpreted through the framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Moral knowing refers to understanding the values and obligations

associated with helping others. In the MAN 1 Medan context, religious guidance and explanations of the purpose of infaq and sadaqah provide opportunities for students to understand these obligations. Moral feeling concerns the emotional dimension of moral development, including empathy, gratitude, and sensitivity to others' difficulties. Direct encounters with beneficiaries may provide contexts in which these feelings are experienced and interpreted. Moral action refers to the enactment of values through behavior, including participation in fundraising, delivery of assistance, and initiatives to respond to urgent social needs. The three domains provide a useful interpretive framework for understanding the relationships among the findings. The model combines opportunities to understand charitable values, participate in practices that may deepen their emotional meaning, and act in response to social needs. Nevertheless, the framework should not be treated as proof that every student progresses through three distinct stages or that the development of one domain necessarily leads to the next. The available findings are more appropriately understood as evidence of interconnected educational opportunities and reported behaviors. This interpretation is consistent with the discussion of moral reasoning and social behavior in (Basri, 2024) and (Rusinah et al., 2024) while adding contextual detail about the institutional and participatory mechanisms through which these outcomes may be encouraged at MAN 1 Medan.

Conclusion

The character education model based on infaq and alms activities at MAN 1 Medan is systematically constructed as part of the madrasah culture (*school culture*) through *input* schemes, *processes*, and *outcomes*. At the *input* and *process* stage, routine habituation activities every Friday morning use a *peer-led approach* by the Religious Team and *experiential learning* through the involvement of student representatives in the distribution of aid. The habituation and moment of distribution have proven to be effective as a forum*for tarbiyah ruhiyah* that builds students' collective memory that there are still many people in need, so that it succeeds in transforming *moral knowing* into *moral action* that is reflected in the high sensitivity of empathy, awareness of *gratitude*, and social concern of students when responding to natural disasters and sad news. However, the implementation of the model in the field still faces several technical obstacles and operational limitations. In the collection process, there are still a number of students who forget to bring infaq money. The main limitation lies in the transparency and financial accountability system, where the recapitulation report of the collected funds is still limited to the student administrators and teachers who are directly involved in the calculation, and there is no special mading board for reporting infaq and alms. In addition, the involvement of students in the process of distributing direct assistance such as the submission of condolence compensation is still representative (limited to OSIM administrators, Religious Teams, and class administrators) so that it cannot be felt equally by all students. Based on these findings, it is recommended for the management of MAN 1 Medan to improve the financial transparency system by providing a special mading board for reporting infaq and alms on a regular and written basis so that all madrasah residents can access this information. Meanwhile, for future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study by measuring the influence of infaq and alms activities on the formation of social care character quantitatively, or examining their impact on other moral attitude variables.

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