

The Dynamics of the Internalization of Islamic Values in the Formation of Religious Character through Religious Education and Cultural Socialization

Siti Muntadziroh

An-Nur Islamic University of Lampung

sitimuntadziroh@an-nur.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of the internalization of Islamic values in the formation of religious character through the interconnection between religious education and a culture of habit formation in schools. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design conducted at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin Sidoharjo over a one-month period. Four informants were selected through *purposive sampling*: the school principal, an Islamic Religious Education teacher, a homeroom teacher/religious activities coordinator, and a student. Data were collected through eight observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Analysis was conducted through verbatim transcription, *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding* to construct themes regarding the dynamics of the internalization of Islamic values. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to identify patterns, variations, and relationships among themes. The research findings indicate that the internalization of Islamic values in the formation of religious character occurs gradually through the interconnection between students' cognitive understanding, habit formation, and changes in behavioral orientation. Religious education serves as the foundation for interpreting values, while the culture of habit formation provides a practical space to repeat and actualize them until they develop into habits. The internalization process moves from compliance with rules toward independent religious awareness. These findings reinforce Lickona's framework of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*, while also expanding it by demonstrating that transitions between stages are not always linear and are influenced by school culture, role modeling, and social experiences. Contextually, religious character formation is shaped through the interaction between formal learning and school life. Consequently, character education must integrate learning, habit formation, role modeling, and reflection so that values develop into enduring awareness.

Keywords: internalization of Islamic values; religious character; culture of habit formation.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dinamika internalisasi nilai-nilai keislaman dalam pembentukan karakter religius melalui keterhubungan antara pembelajaran keagamaan dan kultur pembiasaan di sekolah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus di MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin Sidoharjo selama satu bulan. Empat informan dipilih secara *purposive*, yaitu kepala madrasah, guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, wali kelas/pembina kegiatan keagamaan, dan peserta didik. Data dikumpulkan melalui delapan kali observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Analisis dilakukan melalui transkripsi verbatim, *open coding*, *axial coding*, dan *selective coding* untuk membangun tema mengenai dinamika internalisasi nilai-nilai keislaman. Keabsahan data diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik dengan membandingkan hasil wawancara, observasi, serta dokumentasi untuk mengidentifikasi pola, variasi, dan hubungan antartema. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai-nilai keislaman dalam pembentukan karakter religius berlangsung secara bertahap melalui keterhubungan antara pemahaman kognitif, pembiasaan, dan perubahan orientasi perilaku peserta didik. Pembelajaran keagamaan menjadi dasar pemaknaan nilai, sedangkan kultur pembiasaan menyediakan ruang praktis untuk mengulang dan mengaktualisasikannya hingga berkembang menjadi kebiasaan. Proses internalisasi bergerak dari kepatuhan terhadap aturan menuju kesadaran religius yang mandiri. Temuan ini memperkuat kerangka *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, dan *moral action* Lickona, sekaligus memperluasnya dengan menunjukkan bahwa perpindahan antartahap tidak selalu linear dan dipengaruhi oleh kultur sekolah, keteladanan, serta pengalaman sosial. Secara kontekstual, pembentukan karakter religius terbentuk melalui interaksi antara pembelajaran formal dan kehidupan sekolah. Implikasinya, pendidikan karakter perlu mengintegrasikan pembelajaran, pembiasaan, keteladanan, dan refleksi agar nilai berkembang menjadi kesadaran yang bertahan.

Kata kunci: internalisasi nilai-nilai keislaman; karakter religius; kultur pembiasaan.

INTRODUCTION

The formation of students' religious character at the madrasah level is determined not only by the amount of religious material received during the learning process but also by the extent to which Islamic values are truly internalized and manifested in daily behavior (Setiono & Arifin, 2026) . In educational practice, there remains a gap between students' cognitive

understanding of religious concepts and the application of those values in their attitudes and habits. Students may understand the importance of discipline, honesty, responsibility, politeness, compassion, and the practice of worship, but this understanding does not always automatically lead to consistent behavior (Sajidin, 2025) .

This situation indicates that the development of religious character requires a continuous process of internalization through learning experiences, role modeling, reinforcement of values, and the cultivation of habits that are embedded in the school culture. The presence of religious education accompanied by practices such as group prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, communal worship, the habit of greeting others, respectful behavior toward teachers, adherence to rules, and various other religious activities demonstrates that values education takes place not only within the classroom but also through social interactions and institutional routines. Nevertheless, this internalization process does not always occur uniformly, as each student has different family backgrounds, social environments, religious experiences, levels of awareness, and responses to the practices implemented (Azmi et al., 2025; Khasanah et al., 2024) .

Some students are able to make religious activities a personal need and awareness, while others still perform them due to the demands of rules or supervision. These differences reveal the dynamics in the process of transforming Islamic values from mere knowledge and obligations into an awareness that is ingrained within the students (Apriyadi & Amaliyah, 2025; W. Sari, 2026). Therefore, the formation of religious character must be understood as a gradual and ongoing process, shaped through the interconnection between religious education, social experiences, the exemplary behavior of educators, and a culture of habit formation that consistently provides space for students to understand, experience, and actualize Islamic values in their daily lives.

A number of previous studies have shown that the internalization of Islamic values and religious habits play a crucial role in the formation of students' religious character. Fahmi & Jasiah,(2026) examined the internalization of Islamic character values through students' habits and found that the internalization process occurs through the stages of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. The values of faith (akidah), Sharia, and ethics (akhlak) are not merely conveyed as knowledge but are instilled through daily habits, thereby having a positive impact on the character development of students.

Furthermore, the study Mahdia & Aisyah, (2024) found that Islamic habits systematically applied through religious activities such as daily prayers, expressions of gratitude, and the 5S culture can enhance students' moral behavior and their engagement in religious activities. The study

confirms that the development of religious character requires an educational environment that consistently provides students with religious experiences, rather than merely conveying values conceptually through instruction.

Meanwhile, Isnaini, (2026), indicates that establishing habits through morning greetings, Dhuha prayer, congregational Zuhur and Asar prayers, Qur'an recitation practice, and other religious activities can strengthen students' discipline in worship, Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah), faith, piety, and social interaction. The study also shows that the success of character development is influenced by teacher involvement, the school environment, and family support.

Although these three studies have proven the importance of habit formation in religious character development, they tend to position religious habit formation as the primary strategy and have not yet thoroughly explored the dynamics of the internalization of Islamic values that bridge religious instruction in the classroom with the school's culture of habit formation particularly how values initially understood as knowledge and practiced out of obligation gradually evolve into awareness, internalization, and religious behavior among students. It is this area that is crucial for further study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process of religious character formation in school life.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to understand religious character formation not merely as the result of religious instruction or routine practices, but as a process of internalizing Islamic values that unfolds dynamically through the interconnection between classroom learning experiences and the culture of practice within the school environment. Previous research has generally treated religious activities, role modeling, or habitual practices as separate character-building strategies, whereas this study focuses on how Islamic values progress from being cognitively understood, to being affectively accepted, and then consistently internalized and manifested in students' behavior. Another novelty lies in the attention paid to differences in students' responses during this process, including the shift from behavior initially driven by rules, supervision, and institutional demands toward religious behavior stemming from personal awareness.

Thus, this study not only identifies the forms of religious activities implemented but also analyzes the processes, patterns, interactions, and stages of internalization that emerge through the interplay between religious education, educators' exemplary behavior, social interactions, and the culture of habit formation. This perspective is expected to yield a more comprehensive understanding of religious character formation as a continuous process of value transformation rather than merely as the result of formal and administrative religious routines.

Various studies have shown that religious education, educators' exemplary behavior, and the habit-forming nature of religious activities have a strong relationship with the character formation of students. However, most studies still focus on the forms of activities, habit-forming strategies, or observable behavioral changes, and thus do not fully explain how Islamic values move from the realm of knowledge toward a relatively stable religious experience and consciousness. Another gap is evident in the tendency to separate religious education in the classroom from the culture of religious practice that develops within school life, even though both take place within a single social environment that mutually influences one another.

Religious character is formed not only through an understanding of teachings or the repetition of religious activities, but also through the interaction between knowledge, experience, role modeling, institutional norms, social relationships, and students' individual responses to the values they receive. Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of the internalization of Islamic values in the formation of religious character through the interconnection between religious education and the culture of habit formation in schools. An understanding of this process allows the formation of religious character to be positioned as a gradual transformation of values—from compliance that is still influenced by external demands toward the acceptance, internalization, and actualization of values that are increasingly rooted in students' personal consciousness. This perspective also broadens the interpretation of religious education by treating formal learning, school culture, role modeling, and social experiences as an integrated process of internalization.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the internalization of Islamic values in the formation of religious character through religious education and the culture of habit formation at school. The research was conducted over a period of one month at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin Sidoharjo, Jati Agung Subdistrict, South Lampung Regency. Informants were selected through *purposive* sampling, taking into account their direct involvement in the learning process, religious guidance, management of school culture, and experience participating in religious habit-forming practices. The number of informants was limited to four individuals, consisting of the madrasah principal, an Islamic Religious Education teacher, a homeroom teacher or religious activity coordinator, and a student who actively participates in the learning process and religious habit-forming activities at the school (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021; I. N. Sari et al., 2022). This selection was intended to obtain perspectives that represent institutional policies, the implementation

of learning, habit-forming practices, and student experiences (Roosinda et al., 2021; Mulyana et al., 2024).

Data collection was conducted through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted eight times over the course of one month an average of twice a week focusing on the religious learning process, teacher-student interactions, prayer activities, Quran recitation, communal worship, the practice of greetings and polite behavior, discipline, and students' responses to rules and religious activities. Interviews were conducted individually, lasting approximately 30–60 minutes, using a semi-structured guide that allowed for the development of questions based on information that emerged during the interview process (Nartin et al., 2024; Hasan et al., 2025) .

Interview indicators include understanding of Islamic values, how values are instilled in learning, the forms and consistency of religious practices, educators' role modeling, students' responses to religious activities, factors supporting and hindering internalization, behavioral changes, and the tendency to shift from rule-based compliance toward a conscious, independent practice of values.

Documentation included instructional materials, schedules of religious activities, school rules and regulations, habit-forming programs, activity logs, and relevant visual documentation. These documents were not merely used as supplementary data but were analyzed to identify content, activity patterns, consistency of implementation, and their alignment with the results of observations and interviews. All interview results were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed through the stages of *open coding* to identify units of meaning and initial codes, and *axial coding* to link the codes into categories such as value learning, habit formation, exemplary behavior, compliance, internalization, and actualization of values, and *selective coding* to construct main themes that explain the dynamics of the internalization of Islamic values (Sugiyono, 2022; Nasution & Junaidi, 2024).

The data were then continuously compared across informants and across data collection techniques to identify patterns, variations, and relationships among themes. The validity of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and cross-checking the consistency of results from interviews, observations, and documentation, ensuring that the resulting interpretations do not rely solely on a single data source but provide a more comprehensive picture of the process of value internalization within the context of school life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Research Results****Religious Education as the Initial Stage of Interpreting Islamic Values**

The research results indicate that religious education serves as the initial space for students to understand the meaning of Islamic values before these values are manifested in daily behavior. Religious instruction does not stop at conveying concepts but is directed toward understanding discipline, responsibility, honesty, politeness, compassion, and devotion to worship. This process of understanding is reinforced through teachers' explanations, examples, advice, dialogue, and linking the material to situations relevant to students' lives. However, the understanding formed in the classroom does not always result in consistent religious behavior, as some students still require guidance and reinforcement when applying these values in their school life.

"In our classroom, we don't just explain religious material; we always relate it to the students' daily behavior. For example, when discussing moral conduct, we connect it to how they speak to teachers, discipline, honesty, and responsibility. The students actually already understand these concepts, but to make them a habit, they still need guidance and reminders." (Islamic Religious Education Teacher, interview)

The accounts from all informants reveal a relatively consistent pattern. The madrasah principal emphasized that religious education serves as the foundation for introducing values, which are then reinforced through school activities. The Islamic Religious Education teacher explained that an understanding of values is built by connecting the curriculum to students' concrete experiences. Homeroom teachers or religious activity coordinators observed that students who understand the rationale behind an action are easier to guide in practicing religious habits, although their consistency still varies. Meanwhile, students expressed that the explanations and examples provided by teachers help them understand why discipline, good manners, honesty, and the performance of religious rituals are necessary. Taken together, these accounts demonstrate that religious education serves as a stage for meaning-making, while the reinforcement of values occurs through repeated practice and habit formation within the school setting.

A Culture of Habituation: Transforming Religious Knowledge into School Life Practices

Research findings show that the religious understanding students gain through classroom instruction is reinforced when these values are consistently embodied in the school's culture of habit formation. Group prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, collective worship, the practice of greeting others, respectful behavior toward teachers, and discipline provide practical opportunities for students to put their acquired knowledge into practice. The repetition of these activities not only reinforces students' memory of Islamic values but also shapes patterns of behavior that become increasingly familiar

in school life. In this context, habit formation serves as a bridge connecting religious knowledge with students' real-life experiences.

"If it's just explained in class, sometimes the children understand, but they may not necessarily put it into practice right away. That's why activities such as prayer, reading the Qur'an, congregational prayer, greeting others, and discipline are consistently practiced. Over time, the children become accustomed to them and find it easier to put into practice what they have learned." (Homeroom teacher/religious activities coordinator, interview)

Statements from all informants indicate a consistent link between learning and habit formation. The madrasah principal explained that the religious education program is designed to ensure that the values taught do not remain merely as academic content but are integrated into the school's daily routines. Islamic Religious Education teachers believe that habit formation helps students apply concepts of moral conduct, discipline, and worship in concrete situations. Homeroom teachers or religious activity coordinators observed that religious behavior becomes easier to cultivate when activities are conducted regularly and guided by teachers. Meanwhile, students reported that repeated religious activities have made them more accustomed to praying, reading the Qur'an, behaving politely, and participating in worship without always needing to be directed. These findings indicate that a culture of habit-forming serves as a crucial medium for transforming religious knowledge into practices that are alive in students' daily lives.

Internalization: Moving from External Compliance to Religious Awareness

The research results show that the process of internalizing Islamic values does not occur immediately but develops through changes in students' behavioral orientation. In the early stages, some religious activities were still carried out due to school rules, teacher instructions, activity schedules, or supervision. However, after these activities were performed repeatedly and accompanied by an understanding of the meaning and purpose of the values being practiced, changes began to appear in some students. They no longer merely participate out of a sense of obligation but begin to demonstrate initiative, consistency, and a willingness to engage in these activities without always waiting for instructions from educators.

"At first, many still needed to be reminded, especially regarding worship activities and discipline. As the activities continued and they understood their purpose, some students began doing them on their own. So, it wasn't just because the

teacher told them to, but a sense of awareness had begun to emerge from within themselves.” (Madrasah principal, interview)

Accounts from all informants reveal a relatively similar pattern of change. The madrasah principal observed a shift from behavior that was initially dependent on supervision toward increasingly independent habits. The Islamic Religious Education teacher explained that understanding the reasons and meanings behind a teaching helps students practice these values with greater awareness. Homeroom teachers or religious activity coordinators observed that some students began participating in religious activities without needing constant guidance, although their levels of independence were not yet uniform. Meanwhile, students reported that repeating these activities made them feel more accustomed to them and helped them understand the importance of performing religious duties, maintaining proper conduct, and following the rules. Taken together, these findings indicate that the internalization of values progresses gradually from compliance influenced by external control toward a more personal sense of religious acceptance and awareness.

Research Discussion

Religious Education as the Initial Stage of Interpreting Islamic Values

These findings indicate that religious education serves as the initial arena for the formation of value awareness but does not, in and of itself, result in consistent religious behavior. From the perspective of Lickona's character education theory, this condition represents "*moral knowing*" as a foundation that must develop into "*moral feeling*" and "*moral action*." These findings reinforce this framework because students must first understand the meaning of discipline, honesty, responsibility, courtesy, and obedience before these values can be manifested in action. However, the research results also expand upon Lickona's thinking by demonstrating that the transition from knowing to acting does not always occur linearly; the interpretation of values is highly dependent on the contextualization of the material, dialogue, exemplary behavior, and the accompanying social experiences.

These findings align with Irbathy et al.,(2026) , which indicates that Islamic education enables students to connect their actions and life decisions with Islamic values. Eriska et al.,(2026) also emphasizes that Islamic religious education must go beyond the mastery of rituals and be contextualized within students' real lives. Meanwhile, Hidayah et al.,(2025) show that the school environment also influences the development of students' moral identity. Thus, these findings expand upon previous perspectives by positioning religious learning as an initial stage of meaning-making, the effectiveness of

whose internalization is determined by the continuity between cognitive understanding and experiential values within the school culture.

A Culture of Habituation Transforms Religious Knowledge into School Life Practices

Findings regarding the culture of habit formation indicate that the internalization of Islamic values does not stop at cognitive understanding but develops as these values are repeatedly practiced in school life. In character education theory, this process reflects a shift from “*moral knowing*” to “*moral feeling*” and, most importantly, to “*moral action*,” as understood values take concrete form through action. These findings reinforce Acetylena & Zaironi’s (2026) , as collective prayer, recitation of the Qur’an, congregational worship, greetings, courtesy, and discipline provide repeated experiences that enable values to develop into moral habits. However, this finding also expands the theory by demonstrating that *moral action* is not merely an individual achievement but is shaped through a collective culture that consistently provides space to experience and practice values.

This is consistent with the study by Arnila et al., (2026) , which found that sustained habituation reinforces the internalization of Islamic character. These findings are further supported by Trisnantari et al., (2026) which demonstrates a positive relationship between a religion-based school climate and the development of students’ moral identity. Meanwhile, study of Munif, (2025), shows that school culture shapes religious character through discipline as a behavioral pathway that links cultural values to moral actions. Unlike studies that tend to view habituation as a strategy for behavioral repetition, these findings revise that understanding by positioning habituation as a transformative mechanism that brings together religious knowledge, collective experience, and daily practices, thereby blurring the boundaries between formal learning and school culture in the process of religious character formation.

Internalization: Moving from External Compliance to Religious Consciousness

Findings regarding the shift from external compliance toward religious awareness indicate that the internalization of values occurs as a gradual process, not an automatic behavioral change. Within the framework of character education, this process reveals the interconnectedness of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*: students not only know the values but gradually accept them, feel their relevance, and make them the foundation of their actions. These findings reinforce the work of Syari’ah et al.,(2025) , while simultaneously expanding upon it by demonstrating that *moral action* possesses varying degrees of depth; actions performed under supervision cannot be equated with those arising from personal awareness.

Alfathoni et al.,(2026) , found that school climate is positively associated with the development of students’ moral identity, affirming the importance of

the social environment in shaping value orientations. In line with this, Rohman & Salleh,(2026) , show that a school climate supportive of the identity formation process plays a role in enhancing students' identification with religious values. Meanwhile, the study by Abdullah & Amalia, (2025), emphasizes that symbolic mediation plays a role in the development of students' self-determination. Thus, these findings do not contradict previous theories but revise the interpretation of successful internalization: success is not merely marked by compliance with rituals and rules but by a shift in the source of behavioral regulation from institutional control toward a religious consciousness that is increasingly integrated within the students themselves.

CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that the internalization of Islamic values in the formation of religious character occurs as a gradual process that links cognitive interpretation, habitual experiences, and changes in students' behavioral orientation. Religious education serves as an initial space for understanding the meaning of values, while the culture of habit formation provides a concrete context that allows these values to be practiced repeatedly until they develop into habits. This process does not stop at compliance with rules but moves toward a more personal religious awareness as students begin to live out these values without relying entirely on supervision. Theoretically, these findings reinforce Lickona's framework of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*, while also expanding it by demonstrating that transitions between stages do not occur linearly and are significantly influenced by collective culture, role modeling, and the school's social environment.

Contextually, the formation of religious character is best understood as the result of the interaction between formal learning and everyday school life, rather than as a product of standalone religious activities. Consequently, character education design must integrate instructional content, habit-forming practices, role modeling, and spaces for reflection so that values do not remain merely symbolic compliance. Further research should explore variations in the internalization process among student groups with different family backgrounds and levels of religious involvement, and employ a longitudinal approach to examine the stability of changes from external compliance toward self-regulation. Moving forward, the success of religious education will increasingly depend on schools' ability to build a values ecosystem that not only regulates behavior but also fosters awareness that endures beyond the school setting.

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