The Role of Teachers and the Implementation of Islamic Character Education Methods in Madrasah Students

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) value internalization in the development of students' religious character at MTs S Taman Pendidikan Islam Medan. A descriptive qualitative method was employed with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that value internalization is implemented through three key strategies: daily religious habituation, the integration of Islamic-based school culture, and constructive collaboration between teachers and parents in character guidance. These practices have produced a significant impact on improving worship discipline, Qur'an literacy skills, and students' social behavior aligned with Islamic moral values. The study concludes that the success of religious character education is determined by the integration of planned value learning, strong moral modeling, and a consistently supportive educational environment.

Keywords: *Teacher; Value Internalization; Character Education*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses internalisasi nilai-nilai Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam pembentukan karakter religius peserta didik di MTs S Taman Pendidikan Islam Medan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai dilakukan melalui tiga strategi utama, yaitu pembiasaan ibadah sehari-hari, integrasi budaya sekolah yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai Islam, serta kolaborasi konstruktif antara guru dan orang tua dalam pembinaan akhlak. Proses internalisasi ini memberikan dampak signifikan terhadap peningkatan kedisiplinan ibadah, keterampilan literasi Al-Qur'an, dan sikap sosial peserta didik yang mencerminkan akhlakul karimah. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keberhasilan pendidikan karakter religius ditentukan oleh keterpaduan proses pembelajaran nilai yang terencana, keteladanan moral, serta dukungan lingkungan pendidikan yang konsisten.

Kata Kunci: *Guru; Internalisasi Nilai; Pendidikan Karakter*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Education is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional effort that does not only transmit knowledge but also shapes learners' moral and spiritual identity. In the context of Islamic education, the cultivation of religious character is not confined to classroom instruction but extends deeply into extracurricular settings and the broader school environment. Through continuous exposure to values such as honesty, discipline, respect, and devotion, students gradually internalize religious principles as an integral part of their daily behavior. This holistic model of character development underscores that real transformation occurs when learning transcends cognitive mastery and nurtures a way of life grounded in spirituality (Abdi, 2021).

However, various studies indicate that the religious character of students in contemporary educational settings has not yet reached the expected quality in practice. Issues such as decreased motivation to engage in religious activities, lack of consistency in worship, peer-influenced behavioral problems, and exposure to digital cultures that promote individualism and moral relativism continue to challenge the effectiveness of religious education in schools. These conditions reveal a gap between the expected ideals of Islamic moral values and the actual conduct of students, suggesting that existing instructional strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) need reinforcement through meaningful internalization processes (Jakandar et al., 2025).

To address these concerns, internalizing Islamic character values through PAI instruction is viewed as an essential foundation for nurturing students' spiritual maturity and ethical behavior. Teachers play a key role in modeling and contextualizing religious teachings, guiding learners to translate knowledge into moral actions such as empathy, responsibility, and ethical decision-making. When students are encouraged to reflect on religious teachings and experience them through school norms, activities, and interactions, character formation becomes more sustainable and transformative. This reinforces the idea that PAI instruction should not merely teach doctrinal content, but must also cultivate lived experiences of faith-based values .

Existing research has highlighted the importance of such an internalization approach. For example, studies demonstrate that comprehensive religious programs can significantly enhance students' moral reasoning, religious awareness, and behavioral discipline within school communities (Rahman & Sahin, 2021; Yusuf, 2022; Abdullah & Hashim, 2023). Other scholars emphasize that integrating affective and practical elements into PAI pedagogy strengthens value embodiment and shapes students' identity as morally responsible individuals (Hasan et al., 2020; Nurdin, 2023). Despite these contributions, limited research has focused specifically on how the internalization of PAI values is implemented systematically to build religious character within a school's daily cultural life.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the internalization of Islamic Religious Education in fostering students' religious character in the school environment. It seeks to explore the strategies, experiences, and implications of embedding religious values into educational practices. To guide this investigation, the following research question is posed: How does the internalization of Islamic Religious Education contribute to the development of students' religious character in schools.

METHOD

This study employed a field research design to investigate the internalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping students' religious character within MTs S Taman Pendidikan Islam Medan, located in Medan Amplas District, through direct engagement in the natural school environment. The primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and students, complemented by direct classroom and school observations aimed at capturing the real implementation of religious values in daily educational practices. Secondary data were collected from scholarly books, reputable journal articles, classroom reports, and academic theses relevant to character education and Islamic pedagogy, which served to strengthen the contextual and conceptual framework of the study. All collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, involving systematic data reduction, structured data display, and conclusion drawing to generate valid and meaningful interpretations of how internalization strategies contribute to the development of students' religious behavior. This methodological approach ensures that research findings are grounded in authentic experiences, supported by theoretical foundations, and aligned with the standards of rigorous scholarly inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Value of Teaching Islamic Religious Education in Schools

The internalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in schools operates as a strategic effort to cultivate students' religious character through both structured lessons and daily moral guidance. Within the classroom, PAI is positioned not merely as a cognitive subject focused on doctrinal knowledge, but as a transformative learning process aimed at nurturing faith-based identity and ethical consciousness. Through instructional engagement with Qur'anic teachings, Islamic law, and moral principles, students are guided to interpret religious values in ways that are applicable to their personal lives and social relationships (Azizah et al., 2023).

One of the core teachings emphasized in PAI is the strengthening of faith and piety, which forms the spiritual foundation of character building. The teacher encourages students to understand the meaning of belief in Allah and interact with religious practices not as routines, but as expressions of devotion

and inner awareness. This goal is achieved through reflective learning activities, such as discussions on tawhid and moral decision-making, which inspire students to see religious values as guiding principles in their daily behavior (Maslani et al., 2023).

In addition to spiritual reinforcement, the teaching of Islamic ethics plays a crucial role in shaping responsible social behavior among students. Lessons on adab, empathy, cooperation, and respect for others are intentionally connected with real school situations, enabling students to experience moral concepts as practical actions rather than abstract ideas. As a result, relational values—such as tolerance, compassion, honesty, and justice—become culturally embedded within the classroom environment (Puspitarini et al., 2023).

Ritual worship education also contributes significantly to religious character development. Students are trained not only to master the technical aspects of prayer, Qur'an recitation, and remembrance, but also to cultivate discipline, sincerity, and consistency in worship. Daily practices such as Dhuhr prayer in congregation and regular Qur'an reading create structured habits that reinforce the internalization of religious values through lived experience.

The teacher functions as a moral role model whose personal example strengthens the credibility of value teaching. When teachers demonstrate integrity, patience, respect, and responsibility, students witness ethical principles manifested in human behavior. This modeling effect supports the formation of students' character by providing a tangible template to follow, especially for those still in the process of moral identity development (Tambak et al., 2021).

PAI teaching promotes a balance between cognitive understanding and affective appreciation of religion. Students are encouraged to connect knowledge with emotional and spiritual growth. Learning strategies such as storytelling from prophetic narratives, motivational guidance, and reflective dialogue assist learners in developing a deeper attachment to Islamic teachings, making internalization more profound and long-lasting.

The integration of religious values into school culture ensures that internalization extends beyond the classroom. Activities such as routine religious ceremonies, remembrance gatherings, and community service projects complement formal instruction and create a moral ecosystem that shapes students' behavior holistically. When the school environment reinforces what is taught in PAI, students are more likely to consistently practice those values in various settings.

The internalization of PAI values contributes not only to improving students' religious knowledge, but also to fostering their character as ethical and spiritually grounded individuals. By engaging students in continuous value-based learning, Islamic education at school becomes a catalyst for developing responsible citizens who uphold Islamic morality in their actions,

relationships, and social contributions. This demonstrates that PAI, when implemented effectively, plays a vital role in embedding religious values that form the core of students' character and identity.

The Role of Teachers in Character Building

Teachers occupy a fundamental position in shaping students' religious character, as they function not only as educators but also as moral exemplars whose behavior and guidance influence students' daily lives. Through direct interaction in the learning environment, teachers have the ability to stimulate not just cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings but also the embodiment of ethical values. Their intentional efforts in organizing learning processes and behavioral routines contribute to the internalization of values that ultimately form students' religious identity. This makes the teacher's role central to ensuring that character building becomes an integral part of educational experiences (Zainuddin et al., 2025).

One of the primary strategies implemented by teachers in the school environment is the cultivation of habituation. Habituation refers to repeated exposure to and performance of desirable behaviors until those behaviors become natural and personally meaningful. Within Islamic Religious Education, habituation is closely linked to the formation of religious discipline. Teachers emphasize discipline in fundamental aspects of student life, such as punctuality, obedience to rules, and personal responsibility. This consistent guidance shapes students' awareness that religious values must be reflected through actions.

A critical dimension of this habituation process is discipline in appearance. Teachers ensure that students follow the Islamic dress code, maintain neat clothing, and present themselves respectfully. The aim is not solely to enforce uniformity, but to help students understand that outward appearance represents dignity and Islamic identity. When students learn to dress appropriately, they also learn to take pride in expressing their religious values publicly.

In addition to appearance, teachers emphasize the importance of self-hygiene as part of moral and spiritual purity. Students are instructed to maintain cleanliness of their bodies, belongings, and school surroundings. Cleanliness is not merely framed as a rule but as a manifestation of Islamic teachings emphasizing purity (taharah). Through this approach, students internalize the notion that practicing faith involves attention to everyday details that reflect obedience and respect for religious principles.

Responsibility toward maintaining the cleanliness and order of the school environment is also embedded into their character training. Teachers assign students rotating duties, such as cleaning classrooms, organizing learning materials, and taking care of shared facilities. These activities nurture a sense of shared responsibility, cooperation, and stewardship, reinforcing

moral values in concrete ways. Students gradually develop an attitude of caring for their surroundings, which corresponds to Islamic teachings that promote collective well-being and environmental responsibility (Warsah et al., 2024).

Teachers' influence extends beyond structured tasks into subtle modeling of ethical behavior. How teachers speak, respond to challenges, manage emotions, and show respect to others communicates lessons that cannot be fully conveyed through textbooks. This role-modeling approach strengthens the credibility of teachers in students' eyes and inspires them to emulate positive attitudes and behaviors. When teachers act consistently with the values they teach, students are more likely to internalize those values sincerely.

However, the character formation process in schools does not operate in isolation. Teachers recognize that families play an equally significant role in reinforcing or weakening religious character development. As a result, teachers build strong coordination systems with parents to ensure continuous monitoring of student behavior outside the school environment. This collaboration strengthens the integration of value education between school and home.

Online communication platforms serve as a vital medium for maintaining teacher–parent engagement. Through digital group messaging, video calls, and regular behavioral reports, teachers and parents share updates on students' worship routines, discipline, and moral interactions. Parents are encouraged to reinforce school-initiated habits such as regular prayer, Qur'an reading, and respectful communication at home. This monitoring system allows teachers to provide follow-up interventions when inconsistencies or challenges are identified (Rini et al., 2022).

With this integrated approach, the boundaries between school and family roles are bridged, creating a consistent moral ecosystem for students. The reinforcement of religious values becomes sustainable because students are exposed to the same expectations across contexts. Both teachers and parents deliver synchronized guidance, enabling children to experience character building as a continuous lifestyle rather than isolated learning moments.

Ultimately, the teacher's role in character building is multidimensional and transformative. Through habituation, disciplinary guidance, moral modeling, and strategic collaboration with families, teachers become key actors who facilitate the internalization of religious values in students' personalities. Their efforts ensure that Islamic teachings are not only understood intellectually but also expressed behaviorally—shaping students into individuals who uphold religious responsibility, moral consciousness, and positive social engagement in their everyday lives.

Integration of School Culture in Value Internalization

School culture serves as a critical foundation in the internalization of Islamic religious values, as it shapes the environment within which students learn, interact, and develop their character. Unlike formal instruction that occurs within scheduled classroom hours, school culture operates continuously and influences students' behaviors through norms, traditions, and collective practices embedded in the institution's daily life. When Islamic principles become part of the school's identity and atmosphere, students naturally absorb these values through participation in the community's routine (Basir & Rahman, 2020).

One major aspect supporting value internalization is the establishment of religious norms that guide conduct within the school environment. Daily activities such as greeting teachers with respect, observing decorum during transitions, and maintaining silence during the call to prayer serve as behavioral cues that strengthen religious discipline. These norms act as subconscious reminders that faith-based values are not situational, but constant expectations of student behavior.

Religious practices integrated into the school schedule further reinforce this internalization. The obligatory Dhuhr prayer in congregation, Qur'an reading sessions, and periodic religious counseling provide students with frequent opportunities to experience worship collectively. These routines do not only develop technical competencies in religious rituals, but more importantly foster sincerity, humility, and accountability before God, which are essential components of religious character.

The role of symbolic culture also contributes significantly to this process. Islamic posters, Qur'anic verses displayed on walls, prayer rooms accessible to all students, and school mottos that emphasize piety create a physically reinforcing environment. These visual elements serve as constant spiritual reminders that influence attitudes and mentally condition students toward moral consciousness in their actions and decisions throughout the day.

Furthermore, school culture is strengthened by collective moral expectations shared among members of the community. When peers mutually encourage positive behavior—such as assisting one another, participating in social worship, or reporting misconduct—students develop social responsibility based on Islamic ethics. This peer influence becomes a powerful force of character formation, as students often respond more strongly to behavioral norms practiced by their own social group.

Teachers and administrative leaders contribute by maintaining consistent enforcement of school values. Their commitment to upholding Islamic principles during disciplinary procedures and interpersonal interactions communicates to students that religious morality is taken seriously. Leadership behavior, therefore, becomes a cultural signal, shaping

students' perceptions of what behaviors are rewarded, tolerated, or discouraged within the institution.

Extracurricular religious activities also play an instrumental role in embedding values beyond academics. Programs such as Islamic youth communities, Qur'an memorization groups, and charity initiatives encourage students to apply religious teachings in social contexts. These activities invite students to translate spiritual values into real experiences, fostering empathy, generosity, and collective participation in religious contributions.

School events and commemorations of Islamic celebrations deepen students' emotional attachment to their faith. Activities like the commemoration of Islamic holidays, religious competitions, or community service on sacred occasions help strengthen the identity of students as part of the ummah. Through these communal expressions of faith, students develop pride and belonging, which further reinforces their willingness to uphold religious values (Hadi et al., 2025).

Importantly, the integration of school culture in value internalization requires alignment with students' evolving social contexts. As digital influences and modern lifestyles shape youth identity, schools must adapt their cultural strategies to remain relevant and meaningful. Incorporating technology in Qur'an learning, digital communication in religious mentoring, and contemporary media in moral instruction ensures that values are conveyed in a form relatable to students' lives.

In essence, the integration of Islamic values into school culture creates a holistic system where learning and character development occur simultaneously. Students are immersed in an environment that supports their moral growth, encourages ethical behavior, and strengthens spiritual commitment. Through sustained cultural reinforcement, internalization becomes not only a structured educational process but a lived experience that deeply influences students' identity and behavior both in and beyond the school.

Students' Learning Outcomes in the Habituation Method

The implementation of habituation as a core method in the learning process at MTs S Taman Pendidikan Islam Medan has demonstrated significant positive impacts on students' religious and behavioral development. Through consistent and guided routines established by teachers, students increasingly internalize Islamic values not as formal obligations, but as natural components of their daily lives. This gradual transformation reflects that habituation is not merely an instructional technique, but a formative approach that shapes mindset, attitudes, and spiritual discipline in a continuous manner.

One of the most noticeable achievements is the enhancement of students' worship practices. The regular performance of the five daily prayers,

both inside and outside the school, has become embedded in students' personal habits. Students are no longer motivated solely by supervision, but by an emerging sense of responsibility and devotion rooted in their understanding of Islamic obligations. This demonstrates that habituation effectively supports the development of intrinsic religious awareness.

In addition, Qur'an learning routines, such as daily recitation and memorization, have positively influenced students' ability to engage more deeply with the holy text. These practices help strengthen their spiritual literacy, encourage reflection, and improve discipline in fulfilling religious duties. As students grow more familiar with Qur'anic teachings, the message contained within its verses further guides their moral decision-making and behavior in both school and social environments.

Moral character development has also shown significant improvement. Students increasingly demonstrate noble virtues such as honesty, respect, humility, and responsibility. Their interactions with teachers, peers, and community members reflect courtesy and ethical conduct encouraged through habituation programs. The cultivation of akhlak al-karimah becomes evident not only in formal settings but in spontaneous daily interactions, showing the depth of internalization achieved.

Habituation practices contribute to the development of students' social behavior or muamalah, particularly in their willingness to help others, maintain harmony in peer relationships, and participate in collective responsibilities. Such positive socio-religious behavior indicates that students are learning to apply Islamic values in practical ways that strengthen their identity as responsible members of the community.

Another notable outcome is the refinement of students' communication etiquette. Polite speech, respectful language, and avoidance of verbal aggression have become prioritized behavioral norms. Teachers often observe students reminding one another to maintain good manners, which signifies that societal and religious values are becoming part of peer-driven cultural reinforcement.

These achievements also extend to students' home environments. Parents recognize improvements in their children's behavior, reporting greater obedience, responsibility, and courtesy within family interactions. This consistency between school and home demonstrates that habituation has successfully fostered sustainable behavior that transcends educational settings.

Overall, the success of habituation at MTs S Taman Pendidikan Islam Medan highlights its effectiveness as a method for integrating Islamic values into students' character formation and academic life. By encouraging repetitive practice aligned with religious teachings, students develop meaningful behavioral transformations that support academic success, spiritual growth, and moral excellence. Thus, habituation stands as a powerful

educational approach that cultivates well-rounded learners who embody Islamic ethics in all facets of their lives.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study confirm that the internalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a vital role in shaping students' religious character within the school environment. Through the implementation of habituation strategies, integration of school culture, and strong teacher–parent collaboration, students at MTs S Taman Pendidikan Islam Medan successfully developed consistent religious practices and positive moral behavior. This demonstrates that PAI instruction, when supported by structured routines and moral modeling, contributes significantly to enhancing discipline in worship, strengthening Qur'an literacy, improving akhlak, and fostering respectful communication. Therefore, the research question of how the internalization of Islamic Religious Education contributes to the development of students' religious character is answered by showing that these integrated strategies have led to meaningful behavioral transformations reflected both in school and at home.

The implications of this study highlight the importance of designing religious education programs that extend beyond theoretical knowledge into lived experiences of Islamic values. Schools should reinforce moral internalization by creating supportive cultural environments, establishing consistent communication systems with parents, and ensuring that teachers serve as exemplary figures for students. In practical terms, Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to adopt comprehensive habituation programs that promote worship routines, ethical conduct, and social responsibility as daily practices. Additionally, this study implies that continued professional development for teachers is essential to strengthen their role as role models and facilitators of value-based learning. Future research may explore long-term impacts of habituation methods and examine comparative models across different school contexts to expand the scholarly understanding of character education within Islamic schooling.

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