






## Integration of Islamic Values in Secondary School Curriculum: A Case Study in Public Schools

Jumahir<sup>1,\*</sup>, Mukhtar Muhammad Mahdar Ahmad<sup>2</sup>, Hasrat A. Aimang<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Luwuk, Sulawesi Tengah, Indonesia  
<sup>2</sup> Holy Quran & Islamic Sciences University, Hadhramout, Yemen

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** This study aims to describe and analyze how Islamic values are integrated into the curriculum at public junior high schools in the Luwuk sub-district, and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation.

**Methodology:** This research employs a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers and school principals, direct classroom observations, and analysis of curriculum documents and syllabi. Data were analyzed descriptively through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing.

**Main Findings:** The findings reveal that the integration of Islamic values is carried out implicitly through character strengthening, habituation programs, and contextual approaches across various subjects. Although not all schools apply this integration systematically, educators consistently strive to instill values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance. Key supporting factors include teachers' commitment and the reinforcement of school culture, while the main challenges involve limited training opportunities and the absence of standardized curriculum guidelines.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** This study offers new insights into the practice of integrating Islamic values into formal education at the junior high school level, focusing on local-level factors influencing its implementation. It also highlights the importance of empowering teachers and formulating clearer curricular policies to support the successful integration of these values.

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### Corresponding Author:

Jumahir,  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Luwuk, Jl. KH Ahmad Dahlan, Baru, Luwuk, Kabupaten Banggai, Sulawesi Tengah, 94712, Indonesia  
Email: [jumahirmagfira@gmail.com](mailto:jumahirmagfira@gmail.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In modern education, there is an increasing demand for systems that not only cultivate students' intellectual capacities but also shape individuals with strong moral and spiritual foundations [1]. In Indonesia, the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, value-based education rooted in Islamic teachings has long been a cornerstone of national education [2]. Values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and mutual respect are crucial in strengthening students' character, particularly at the junior secondary level, where students undergo critical phases of moral and identity development [3]. The integration of religious values, especially Islamic principles, into the national curriculum has become a focal point of education policy in recent years. The

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) has stressed the importance of character education through cross-subject integration and the cultivation of school culture [4]. Despite this, the actual implementation often remains superficial, as many public schools fail to integrate Islamic values consistently and effectively. While Islamic values are recognized in policy frameworks, there is a notable lack of clear strategies for their implementation across the curriculum.

Ideally, the national curriculum should provide mechanisms for embedding Islamic values not only within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) but across all subjects, including science, mathematics, and social studies [5]. Teachers should be equipped with the tools to apply thematic, contextual, and reflective approaches that allow students to internalize Islamic values in everyday life. However, many teachers still struggle with integrating values, often perceiving value education as the sole responsibility of IRE teachers [6]. Moreover, the absence of integrative guidelines, inadequate training, and a lack of exemplary modules exacerbate the situation.

This gap between policy aspirations and actual practice serves as the focus of this study. Several studies have pointed out the challenges of integrating Islamic values in schools, noting that the integration often takes place only in extracurricular or ceremonial settings, rather than within the core curriculum. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how Islamic values are integrated within public junior high schools, particularly in the Luwuk Subdistrict, where religious and ethnic diversity requires a nuanced, inclusive approach to value education. While existing literature has explored related topics from different angles, such as spirituality-based frameworks in higher education and interfaith cooperation in peacebuilding, few studies have specifically focused on Islamic value integration in public junior high schools from a localized, practice-oriented perspective. This research fills this gap by offering a field-based study that looks at both curriculum content and classroom practices, considering teachers' roles across various subjects, as well as the influence of school policies and organizational culture.

The originality of this study lies in its contextual and practical approach, which focuses not only on curriculum but also on the lived experiences of teachers and students. By investigating the factors that support or hinder the integration of Islamic values, this research offers new insights into the practical application of value-based education in public schools. Moreover, this study examines the role of institutional leadership in fostering a values-based educational culture that goes beyond religious identity reinforcement, aiming for inclusivity and national unity. Given the rise in school-based violence, bullying, and intolerance among students, value education has become more crucial than ever [7]; [8]. This research builds on the premise that Islamic values have the potential to transform students into well-rounded individuals, both intellectually and morally. The study aims to provide a model framework for the effective integration of Islamic values that can be adapted by other public schools across Indonesia, thus contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society. The research questions for this study are as follows: How are Islamic values integrated into the curriculum and practices of public junior high schools in Luwuk Subdistrict, and what factors influence the successful implementation of this integration?

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

Sampling in this study was purposively conducted, considering the social and cultural diversity of the Luwuk Sub-district. The selected schools are public schools with a high level of ethnic and religious diversity, making them ideal for studying the implementation of inclusive Islamic value-based education. The study sample consists of school principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, general subject teachers, and students. Respondents were selected based on their involvement in the educational process and their relevance to the research topic [9]. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This process was carried out simultaneously with data collection to allow adjustments and improvements in data gathering based on initial findings. The variables analyzed include patterns of Islamic value integration in the curriculum, pedagogical strategies employed by teachers, and the challenges and supporting factors in implementation. The measurement of variables was conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of relevant curriculum documents [10].

The research instruments, including interview guides and observation sheets, were developed based on indicators of value integration that were adapted from previous studies [11]. To ensure instrument validity, validation was conducted through consultations with experts in education and evaluation. Reliability testing was carried out using data triangulation techniques, involving the use of multiple data sources and methods to enhance the credibility of the research findings. Member checking was also employed to confirm the accuracy of interpretations with the informants involved in the study [12].

The research design is presented in the following figure 1.

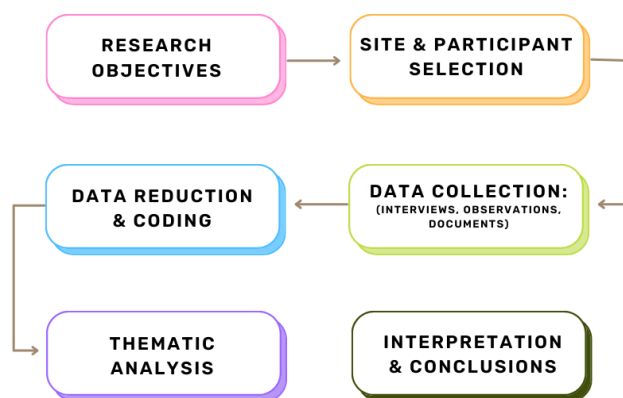


Figure 1. Qualitative Case Study Research Design

This study does not intend to generalize the results, but rather to understand the specific context of the integration of Islamic values in complex and dynamic public schools. Therefore, a qualitative approach with case studies is a relevant choice to answer the research objectives in a deep and contextual manner.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Integration Patterns of Islamic Values in the Curriculum

The integration of Islamic values into the curriculum, as observed in this study, provides both challenges and opportunities within the context of public junior high schools in Luwuk Sub-district. While Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance were found to be integrated implicitly across various subjects, this integration remained inconsistent and often depended heavily on the initiative and personal commitment of individual teachers.

*“Although Islamic values are not explicitly included in the general curriculum, we try to integrate them into the subjects we teach. For example, when teaching science, I often connect topics related to the environment and human biology with the concept of creation by the One True God. In this way, students not only understand the scientific material but also internalize spiritual values”.* (Interview G1)

*“We take this opportunity to instill the values of fairness and honesty. This way, students not only learn mathematical calculations but also gain an understanding of moral principles that can be applied in their daily lives”.* (Interview G2)

Islamic values were found to be integrated not only in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) but also across general subjects, including Social Science, Natural Science, Mathematics, and Bahasa Indonesia. The integration typically occurs implicitly, often depending on the initiative and creativity of the teachers rather than being directed by formal curriculum guidelines. Teachers reported drawing connections between subject content and moral principles such as justice, honesty, responsibility, and empathy to promote character development among students. These findings resonate with previous studies, such as those by [3] and [2], which highlight the fragmented nature of value-based education in Indonesian schools, where the integration of values is not systematically embedded in the curriculum.

*“We often try to connect the material we teach with Islamic values, particularly regarding God’s creation. For example, when we discuss ecosystems or the human body, I always emphasize that all of these creations are the work of the Almighty God. The goal is for students not only to understand scientific knowledge but also to appreciate the magnificence of God’s creation.”* (Interview G3)

*“The integration is still highly dependent on the initiative of each teacher. The curriculum does not explicitly mention how religious values, particularly Islam, should be integrated into each subject. Therefore, each teacher has the freedom to adapt it in their own way.”* (Interview G4)

For instance, in science classes, discussions on the environment or human biology were often linked to the concept of divine creation. In mathematics, ethical dilemmas in commerce were used to explain basic calculations involving profit and loss, embedding the values of fairness and honesty. In language classes, teachers used literary texts with Islamic moral themes. However, such integration remained fragmented and

lacked a standardized framework. The curricula and syllabi generally did not explicitly outline the integration of Islamic values, leaving it up to the discretion of individual teachers.

One of the central findings of this study is the fact that Islamic values were not confined to religious instruction alone but were extended albeit inconsistently into various general subjects. This phenomenon supports the assertion by [13] that Islamic education should move beyond isolated religious subjects to permeate all facets of learning as a foundation for holistic moral development. Teachers in this study employed a variety of methods to integrate ethical principles into their daily instruction, demonstrating what [14] terms as “hidden curriculum,” where values are transmitted implicitly through pedagogy and classroom culture. This finding confirms earlier work by [15], who argued that Islamic-based value integration is most effective when it is aligned with contextually grounded and student-centered pedagogies. However, the study also reveals a lack of formal curricular mandates and institutional support, a gap noted by [16], who emphasized that the absence of regulatory guidance results in sporadic and individual-based moral instruction efforts.

The data indicate that while the intention to integrate Islamic values exists, the actual curriculum documents (such as lesson plans and syllabi) seldom reflect these values in a structured or strategic manner. Consequently, the implementation depends heavily on informal practices and the value orientations of the educators themselves.

### Teacher Pedagogical Strategies

Another key contribution of this study lies in its depiction of teachers as both facilitators and gatekeepers of value integration. While many educators demonstrated a strong personal commitment to fostering Islamic ethics, their practices varied greatly depending on personal capacity, training background, and institutional encouragement. This aligns with the findings of [17], who emphasized the critical role of teacher agency in the moral development of students in religious subjects and beyond.

*“As an Islamic Religious Education teacher, I often use narrative methods in teaching. I frequently share stories of the prophets, companions of Prophet Muhammad, or famous Muslim figures. These stories not only teach moral values but also provide examples for students to emulate their character. For instance, the story of Prophet Ayub’s patience or Prophet Muhammad’s honesty.”* (Interview G5)

*“Students become more aware that Islamic values are not only to be studied in religious education but must also be applied in their daily lives.”* (Interview G5)

Teachers employ various strategies to instill Islamic values in the learning process [18], using reflective and contextual approaches by connecting Islamic principles to real-life situations and current events, thereby highlighting the relevance of Islamic values in everyday life [19];[20]. Thus, the different methods used by teachers demonstrate diverse efforts to effectively integrate Islamic values into education, both in the context of religious education and general subjects.

Nonetheless, the teachers in this research faced multiple constraints, most notably the lack of structured professional development on inter-disciplinary value integration. As argued by [21], the integration of Islamic values into general education demands pedagogical training and curricular alignment to prevent moral messages from becoming superficial or inconsistent.

*“The use of the reflective dialogic model to encourage students to analyze contemporary social issues from the perspective of Islamic ethics, in social studies lessons, by addressing issues such as social inequality and justice, which are then linked to Quranic teachings, such as the obligation of zakat and the importance of social solidarity. This approach aims to help students understand that Islamic principles are not only applicable in the religious context but also relevant to the social issues faced in everyday life.”* (Interview G6)

The reflective dialogic model can be used as a pedagogical approach to encourage students to analyze contemporary social issues through the lens of Islamic ethics. This approach allows students to connect religious principles, as found in Quranic teachings, with social problems encountered in everyday life. By using themes such as social inequality and justice, teachers can help students understand that Islamic teachings are not only applicable in religious contexts but also relevant in addressing social issues, such as the obligation of zakat and the importance of social solidarity. This approach supports the development of students' critical thinking and the integration of religious values into their social lives. This aligns with the argument by [22], which states that Islamic education should permeate all aspects of learning and life, not just be confined to religious subjects, but also be applied in social life for holistic moral development. as proposed by [23], where religious values are transmitted through social interactions in the classroom and the pedagogy applied by teachers.

Moreover, teachers frequently reported that time constraints and an overemphasis on cognitive achievement hampered efforts to embed values deeply. This reflects broader systemic issues in Indonesian education noted by [24], who warned that character education can be marginalized in systems dominated by standardized testing and academic benchmarking.

### **Role of School Leadership and Institutional Culture**

This study also underscores the essential function of school leadership and organizational culture in shaping the success of value integration. Schools where principals had a clear moral vision and implemented structured religious activities such as Quranic recitation, Friday charity, and Islamic assemblies were more successful in cultivating values within and beyond the classroom [25];[26]. These findings corroborate [27], who argue that leadership practices and moral vision strongly influence the institutionalization of ethical education.

School leadership plays a crucial role in the success of integrating moral values into education [28]. Visionary school leaders who focus on moral education can create an environment that supports the structured implementation of these values [29]. Programs initiated by the principals, such as Friday charity drives, morning Quran recitations, and character education campaigns, significantly contribute to reinforcing moral values outside the classroom. Such initiatives not only strengthen the efforts made in the classroom but also provide students with real examples of applying moral values in everyday life. With supporting policies and programs, the integration of moral values becomes more effective and visible in the overall school activities, fostering the holistic development of students' character. This aligns with the findings of [30], which states that leadership focused on moral and religious education can enhance the success of value integration across all aspects of school life, both inside and outside the classroom. This approach also supports the statement of [31], which emphasizes the importance of institutional policies in creating an environment conducive to the development of students' character.

*“Various programs that support moral education outside the classroom, such as Friday charity drives, morning Quran recitations, and character education campaigns. These programs not only strengthen the efforts made in the classroom but also provide students with direct examples of the importance of applying moral values in everyday life. Through policies and initiatives like these, the integration of moral values becomes more effective and more visible in the overall school activities.” (Interview K1)*

The role of school leadership emerged as a decisive factor in determining the success of value integration. In schools led by visionary principals who emphasized moral education, integration was more structured and supported by institutional policies. These principals initiated programs such as Friday charity drives, morning Quran recitations, and character education campaigns, which reinforced classroom efforts.

*“The synergy between home and school is crucial in reinforcing the Islamic values taught in the classroom. They believe that the active involvement of parents and the community in character education can strengthen the application of moral values in students' daily lives, as well as create an environment that better supports the development of their character.” (Interview K2)*

The active involvement of parents and the community in character education can strengthen the application of moral values in students' daily lives [32]. This approach emphasizes the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and the surrounding environment in creating an atmosphere that supports the holistic development of character [33]. This aligns with the view of [34], which states that a close relationship between family, school, and community is key to creating a value-rich environment that supports the moral growth of students beyond the context of formal learning

Effective school leaders were also those who involved parents and communities in character education efforts. Parent-teacher meetings, community religious events, and student-led initiatives played a role in sustaining a value-rich environment. The synergy between home and school was considered essential in reinforcing the Islamic values taught in classrooms. A key insight here is that transformational leadership was associated with more coherent and sustainable value practices, whereas passive or administrative leadership styles resulted in fragmented implementation. This resonates with the study of [35], who explored how Islamic educational visions must be supported by systemic frameworks to be internalized by students and staff alike.

### **Impact on Student Character and Behavior**

The integration of moral values in education can significantly impact the development of students' social behavior [36]. Students who are involved in a school environment that supports the integration of moral values, such as discipline, empathy, and mutual respect, tend to exhibit positive social behavior [37]. Active student participation in activities like initiating greetings, voluntary clean-up activities, and charitable initiatives

reflects the application of moral values in daily life. This supports the theory that education integrating religious values not only strengthens students' academic aspects but also plays a crucial role in shaping their character and social behavior outside the formal learning context. This aligns with the view of [38], which states that the integration of religious values in education helps strengthen students' character and increases their participation in social activities outside the classroom. This approach also supports the findings of [39], which suggests that teaching moral values can enhance students' involvement in social activities and strengthen relationships among individuals within the school community.

*“Students in those schools were more likely to initiate greetings, participate in voluntary clean-up activities, and engage in charitable activities at school.” (Interview K2,G1)*

Teachers and principals observed that students in schools with strong value integration exhibited better social behavior, including discipline, empathy, and mutual respect. Students were more likely to initiate greetings, participate in voluntary clean-up activities, and engage in charitable initiatives. Some students demonstrated the ability to articulate Islamic moral principles in classroom discussions and written assignments.

*“Student character development requires continuous reinforcement, both through the teaching process and through the culture within the school. They believe that to achieve optimal results in character development, moral values must be consistently integrated into all aspects of school life.” (Interview K3,G1)*

Student character development requires a consistent and ongoing approach, which is not only carried out through formal teaching but also through the culture established in the school [40]. The integration of strong and consistent moral values in all aspects of school life has proven effective in shaping students' character [41]. This aligns with the theory that character development depends not only on the curriculum or direct teaching but also on the social environment and culture built within the school. A holistic approach that encompasses both aspects, through formal education processes as well as the school culture, is necessary to achieve optimal results in student character formation. As stated by [42], student character development requires continuous reinforcement from all elements within the school. Additionally, [43] emphasizes the importance of integrating moral values into every aspect of school life to support the optimal development of character.

Moreover, the study found that student transformation was most sustainable when value education was consistently applied across subjects, co-curricular activities, and daily routines. In this regard, the presence of role models among teachers and school leaders significantly contributed to internalizing values among students.

### **Critical Interpretation: Between Normativity and Practice**

Although value integration is often promoted normatively in education policy, this study demonstrates the tension between rhetoric and implementation. As pointed out by [44], many Islamic schools and public institutions in Indonesia lack operational frameworks that translate moral ideals into daily teaching practices. The absence of curricular alignment, teaching modules, and institutional incentives for value education contributes to its marginalization. Moreover, the study supports previous critiques by [45] regarding the risk of superficial value inclusion when integration is driven solely by individual initiative rather than systemic mandates. Without coherent policies and dedicated curricular components, Islamic values risk being reduced to ceremonial or cosmetic elements rather than transformative educational experiences. Yet, this research also identifies hopeful innovations, particularly where educators creatively embed values into science, mathematics, or social studies lessons using narrative and contextual frameworks. These micro-level practices reflect what [46] describes as pedagogical resilience the ability of educators to adapt moral instruction to their realities despite structural constraints.

The findings of this study are best situated within constructivist and transformative learning theories, which posit that meaningful education occurs when students actively reconstruct knowledge through experiences rooted in values and context [47]. When students are encouraged to reflect on ethical dilemmas and relate them to religious teachings, they are more likely to internalize those values meaningfully. This framework also resonates with the concept of values-based education, which promotes an integrative model of schooling that addresses cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains [48]. In the Indonesian context, the challenge lies in harmonizing national secular curricula with Islamic moral frameworks without compromising educational inclusivity and diversity.

As noted by [49], the implementation of Islamic values must be anchored in pluralistic, democratic ethics that respect multicultural identities, especially in public school environments. This study contributes to that vision by highlighting the potential for Islamic value integration to enhance rather than hinder intercultural understanding provided it is guided by principles of moderation, contextuality, and universal morality. In summary, the discussion reveals that the integration of Islamic values in public junior high schools in Luwuk is

characterized by complexity, creativity, and constraint. While educators and school leaders demonstrate agency and commitment, systemic issues such as lack of curricular alignment, inadequate teacher training, and institutional fragmentation hinder consistent implementation [50].

Nevertheless, this study adds to the growing literature that supports the feasibility and desirability of value integration across disciplines. It calls for systemic reforms, including professional development, policy frameworks, and leadership training, to institutionalize Islamic moral education in ways that resonate with local contexts and national goals. This research thus bridges the gap between policy ideals and classroom realities, offering practical insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to foster holistic student development grounded in ethical and spiritual foundations.

The implications of this study are particularly relevant for educators, school leaders, and policymakers. The research reveals that while there is a general commitment to integrating Islamic values, there is a clear gap in the systematic and strategic implementation of this integration. The findings suggest the need for a more formalized approach to integrating values into the curriculum, one that includes clear guidelines and specific training for teachers in all subject areas. The study also highlights the importance of strong school leadership in fostering an environment conducive to value-based education. Schools with visionary leaders were more successful in integrating values into daily practices, demonstrating the role of institutional culture in supporting moral education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study found that the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum of junior high schools in Luwuk Sub-district is carried out implicitly and varies across different subjects. While there is a strong commitment from teachers and school leaders, the integration often relies on the individual initiatives of teachers and has not been systematically embedded in the curriculum. The findings indicate that while values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance are applied in teaching, there is a lack of clear curricular guidelines and specific training for teachers in value-based education. The contribution of this research lies in providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in integrating Islamic values in public schools, as well as how factors such as school leadership, teacher training, and school culture influence the success of this integration. This study enriches the body of educational knowledge by offering empirical evidence on the practice of value integration based on religious teachings in the context of Indonesian education, particularly at the junior high school level. The policy implications of these findings suggest the need for the development of clearer and more structured educational policies regarding the integration of religious values across all subjects, not just within Islamic Religious Education. Furthermore, there is a need for more intensive training programs for teachers to enhance their capacity to integrate moral values into their teaching practices. Visionary leadership at the school level also plays a crucial role in creating an educational environment that consistently supports the integration of values. Thus, this research recommends that policymakers design a more holistic and comprehensive curriculum, and strengthen teacher training programs, so that moral values can be more consistently and effectively implemented across all aspects of education.

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#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

J was responsible for the research design and data collection. M was responsible for data analysis and manuscript preparation. H contributed to the development of the concept, provided guidance on research methodology, and offered critical feedback on the manuscript. The authors have thoroughly reviewed the final approved manuscript.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

#### USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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