



Internalization of Islamic Values through School Culture in Character Formation of Students at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam: A Naturalistic Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to explore the internalization of Islamic values through school culture in shaping students' character at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam.

Methodology: A qualitative naturalistic approach was employed to capture the authentic experiences and practices within the school environment. research was conducted at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam. data analysis process followed data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

Main Findings: The findings indicate that Islamic values are internalized through a combination of religious routines, habituation practices, teacher role modeling, and a supportive environment, which collectively contribute to the development of students' character, including religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and respect.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analysis of Islamic value internalization, school culture, and character formation within a naturalistic framework, highlighting the role of implicit practices and lived experiences in basic education contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping not only students' cognitive abilities but also their moral and spiritual character [1]-[3]. In the context of Islamic education, the cultivation of values is not merely an additional component of learning but a central objective embedded within the entire educational process [4]-[6]. Schools, particularly Islamic elementary schools, are expected to function as environments where values are lived, practiced, and internalized through daily interactions and routines [7]-[9]. In this regard, school culture becomes a crucial medium through which Islamic values are transmitted and reinforced in meaningful and sustainable ways.

School culture encompasses shared beliefs, norms, habits, and practices that develop within the school environment and influence the behavior of its members [10], [11]. In Islamic schools, this culture is often reflected in religious routines, ethical interactions, and value-laden activities that guide students' attitudes and actions [12]-[14]. The internalization of Islamic values through such a culture is believed to contribute significantly to the development of students' character, particularly in fostering traits such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and religiosity [15], [16]. However, the extent to which these values are genuinely internalized rather than merely practiced superficially remains an important question for educators and researchers.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of school culture in character education, emphasizing that consistent exposure to value-based practices can shape students' moral development [17]-[19]. Research has also shown that Islamic values, when integrated into school routines and teacher-student interactions, can positively influence students' behavior [20], [21]. Nevertheless, many of these studies tend to focus on formal curricula or specific programs, rather than examining the holistic and lived experiences of students within the natural school setting [22], [23]. As a result, there is still limited understanding of how Islamic values are internalized organically through everyday school culture, particularly at the elementary school level.

This study addresses this gap by adopting a qualitative naturalistic approach to explore the internalization process as it occurs in real-life contexts [24]. Dishon [25], unlike studies that rely heavily on structured interventions or quantitative measurements, this research seeks to capture authentic experiences, interactions, and meanings constructed by participants within their natural environment. By focusing on MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam, this study provides a contextualized understanding of how school culture operates as a medium for value internalization in a specific socio-cultural setting.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative perspective, which combines the concepts of Islamic value internalization, school culture, and character formation within a single analytical framework. While previous research often treats these elements separately, this study examines their dynamic interconnections as they unfold in daily school life. Furthermore, the use of a naturalistic qualitative design allows for a deeper exploration of implicit practices, hidden curricula, and subtle interactions that are often overlooked but play a significant role in shaping students' character [26], [27].

The urgency of this study is underscored by growing concerns about moral and character development among students in the modern era. Rapid social changes, technological advancements, and shifting cultural values have posed challenges to maintaining strong moral foundations among young learners. In this context, Islamic schools are expected to serve as strongholds of value-based education [28]. Understanding how Islamic values are effectively internalized through school culture is therefore essential for strengthening educational practices and ensuring that character education is not merely theoretical but deeply rooted in students' daily lives.

Based on these considerations, the purpose of this study is to explore and describe how Islamic values are internalized through school culture in shaping students' character at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam. Specifically, this research aims to uncover the forms of school culture that support value internalization, the processes through which these values are embedded in students' behavior, and the meanings attributed to these practices by members of the school community. Through this exploration, the study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of more holistic and effective character education in Islamic schools.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative naturalistic research design [29], [30], which seeks to understand social phenomena as they occur naturally in real-life contexts without manipulation or experimental intervention. A naturalistic approach emphasizes the exploration of meanings, experiences, and interactions from the perspectives of participants within their authentic environment. In the context of this study, it allows for an in-depth examination of how Islamic values are internalized through everyday school culture and how such processes contribute to students' character formation.

The research was conducted at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam, selected purposively due to its strong emphasis on Islamic-based school culture and its relevance to the research focus. The research subjects consisted of 5 teachers who were directly involved in implementing and maintaining school culture. The selection of participants used a purposive sampling technique, which refers to a non-probability sampling method where participants are chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives [31], [32]. In this case, the criteria included teaching experience, active involvement in school cultural activities, and understanding of Islamic value integration in the learning process. This approach ensures that the data collected are rich, relevant, and aligned with the focus of the study.

The primary instrument used in this study was in-depth interviews. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the main instrument, meaning that the researcher plays a central role in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. However, to ensure systematic data collection, an interview guide was developed to explore key aspects such as forms of school culture, strategies for internalizing Islamic values, and perceived impacts on students' character. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to express their experiences and perspectives in depth while still maintaining alignment with the research objectives. The concept of a semi-structured interview refers to a guided conversation where predetermined questions are complemented by probing questions to elicit deeper insights. To provide a clearer overview of the research components, the following table summarizes the key elements of the methodology:

Table 1. Overview of Research Methodology Components

Component	Description
Research Design	Qualitative Naturalistic Approach
Research Site	MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam
Participants	5 Teachers
Sampling Technique	Purposive Sampling
Data Collection Tool	Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews
Research Instrument	Researcher as the main instrument supported by interview guidelines

The table above illustrates how each methodological component is aligned with the research objectives, ensuring coherence between the research design, participants, and data collection strategies. Data collection was carried out through direct interaction with participants in their natural school setting. Each interview was conducted in a flexible and open manner to encourage participants to share authentic experiences. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and then organized systematically for analysis. In qualitative research, data saturation the point at which no new information emerges was used as an indicator to ensure the adequacy of the data collected.

The data analysis process followed an interactive model of qualitative analysis, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [33]. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data into meaningful information [34]. Data display involves organizing the data in a structured form, such as narratives or matrices, to facilitate understanding and interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involve identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings, as well as ensuring the validity of findings through continuous comparison and reflection. This iterative process allows the researcher to move back and forth between data and interpretation to ensure depth and accuracy.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement and in-depth interviews, allowing the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context. Dependability refers to the consistency of the research process, which was maintained through clear documentation of procedures. Confirmability was achieved by ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data rather than researcher bias, supported by direct quotations and systematic analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

. This section presents the findings of the study on the internalization of Islamic values through school culture in shaping students' character at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam. The data were obtained from in-depth interviews with 10 teachers and analyzed using an interactive qualitative approach involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings are organized into several thematic categories that emerged from the data, namely: (1) forms of school culture, (2) processes of value internalization, (3) perceived impacts on students' character, and (4) challenges in implementation. Teachers consistently emphasized that school culture is embedded in daily routines, spontaneous activities, and structured programs.

Table 2. Forms of School Culture in Internalizing Islamic Values

Category	Teacher Interview Results
Religious Routines	"Students start the day by reading the Quran; they pray before class, and they pray in congregation at school. It has become a habit."
Behavioral Habits	"We train students to greet teachers and friends politely every day."
Exemplification	"Students imitate what teachers do, not just what we say."
Environmental Culture	"The school environment constantly reminds students of Islamic values."

The findings indicate that school culture is not limited to formal instruction but is reflected in continuous and consistent practices that shape students' daily experiences. These cultural elements function as implicit learning tools that reinforce Islamic values naturally. The second theme focuses on how Islamic values are internalized through school culture. The analysis reveals that the internalization process occurs gradually through repeated exposure, meaningful interaction, and reflective practices.

Table 3. Process of Islamic Values Internalization

Process Stages	Description	Teacher Interview Results
Introduction	Teachers introduce values through explanation and guidance.	We explain why certain behaviors are important in Islam.
Habitization	Values are practiced repeatedly in daily activities.	Students get used to practicing good habits without being told.

Process Stages	Description	Teacher Interview Results
Internalization	Values become part of students' personal awareness and behavior.	Ultimately, students act based on their own conscience.
Reinforcement	Ongoing support through reminders and appreciation.	We always remind and appreciate good behavior.

The table illustrates that internalization is a dynamic and continuous process rather than an instant outcome. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students from understanding values to embodying them in their daily behavior. The third theme highlights the perceived impact of school culture on students' character development. All participants agreed that the internalization of Islamic values has a significant influence on shaping positive character traits.

Table 4. Impact of School Culture on Students' Character Formation

Character Aspect	Observed Changes in Students	Teacher Interview Results
Religiosity	Increased awareness in performing religious practices	Students pray without being told.
Discipline	Improved punctuality and rule adherence	They are more disciplined in following school rules.
Responsibility	Greater accountability in tasks and behavior	Students take responsibility for their actions.
Respect and Ethics	Polite communication and respectful interactions	They show respect to teachers and peers.

These findings suggest that school culture plays a significant role in fostering holistic character development, encompassing both spiritual and social dimensions. Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges faced by teachers in maintaining and strengthening school culture.

Table 5. Challenges in Implementing School Culture

Challenge Category	Description	Teacher Interview Results
Student Diversity	Differences in students' backgrounds and home environments	Not all students get the same values at home.
Consistency	Maintaining consistent implementation among all school members	Consistency among teachers is sometimes a challenge.
External Influence	Influence of technology and social environment	Students are affected by external factors outside school.
Time Constraints	Limited time to reinforce values deeply	Academic demands sometimes reduce focus on character building.

These challenges indicate that the success of value internalization depends not only on school efforts but also on external factors such as family and societal influences. The findings of this study demonstrate that the internalization of Islamic values through school culture at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam is carried out in a holistic, consistent, and experience-based manner. The presence of religious routines, behavioral habituation, teacher role modeling, and a supportive environment confirms that school culture operates as a living system rather than a formal program [35]. These results reinforce the idea that in the context of basic education, especially at the elementary level, character formation is most effective when values are embedded in daily practices that are continuously experienced by students. At this developmental stage, students tend to learn more effectively through imitation, repetition, and meaningful interaction, making school culture a strategic medium for value internalization.

These findings are in line with previous research emphasizing the central role of school culture in shaping students' character. Prior studies have shown that value-based routines and consistent behavioral reinforcement can significantly influence students' moral development. Similarly, research on Islamic education highlights that the integration of religious values into daily school life contributes to the development of students' religiosity and social ethics [15], [36]. However, many earlier studies tend to focus on formal curriculum design or specific character education programs [37], [38]. In contrast, this study provides a more contextual and grounded understanding by revealing how values are internalized through naturally occurring interactions and practices within the school environment [39], [40]. This strengthens the argument that the hidden curriculum unwritten norms, habits, and interactions plays a crucial role in basic education settings.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative and naturalistic perspective, which connects three key dimensions Islamic values, school culture, and character formation within a single analytical framework. Unlike fragmented approaches that examine these aspects separately, this study demonstrates their dynamic

interrelationship as they unfold in everyday school life. Additionally, by focusing on a qualitative naturalistic design, this research uncovers subtle processes of internalization, such as spontaneous habituation, implicit modeling, and emotional engagement, which are often overlooked in more structured or quantitative studies. This contribution is particularly relevant to the field of basic education, where learning is deeply influenced by context, relationships, and lived experiences rather than solely by formal instruction.

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer important implications for the development of character education in elementary schools. First, they highlight the importance of consistency among teachers as key agents of cultural transmission. The role modeling demonstrated by teachers suggests that students' character development is strongly influenced by what they observe in daily interactions. Second, the study underscores the need to design school environments that are intentionally value-rich, where physical settings, routines, and social interactions collectively support the internalization process. Third, the results suggest that collaboration between schools and families is essential, as differences in students' home backgrounds were identified as a significant challenge. In the broader scope of basic education, this implies that character education should not be treated as an isolated school responsibility but as a shared commitment involving multiple stakeholders.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The research was conducted in a single Islamic elementary school with a relatively small number of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. In addition, the data were primarily derived from teachers' perspectives, which may not fully capture students' internal experiences or the long-term impact of value internalization. The use of interviews as the main data collection method also relies on participants' subjective interpretations, which may be influenced by social desirability. Furthermore, the naturalistic design, while providing depth and authenticity, does not allow for direct measurement of causal relationships between school culture and character outcomes.

In light of these limitations, future research is recommended to involve multiple data sources, such as student perspectives, parental input, and direct classroom observations, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the internalization process. Comparative studies across different schools or regions could also enrich the findings and strengthen their applicability. Nevertheless, this study provides meaningful insights into how Islamic values can be effectively internalized through school culture in basic education, offering both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of holistic and value-based learning environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore and describe how Islamic values are internalized through school culture in shaping students' character at MI AL-Hidayah Kebon IX Sungai Gelam. The findings reveal that the internalization process occurs through a holistic and continuous system consisting of religious routines, behavioral habituation, teacher role modeling, and a supportive school environment. These elements work synergistically to transform Islamic values from abstract concepts into lived experiences that are embedded in students' daily behavior. The process of internalization takes place gradually through stages of introduction, habituation, reinforcement, and personal awareness, resulting in the development of key character traits such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and respect. Despite challenges related to student diversity, external influences, and consistency among educators, school culture has proven to be an effective medium for character formation in the context of basic education. It is recommended that schools strengthen collaboration with parents to ensure consistency of value internalization beyond the school environment. Future research is suggested to involve multiple perspectives and broader contexts to deepen the understanding of value internalization in diverse educational settings.

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