

Internalization of Character Values Through Islamic Religious Education Learning Among Students at Junior High School of Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the internalization of character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning among students at SMP Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving school principals, teachers, students, and parents. The findings reveal that character values are internalized through classroom learning, religious habituation, exemplary behavior, extracurricular activities, and collaborative interactions between teachers and students. Islamic Religious Education teachers play a central role in integrating character values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, respect, and religiosity into both learning activities and students' daily behavior. The study also found that support from the school environment and parents strengthens the effectiveness of character education implementation. Therefore, the internalization of character values through PAI learning contributes significantly to shaping students' moral character and positive behavior in the school environment.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Character education has become one of the central issues in Indonesian education today, given the increasing phenomena of moral decline, juvenile delinquency, and the challenges of globalization that affect the behavior of the younger generation (Aisyah & Fitriatin, 2025). Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a strategic role in shaping students' character, particularly through the internalization of character

values integrated into every aspect of learning, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (Zahroh & Asyhari, 2024).

Islamic Religious Education in schools serves not only as a medium for conveying religious knowledge, but also as a strategic tool for shaping and instilling character values. Through Islamic Religious Education (PAI), students are guided to develop honesty, discipline, responsibility, hard work, environmental awareness, and a strong religious commitment in their daily

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lives. Internalization of character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is achieved through various approaches, including teacher role models, fostering habitual worship, integrating values into the curriculum, and creating a religious school environment conducive to character building (Islamiati & Jazuli, 2024). Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School, Palu, as an Islamic-based educational institution, has a responsibility to foster Islamic character values in its students.

In the modern era filled with the challenges of globalization and technological development, character building is increasingly important to protect the younger generation from negative influences that can weaken their morals and ethics (Ulinuha & Ridwan, 2025). The rapid flow of information and exposure to foreign cultures often make students easily influenced by values deemed contrary to Islamic teachings. Therefore, character education through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) must be carried out systematically and continuously so that students are able to select and apply values that align with Islamic teachings in their lives.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Internalizing Character Values

Doni Koesoma A. states that character is synonymous with personality. Personality is seen as a person's unique traits or characteristics, as well as their style, formed by various environmental influences, such as family during childhood and innate factors. A person's character is the result of the influences and forms they

receive from their environment (Koesoma, 2007).

E. Mulyasa stated that students will achieve success if they put in maximum effort using efficient learning methods, thereby improving their learning outcomes. Conversely, if they study haphazardly and disorganized, the results will reflect that effort, and they may even achieve nothing (Mulyasa, 2002).

Conversely, if they study haphazardly and disorganized, the results will reflect that effort, possibly even yielding no results at all. Disorganized learning often leads to confusion and a lack of understanding of the material, preventing students from reaching their full potential. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to provide guidance in selecting appropriate learning methods and helping students develop good study habits. This way, students will not only gain knowledge but also critical thinking skills and the ability to apply what they have learned in everyday life (Wahyuni & Herlinda, 2021).

According to Thomas Lickona, as quoted by Muzakki, character is a consistent internal disposition in responding to various situations in a moral manner. Lickona also emphasized that character consists of three inseparable aspects: moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral behavior (Rani et al., 2021) (Azminah, 2020).

Moral knowledge refers to a person's understanding of good and correct moral principles. This includes an awareness of values such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, and concern for others. Without strong moral knowledge, a person may lack a clear basis for distinguishing between ethical and unethical actions.

Lickona also explains that good character is supported by knowledge of the good, the desire to do good, and the act of doing good (Loloagin et al., 2023).

Moral behavior is the most tangible aspect of character formation. It reflects how a person applies moral values in concrete actions. Without consistent moral behavior, moral knowledge and feelings become meaningless. Therefore, character education must include efforts to cultivate good behavior in everyday life, within the family, school, and community.

After understanding Lickona's concept of character, it can be concluded that character formation depends not only on formal education but also requires the support of a conducive social environment. Building good character involves a continuous learning process, both through examples from those around them and through direct experience in dealing with various life situations. Therefore, efforts to internalize moral values within an individual must be carried out comprehensively so that the character formed is not only intellectually strong, but also emotionally and practically in everyday actions (Azminah, 2020).

More than just a visual distinction, character reflects the combination of thoughts, feelings, and will that generates an individual's energy or will. In other words, character is a combination of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills that influence how a person acts and interacts with the world around them (Abdurahman et al., 2024) (Mukhyidin et al., 2020). Therefore, character education is essential in developing noble character that

aligns with the values of society and the nation (Haliza et al., 2024).

2.2 Student Character Values

Islamic religious education in schools or madrasas aims to foster and strengthen students' faith through the process of understanding, internalizing, practicing, and directly experiencing Islamic values and teachings in their daily lives. This is expected to produce Muslim individuals who grow in faith and piety, while also possessing a sense of nationalism and citizenship, enabling them to continue their education to a higher level. The fundamental goal of Islamic religious education is to foster good character and shape students' personalities. Therefore, this educational orientation aligns with Islamic teachings, namely developing morals to achieve a noble character (*al-akhlaq al-karimah*) (Azizah, 2022). Moral development for students is mandatory. This is the main foundation in forming a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has high integrity.

Character education aims to develop good attitudes, high morals, compassion, independence, and the ability to make sound and wise decisions. Thus, students learn not only to achieve academic success but also to become individuals with integrity and social responsibility (Eni Setyaningsih, 2022). In this context, the role of educators is crucial as role models in implementing these values. The example set by teachers and parents can strengthen this internalization process, allowing students to directly observe the application of character values in everyday life (Patiung et al., 2023).

Regarding character, there are several values that need to be applied as strengths. These values serve to provide the essence of students' character. Values are aspects embedded in the human conscience, serve as the foundation for moral principles, and serve as benchmarks for inner beauty and integrity. Thus, values serve as the goal and general framework for shaping students' character (Purnawati et al., 2024) (Abbeduto et al., 2019).

The term "religion" gives rise to the concept of religiosity. Glock and Stark, as cited by Asmaun Sahlan, define religiosity as a person's attachment to a religion or belief system. This religious commitment is reflected in various individual activities or behaviors related to their religious teachings. Religiosity is often associated with diversity. When a person's religiosity reaches an optimal level, they will experience various religious experiences and experiences, known as *ihsan*, and demonstrate high morals. In addition to these four levels, an individual's religious knowledge is also an important aspect of Islamic religiosity.

3. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative approach is used to examine objects in their natural settings, unlike experimental research. In this method, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, while data source sampling is carried out systematically (Sugiyono, 2017) (Nurdin, 2017). Imron Arifin explained that qualitative research is a study within the social sciences and humanities conducted based on scientific principles to collect, analyze, and interpret facts and the relationships between them,

whether related to natural phenomena, social life, behavior, or human spirituality. The goal is to discover new principles of knowledge and methods for understanding these various phenomena. Qualitative research is exploratory and descriptive, with results presented in the form of qualitative descriptions (Arifin, 2023). This research will be conducted at Al-Azhar Mandiri Middle School in Palu City.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Forms of Character Values Internalized in Islamic Religious Education Learning

Based on the research findings, it was revealed that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at Al-Azhar School Palu consistently internalizes various character values into both learning activities and daily school life. The main values identified include discipline, religiosity, tolerance, honesty, and creativity. Each of these values is not only taught theoretically in the classroom but is also instilled through habituation and role modeling in real practice.

Al-Azhar School is one of the schools that emphasizes the inculcation of character values in learning, particularly in Islamic Religious Education classes. Every subject, both at the school and teacher level, consistently incorporates character values into the learning process for students. Likewise, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is one of the subjects that most readily integrates character values into its teaching content. The inculcation of character values is not limited to a single subject but is implemented across various subjects within the curriculum.

This indicates that the internalization of character values is not confined solely to Islamic Religious Education; however, PAI

holds a central and dominant role because its instructional materials are directly related to moral and ethical teachings. The integration of character values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) aims to develop students who not only understand religious teachings theoretically but are also able to apply them in their daily lives as a reflection of noble character. The main objectives include the following.

One of the primary objectives of internalizing character values in Islamic Religious Education is to provide students with a strong foundation of faith and moral character. This foundation is essential because it serves as the basis for developing personalities that are aligned with Islamic teachings and values. Education is not merely oriented toward the acquisition of knowledge, but also toward the cultivation of noble and civilized character.

One example is the implementation of discipline among students in various forms. In the school context, discipline can be defined as the attitudes and behaviors of students, teachers, and all members of the school community in complying with the rules, regulations, and norms that apply within the school environment. Discipline constitutes an important aspect of the educational process because it helps create an orderly, safe, and conducive learning atmosphere.

The principal of Al-Azhar Junior High School stated that discipline is one of the important character values intentionally instilled in students. By fostering disciplined behavior from an early age, the school hopes to shape students into individuals who are able to comply with school rules and regulations. Discipline is not only related to punctuality, but also encompasses appropriate dress, polite behavior, and responsibility in carrying out assigned tasks.

The process of instilling disciplined behavior is carried out gradually and continuously, as character formation cannot be achieved instantly.

This demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only functions as a medium for conveying religious knowledge, but also serves as a strategic instrument for character education. Through an integrative approach involving learning materials, teaching methods, and teachers' role modeling, character values are instilled so that students not only understand Islamic teachings theoretically, but are also able to practice them in their daily lives.

These habituation practices are not merely formalities, but rather constitute an integral part of the process of character formation within the educational environment. Simple actions such as arriving on time, performing congregational prayers, and dressing neatly serve as concrete examples of the discipline values instilled on a daily basis.

The habituation practices implemented by teachers at Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu have had a significant impact on the level of student discipline. This is due to the continuous reinforcement provided on a daily basis, ensuring that discipline is not limited to theoretical understanding but is also reflected in everyday practice. The cultivation of disciplined behavior does not occur instantly; rather, it requires a gradual process before it can be properly implemented.

In addition, religiosity is also an essential aspect of students' character development. In the context of character values, religiosity refers to behaviors that reflect an individual's obedience to religious teachings and demonstrate harmonious

relationships with God and fellow human beings. This attitude constitutes an important component of character education because it forms the moral and spiritual foundation of an individual's life.

According to one student's testimony, the teachers at Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu not only deliver religious lessons theoretically, but also provide direct examples through attitudes and behaviors that reflect religious values. Whenever entering the classroom, the teachers consistently greet the students with Islamic salutations and invite them to pray together before beginning the lesson. This practice has become part of the daily routine, creating a calmer and more orderly classroom atmosphere while also fostering a sense of blessing and solemnity in the learning process.

Through such role modeling, students gradually become accustomed to Islamic values such as politeness, respect for time, and developing respect for teachers and peers, as well as discipline in worship. The consistent attitude of teachers in instilling manners through real actions has proven to be more effective in shaping students' religious character than merely delivering instructional content.

4.2 The process of internalizing character values in Islamic Religious Education learning among students.

The process of internalizing character values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) among students at Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu takes place through a holistic and integrated approach, in which the strengthening of teaching materials, the implementation of active learning methods, and the habituation of character values in daily life

serve as three main pillars that complement one another.

The reinforcement of teaching materials is carried out by linking each topic in the PAI curriculum with character values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and integrity. Each discussion is not limited to theoretical aspects or rote memorization, but is directed toward fostering a deeper understanding that is relevant to students' real-life experiences. Teachers strive to explain how Islamic teachings apply not only in the context of ritual worship, but also in attitudes, behavior, and everyday decision-making.

This approach indicates a shift in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, from previously focusing mainly on memorization or theoretical understanding to placing greater emphasis on comprehending Islamic teachings that can be applied in the daily lives of students at Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu is not only oriented toward the delivery of theoretical material, but also serves as a strategic means of internalizing character values among students. Values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, creativity, tolerance, and cooperation are instilled through a contextual and applicable approach. Teachers actively relate instructional content to students' daily attitudes and behaviors, while also encouraging various creative and collaborative activities. In this way, the PAI learning process becomes more meaningful and impactful, as it is able to shape students' personalities who not only understand concepts cognitively but are also able to practice Islamic values in real life, both inside and outside the school environment.

The process of internalizing discipline character values at Al-Azhar School Palu takes place through various approaches integrated into daily school life. One of the most prominent methods is through the role modeling of teachers and education staff. Teachers arrive on time, carry out their duties responsibly, and consistently adhere to school regulations. These attitudes directly serve as real examples for students, encouraging them to imitate the disciplined behavior demonstrated by individuals they respect.

Overall, the process of internalizing religious values at Al-Azhar School Palu is carried out gradually and continuously. Through approaches such as role modeling, habituation, spiritual reinforcement, and the integration of Islamic values into all aspects of learning, students are guided not only to understand Islamic teachings but also to appreciate them and make them a guiding principle in their daily lives. In this way, religious character develops not through coercion, but through students' own awareness and inner conviction.

As an Islamic-based school, Al-Azhar School Palu not only instills religious values in the context of worship practices, but also in social relationships among individuals, including the importance of mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and harmonious coexistence.

The cultivation of tolerance values begins within the school environment, which upholds mutual respect among all school members. Teachers serve as the main role models in demonstrating tolerant behavior, both in communicating with students and in interacting with fellow colleagues. Teachers do not only verbally teach the importance of respecting others' opinions, but also demonstrate it in daily practice, such as listening to students'

opinions attentively, resolving differences through polite dialogue, and treating all students fairly without discrimination based on social background or academic ability.

5. Conclusion

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not only aimed at transferring religious knowledge, but also at internalizing moral and character values that serve as a foundation for students' social life. At Al-Azhar Mandiri Junior High School Palu, key character values such as discipline, religiosity, tolerance, honesty, and creativity are systematically developed through an integrated and holistic approach. This process is implemented by embedding character values into PAI learning materials, applying contextual and active learning methods, providing teacher role modeling, and establishing daily habituation practices within the school environment. In addition, continuous evaluation of students' attitudes and behavior ensures that these values are not only understood cognitively but also consistently practiced in real life, thereby shaping students' character in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

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